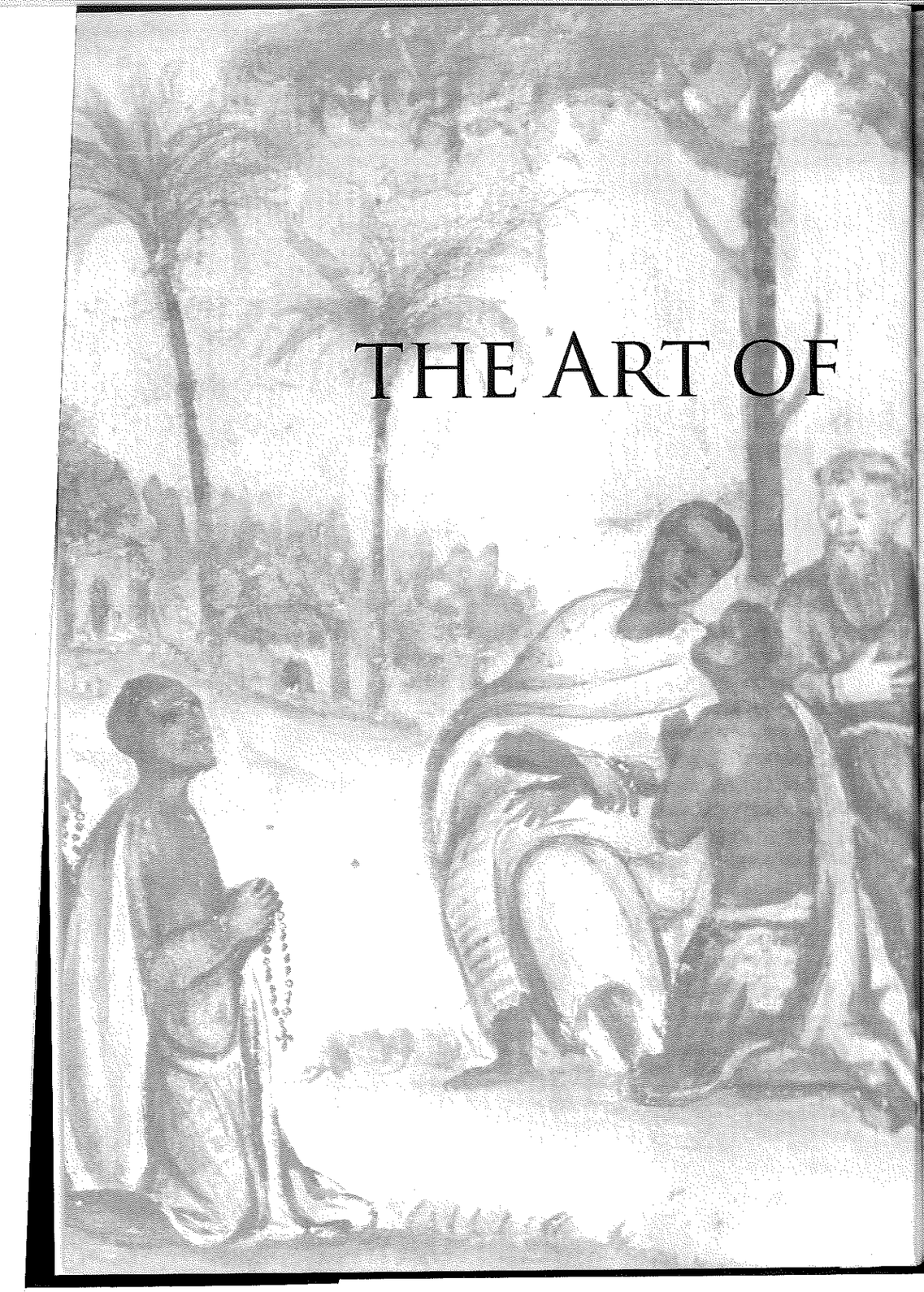

THE ART OF CONVERSION

CÉCILE FROMONT

Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of Kongo

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Jacket illustration: Detail of Albert Eckhout, *Portrait of a Kongo Ambassador to Recife, Brazil.* Circa 1637–1644. Oil on paper, 30 x 50 cm. Libri Picturati A 34, fol. 1. Jagiellonian Library, Krakow. Photograph courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library Photographic Services.

To my parents,
to Louis and Héloïse,
and to Grant

decorated with two diamonds connects the metal figurine to the wooden part. To viewers familiar with Kongo Christian objects and insignia, whether in the Christian era or in the twentieth century when they were still used, wall painting and finial figure easily echoed each other. The hatched treatment of the loincloth on the wall recalled the draping of the saint's habit, the raised arms and pectoral cross paralleled the attributes held high by the saint, and the pedestal engraved with the Greek cross lent to the two-dimensional motifs the same proportions and composing parts as the finial. As with many examples of saint figures from central Africa, the man's attributes invite ambivalent readings that would see him either as a cleric or as a member of the Kongo Christian elite.

If the staffs and the crucifixes served as ostentatious markers of status for all to behold, the rock paintings and engravings often remained in remote locations, hidden caves, riverbeds, escarpments, and cliffs, only to be seen by those with knowledge of their existence. There, they served a purpose very different from that of regalia and testified to the diverse role that central Africans expected Kongo Christian motifs and symbolism to play. If crosses worn as insignia conspicuously heralded the link between Christianity and elite status, remote wall paintings expressed more discreet, secluded reflections on the new religion, its images, and the place of those icons within local systems of expression. The graphic designs of the rock paintings are key to grasping the full significance of the crucifixes, not only as insignia but also as media for two-dimensional Kongo signs.

Conclusion

As a genre, Kongo crucifixes formed a space of correlation in which Kongo artists and patrons brought together central African and European artistic categories, approximated heterogeneous visual syntaxes, and bridged the gap between distant forms of beliefs. In the crucifixes, the meeting of Kongo cross and Christian cross naturalized Christianity into a local discourse about the nature of the supernatural and the cycle of life and death and, in turn, transposed Kongo religious signs into visual expressions of Catholic thought. Much is still to be discovered about Kongo crucifixes, but, as a group, they demonstrate how the adoption of Catholicism in central Africa was, in contrast to the outcome of the coercive proselytism exercised elsewhere by Europeans—especially in the Americas—an independent development. Crucifixes were not tools of resistance against foreign influences; they were the result of an independent process of cross-cultural inclusion and reinvention.

