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TORDAY, Emil

The Influence of the Kingdom of Kongo on Central Africa / A Kongói Királyság hatása Közép-Afrikára

Eredeti közlés /Original publication:

Africa, Journal of the International African Institute, 1928, Vol. 1, No. 2, Apr., pp.157–169.

Elektronikus újraközlés/Electronic republication:

AHU MAGYAR AFRIKA-TUDÁS TÁR – 000.002.479

Dátum/Date: 2016. november / November 16.

filename: torday_1928_InflKongoKingdom

Az elektronikus újraközlést előkészítette

/The electronic republication prepared by:

B. WALLNER, Erika és/and BIERNACZKY, Szilárd

Hivatkozás erre a dokumentumra/Cite this document

TORDAY, Emil: The Influence of the Kingdom of Kongo on Central Africa / A Kongói Királyság hatása Közép-Afrikára, *AHU MATT*, 2016, **pp. 1–15. old.**, No. 000.002.479, <http://afrikatudastar.hu>

Eredeti forrás megtalálható/The original source is available:

kézirat az Afrikai Kutatási és Kiadási Program archívumában (Érd) / manuscript in the Archive of African Research and Publication Program (Érd)

Kulcsszavak/Key words

Magyar Afrika-kutatás, az egykori Kongói Királyság szerepe Közép-Afrika későbbi történelmi-társadalmi sorsának alakulásában

African studies in Hungary, the role of the former Kongo Kingdom in the later historical and social fate of Central Africa

AZ ELSŐ MAGYAR, SZABAD FELHASZNÁLÁSÚ, ELEKTRONIKUS,
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THE INFLUENCE OF THE KINGDOM OF KONGO ON CENTRAL AFRICA

[On trouvera la page 277 un résumé en français de cet article.]

TORDAY, Emil

(*Africa*, Journal of the International African Institute, 1928, Vol. 1, No. 2, Apr., pp.157–169.)

The methodical investigation of African customs and institutions, which, notwithstanding tardy official recognition, has made such rapid strides within the last twenty or thirty years, brings us constantly up against phenomena which upset our most cherished theories. The best text-books have taught us that the method of making fire by the stick-and-groove method belongs to Oceania, and it is most disconcerting to come across some African tribe, like the Tophoke,¹ right in the centre of the continent, who practise it and know no other. The features of a Bena Lulua display unabashed curvilinear scorings² which by all rights ought to adorn the face of some Maori. The Boloki³ employ a method of casting which is, but for its crudeness and the distinction that vegetable matter is used instead of wax, based practically on the same principles as the *cire perdue* process of higher civilizations. How is it that the Warega disdain the time-honoured African institution of slavery in whatever form and have social grades⁴ which find their nearest counterpart among the Edo⁵ and Ibo,⁶ twelve

¹ Torday and Joyce: *Notes ethnographiques sur les populations habitant les bassins du Kasai et du Kwango Oriental*, p. 208. Curiously enough some kind of outrigger is used in the same region. (Torday, *Man*, 1918, 41.)

² E. Torday, *Man*, 1913, 2.; Wissmann, *Im Inneren Afrikas*, p. 164.

³ John H. Weeks, *Among Congo Cannibals*, p. 89.

⁴ Le Commandant Delhaise, *Les Warega*, pp. 228–9, 337, 345. The titles taken by members of Baluba-Hemba town companies (Colle, *Les Baluba*, p. 176 et seq., where they are called 'clans', obviously a mistake) are of a quite different character.

⁵ N. W. Thomas, *Anthrop. Report on the Edo-speaking peoples*, vol. I, p. 11.

hundred miles west? Shall we ever find explanations for these and many other ethnological problems? The greatest difficulty we have to face when investigating matters of the past in Africa is the entire absence of dates: the African has never kept an account of time, which has always been of but little value to him, and consequently the co-ordination of various events becomes extremely laborious, if not impossible.

