

scraping, splitting, etc. These instruments made possible the production of wooden weapons and tools that have since disappeared.

This type of primitive African probably lived during the entire first half of the fourth Ice Age, viz., for a period of about 500,000 years.

The Pithecanthropus, who originated in Asia, succeeded him. He dominated the face of the Old World for some 300,000 years. Recent discoveries made in Northern Africa have shown that this Pithecanthropus was the author of the fist-hatchets which characterized Europe during the earliest part of the Paleolithic Age.

An evolution took place among the Pithecanthropi toward the end of their period of domination and produced two divergent tendencies: one led to the Neanderthals, who remained very primitive in appearance, and the other to Homo Sapiens, the type to which all human beings belong today. The Neanderthals were dominant for some 100,000 years and produced cultures of the advanced Mousterian or Levalloisian type. About 80,000 years ago, they were replaced by Homo Sapiens, the creator of the world of today with its richness and variety in all the things of the mind.

### 3.

## Prehistoric Times in the Congo.

What has been the part played by the Congo in this evolution of primitive humanity?

As early as 1884, in the Lower Congo, the first indications of the existence of a stone age were discovered. However, it was not until the second quarter of the present century that systematic studies were made on the prehistory of the entire Congo region. These studies, still very incomplete, nevertheless make it possible to bring out the characteristics peculiar to the Congo and fit them into the information we possess about Africa as a whole.

The prehistory of the Congo region, like that of the rest of Africa, began with the crudely cut pebbles of the pebble culture period, the most ancient of all the stone age civilizations, that of the Australopithecus. All the phases of pebble culture discovered in Uganda and in South Africa have also been found in the Belgian Congo; however, in the Congo they show characteristics peculiar to the land of forests. As of today, cut and shaped pebbles have been discovered in Katanga and Upper Kasai, but it is probable that they exist all along the periphery of the Congolese basin. These finds plainly indicate that the Australopithecus formerly lived in the Belgian Congo, but as yet no fossil remains have been unearthed.



thick layers of red sand blown by the wind : in fact, some 100,000 years ago, the entire Congo basin was transformed for an uncertain period of time into a vast desert probably similar to the Kalahari Desert.

Later, when more favorable climates returned, new phases of cultures appeared which continued the evolution begun earlier. The most striking of these cultures are of the forest type, discovered in the West of the Congo. To the picks, chisels, and gouges of the Sangoan culture, the Lupembian added daggers, spearheads, and arrowheads. At the same time, in the East of the Congo appeared a culture of the Mousterian type better adapted to the nearby steppes, and therefore belonging to the great category of cultures of the steppes discovered in the East and the South of Africa.

This diversification of cultures, which began at the end of the Paleolithic Age, continued during the Congolese Mesolithic Age. At that time, within the sphere of culture of a forest type, the Lupembian, which in its final phase was enriched by micro-lithic elements such as arrows with transverse cutting edges, developed into Tshitolian. Among the cultures of the steppes, varied forms appeared : some microlithic, others macro-lithic, still others using larger stones.

At the time when the Neolithic Age was about to reach the Congolese basin, the great forest took on first-rate importance. Indeed, the Neolithics, who originated in the Sudanese regions, brought with them new techniques : agriculture, pottery, stone polishing. The forest opposed an almost impassable barrier to their progress. From this time on, it divided the Congo into two zones of civilization. A widespread Neolithic culture extended to the north of the great forest, but it barely manifested its existence toward the south along the Luluba as far as Maniema and on both sides of the forest. Elsewhere the Mesolithic cultures continued to exist until the arrival, in the course of the Christian era, of the Bantus, who brought with them the making and use of metals.

On the other hand, the Congo is badly represented in the Abbevillian, Acheulian, and Clactonian types, except in their last phases. The climate is responsible for this fact. Indeed, during the long period that witnessed the appearance and evolution of these cultures, Africa was drenched by heavy rainfall. At that time, the Pithecanthropi found, in these regions which are deserts today, hunting grounds rich in a variety of animals. Central Africa had become extremely damp and was covered with a dense and unhealthy forest that made it unfit for human habitation. However, at the end of this long wet period, a drying-up process began that forced back the great forest to the heart of the central basin of the Congo. Deposits dating from that time, found in the periphery of this basin, bear witness to the arrival of a prehistoric man of a new type. Such deposits have been discovered in Katanga and upper Kasai ; they give evidence of a highly developed Acheulian culture and, in Katanga, of a Clactonian type of flint implements.

It should be noted that in the Old World, wherever Acheulian cultures appear, they begin by being all similar, but in their final phase seem brusquely to break apart and become diversified. This diversification may be due to several factors such as profound climatic changes and also the appearance, among the last Pithecanthropi of Pre-Neanderthalian and Pre-Homo Sapiens types.

The Congolese basin also witnessed this diversification of Acheulian cultures of the Paleolithic Age in their final phase.

In the highly developed Acheulian culture of Katanga, which came at the end of the wet period, wooden tools had appeared ; these were destined soon to characterize the successive phases of Congolese prehistoric culture.