3

The Fabric of Power, Wealth, and Devotion

Clothing and Regalia of the Christian Kongo

A crowd of men clad in colorful fabrics, weapons held high, marches downhill from the outskirts of a town toward a Capuchin friar and his retinue (Figure 42 [Plate 17]). Their richly attired leader walks one step in front of the group in the shade of a red umbrella that an attendant diligently holds above his head. The shade, the attentive servant, and elaborate items of regalia and clothing set the man apart from the rest of the group. He wears a *mpu* (pl. *zimpu*) cap of status on his head and a *nkutu* (pl. *nkutu*) net over his shoulders; he carries a wooden staff in his left hand, and many bracelets and anklets adorn his arms and legs. As he steps, a fringed wrapper, made of thick and colorful fine raffia cloth or silk brocade, undulates around his legs, and a brilliant red coat embroidered with the insignia of the Order of Christ floats behind his back. The second man in command, under another crimson shade and also with a red coat draped on his left shoulder, has chosen a cotton wrapper checkered in blue and red. Each of the attendants grouped around the two men shows off a different combination of clothing and regalia according to his rank. Some wear nkutu nets, others, coats of various hues, and all carry different kinds of weapons. To the right of the image, the Capuchin friar coolly stands under a simple umbrella to face the welcoming party. Behind him, two *mestres,* interpreters and leaders of the church, wear their uniform, a white cloth draped over one shoulder. Members of the elite themselves, they are richly attired. One of them wears a white mpu cap of status appropriate to his social standing and a raffia wrapper, while the other has draped his ample white cloak over striped, possibly imported, fabric. They exchange a knowing glance as they observe the reception that the prince of the coastal province of Soyo organized for Friar Bernardino d'Asti, the author of the watercolor. The Capuchin and the Kongo prince stand face to face, measuring the other's demonstration of power, prestige, and determination.

The watercolor and the scene it records celebrate the return of the Capuchin mission to Soyo a few years after a disagreement with the former ruler, Cosme Barreto da Silva, had driven the friars from the region in 1743. The dispute emerged around the prince's right to marry one of his nieces against

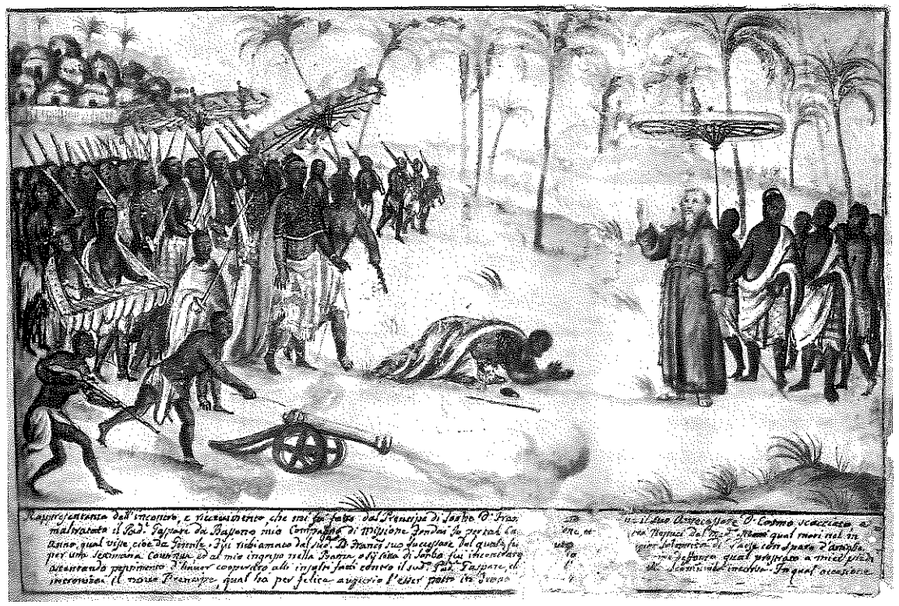


FIGURE 42 Bernardino d'Asti, *The Missionary Comes Back to Soyo*. Circa 1750. Watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. From "Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," MS 457, fol. 9r, Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin. Photograph © Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin

Catholic kinship rules. In the image, the missionary gazes up at the prince with a gesture of blessing and salutation and conspicuously overlooks the man lying apologetically at his feet. The prostrated penitent is also richly outfitted in a thick blue coat and a nkutu net. He respectfully took off his mpu bonnet and dropped his wooden staff, now lying on the ground next to him. The prince, in turn, looks back at the priest but points to the man on the floor. The fragmentary text on the damaged page partly explains the exchange. Don Francesco, it tells us, the new ruler of Soyo, presents to Bernardino a repentant associate of the former prince as a token of his own dedication to the Capuchin mission and in a conspicuous display of might over his people, even those of the highest social rank. The friar, in turn, haughtily accepts the homage and apology.[1]

1. On the dispute between the former prince Cosme Barreto da Silva and the Capuchin missionaries, see Graziano Saccardo, *Congo e Angola con la storia dell'Antica missione dei Cappuccini*, 3 vols. (Venice-Mestre, 1982–1983), II, 307–308. See also Bernardino Ignazio da Vezza d'Asti's version in his Vatican manuscript, "Missione in prattica de RP cappuccini italiani ne regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," circa 1750, MS Borgiano Latino 316, fol. 54, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. For more details, see Scritture originali riferite nelle congregazioni generali, vol. 721, fols. 298, 301, Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide, the Vatican. The text of the vignette is damaged, so the identity of the prostrated man is unclear, but it likely is a relative or close associate of the dead prince; see Bernardino Ignazio da Vezza d'Asti, "Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne' Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," circa 1750, MS 457, fol. 12, Biblioteca Civica Centrale di Torino.

No words are recorded for the encounter. Gestures, regalia, and gaze suffice to convey the stakes of the meeting and the position of its protagonists. The prince of Soyo appears grandly dressed in the cosmopolitan outfit of a Kongo Christian ruler, a mix of textiles and insignia derived from both local and foreign sources. His mpu cap and nkutu shoulder net draw from central African practices and symbolism, but his coat and insignia of the Order of Christ ultimately derive from a European imagery of nobility and prestige. Artillery fire also resoundingly showcases the prince's access to the commercial and technological networks of the Atlantic world as well as his conspicuous consumption of gunpowder, a most precious and sought-after commodity that he literally blows into smoke for show in the foreground of the watercolor. Meanwhile, two marimbas play a quieter local tune during this spectacular display of power, wealth, and devotion.