Besides, native traditions are not freely imparted to strangers by the xenophobe and conservative old gentlemen who preserve them, while the well-meaning interpreter who communicates without reserve with the passing tripper is generally an individual who has severed all connexion with his own people at an early age and is as ignorant of their folklore as the inquirer. Fortunately for the serious and patient workers in the field Father Van Wing's invaluable labours have revealed a new source of historical information in the *Ndumbululu*,⁷ the clan song or clan rallying cry. We now know at any rate where to look for information, which, if collected before it is swept away by the inevitable break-up of the old social order, may supply us with most valuable material in the future. Each song contains a terse record of the respective clan's history, and by fitting many of them together they may help to solve problems which have hitherto baffled us. The outlook is all the more promising since these clan songs are apparently not confined to the Bakongo and kindred peoples; by the merest chance a song of identical nature was found far inland among the Batetela⁸ in 1908; but as this was long before Father Van Wing had

⁶ N. W. Thomas, *Anthrop. Report on the Ibo-speaking peoples*, vol. I, pp. 75, 76.

⁷ J. Van Wing, S. J., *Études Bakongo*, p. 79.

⁸ Torday and Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

'Olengo Kunji, of Kunji, came,
 Came from the Lukenye to conquer
 And conquered all the land.
 We chased the Basonge and took their land
 We took it all, the whole country
 And Mokunji became Lord of the Sungu
 And showed how to rule the land we conquered
 Driving out the Basonge.
 When all the Basonge fled in terror
 One remained and slew
 Mokunji Mokunji who by Kunjateli's advice

revealed their great importance, the traveller, though recording the song verbatim, lacked the learned Jesuit's flair and discernment and did not follow up the precious clue.

It is very probable that the carefully preserved traditions of the Bushongo are based on narratives in poetical form like the Bakongo clan songs, pieced together either for the present generation, which knows little or nothing of their archaic language, or simply for the benefit of the traveller who collected them. The task being thus simplified, it is intended to demonstrate that it is possible to connect through them this people's history with that of the known world and that they enable us even to fix approximately the date of certain memorable events in their past. This may lead to the explanation of one of the many curious African problems: the rise of a distinctive, high civilization in the midst of peoples of much lower culture. Some of the facts recorded in their traditions have already successfully stood the test of investigation.

One of these is the account of a memorable event which was said to have taken place during the reign of the ninety-eighth king of their dynasty: the sun disappeared one day at noon. Thanks to Mr. Knobel, it was ascertained that a total eclipse of the sun, visible in Central Africa, took place on the 3th March 1680, and the total phase of it

Had lopped off his finger.
He whose hand was severed by Jadeyenche
Begot Tambo Kunji whose children all
Reigned over the land,
He also begat Olengo Kunji.

With Mokunji came the Pungwa Sungu.
The Ganja Sungu followed later from the Lukenye
After Mokunji had taken possession.
All Basonge were driven away
Not one of them remained behind.
And the Sungu remained, Mokunji's followers
And Mokunji is lord of the Sungu, Vua Sungu, Sanga Sungu, Osasi Sungu
Mokunji who from the Lukenye
Came to conquer our country.

It will be seen that this song tells us, at any rate, whence the Sungu Batetela came, under whose leadership and what people they drove out of the country they now occupy. See also i-Hubo in Bryant's Zulu Dictionary, p. 268.

reached the site of the capital of Bushongo at 11.58 a.m. local time.⁹ Another striking instance is that relating to King Miele, who must have lived in the early sixteenth century. Tradition credits him with having been a remarkably clever smith whose skill was so great that he wrought in iron figures of men and beasts which were preserved as valuable heirlooms by the nation.¹⁰

This story, published in 1910, appeared to be rather fantastic, especially as the wonderful works of art could not be produced; the excuse was that they had been 'given away' years ago to an officer of the Congo Free State. It was fortunate indeed that they should have been found and identified fourteen years later in the Museum of the Butchers' Hall in Antwerp.¹¹ These cases do not stand alone.¹²