The first of these to appear was the Sangoan, which resulted from a diversification of the Acheulian. The Sangoan is a forest culture characterized by the appearance of large picks for stripping the bark off trees, chisels, and gouges for working wood. But the traces of this culture were quickly buried under

CHAPTER II  
 THE CONGO BEFORE THE ARRIVAL  
 OF THE BELGIANS

It was doubtless in the course of the seventh or eighth century of our era that metals began to be used in the Congolese basin. But no precise date can be given as yet; excavations in the Lower Congo, Kwango, Kivu, and Katanga show that the arrival of the Bantus in the Congo took the form of a series of invasions that gradually pushed back and then destroyed the last remnants of the Stone Age.

But traces of the Stone Age remained for a long time alongside the new techniques. Indeed, the same excavations have shown that, until a recent epoch which ended perhaps two centuries ago, the Bantus continued to use, together with their own tools of metal and clay, the stone implements that they had found on the spot; however, these implements (flint tools and stone blades) are, as might be expected, of a debased style.

It should be noted that the results of these excavations can in many cases be reconciled with the chronology of oral traditions, such as lists of sovereigns.

The Bantu cultures of the Age of Metals can be, it seems, linked up with all the graphic representations in rock hitherto found both in the Lower Congo and Katanga as well as in the Uele. These graphic representations include engravings, a variety of carved signs and symbols (cupular, pediform, etc.), and also paintings.



As a matter of fact, the first Europeans who landed in Africa often found communities that were politically organized. Some of them, under the stimulus of the head of a family who transformed

Must we conclude from this that for nearly two thousand years Central Africa, cut off from European progress by the desert and by impassible rivers, saw only unorganized hordes similar to the human herds of prehistoric times? Not at all. This is an erroneous idea; it is still believed in certain circles where people repeat glibly that, until the arrival of the Europeans in the last century, the history of black Africa is one with pre-historic times.

No written chronicle to be found on the spot has perpetuated events, peoples, dynasties. No lasting monument has preserved in stone the memory of dreams, desires, and emotions effaced thousands of years ago. Just a few carvings here and there on the rocks bear witness to the passage of forgotten tribes. Nothing more.

Down to the present time, not only the past but even the recent past of Central Africa have remained shrouded in mystery.

## Outline of a History of the Congo.

### 1.

## SUMMARY

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points, slowly approached the edges of the inhospitable tropical forests, were not so much conquerors as tribes driven back by invaders. The point where they originally dispersed seems to have been the Northeast of the Congo, doubtless in the Sudanese or the Abyssinian region. What causes precipitated the migration of the Bantus toward the South? Foreign invasions? Or was it above all the spreading of a drought that had its origin in the Sahara Desert?

However that may be, while a gradual flow of peoples skirting the great lakes and the Indian Ocean arrived in South Africa, other tribes, widely dispersed, infiltrating the valleys and the river banks, arrived from all directions and met in the heart of the equatorial forest where little by little they settled down. The paths of these migrations coincide or intersect each other to such an extent that a map of these great movements of tribes seems above all a labyrinth of lines fantastically mingled in a complicated mosaic. Some of these tribes progressed in very strange spirals which are still to a certain extent kept alive in traditions.

These Bantu invasions, successive and intermingled, continued throughout the entire second millennium. They were still going on when, at the close of the 19th century, Europeans occupied the country. It can be said that this arrival of Europeans put an end to the great ethnic migrations of Central Africa. (1)

Of the part played by the Pygmies during this long period little is known. The Bantu traditions however are in agreement in calling them the first occupants, living by hunting and food-gathering, whom they found in different parts of the great forest. During the past two centuries, newcomers appeared on the northern border of the country: they were the Sudanese and the Nilotic tribes who thus succeeded the Bantus in various peripheral regions.

(1) It must be noted however that these migrations of tribes have today been transformed into human currents born of the industrialization and urbanization of the country.

himself into a monarch, had even become kingdoms, such as the kingdom of the Congo near the mouth of the river, founded in the 13th century, or the empire of the Lunda on the frontier of Katanga, created in the 13th century. There are many evidences of the history of these Congolese monarchies. These evidences are of the two kinds: the most numerous are the oral traditions of the tribes — still preserved in part — which have been collected and recorded by investigators, missionaries or territorial officials; the others — rarer but more precious — are the chronicles, especially the travelers' chronicles of the 15th and 16th centuries printed in Europe at the time. The latter thus make the Congo pass from the stage of prehistoric times, based on oral legends and chronology, to that of history properly speaking, which rests on written records.

Has the sum total of all this evidence been used as it could have been? This can be doubted. Certainly essays have been written on such a people: the Bakongo, the Bakuba, and the Mongo have been the most favored in this respect. But as yet there is no synthesis which, utilizing all the available documents and adding to them the oral traditions that are still alive but ready to be blotted out in the memories of tomorrow, would finally recount a history of the Congo such as it developed before Stanley traversed the country.

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Such a history might start at the beginning of the second millennium.

Indeed, no precise record has been preserved of what happened during the first millennium of our era.