The watercolor functions as evidence, for the Roman hierarchy, of Bernardino's status as a respected missionary to a powerful, Christian realm. The scene appropriately presents Kongo nobles respectfully paying homage to the friar and, through him, the church. Yet, the vignette also captures how the Kongo Christian elite creatively mixed and seamlessly merged in their sartorial practices and insignia both local and foreign elements and transfigured them into the new outfits and regalia of Kongo Christianity. These sartorial practices and political insignia thus functioned as spaces of correlation through which the high-ranking men and women of the Kongo recast local and foreign materials, old and new ideas of luxury, and emblems of power into the visual and symbolic expressions of rank and status in the Christian Kongo.

The preceding chapters discussed the symbolic operations through which, from the beginning of the sixteenth century, the elite of the kingdom correlated central African and European religious thought, mythology, and political ideology into a novel and enduring Kongo Christian worldview. Similarly, the distinctive insignia and sartorial practices analyzed here became pivotal loci of the visual and symbolic expression of Kongo Christian political legitimacy and religious affiliation. The relationship inaugurated in the early years of contact between the kingdom and Europe evolved over

the centuries in response to changing historical circumstances and to the formative effects of the cross-cultural transactions brought about by the involvement of the kingdom and its people in the religious, commercial, and diplomatic networks of the early modern Atlantic world.

Kongo Christian Fashion

The defining trait of Kongo Christian regalia revolved around artful juxtapositions of local and foreign elements, combined and redefined into a new look. As early as 1491, Portuguese travelers noted upon their return to the Kongo that the king wore in conjunction with his local regalia a wrapper made of the damask cloth they had given him a few years earlier on their first visit. This combination of local and imported textiles observed by the travelers foretold a practice that would define the image of the Kongo noble throughout the Christian era as the kingdom's upper classes followed in the footsteps of their ruler. A century later, around 1580, the Portuguese Duarte Lopes noted that all of the Kongo elite had eagerly adopted clothing in the European style "since the kingdom received the Christian Faith." The prominent men of the Kongo wore "coats, capes, scarlet cloaks, and silk cloth, each according to his means." They also sported hats, shoes, golden chains, and large iron swords inspired by Europe. Only the "common people," he added, "who cannot make clothing in the Portuguese fashion for themselves, retained their unchanged customs." Lopes probably intended his list to demonstrate the wholesale adoption of Portuguese garb, but in fact his observations reveal a selective interest on the part of the inhabitants of the Kongo in specific foreign items. Two categories of imports are most often mentioned on the list, footwear and headgear, on the one hand, and large spans of untailored fabric used as coats, capes, cloaks, and cloth—that is, long textiles fit for draping—on the other. If shoes and hats functioned as exotic novelties, the textiles corresponded to a local predilection for cloth and immediately translated into existing practices. The king, and after him the entire upper class of a highly textile-literate society, readily recognized the imports' pliability to local conceptions of cloth use and value as well as their potential to express locally hewn ideas of prestige.[2]

2. [Duarte Lopes and Filippo Pigafetta], *Relatione del reame di Congo et delle circonvicine contrade: Tratta dalli scritti e ragionamenti di Odoardo Lopez Portoghese per Filippo Pigafetta* . . . (Rome, 1591), 67. The second meeting with the king of Kongo is recorded in João de Barros, "Primeira Missão Enviada ao Congo, 19-12-1490," in António Brásio, ed., *Monumenta missionaria africana: África ocidental*, 15 vols. (Lisbon, 1952–1988), I, 82. The Discalced Carmelite missionary Diego del Santissimo Sacramento also described Kongo elite outfits in 1584: "Chi ha maggiore facoltà, usa di una pezza di cotone con cui si copre le spalle" ("Who has more faculty, uses a piece of cotton with which he covers his back"); see "Lettera delli Padri Carmelitani Discalzi del Convento della Madonna della Concettion di Congo in Etiopia alli Padri et Fratelli della sua provincia scritta alii 14 Decembre 1584," *Il Carmelo*, I, nos. 3–9 (1902), 94.

FIGURE 43 *Dress of the Noble and the Servant.* From [Duarte Lopes and Filippo Pigafetta], *Relatione del reame di Congo et delle circonvicine contrade: Tratta dalli scritti e ragionamenti di Odoardo Lopez Portoghese per Filippo Pigaffetta* . . . (Rome, 1591), plate 3. Photograph courtesy of the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies, Northwestern University

Portuguese mapmaker Diogo Homem enhanced his 1558 map of Africa with a representation of the "Manicongo rex," or king of Kongo, but the prints published with Lopes's descriptions are the earliest surviving European visual representations of the Kongo elite (Figure 43). In the image titled *Dress of the Noble and the Servant (Habito del nobile e del servitore),* a prominent man and his attendant stroll in an imaginary landscape wearing a combination of loose, draped fabric, European-style bowler hats, and swords that, for the print's Italian audience, had a distinct oriental flair. The image belongs to a large corpus of European representations of exotic peoples drawn from imagination rather than observation. It borrows some of its details and composition from this genre, such as the fantastic townscape in the background and the Caucasian traits of the two men. The print nonetheless also demonstrates its maker's reliance on knowledgeable sources, most likely the eyewitness testimonies of Lopes himself. As fit for a wealthy, high-ranking Kongo