It may be useful at the start to state facts which are self-evident. Physically, culturally, and linguistically the original Bushongo stock (as distinct from conquerors and later immigrants) belongs to the Baluba family, which has its ramifications from the Kasai to Lake Nyasa, from the Sankuru to Lake Bangweulu. Two influences have been at work to raise it above its kindred. An energetic race of roving warriors or hunters came from the north and established a domination over the Baluba aborigines. These Sudanese conquerors gave political security to their subjects, under which, encouraged by a splendid court and a wealthy, idle aristocracy, their natural artistic gifts were encouraged and allowed to develop freely, while their weaker neighbours wasted their energies in inter-tribal wars. We have a perfect parallel in the enormous development which took place in Mexico when the Nahuatl hunting tribes descended on the agricultural people and established themselves as a ruling caste.

It is the object of this paper to establish the theory that the other influence came from the west. Bushongo stands alone among the surrounding peoples, not only for its artistic achievements but also for its social organization. Tradition proclaims that this is due to the genius of King Shamba Bolongongo,¹³ who is called Samba Mikepe by the eastern section of the nation. It explains how the king came to work his far-reaching changes and reforms by one sentence: Shamba

⁹ Torday and Joyce, *Notes ethnographiques*, etc., *Les Bushongo*, p. 36.

¹⁰ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, p. 25.

¹¹ E. Torday, *Man*, 1924, 13.

¹² T. A. Joyce, *Man*, 1925, 115.

¹³ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, p. 25.

saw the Pene, saw the Abono, saw the Badinga, saw the Bapinji. It relates how the king in his youth, before he succeeded to the throne, had travelled for years in western countries, and it is not difficult to identify the peoples whom he is said to have visited; they still exist and are still known by their ancient names. One, however, Abono (calling itself now Ambunu¹⁴ and also known as Ambundo, Babunda, Kimbundu) requires some comment. It was and still is one of the biggest ethnical and linguistic units in this part of Africa.

It is no wonder that the Ntotila (king) of Kongo, among many high-sounding titles he assumed in imitation of his suzerain, the king of Portugal, claimed to be the Lord of Ambundo.¹⁵ When he glorified himself with this lordship, long after he had lost all hold over the Babunda proper, he was really nearer the truth than he would have been disposed to admit, as his subjects, though they called themselves Mushikongo, were, as Paiva has well established,¹⁶ nothing but a lesser branch of the immense Ambundo, Babunda people, conquered by Nimi Lukeni, head of the Kongo clan and founder of the dynasty.¹⁷ If the king differentiated between his subjects and the independent Babunda, such a distinction, purely political and not ethnical, may not have been made by the neighbouring peoples, and one may assume that the Abono of Shamba included all the people of that race, viz. the Kongo people too. Such a hypothesis is not meant to add force to the following arguments; it is a conclusion which is self-evident.

Every great ruler of a nation becomes in the course of time idealized, and the great achievements of his age are attributed to his personal efforts. It would be rash indeed to accept indiscriminately all the claims made by Bushongo historians for Shamba; besides, it matters little to establish how great was his individual share in the changes which took place in his time. Nor is it of any consequence to find out how the contact with Kongo was brought about. He may have travelled, as it is claimed, in Kongo and seen with his own eyes the things he emulated in his own country; he may have done so as the leader of an embassy sent by his predecessor to the court of the greatest king of his time in West and Central Africa; he may have done so as a trader, a prisoner, or even a slave captured in war; but it

¹⁴ Torday and Joyce, *Kasai*, p. 230.

¹⁵ Vte. de Palva Manso, *Historia do Congo*, p. 60.

¹⁶ Paiva, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

¹⁷ Van Wing, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

is just as possible that he sent emissaries to the Ntotila, whose fame must have still resounded abroad in all its glory when it was already declining at home. Even at his court decay would not have been perceptible so long as it maintained the pomp and ceremonials of old, and skilled courtiers chanted the greatness of their king.