It seems however that this first millennium witnessed the arrival in the Congo of a succession of peoples of the Bantu type. Were they « proto-Bantu », « semi-Bantu », or « real Bantu »? Discussions on this point are in full swing and no one seems to be getting any nearer to solving the problem. But it appears that these people who, coming in waves from different



and succeeded each other. Kingdoms were created that were at times definitely despotic and tyrannical, and at other times bore a close resemblance to feudal Europe; occasionally they even had certain aspects that revealed democratic aspirations.

Simultaneously, civilizations appeared which were characterized by a body of religious beliefs, social concepts, and artistic manifestations. Was this the birth of new civilizations? Or a resurgence of ancient elements fused with oriental contributions? Or was it one of the last stages of a very ancient civilization deteriorating in hostile surroundings? These are all questions for the expert on Africa. But whatever hypothesis is adopted, it seems clearly proved that the Congo, during the European Middle Ages, was not the « savage » country it has generally been called. Neither was it at the height of human culture. However, a kind of life existed there that had already evolved, although its forms gradually died out under varying circumstances, but evidence that it actually did exist has been preserved.

## A.

### The Kingdom of the Congo.

As early as the 15th century the kingdom of the Congo — the one concerning which we possess the most ancient and the most numerous documents — entered into relations with Europe and made its appearance in world history.

This kingdom had been founded toward the close of the 13th or the beginning of the 14th century by hunters who had come from the southeast; a long migration had brought them to the shores of the Atlantic. When the Portuguese discovered the kingdom at the end of the 15th century, it spanned the river, stretching to the north as far as the vicinity of Pointe-Noire and to the south as far as Angola; to the east it bordered on Kwango.

What was this Congolese kingdom like?

## 2.

### The ancient Congolese Monarchies.

In the course of the second millennium another phenomenon appeared, as evidenced by oral traditions and the few chronicles written by ancient European travelers: the stabilization and the political organization of the tribes in strong units. It seems, generally speaking, that once the current of migration had been exhausted and a safe refuge together with a fertile soil had been secured, the Bantu communities soon settled down. Some forms of power were organized and consolidated; dynasties were born



to the paganism of his ancestors but, before dying in 1506, he had designated as his successor his son who had been converted under the name of Don Affonso. The latter at the time was ruling the province of Mbanzasundi, in the present-day Belgian Congo. Once on the throne, he turned out to be a great king. During his reign Europeans, the majority of them Portuguese, arrived in ever-growing numbers. Caravans of missionaries kept following each other, churches were built, wholesale baptisms — sometimes two thousand a day — took place while fetishes were burned. Finally foreign commerce was established and trading posts covered the entire country.

Under Don Affonso the idea of an African Catholic clergy first became a reality. He sent his son Don Henrique to Europe to receive an ecclesiastical training; in 1518, before returning to Africa, the latter was made a bishop.

Soon, under the stimulus of Don Affonso, the kingdom of the Congo entered active international life. He not only maintained diplomatic relations with the Portuguese court on a level of equality, but he maintained diplomatic relations with the Holy See throughout his life. Between 1504 and 1539, he even sent three delegations to Rome to request for himself privileges equal to those granted the King of Portugal. What was more, he did not hesitate to insist on the annexation of the island of São Tomé to his kingdom. This island was at the time a nest of Portuguese pirates.

But the end of his reign was marked by repeated conflicts with the Portuguese. As a matter of fact, the latter had introduced — together with commerce — alcoholism, extortion, and the slave trade. The slave trade soon assumed such proportions that Don Affonso, although he had been one of the first suppliers of slaves, became indignant and threatened to cut off all commerce with the Portuguese. Such reprisals seem to foreshadow the modern methods of the boycott. The King's indignation is understandable: from 1436 on, four thousand to five thousand Negroes were embarked every year as slaves in the Congolese port of Mpinda and sent to Portugal.

The very first explorers pointed out that the natives there seemed more civilized than elsewhere. To be sure, writing was unknown, and the country had not been — as were the Negro territories of Benin and Timbuktoo — in touch with superior civilizations, but the political structure closely resembled the feudal organization of Europe during the Middle Ages. In fact, the king had divided the country into provinces and districts at the head of which he placed delegates chosen by himself and treated as vassals. However, in certain cases there were already popular elections, a kind of democratic counterweight in embryonic opposing authoritarianism. Social life was rigid and governed by strict rules. There were rather highly developed techniques: the casting of iron and copper was known; also the art of pottery; and the weaving of cloth so strong that the Portuguese used it as sails for their boats. Certain animals were raised — pigs, sheep, goats, — and also poultry. Moreover, long before the arrival of Europeans, millet, sorgho, bananas, peas, squashes, and yams were grown.

Such was the Congo when its king, Nzinga Ntinu, received the delegates that the King of Portugal sent him in 1484. Keeping these delegates as hostages, he dispatched ambassadors to Lisbon asking for masons, carpenters, agricultural laborers and missionaries — in short all the technicians he needed to help him improve the living conditions of his subjects.