noble, the man on the left sports great lengths of cloth, one of them possibly a nkutu shoulder net. The earliest mention of the net by name is in 1627 in the Jesuit annals, where it is called "encuta," translated as "clothing" or "vest," a word also recorded in 1651 as "ncutu" for the Latin *cucullus,* or "cowl," in the "Vocabularium Latinum, Hispanicum et Congense." In R. F. Cuénot's 1775 dictionary of northern Kikongo, the word *kinkutu* (pl. *binkutu*) is used for "clothing" ("habit"), and in W. Holman Bentley's 1887 *Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language, as Spoken in São Salvador, nkuta* is used as the word for "cloth." The nkutu net is homonymous to the Kikongo term *nkutu,* or "bag," a word often recorded in anthropological writing since the late nineteenth century as referring to the small bag that served as insignia principally on the northern shore of the Congo River. Thin thread looped into delicate large stitches formed the circular or diamond-shaped garments known in the Christian era as *nkutu,* which elite men wore draped over the shoulders or passing over the head through an opening at the neck (Figure 44). In Lopes's print, only the *nobile* has a nkutu, but both men wear wrappers that, with their fine grain, light color, and characteristic decorative fringe, evoke central African cloth made of raffia or pineapple fiber. The surprising hats worn by the two men also echo uses of European headgear by other high-ranking Kongo men, such as the bridegroom in Figure 56 (Plate 27) and the ambassador in Figure 67 (Plate 31), below, who each holds a black hat in his hands. In the late eighteenth century, Raimondo di Dicomano observed that the elite of the Kongo—"but no others"—proudly wore, "when they had them," foreign hats, as they would a mpu.[3]

The consistent image of Kongo Christian nobility these documents record comes in sharp focus in a series of oil studies painted in Brazil around 1642. Images of five men of varying rank within the central African elite offer

3. The image of the king of Kongo appears in Diogo Homem, "Queen Mary Atlas," 1558, Department of Manuscripts, Add. MS 5415A, fol. 14r, British Library, London. See Antonio Franco, *Synopsis annalium Societatis Jesu in Lusitania ab anno 1540; usque ad annum 1725* (Augsburg, 1726), no. 11, 249; "Vocabularium Latinum, Hispanicum et Congense," [1652], MSS Varia 274, Fondi minori 1896, 26v, Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio-Emmanuele II di Roma; José Troesch, "Le Nkutu du Comte de Soyo," *Aequatoria,* XXIV, no. 2 (1961), 42–49. Troesch calls the shoulder net worn in Soyo in the 1930s "nzemba" in "Le Royaume de Soyo," ibid., XXV, no. 3 (1962), 95–100. See also R. F. Cuénot, "Dictionnaire Congo et françois," 1775, MS 524, 188, s.v. "kinkutu," Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon; Cuénot, "Dictionnaire françois et Congo," 1773, MS 525, 339, s.v. "habit," Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon. *Binkutu* is also translated as "habit" in the Northern dialect in "Dictionnaire Kikongo Français," 1772, 22, Archivio dei Cappuccini di Genova. For *nkutu* used for "cloth," see W. Holman Bentley, *Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language, as Spoken at San Salvador, the Ancient Capital of the Old Kongo Empire, West Afrika [and Appendix]* (London, 1887), 386. The word for "cloth" and the word for "bag," however, belong to a different noun class in the São Salvador dialect. See Raimondo di Dicomano's *Informazione* (1798), published with original pagination in António Brásio, "Domumentário: Informação de frei Raimundo de Dicomano," *Studia,* XLVI (1987), 303–330 (quotation on 326).

FIGURE 44 Sangamento Dancer with Sword and Nkutu Shoulder Net. Detail of Bernardino d'Asti, *The Missionary Gives His Blessing to the Mani during a Sangamento.* Circa 1750. Watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. From "Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," MS 457, fol. 12r, Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin. Photograph © Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin

a comprehensive and detailed visual record of the clothing practices of seventeenth-century Kongo. Albert Eckhout, court painter for the governor of Dutch Brazil, Johan Maurits van Nassau, seized the likenesses of five diplomatic envoys sent to Recife around 1642 by the ruler of Soyo (Figures 45–49 [Plates 18–22]). The thirty-by-fifty-centimeter oil paintings on paper are now bound in the third volume of the "Theatri Rerum," a five-tome compilation of visual material from Dutch Brazil that German scholar Christian Mentzel edited between 1660 and 1664. Mentzel's titles for the five images (on pages 1, 3, 5, 9, and 11 of the album), such as *A Chilean Prince (Principum quidam Chilensium)* and *Another Chilean (Alius Chilensium),* do not reflect Eckhout's own observations but refer to an expedition conducted by Dutch naturalists to Chile, also illustrated in the volume, which Mentzel erroneously linked to the portraits. A sixth image probably completed the set, on page 7 of the album, now cut off.[4]

4. Several embassies were sent from the Kongo in 1642 by both the king of the kingdom and by the ruler of Soyo. See the description of the diplomatic visits in Caspar van Baerle, *História dos feitos recentemente praticados durante oito anos no Brasil e noutras partes sob o govêrno do ilustríssimo João Maurício . . .*, ed. and trans. Claudio Brandão (Rio de Janeiro, 1940), 272. Rebecca Parker Brienen, who wrote an important analysis of Eckhout's oeuvre, suggested that the oil paintings served as studies for one of his large 1641 canvases and could not represent the 1642 embassy. However, although adjacent images in the album inspired the paintings she mentions, no details of the five portraits appear in the large canvases. Brienen's misidentification of the younger ambassador in Figure 49 (Plate 22) as a preparatory study for a woman in the 1641 series derives from the lack of comparative material from the Kongo available to her. In light of the material presented here, the person in Figure 49 (Plate 22) is clearly not an enslaved African woman in Brazil; rather, he is a member of the central African elite, proudly clad in the prestigious shoulder net, raffia cloth wrapper, and animal skin appropriate to his social standing. See Brienen, *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil* (Amsterdam, 2006), 149 and n. 81. The images are in Christian Mentzel, ed.,

In the five paintings, Eckhout unmistakably captured the appearance of three high-ranking Kongo nobles (Figures 45, 46, 47 [Plates 18, 19, 20]) and two men of their entourage (Figures 48, 49 [Plates 21, 22]). The African travelers, depicted individually on a full page, wore, each according to his rank and prestige, a combination of items of European and central African facture. The three eminent older men in rich outfits and colorful mpu caps appear along with two younger attendants in more modest clothing. One of the two attendants is possibly a mestre, characteristically outfitted with a light-colored cloak draped on one shoulder and here tellingly posed with finger pointed, in the attitude of speech (Figure 49 [Plate 22]). The three senior ambassadors are likely Miguel de Castro, Bastião de Sonho, and António Fernandes, the envoys from the count of Soyo that Dutch traveler and chronicler Johan Nieuhoff described as members of the educated Kongo elite who could converse with the Dutch officials in Latin. An important aspect of their mission, Nieuhof wrote, was to secure regalia, such as "a chair, a cape, war insignia, flags and other items of clothing." Another embassy from the king of Kongo sought similar gifts from the Dutch in the same year. These two visits took place at a time of conflict between the Kongo and Portugal and illustrate the central Africans' active search for other European allies and new sources of imported finery that they could no longer secure from their former friend and now rival, Portugal.[5]