This greatness of the Ntotila must have made the deepest impression on the backwoods-man who came from the far interior, five hundred miles from the sea. The proudest title of the king of Kongo was that of Nimi, coupled with that of Lukeni.¹⁸ Nimi Lukeni had been the founder of the dynasty; as its ancestor he was the king of kings. To assume his name was a step towards achieving his greatness. To this day the king of Bushongo bears the title of Nyimi; he must not be addressed by any other, though he is also known, particularly to his subjects of foreign extraction and his neighbours, as Lukengo. And as the original Nimi Lukeni had added the name of his mother (or his mother's clan) to his personal name, so to within recent years the kings of Bushongo bore the name of their mother added to their own. Neither Nimi nor Nyimi are titles found among the peoples of Baluba stock or those in contact with the Bushongo. They are not even found among the Bashilele or Loange-Bakongo, though these are of the same blood as the Bushongo, in fact their very brothers. It is true that the Bushongo refer to their ruler as Nyimi Lele, but they themselves call their king Goma Nvula, or Gomampura.¹⁹

It is obvious that the paramount chief of Bushongo can only have assumed this title of the Kongo king, whilst the latter was, apparently at least, still the great potentate who, in Cao's time, held his court of justice at his capital, and all the chiefs from the sea to the river Kwango, from the Coanza to the Kwilu, recognized him as their overlord and paid him tribute.²⁰ Less than two centuries later his empire had fallen to pieces, his glory had departed, and not even the chief of a good-sized village would have shed splendour on his

¹⁸ Van Wing, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁹ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, p. 74. This title reminds one naturally of Golambolo, one of the principal war-lords of the Jaga (see Cavazzi, *Historica Descrizione de tre Regni del Congo*, p. 207), with whose plundering bands the Bashilele and Loange-Bakongo, like most peoples in those parts, must have come into painful contact during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

²⁰ Van Wing, op. cit., p. 9.

position by assuming a title of the miserable kinglet of San Salvador, who was not even master in his own town and whose edicts carried no weight beyond a few slave-hamlets in the vicinity of his farcical court. We may be sure that it must have been long before 1700 that the greatness of Kongo was reflected in Central Africa.

The period to be considered is still further narrowed down by the fact that the first king of Kongo to bear the ancestral titles of Nimi and Lukeni was Alvaro I, who ascended the throne in 1568, and the last Alvaro III, who died in 1622.²¹ During the reign of Alvaro I intercourse with the interior must have been practically impossible in consequence of the Jaga raids and the Angola wars. Consequently it is during the reign of Alvaro II that we must look for the event or events which had such a great influence on the Bushongo; it lasted forty years (1574–1614). This period seems all the more probable, as Alvaro II was, since Diego (†1561), the only Ntotila able to maintain himself on the throne, though he was some-times openly, always secretly, opposed to Portuguese domination. We may attribute to this hatred of 'the friends of the slavers', which still lives in the heart of the Bakongo who for generations have lost all contact with them,²² the obstinate xenophobia of the Bushongo, otherwise unaccountable in a people which has shown itself so ready to accept foreign ideas. They kept their country closed to European penetration to the last, and even the use of goods of European manufacture was deemed till recent years a capital offence. The fate of Kongo had taught them that the trader was followed by the tax-collector.

Under the ever vigilant eyes of the Portuguese, Alvaro II was forced to cloak with pseudo-European appearances the true esi-Kongo, (Kongo custom), which must have prevailed at his court, and consequently it was hidden to the travellers and missionaries whose records we possess. Fortunately we can form a good idea of the ancient customs by what we know of the minor courts established after the pattern of the capital by the king's 'sons' who had been deputed by the Ntotila to govern various provinces and vassal states,²³ such as Sonyo and Loango, of which Merolla and Battell have given

²¹ Van Wing, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

²³ Battell, *The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell*, appendix by Ravenstein, p. 104.