From this time on, regular relations were established between the kingdoms of the Congo and Portugal; relations based, at least at the start, not on conquest or vassalization, but on an alliance. The two kings, on an equal footing of formality, exchanged ambassadors from their first contacts and these diplomatic relations were continued for many years. Indeed, Portugal was aiming, through this alliance, at establishing for her benefit a monopoly of commerce and evangelization.

The kingdom of the Congo reached its apogee in the 16th century. After having been converted to Catholicism and baptized in 1491 old King Nzinga Ntinu had gradually returned



From that time on, the decline of the kingdom of the Congo was swift. Crushed by military might, abandoned by commerce which had shifted to Angola, and weakened by the slave traffic, the Congo was reduced to vassalization and, as a phantom state, it was finally dismembered definitively in 1885 when it was partitioned among France, Portugal, and Leopold II.

Thus expired and disappeared the first and only native Congolese state that ever played a part in world history. The kingdom of the Congo had known a current of foreign commerce; it had opened its frontiers to the diffusion of European culture and religion; it had established diplomatic relations with Portugal, the Holy See, Brazil, and the Netherlands. Portugal had the undeniable merit of opening the country to a superior civilization and of treating it, at the start, not as a vassal but as a protected ally. Unfortunately, this system of protection involved in exchange monopolies of commerce, religion, and culture. Such privileges were soon corrupted, giving way to trickery and violence; and the alliance was transformed into such a vast system of exploitation that in three hundred years it succeeded in converting into a gigantic slave market this country which might have known a better fate.

## B.

### The Kingdom of the Bakuba.

Situated between Kasai and Sankuru, the kingdom of the Bakuba, or of the Bushongo, is perhaps the most ancient of the Congolese kingdoms, certainly the one where African civilization has reached its highest point, and the only one which, frozen in a kind of proud conservatism, has retained its ancient aspect down to the present day.

Oral tradition preserves an accurate list of more than one hundred and twenty Bakuba kings, the earliest of whom lived

The situation kept getting worse, the local traffickers piling abuse on abuse and extending more and more every day their trade in Congolese slaves. Soon they even accused the King of concealing from them gold and silver mines that existed only in their imagination.

To aggravate all this, invasion soon threatened the kingdom: the barbarous Jagas, who like the Huns in Europe were over-running Africa and burning everything in their path, were at the frontiers. The Congo was sacked and its capital destroyed and burned. Don Afonso's successor, Don Alvaro, appealed to the Portuguese for help. In 1580 the latter arrived and restored order. It took them a year and a half to subdue the ferocious Jagas.

After this intervention, the Portuguese abandoned the Congo more and more and turned their attention to Angola which offered them a more favorable field for commercial activity. Faced by such a state of affairs, King Alvaro II in 1590 undertook a struggle against the Portuguese. Making use of European rivalries, he tried to put his kingdom under the tutelage of the Holy See and then encouraged the arrival in the Congo of the Dutch, who were beginning at that time to acquire a foothold in Africa.

This balancing feat thus begun between Holland and Portugal continued throughout the entire 17th century. When, after the capture in 1641 and the brief occupation of Loanda, the Dutch supplanted the Portuguese on the western shore of Africa, a new diplomatic current was established between them and the King of the Congo. The latter sent ambassadors to Brazil and Amsterdam and asked the Prince of Orange for help against the Portuguese. On the other hand, a Dutch delegation was received at the Congolese court; it proceeded between two rows of bearers of lighted candles before reaching the King's throne.

But soon the Portuguese recovered their lost positions. Then, actuated as in the preceding century by their greed for imaginary gold mines, they embarked on open warfare against the King, Don Antonio, and crushed the Congolese in the battle of Mpila in 1665.



an African classicism which excelled in the expression of all the national forms and was not surpassed at any future time.

## C.

### The Empires of the Southeast.

In the southeast of the Congo, in Kasai and Katanga, countries also came into existence and had varying fates.

The most extensive and strongest of these countries was unquestionably **the empire of the Baluba**, which at its peak covered the territory stretching from Maniema to the South of Katanga, and from Bushimate to Lakes Tanganyika and Moero.

The empire of the Baluba was founded in the 16th century by Kongolo Mukulu; he was beheaded by his people after having threatened to kill his own son of whom he was jealous. The history of this empire is above all a record of conquests and wars which lasted until the arrival of the Belgians. Successive intrigues then brought about its dismemberment.

Another important state was **the empire of the Lunda** located on the high plateaus of Kasai and extending its suzerainty as far as Kwango and Angola. Founded in the 16th century like the empire of the Baluba, the empire of the Lundas, by the strength of its political and military organization, earned for its leader, Mwata Yamo, a degree of prestige so great that it has lasted until today.

Finally, in the middle of the 19th century the last of these small empires, **the empire of Msiri**, came into existence, but only for a short time. Coming from Tanganyika, Msiri, who ruled over a territory of about 50,000 square miles, was a conqueror, a warrior, a businessman, and a despot. After coving all the neighboring tribes, he made his capital, Bunkaya, a center for international trading where, in exchange for arms and munitions, one could obtain ivory, copper, iron, salt, and slaves in abundance.

in the 5th century of our era. It also preserves a precise recollection of the acts performed by these sovereigns, who were monarchs by divine right; the wars they waged, the reforms they undertook, the progress they achieved. The checking of these stories by striking events that are known permits us to fix with certainty various dates in the history of the Bakuba, and thus determine when some of their kings lived. We know for example that King Bokoma Bomanchala saw the eclipse at noon on March 30, 1680, and that King Bope Mobinji, who lived to be very old, saw the comet of 1843 and was the first to come in contact with Europeans at the time of the Wissman expedition of 1884.