The paintings of the "Theatri Rerum" did not stage the Kongo ambassadors in elaborate compositions; rather, they portrayed them in a documentary mode. The combination of Kongo and European elements captured in the five portraits reflected the envoys' sartorial practices as members of the central African elite, with a possible nod to the regional fashion of Soyo. The three high-ranking men wear colorful zimpu adorned with shells, a detail typical of the coastal region, as well as long metal chains, medals, crosses, and strings of coral beads that were favored across the kingdom. Two of the three men have draped extravagant lengths of heavy dark wools over their bare shoulders and combined them with wrappers of the same fabric (in Figure 45 [Plate 18]) or made of central African dark-dyed patterned cloth (in Figure 46 [Plate 19]). By the end of the eighteenth century, the Kikongo language in-

"Icones animalium Brasiliae: Theatri rerum naturalium brasiliae tomus III quo pronuntur icons animalium ad homine ad insecta usq iussu serenissimi ac potentissimi principis ac domini Dn Friderici Wilhelmi, marchionis brandeburgici, S R IMP archicamerarii atq electoris principis etc. etc. etc in ordinem redactus a Christiano Menszelio D.," 1637–1644, Libri Picturati A 34 (call number), Biblioteka Jagiellonska, Krakow.

5. Johan Nieuhof, *Johan Nieuhofs Gedenkwaerdige zee en lantreize door de voornaemste landschappen van West en Oostindien* . . . (Amsterdam, 1682), 56.

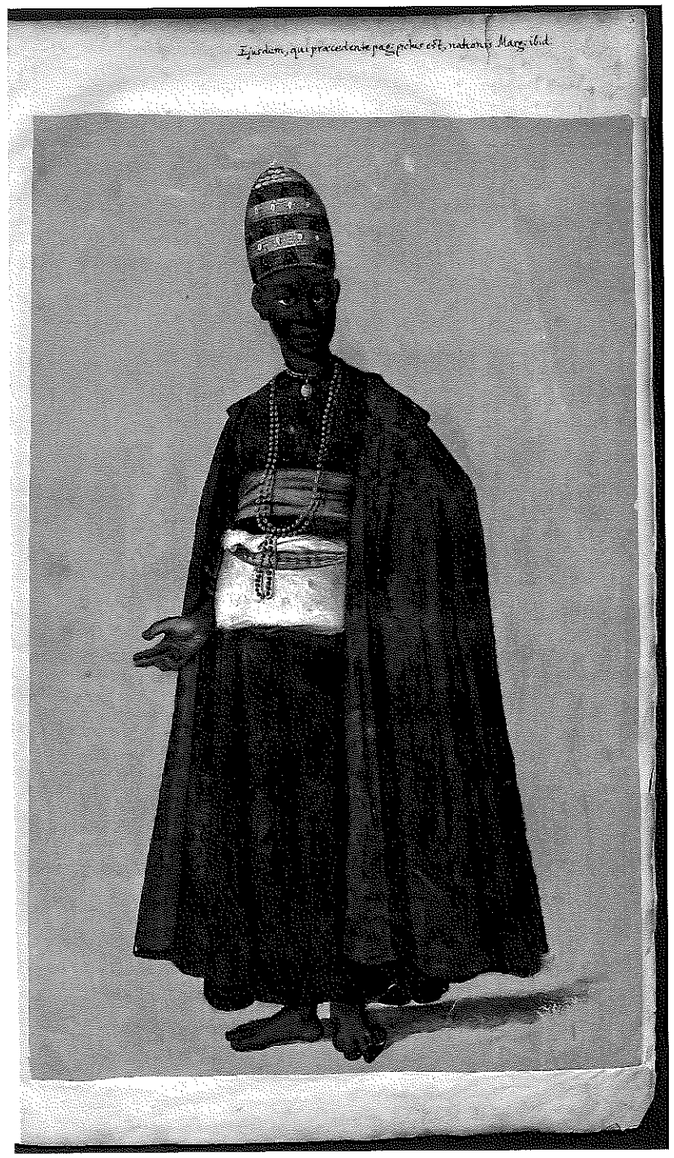


FIGURE 45 Albert Eckhout, *Portrait of a Kongo Ambassador to Recife, Brazil*. Circa 1637–1644. Oil on paper, 30 × 50 cm. Libri Picturati A 34, fol. 3, Jagiellonian Library, Krakow. Photograph courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library Photographic Services

FIGURE 46 Albert Eckhout, *Portrait of a Kongo Ambassador to Recife, Brazil*. Circa 1637–1644. Oil on paper, 30 × 50 cm. Libri Picturati A 34, fol. 1. Jagiellonian Library, Krakow. Photograph courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library Photographic Services