us such valuable descriptions. Battell records²⁴ that the mother of the king of Loango was the highest chief woman in all the land—just as the mother of the Bushongo ruler occupies the most exalted position in his realm. He also mentions the custom of attributing various titles to the ruler's brothers in order of their future succession to the throne;²⁵ when the king dies the eldest of them takes his place and the other princes are promoted a step in the hierarchy; the Buimbi and the two Chwala of Bushongo²⁶ occupy exactly similar positions. There is always an interregnum between the demise of the Bushongo Nyimi and the enthronement of his successor, during which the son of the king (excluded from succession in a matriarchal state of society) temporarily wields all power.²⁷ Now Merolla states²⁸ that in Sonyo 'during the interim or *Sede Vacante* a Child governs, who is obeyed by all as if he were the real Prince'. This may be pure coincidence, but we must bear in mind that child and son are expressed in Kikongo by the same word *mwana*, and that such a temporary regency by an individual instead of the council of elders is not usual among the Bantu.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of Bushongo society, apparently inexplicable, is the organization of its national council which really wields the power of which the king is the symbol.²⁹ The representation of various territorial divisions and the existence of an executive corresponding to a European government require no comment as both are found in many parts of Africa. But the distinctive feature of Bushongo, the presence among the Kolomo (elders, councillors, derived from the Chiluba word Kilolo, noble³⁰) of men who are representative of various arts and crafts, stands alone. Councillors there must have been in Bushongo before Shamba's reform (tradition admits this), just as they are found in every village,

²⁴ Battell, op. cit., p. 50. Among peoples of Luba stock it is the sister, not the mother, who occupies a high secular (Gouldsbury and Sheane, *The Plateau of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 18) or spiritual (Cameron, *Across Africa*, vol. II, pp. 71–72) position.

²⁵ Battell, op. cit., p. 49.

²⁶ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, p. 56.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 63.

²⁸ Merolla de Sorrento, in *Churchill*, p. 690.

²⁹ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, p. 53 et seq.

³⁰ R. P. Colle, op. cit., p. 821.

chieftainship, or state of the surrounding Baluba, but trader representation is an unknown phenomenon among the Bantu. The custom must have been alien to a community based on Luba culture, all the more as among the unadulterated Baluba a stage of real division of labour, smiths excepted, has not been reached to this day and, however distinguished certain individuals might become in a craft practised by all, no real artisan class is found.³¹

In Kongo things were different. Proyard³² mentions besides smiths, house-builders, potters, weavers, and salt-makers. There is no indication that these should, as such, have had representatives at court; but Van Wing tells us³³ that 'originally in Kongo every clan had its special craft, such as weavers, palm wine-makers, basket-makers, potters, smiths. In common they had only agriculture, the women's share, and hunting and fishing, the men's'. This tradition of division of labour according to clans was confirmed by various clan chiefs. Thus every chief of a clan or the branch of a clan who as courtier, lord, or vassal lived, according to Pigafetta³⁴ and Battell,³⁵ at or near the court, was not only the representative of a territorial division, but also voiced the wishes of some particular art or craft in the council of the king. We may see a survival of this division of labour according to clan in the custom, recorded by Merolla,³⁶ that territorial and village chiefs had to offer their yearly tribute to their overlord in the shape of produce, the nature of which was fixed for each differently by tradition and which never varied in kind for the particular division. In the present form of representation of Bushongo, ascribed to the traveller-king Shamba, we probably see a copy of an obsolete system in Kongo where division into clans coincided with division into trades and no clear distinction could be drawn between territorial and labour representation.

³¹ Colle, op. cit., p. 821. The guilds mentioned by Campbell in his *Heart of Bantuland*, p. 113, as existing in Katanga are due to the foreign Msidi's and Arab influences.

³² Pinkerton, vol. xi, pp. 560, 574.

³³ Van Wing, op. cit., p. 79.

³⁴ Pigafetta, op. cit., p. 63.

³⁵ Battell, op. cit., p. 94.

³⁶ Merolla, op. cit., p. 692.