Coming from the north, perhaps from the Sudanese savanna from which they made their way, cutting across the paths of the Bantu migration, the Bakuba are said to have traversed Sankuru as early as the 6th century to settle down in the territory they have occupied to this day. Their history is not so much that of a series of conquests as of the development of an original civilization which organized its social system and sought out its own esthetics. In this connection, it is a significant fact that the most famous of their kings was not a conqueror but a man of peace, a Maccenas of the arts: Shamba Bolongongo. He died at the beginning of the 17th century. He had the originality to abolish the use of weapons and especially of those famous throwing knives that earned his people the surname of « the lightning people ». It was also he who was the first to have a sculptor of his court execute his portrait statue. This work has been preserved down to the present time: it is the most ancient work of art to be found in Central Africa.

A taste for beauty is moreover one of the dominant traits of the Bakuba people. Everything in this country is decorated, chiseled: cosmetic boxes, cups, drums, walls of houses, etc. Conservatism is another of their characteristics: to this very day the ritual of past times has been preserved at the court of Nyimi: one can only approach the King's throne by conforming to strict etiquette and, by way of a labyrinth, following a carefully arranged and guarded itinerary. Patronized at the court, the artists of the kingdom of the Bakubas showed themselves in the past to be the equals of the sculptors of the Bénin. They attained



### Foreign Penetration.

#### A.

#### Arrival of the Portuguese in the Lower Congo.

In 1482, a European explorer who was skirting the western coast of Africa discovered the mouth of the Congo River: this explorer was the Portuguese Diego Cao.

Paradoxically this discovery of the Congo River came as a result of the wars that Christian Europe had undertaken against the Moslems. As a matter of fact, it was in driving back the last of the Moors after the fall of Ceuta, the key of North Africa, that the Portuguese thought of continuing on their way toward the south. For a long time this obsession of chasing « the Moor » was to remain with them; it was to accompany them when they discovered successively the Senegal, Congo and Zambezi Rivers. They attempted to go up each of the rivers they found along the Atlantic coast of Africa in the hope — never to be realized — of reaching some illusory inland lake that would open the way to another river, and from there to the fabled kingdom of « Prester John ». They planned to free this imaginary

Coming from the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, caravans from Zanzibar and Loanda converged on Bunkaya. When the Belgians arrived, Mstri had an army of ten thousand men, and the stakes in the palisades of Bunkaya were crowned with the skulls of his slain enemies. Soon his extortions became such that the subjugated population, threatened by famine, revolted. The Belgians put an end to his atrocities. Lieutenant Bodson killed Mstri in self-defense on December 20, 1891. His empire disappeared with him.

#### D.

#### The Sultanates of the North.

From the 18th century on, Sudanese tribes crossed the frontiers of the Congo. They arrived in successive waves, but after reaching their destination they intermingled, overlapped, and united in groups of families to the point of constituting an intricate mosaic made up of various clans.

In the South of the Uele, an elegant but frivolous civilization which still exists developed among the Mangbetu, who were famous for their artificially elongated heads; but to the north of the river the Azande sultanates, tough and warlike states, were set up.

These sultanates, divided into vassalized districts, were organized in such a manner that, like the spokes of a wheel, all trails converged from these districts on the capital but never connected one district with another. Thus the absence of contact among the vassals put a brake on any inclination to hatch a conspiracy.

When at the end of the 19th century the Belgian troops attacked the Madhists of the Sudan who had made several incursions into Congolese territory, they found valuable allies in some of these Azande sultans. These allies — such as Semio and Renzi — did not hesitate to throw into battle their thousands of lancers who fought side by side with the first contingents of Leopold II.



kingdom from its infidel neighbors and then, with its aid, to take the forces of Islam from the rear somewhere near Egypt. Needless to say, this dream was never realized, but led to the opening of the first gates of Central Africa.

This bellicose dream was not the only motive that actuated the Portuguese. At the same time they were trying to discover a sure route that would lead them to the rich lands of the Indies. On the way, they marked the road with posts, sometimes fortified, and assured themselves of a trading monopoly. Very quickly the Portuguese commercial monopoly was to include an immense slave traffic.

The complexity of these motives explains the contradictory and changing aspects of the Portuguese penetration of Africa.

Two years after finding the mouth of the Congo River, Diego Cao returned in force, accompanied by a group of missionaries. He landed at Mpinda, a little port located on a creek on the southern bank not far from the mouth, a port that was to acquire a sinister fame because of the slave trade. From Mpinda, the missionaries reached the capital of the Congo kingdom, nearly two hundred miles in the interior, and there they met the sovereign, Nzinga Ntinu.