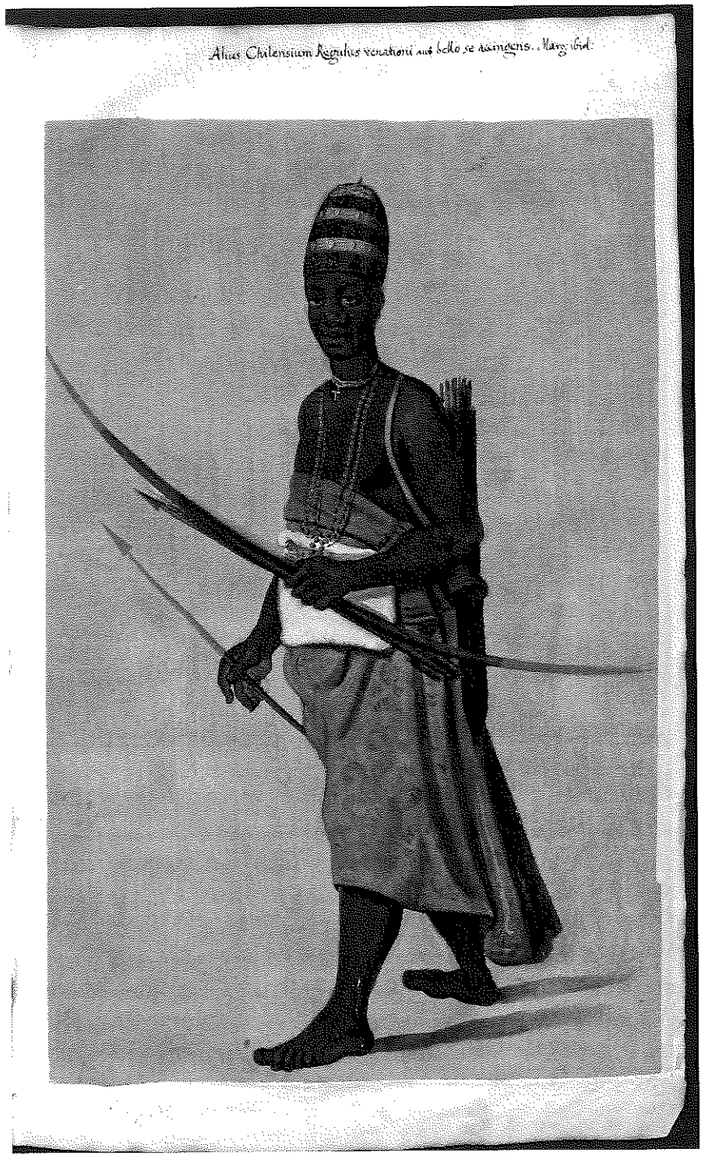


FIGURE 47 Albert Eckhout, *Portrait of a Kongo Ambassador to Recife, Brazil*. Circa 1637–1644. Oil on paper, 30 × 50 cm. Libri Picturati A 34, fol. 5. Jagiellonian Library, Krakow. Photograph courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library Photographic Services

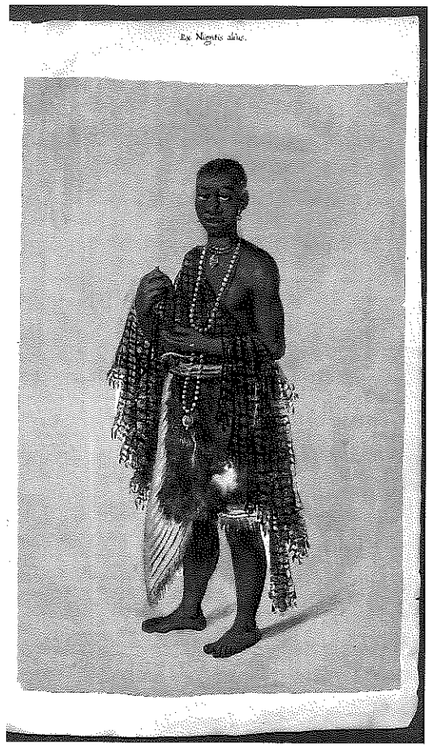


FIGURE 48 Albert Eckhout, *Portrait of a Kongo Youth in Recife, Brazil*. Circa 1637–1644. Oil on paper, 30 × 50 cm. Libri Picturati 34, fol. 11, Jagiellonian Library, Krakow. Photograph courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library Photographic Services

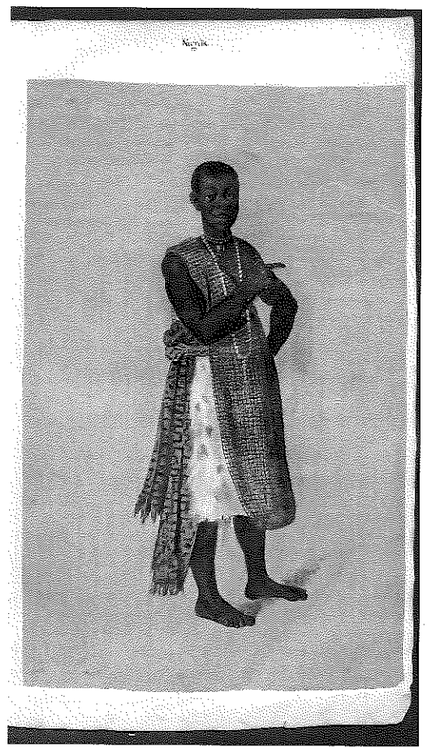


FIGURE 49 Albert Eckhout, *Portrait of a Kongo Youth in Recife, Brazil*. Circa 1637–1644. Oil on paper, 30 × 50 cm. Libri Picturati 34, fol. 9, Jagiellonian Library, Krakow. Photograph courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library Photographic Services

cluded a dedicated word for the dark imported wools illustrated here and in many other depictions of central African regalia. Cuénot recorded the name in the northern form of Kikongo as *livonga* (pl. *mavonga*), defined as "blue or red cloth that they wear on the shoulders" under the French heading for "habit" and as "woolen fabric" under the Kikongo entry "livonga."[6]

6. Although zimpu are often white, colored ones are also mentioned; see, for example, Giovanni Francesco da Roma, *La fondation de la mission des Capucins au Royaume du Congo (1648)*, trans. François Bontinck (Leuven, 1964), 105. Lopes mentions a yellow-and-red cap in [Lopes and Pigafetta], *Relatione*, 67. The duke of Bamba wears a red cap with strips of gold (probably brass) according to Michele Angelo Guattini and Dionigi Carli, *Viaggio del p. Michael Angelo de Guattini et del p. Dioniggi de Carli, predicatori nel regno del Congo descritto per lettere* (Reggio [Emilia], 1672), 193. For references