According to Pigafetta,³⁷ the noblemen surrounding the king of Kongo wore 'very small yellow and red caps, square on the top, which scarcely covered the head and were used more for show than as protection', and in Mayombe old men, faithful to tradition, still wear small caps made of vegetable fibre of exquisite workmanship.³⁸

Similar caps are worn by certain Bushongo, and in technique they resemble so closely those of the Bavili that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. They are no longer square on the top, neither in Mayombe nor in Bushongo; but on the contemporary statue of Shamba, now in the British Museum, the cap is, if not square, at any rate oblong with well-defined angles.³⁹ The custom of the ruling clan and the ruling classes of wearing such caps is ascribed to Shamba, and that this is done with good reason is best proved by the name by which he is known in the eastern provinces: Samba Mikepe, Shamba of the Cap.⁴⁰ A nickname like this is as good a proof as one can desire. In Kongo the king and nobles alone wore these caps and 'if the King be displeased with any of them, he only causes his Cap to be taken off from his Head: for this white Cap is a Cognizance of Nobility or Knighthood here'.⁴¹ It is the same in Bushongo: the king's clansmen are all noble and all wear the cap; but in the provinces only the Kolomo, the nobles, are entitled to do so.⁴² As regards dress, it should be also noted that Pigafetta⁴³ and Dapper⁴⁴ mention that 'every Man, by Promise or Injunction is bound to wear a Furr-skin over his Cloathes, right before his Privacies', and that one never sees a man of Bushongo without a fur-covered skin hanging sporran-like from his belt.⁴⁵

There are various other customs observed by Bushongo royalty which may be copied from *esi-Kongo*; even if they are of minor importance they may be worth mentioning as corroborative evidence.

³⁷ Pigafetta, op. cit., p. 108.

³⁸ De Clercq, in *Les Mayombe*, ed. by Cyril Van Overbergh and Ed. De Jongh, p. 139.

³⁹ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, plate I.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴¹ Dapper, *Africa*, p. 539.

⁴² Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, p. 170.

⁴³ Pigafetta, op. cit., p. 108.

⁴⁴ Dapper, op. cit., p. 496.

⁴⁵ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, p. 173.

As the king of Kongo was at his coronation admonished by a herald (the word is used by Dapper⁴⁶) so it is the most honourable duty of the Bambi and Bengi, the royal heralds of Bushongo,⁴⁷ to lecture their king on this occasion. Dapper says⁴⁸ that the king of Kongo had but one married wife; that this was not a purely Christian innovation is shown by a similar custom in heathen Loango where the king may have as many wives as he pleases till he succeeds to the throne 'but once he has been crowned Maloango he is supplied with one wife, a princess of Ngoio, and must put away the others'.⁴⁹ Such an example might have induced Shamba to laud monogyny;⁵⁰ besides the legends speak of his wife not of his wives, and the Nyimi is still presented on the day of his coronation with a high-born lady as wife who alone bears the title of 'Mikema',⁵¹ just as the king of Kongo's single wife alone is 'Mani Mombanda'.⁵² The divinity of kings is not common enough in Western and Central Africa to pass over the fact that both Maloango⁵³ and Nyimi⁵⁴ are considered divine by their subjects; in Kongo itself the advent of Christianity has naturally done away with any such pretensions. As for the Bushongo Nyimi it is, however, quite possible that such a conception should have been impressed on the subjected people by the original first conqueror.

A few other innovations attributed to Shamba, and their equivalent in Kongo, may be briefly mentioned. He is said to have suppressed the use of throwing knives, spears, and arrows, and to have substituted the sword for them;⁵⁵ the common soldiers in Kongo were armed with swords bought from the Portuguese.⁵⁶ Shamba must have taken a special pride in having taught his people the game of mancala; he is represented on his statue with a mancala board in front of him.⁵⁷ This

⁴⁶ Dapper, op. cit., p. 541.

⁴⁷ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, p. 63.

⁴⁸ Dapper., op. cit., p. 540.

⁴⁹ Dennett, *Back of the Black Man's Mind*, p. 37.

⁵⁰ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, p. 27.