From that moment all the present day Lower Congo was for many years overrun by merchants, artisans, and missionaries (1). European life was about to be introduced into the country and to remain there until Portugal abandoned it for Angola.

At the same time, explorations were made in the interior. The results of these explorations were kept secret because they were often undertaken by merchants who were unwilling to help

(1) Among the first arrivals there were some Belgians. Thus in 1610 a merchant from Antwerp — Pierre Van Broeck — bought ivory at the mouth of the Congo River. Several Belgian Capuchin monks came to the Congo as missionaries; the most famous of them was Father Adrien Willem, who wrote the first Banu dictionary and was stoned to death in 1641.

their competitors. However, in 1488, Diego Cao — in hopes of finding a way to get to the kingdom of Prestor John — went up the river and reached a point above Matadi, where a carved stone still preserves the record of his arrival. Later, in 1632, a missionary, Father de Montesarchio, reached Stanley Pool and came into contact with the land of the Bateke. There he found already established Portuguese trading posts with Negroes in charge.

The commercial occupation of the Lower Congo was achieved by this time. Unfortunately, it was accompanied by extortions of all sorts that soon made it unpopular.

As for the work of the missionaries, it turned out to be precarious. As early as 1491, to be sure, the Congolese king had been baptized; in 1518 his grandson had become the first Congolese bishop; masons and carpenters from Europe had built churches; people were baptized on a tremendous scale, and a small contingent of Capuchin monks had carried on their activities sporadically and in a small way until 1834. But Christianity, such as it was introduced at that time, did not, it seems, strike deep roots. Imposed by force, it had not really won the hearts of the people; very often it was inseparable from political opportunism. When the Belgians arrived at the end of the 19th century they found only a few vestiges of Christianity: some rites that had lost their meaning, here and there a church wall leveled with the ground and covered with grass, and some copper crucifixes, made in the region, that had been preserved for generations.

## B.

### The European Slave Traders.

Between the 15th and the 18th century, European ships carried away Negro slaves to America by millions. This traffic in human flesh was introduced by the Portuguese. It began in 1443 when a Portuguese trader brought back from the Gulf of



Guinea a group of 263 Africans. Soon the Portuguese became the masters of a chain of trading posts spread out all along the Atlantic coast of Africa. They divided up the continent in claims, just like a forest or mine. Speaking of the Congo, one of their writers described it as a « slave mine ».

It was the Congo that suffered the most from this traffic, because its inhabitants were in great demand in the slave market. At the beginning of the 16th century, Lisbon had become the chief slave market, supplying at the same time Portugal and the Americas. At that time, from ten thousand to twenty thousand were already being sold every year. Along the mouth of the Congo, captives that had arrived in caravans from the interior were kept in enclosures while waiting for buyers. The principal exportation port was Mpinda, on a creek on the south bank. It was at Mpinda that the first Portuguese expedition landed, and it was from there that, in the course of the following centuries, the unfortunate black slaves were exported by tens of thousands. Besides, Mpinda was a bone of contention several times in the course of history. In 1602 it was attacked by a French flotilla, in 1606 the Dutch attempted to take possession of it. Both attempts were repulsed by the Portuguese. For two centuries, the 15th and the 16th century, the Portuguese retained a monopoly of the slave trade at Mpinda.

But at the dawn of modern times, the other European powers became commercial competitors. The decline of Portugal set in while the strength of France, England, and the Netherlands grew.

After the fall of Loanda in 1641, the Dutch got their trading posts away from the Portuguese and replaced them in the slave trade. The Portuguese resisted. Combats took place in the Lower Congo; the Dutch trading posts at Mpinda were razed in 1648, but everything was finally settled by an agreement that gave Holland the right to engage in the slave trade. A little later the English in their turn made their appearance in the Congolese installations. As early as 1701, they possessed at Mpinda a trading post that bought slaves from the Mussorongo.

By the end of the 17th century the slave trade, which had started as a Portuguese monopoly, had become a gigantic international undertaking. The places where slaves were kept became more and more numerous and profitable. The French appeared in their turn, drove the Portuguese away from the port of Cabinda and installed their slave markets chiefly beyond the north bank of the river toward Loango and Malemba, while the English traded in the estuary.

In the course of a single year, in 1778, 104,000 slaves had been exported from Africa; one third of them came from the Congo and Angola.

It should be noted that these slaves, after having been found at first in the region at the mouth of the river, later were taken from more and more remote parts of the country, the supply having dwindled. In order to find slaves, expeditions were organized. These were generally commanded by « pombeiros », black or half-breed traders in the service of the Portuguese. In the 17th century some of these expeditions went as far as Lake Leopold II, and later as far as Katanga. Sometimes trading tribes, such as the Beteke, served as go-betweens and resold in the vicinity of Leopoldville slaves from the Upper Congo. Commercial trails linked the Kwango and Stanley Pool to the main trail that led to the ports of Angola. Profiting by all this activity, some Europeans proceeded very far into the interior, such as the Dutchman de Helder, who, soon after 1641, led an expedition as far as Muende Kundi on the Kwango.