The third ambassador, probably ready to dance in the *sangamento* martial performance the men staged in Recife, sports a shorter, lighter wrapper of yellow brocade that leaves his bust and arms uncovered and ready to grab his bow and arrows in the course of the acrobatic martial dance (Figure 47 [Plate 20]). All three senior legates cinched their waist with a red sash, a neatly folded animal pelt, and in two cases a band of white-and-blue-checkered cotton (Figures 45 and 47 [Plates 18 and 20). Their bare-headed attendants draped on their shoulders net-like textiles resembling nkutu. Their jewels, while still opulent, are less exuberant than those of their senior counterparts. They wear simpler wrappers of Kongo cloth adorned with loosely hanging, rather than neatly folded, animal skins. Central African elite in the Kongo and surrounding countries—from the kingdom of Loango in the north to Angola in the south—wore animal pelts hung in front of the legs as a marker of status. Giovanni Belotti da Romano, who described "the customs of the kingdoms of Congo and Angola" in the late seventeenth century, remarked that the elite "like wearing around the waist some animal pelt with the tail hanging in front, . . . for great fast and pomp," an observation also illustrated in Girolamo Merolla da Sorrento's contemporary print in Figure 71, below. Several European accounts duly noted and depicted how the prominent pelt-wearers often cinched the fur with a red sash and a strip of imported checkered cloth, two visually striking foreign novelties.[7]

to coral beads, see, for example, Calogero Piazza, *La missione del Soyo (1713–1716) nella relazione inedita di Giuseppe da Modena OFM Cap.* (Rome, 1973), 259; Girolamo Merolla da Sorrento and Angelo Piccardo, *Breve, e succinta relatione del viaggio nel regno di Congo nell' Africa meridionale, fatto dal P. Girolamo Merolla da Sorrento . . . Continente variati clima, arie, animali, fiumi, frutti, vestimenti con proprie figure, diversità di costumi, e di viveri per l'vso humano* (Naples, 1692), 174. Olfert Dapper also mentions the juxtaposition of metal chains and red coral or red beads in *Naukeurige beschrijvinge der afrikanensche eylanden: Als Madagaskar, of Sant Laurens, Sant Thomee, d'eilanden van Kanarien, Kaep de Verd, Malta en andere, vertoont in de benamingen, gelegentheit, steden, revieren, gewassen . . .* (Amsterdam, 1668), 572. Francesco da Roma in 1648 references coral beads as part of the royal regalia and describes the popular black dyeing process of Kongo local cloth; see Gio[vanni] Francesco da [Roma], *Breve relatione del successo della missione de Frati Minori Cappuccini del Serafico P. S. Francesco al regno del Congo e delle qualità, costumi, e maniere di vivere di quel regno, e suoi habitatori* (Rome, 1648), 173, 177. For black-dyed Kongo vegetal fiber cloth, see also Guattini and Carli, *Viaggio*, 193. The same volume also mentions dark-blue cloaks (198–199). For the Kikongo word for the dark imported wools, see Cuénot, "Dictionnaire Congo et françois," 1775, MS 524, 427; for the French, see Cuénot, "Dictionnaire françois et Congo," 1773, MS 525, 339.

7. For the sangamento staged in Recife, see Nieuhof, *Gedenkwaerdige*, 56. For the pelts, see Giovanni Belotti da Romano, "Giornate apostoliche con varii, e dilettevoli successi: Descritte dal P. F. Giovanni Belotti da Romano predicatore Cappucino della Provincia di Brescia, 23 novembre 1680," 1680, AB 75, 148, Archivio Generale Cappuccini, Rome; Merolla and Piccardo, *Breve, e succinta relatione*, 174 (the print is on 177, no. 14). See also the animal pelt in the watercolor attributed to Louis Marie Joseph Ohier de Grandpré in the Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa published in Jill R. Dias, *Africa: Nas vésperas do mundo moderno*, trans. José Luís ([Portugal], 1992), 216. A similar image appeared as an engraving in De Grandpré's published account, *Voyage à la côte occidentale d'Afrique fait dans les années 1786 et 1787 . . . suivi d'un voyage fait au cap de Bonne-Espérance, contenant la description militaire de cette colonie* (Paris, 1801), I, facing 71. António de Oliveira de Cadornega's illustrated manuscript includes

A consistent image of the Kongo Christian elite regalia appeared across time, from Lopes's 1591 descriptions, to Eckhout's 1642 paintings, and up to Friar Bernardino's circa 1750 watercolor. These European depictions also closely correspond to the findings of the important archaeological exploration of the eighteenth-century elite burial ground of Ngongo Mbata in the 1930s and 1940s. The rich men interred at the site were luxuriously clothed, adorned, and outfitted with precious local and exotic objects. The excavation file records indicate the discovery of fine textiles, some woven with gilt thread, iron and silver swords, beads, chains of brass, gold, and silver, Christian medals and crucifixes of various precious metals as well as glassware and ceramics, all either locally made or imported from Europe or beyond, including chards of pottery from China.[8]

The combination of local and foreign elements in the regalia and sartorial practices of the Kongo endured in its main traits over the centuries. It encompassed a political and religious dimension that arched back to Afonso's reinvention of the Kongo kingdom as a Christian land. The 1650s Capuchin drawing of Garcia II (r. 1641–1660) recalls the political significance of the combination (Figure 5). Its gloss describes the king as wearing "an open shirt, and around the thighs a cloth that touches the ground; he wears socks and shoes and a coat in the European style, and a little white cap on the head; necklaces, armbands." The portrait in ink on paper, in turn, depicts the ruler in a white shirt, a long wrapper, with a large draped coat, a mpu, and many necklaces and bracelets. The drawing also includes the European throne, crown, and scepter that Kongo rulers had eagerly adopted. What could be an awkward juxtaposition of regalia of local and foreign origins here functions well together. The iron *simba* chain and *malunga* bracelets so crucial to the symbolism of central African rule, with their profound link to ideas of power, endurance, and fortitude, are combined with objects suggesting similar notions in a European visual syntax, such as the throne and the scepter. Less obvious but equally crucial points of connection are the European shirt and coat of the king, precious objects that encapsulate Kongo ideas of wealth and power but that also illustrate the ruler's connection to European emblems of nobility. The cross and arrows in his left hand are also linked to his coat of arms, which he inherited from Afonso but customized for his reign with a cross and arrow. The staff topped with a cross echoed the distinctive at-

several depictions of the catskin worn around the legs; see "Historia geral das guerras Angolanas," 1680, Manuscrito Vermelho 77, Academia das Ciências, Lisbon (see, for example, Figure 50 [Plate 23]).