⁵¹ Ibid., *Bushongo*, p. 65.

⁵² Dapper, op. cit., p. 581.

⁵³ Dennet, op. cit., p. II; also Battell, op. cit., p. 46.

⁵⁴ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, pp. 21 and 59.

⁵⁵ Ibid., *Bushongo*, p. 26.

⁵⁶ Dapper, op. cit., p. 535.

⁵⁷ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, plate I.

game is known in Bushongo by the name of Lela,⁵⁸ a word obviously a corruption of Luela under which it is known in San Salvador.⁵⁹ It is apparently unknown to the inland tribes. He is also credited with the introduction of cassava, but how far this claim can be substantiated is doubtful. Battell does not mention cassava among the plants he found cultivated in Loango,⁶⁰ which he visited about 1603, and its use in Kongo did not become general before the seven-teenth century.⁶¹ However, innovations may have taken some time in reaching the outlying provinces, and Johnston⁶² gives the year 1600 as the date of its introduction. He thinks that tobacco was introduced at the same time; this is another blessing attributed by the Bushongo to Shamba, who, however, state in this case that it was brought to the country in Shamba's time by a Mupende called Lokono,⁶³ and this may have been during the latter part of his reign.

This distinction is curious, but it is much more important to note that Bushongo history states emphatically that Shamba learned the use of the loom, as well as the arts of damask weaving, embroidery, and pile-cloth making from the Bapende.⁶⁴ This point is of special interest as it sheds some light on our knowledge of the diffusion of the loom in Africa. It appears to have reached the coast some time after its use had become general inland. Pigafetta⁶⁵ mentions that in Lopez's time the poor still wore bark-cloth, and Angelo and Carli's records state that in Loango they found raphia cloth still a luxury⁶⁶ reserved for the great and worn even by them sparingly. Farther south Battell⁶⁷ found the Dombe of Angola without it: men wore skins, women bark-cloth. It is to the people beyond the eastern confines of Kongo that we have to look for those wonderful 'stuffs, such as velvets, with or without nap,

⁵⁸ Ibid., *Bushongo*, p. 26.

⁵⁹ Bentley, *Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language*, appendix, p. 46.

⁶⁰ Battell, op. cit., pp. 67–69.

⁶¹ Van Wing, op. cit., p. 89.

⁶² Sir Harry H. Johnston, *George Grenfell and the Congo*, p. 605.

⁶³ Torday and Joyce, *Bushongo*, p. 26.

⁶⁴ Ibid., *Bushongo*, p. 26.

⁶⁵ Pigafetta, op. cit., p. 9.

⁶⁶ Carli and Angelo in *Churchill*, p. 631.

⁶⁷ Battell, op. cit., p. 18.

brocades, satins, taffetas, damasks, and such like... they weave their cloth from the leaves of the palm-tree'.⁶⁸

These descriptions fit exactly the present day products of the Bapende and Bapinji.⁶⁹ They were imported to Kongo by those great traders, the Bateke,⁷⁰ but the art itself must have spread from the Bapende east and west. None but they could have taught the Bushongo; they are the only people who manufacture pile-cloth, and if the Bushongo, who have surpassed them far in the art itself, give them credit for their tuition and acknowledge that they owe the loom to them, we must remember that it is no more usual among primitive people than among the civilized to recognize a cultural debt which is not due; the reverse is too often the case.

It seems to be fairly well established that peaceful penetration of Central Africa from the West Coast, particularly from the Kingdom of Kongo, had begun quite early in the seventeenth century. As far as Bushongo is concerned, somewhere between 1600 and 1614 it must have fallen under the spell of Kongo. As the collecting of tribal traditions progresses we may hope to find further connected data, and this will permit us, not only to co-ordinate various events among themselves, but also to link them up with our own history.

⁶⁸ Pigafetta, op. cit., p. 30.

⁶⁹ Torday and Joyce, Kasai, p. 345.

⁷⁰ Pigafetta, op. cit., p. 28.