The 19th century was destined to see at the same time the apogee of the slave trade and its disappearance.

Already in the 18th century, public opinion had become conscious of the situation and a strong reaction against the traffic in human flesh had taken shape. This reaction gradually grew stronger. The ideas of 1789 opened a new era. England took the first step, abolishing the slave trade in 1807, and slavery itself in her colonies in 1833. This example was followed by Portugal in 1835 and by France in 1848.



## C. The Arab Slave Traders.

Hardly had the slave trade diminished in the West when it developed with increased intensity all over the East of the Congo. This time it was no longer a question of America's need for cheap labor, but the harems and palaces of the Middle East clamoring for women and servants.

As early as the 8th century, the Arabs had extended their domination over the east coast of Africa; along the Indian Ocean they had built cities which today lie buried under tropical forests. Repulsed at the end of the 15th century by the Portuguese who had sailed all around the continent, the Arabs soon got a new foothold in Africa and, two hundred years later, they had again become the masters of the east coast, extending their domination far to the south.

When did the first Arabs penetrate the Congo? It is difficult to ascertain, but it has been averred that at the beginning of the 19th century Congolese women were already found in the harems of Osman and Mascate. For a long time the Arabs were satisfied to make local raids, together with rare incursions into the interior, just as the Portuguese had formerly done in the Lower Congo. However, as needs became greater, especially now that the Russian market in white slaves was suppressed, the Arabs ventured nearer and nearer to the heart of Africa. In 1840 they reached Lake Tanganyika, and in 1858 the explorers Burton and Speke gave the world the first report on the Arab slave traders, who had set up a base at Uvira. From Uvira they branched out toward Urundi and Katanga where they met their Portuguese counterparts.

From that time on they made the Congo their hunting ground. With the help of cannibal tribes, from which they often

But for a long time these decrees remained dead letters: they clashed with too many commercial interests. In practice, flourished just the same. Reliable statistics show that between 1840 and 1848, from fifty thousand to eighty thousand blacks were shipped out of Africa every year. In 1850 the estuary of the Congo River was still lined with numerous slave warehouses for which Boma was the great supply center. Soon after, the Portuguese went as far as Katanga to buy slaves from Msiri.

Indeed, it was necessary to wait until the end of the 19th century to see slavery die out, thanks especially to the introduction of new means of production. In 1877, drowned slaves were still found in the river at Boma, their hands tied, an iron collar around their necks, and the name of the slave trader engraved on the chains. And yet the number of slaves exported from the Congo had fallen between 1860 and 1874 from thirty thousand to two thousand.

However, some clandestine centers still existed in Angola. They supplied with workers the trading posts in the interior of the country. These centers attempted, as in the past, to find their human merchandise on Congolese soil. Some of the suppliers did not hesitate, in exchange for captured enemies, to furnish arms to certain Congolese tribes, such as the Batsiok of Kwangao and, at the very beginning of the 20th century, the Batelela rebels that had taken refuge in Katanga.

When the Belgians arrived in the Congo, their first objective — fixed by Leopold II — was the suppression of the slave trade. Up to that time, in four hundred years, merely by the western route, more than fifteen million Congolese had been shipped out. Ten million of them had died en route as a result of bad treatment.

The Belgian occupation and the strict surveillance exercised at the frontiers put an end to the last incursions from Angola and saved the endangered tribes.



be added many who were massacred, because the Arab raids were unusually ferocious and murderous. We can get an indication of the part played by the Congo in the slave trade of the time by consulting the population statistics of Zanzibar, the ancient capital of the slave trade. Today, of 200,000 blacks who inhabit the sultanate, half are descendants of slaves and 2,000 of these still claim to be of Congolese origin.

Soon the Arab occupation became so powerful in the Congo that one of these traffickers carved out a sultanate for himself there; he was the most famous of the slave traders of the time, Tippo-Tip. When the first Belgians arrived they found him to be too strong a potentate to be attacked with any chance of success by their feeble numbers. At that time, Tippo-Tip was unquestionably the master of the entire regions of Maniema and Lomami and his raids stretched from the Upper Ituri in the east to the Lulonga in the west; thus they tended to reach out as far as the territories exploited by the slave traders of Khartoum. It was wiser to come to terms with Tippo-Tip and try to win him over to new ventures. Tippo-Tip showed himself to be a clever diplomat in dealing with the newcomers. Gradually changing his man-hunting grounds, he manoeuvred with such skill as to keep the explorers away from his hidden domains. Finally, Stanley himself, confronted by such power, saw fit to conciliate him by cajoling him. In 1887, in the name of Leopold II, he made Tippo-Tip governor of the province of the Falls, which covered practically the whole East of the Congo. There was only one condition: to collaborate with the Belgians in the suppression of the slave trade. Did Tippo-Tip live up to the agreement? It seems that, on the advice of the sultan of Zanzibar, he resigned himself to the inevitable. Three years later, realizing that new times were coming, he gave up his post of governor and left his former African kingdom for good.

Then suddenly the entire network of Arab posts rebelled. A new era began: that of the Arab campaigns in the course of which, at the cost of numerous sacrifices, the Belgians finally wiped out every trace of slavery.

had to protect their captives, they ravaged entire regions with fire and sword. Generally, half-breeds led these expeditions and organized the markets just as the « pombeiros » had done for the Portuguese.

It took the Arab forces twenty years to occupy the region which extends from Lake Tanganyika to Luabala. In 1860 they reached the Congo River, settled down there and founded Nyangwe, which was to be their African capital for a long time. From Nyangwe a network of posts — Kirundu, Kabambaré, etc. — supplied relays as far as Tanganyika. It took them another twenty years to reach Stanleyville. In 1883 Stanley, in going up the river, met them at Basoko and in Aruwimi which they were ravaging.

Meanwhile, other Arab expeditions were setting out from the Sudan. Being organized on a smaller scale, they skirted the redoubtable Azande sultanates and made raids on the Mangbetu and Abarambo tribes of Ulele. They reached their greatest strength at the time of the attacks made by the Madhists.

Were there Arab explorers who — foreshadowing Stanley — went down the river, at least as far as Stanley Pool if not to the sea? In the absence of known records the question remains unanswered, but it is certain that as early as the middle of the 18th century, the Arabs knew better than the European explorers that the Luabala River was the Congo and not the Nile, and at that time several of them described the estuary of the river, its boats and trading posts.

How many Congolese were traded as slaves during the few decades that the Arab slave trade lasted? Here also records that could give us a definite answer are lacking. It is known that some caravans which covered the six hundred miles separating Tanganyika from the Indian Ocean included no fewer than two thousand slaves. It has been estimated that at the height of their power in Africa the Arabs shipped out about seventy thousand Congolese a year. To this number actually sold into slavery must



## The Explorations of the XIXth Century.

### D.

The Portuguese, in their discovery of Africa, had been spurred on in part by the illusion that they would reach an imaginary kingdom, that of Prester John. A new motive was to guide most of the 19th century explorers, who came from European countries : to solve the problem of the sources of the Nile.

Little by little, the mystery of the heart of Africa was to be penetrated. This was done by successive parties of explorers who, criss-crossing the peripheral zones, culminated in Stanley's sensational exploit.

In 1798, the Portuguese F. Lacerda had already gone as far as Katanga and found out about the copper mines. But the great current of scientific explorations did not start until 1816. In that year, the Englishman J. Tuckey entered the estuary of the Congo in order to find out if it was not the Niger. The ill-starred expedition was decimated by fever : out of fifty-six people, eighteen died on the way. J. Tuckey was among these, but his undertaking had not been useless. The expedition had gone up the river as far as the rapids of Isanghila, far above Matadi, and near the site of Inga. Furthermore, the expedition brought back to Europe the first detailed studies of the regions traversed.

As early as the middle of the century, exploring activity was intensified. In the East of the Congo successive expeditions, searching for the sources of the Nile, discovered the great lakes. The Englishmen C. F. Burton and J. H. Speke arrived in Tanganyika in 1858, and their compatriot S. W. Baker reached Lake Albert in 1860. In the North, between 1870 and 1872, the German G. A. Schweinfurt succeeded in getting to Uele, and the Italian G. Miani reached Bomokandi.

At the same time, Livingstone arrived from the south and discovered Lake Moero, where he met Tippo-Tip. Later, taking

the opportunity presented by a caravan of Arab traffickers, he left Tanganyika and arrived at Nyangwe on the banks of the upper course of the Congo River for the first time. Were these waters of the Nile or of the old Zaïre ? Livingstone asked himself this question. He probably suspected that it was the Congo, but the wily Arabs prevented him from going ahead. Moreover, the region was periodically drenched with blood by the slave merchants. Disgusted by the massacres he had seen, Livingstone returned to Tanganyika by the end of the same year. That is where he was found by Stanley, who was to spend several months traveling with him in the region.

Soon another European reached the same bank of the Luabala. The Englishman Cameron, who had also started from Tanganyika, discovered the Lukuga, traversed regions infested by the slave traders and arrived — as Livingstone had three years earlier — at Nyangwe, the great Arab capital. Advancing scientific arguments, Cameron was the first to declare positively that the waters flowing before him were not those of the Nile, but of the Congo. On August 28, 1874, aided by Tippo-Tip, he succeeded in crossing the Luabala, but this attempt to explore the mysterious river ended there. By dint of persuasion, and tricky covered up by smiles, the clever Tippo-Tip managed to dissuade Cameron from exploring further downstream, so much so that the English officer retracing his steps, soon went up the Lomami. Passing through Kamina, he reached Angola and then the Atlantic the following year, after having succeeded in going all the way across Africa.

It was Stanley who had the luck and the merit to be the first to go down the Congo River.

From Europe, where he had gone after his meeting with Livingstone, Stanley soon returned to Africa. At the very moment when Cameron turned his back on good fortune, Stanley plunged into the interior of the continent. Two years later, on October 18, 1876, he reached Kasongo where he too met Tippo-Tip. More fortunate than his predecessor, Stanley succeeded in impressing the potentate and luring him on with a date : for five