8. J. Vandenhoute, "De Begraafplaats van Ngongo-Mbata (Neder-Zaire)" (licentiate's thesis, Rijksuniversiteit Gent Hoger Instituut voor Kunstgesischiedenis on Oudheidkunde, 1972–1973), 56.

tribute of the powerful mestres, who controlled knowledge of Christianity and buttressed the independent Kongo Christian church on which the king's legitimacy partly depended.[9]

A depiction of the king of Kongo also appeared on one of the frontispieces of António de Oliveira de Cadornega's 1680 manuscript "Historia Geral das Guerras Angolana" (Figure 50 [Plate 23]). The Portuguese military man, veteran of central Africa, took on the task at the end of his life to write a comprehensive account of the history, geography, and people of Angola. In the painted opening to the first of the "Historia's" three volumes, the king of Kongo and the king of Angola stand in full regalia on an illusionistic architectural frontispiece, under the coat of arms of Portugal and two pineapples glossed as "fruits of Angola." The king of Angola pictures the leader of Ndongo and Matamba, two interconnected polities in almost constant conflict with Portugal. Bare-chested and barefoot, his skin is decorated with red marks on his face and dark patterns on his arms. Anklets, bracelets, white beads, a fly whisk slung over his left shoulder, and a cat pelt enrich his simple wrapper and red belt, possibly of foreign origin. In comparison to the barely clad Angolan armed with an African axe and spear, the king of Kongo appears cosmopolitan with his central African insignia, a mpu, and raffia-fiber wrapper combined with a European inspired sword, shirt, dark coat, red boots, and a typically Kongo Christian metal medallion of the Order of Christ. The king's cross, his foreign items of clothing, and their juxtaposition to local cloth and insignia demonstrate once more the specific and consistent look of the Kongo Christian elite. They also draw attention to the political significance of the outfits as emblems of the Kongo's status as a Christian kingdom and as evidence of its people's independent and singular adoption of religious and material novelties from abroad.

Hats, Power, and History

The combination of local and foreign elements articulated in the entire outfits of the Kongo elite was present also within individual pieces such as the different kinds of hats used as emblems of status. Mpu caps were the most important type of headgear in the Kongo and are among the best-documented objects of early modern central African material culture through written and visual descriptions as well as examples that arrived in Europe as early as the seventeenth century. In the first decades following the encounter between Europe and the Kongo, chronicler João de Barros

9. See the seal of Garcia II in Angola, caixa 5, doc. 26, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.

FIGURE 50 António de Oliveira de Cadornega, *King of Congo and King of Angola*. 1680. Watercolor on paper, 30 × 20.5 cm. (manuscript). Manuscrito Vermelho 77, frontispiece, Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, Portugal. Photograph courtesy of the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa

wrote a precise description of the caps, drawing from accounts of travelers and from other sources available to him as a prominent courtier and leading administrator of Portugal's overseas endeavors. He might even have seen a mpu in Lisbon, perhaps brought back from the Kongo by travelers or worn at court by a central African visitor. A mpu, Barros writes, is "a cap high as a miter, made of very fine and thin palm cloth, with high and low embellishments in the manner that around us pertains to the weaving of satin velvet." These words ably render the zimpu recorded in early modern images and the ones that entered European collections in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Figure 51).[10]

The highly elaborate and idiosyncratic creation techniques of the zimpu consisted of successive looping and knotting of raffia or pineapple fiber in a spiral that grew from top to bottom and created a textile cone. Simple, small loops provided a plain background for patterns executed in low and high relief with larger, more elaborate knots. The orthogonal designs found on the caps were ubiquitous in Kongo visual culture and graced the surface of a wide range of objects from *misseto* reliquaries to ivory horns and architecture. The elaboration and sophisticated variations of the designs suggest that they visually encoded complex information we can no longer decipher today.[11]

The male artist who crafted the mpu in Figure 52 (Plate 24) used the knots-and-loops technique to create an unusual object, one among a handful set apart from the rest of the known corpus because of its peculiar design variations. The hat, now in Copenhagen's National Museum, arrived in Europe before 1674. A plain spiral at the top of the bonnet echoes a simple, large band at its bottom. Interlacing diamond-derived motifs occupy most of the main vertical part, forming a band of triangles at its top and bottom. In the lower part, five bold crosses appear above the textile ground in high relief. They stand in sharp contrast to the imbricate patterns in the rest of the hat that rise subtly above the main surface. The five crosses are repeated along the perimeter of the cap in a pattern that somewhat coordinates with

10. A letter sent from Lisbon in 1491 to an unknown party in Milan (probably at the Sforza court) remarked on the presence of a Kongo ambassador at court in Lisbon wearing one such cap; see "Vestirli de nigro, cioè manto e caputio," in Potenze Estere 649 (Misc. in cartolina "Guinea"), Archivio di Stato di Milano, transcribed in Kate Lowe, "Africa in the News in Renaissance Italy: News Extracts from Portugal about Western Africa Circulating in Northern and Central Italy in the 1480s and 1490s," *Italian Studies,* LXV (2010), 327. See João de Barros, *Décadas da Ásia* (1552–1613), decade I, book 3, chap. 9, in Brásio, ed., *Monumenta,* I, 82: "e na cabeça, hum barette alto como mitra, feito de panno de palma muito fino e delgado, com lavores altos, e baixos, a maneira que ácerca de nós hé a tecedura de cetim avelutado."

11. See Ezio Bassani, *African Art and Artefacts in European Collections, 1400–1800,* ed. Malcolm McLeod (London, 2000), 279–281; Gordon D. Gibson and Cecilia R. McGurk, "High-Status Caps of the Kongo and Mbundu Peoples," *Textile Museum Journal,* IV, no. 4 (1977), 71–96.

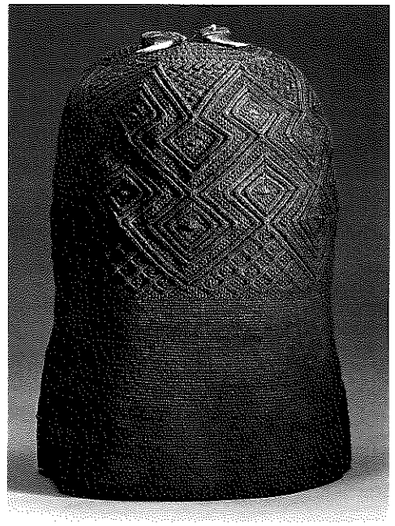


FIGURE 51 Mpu Cap of Status. Kongo kingdom, eighteenth century. Pineapple fiber and leopard claws, 25.5 × 24 cm (flat). National Museums Scotland, inv. A.1956.1153. Photograph © National Museums Scotland

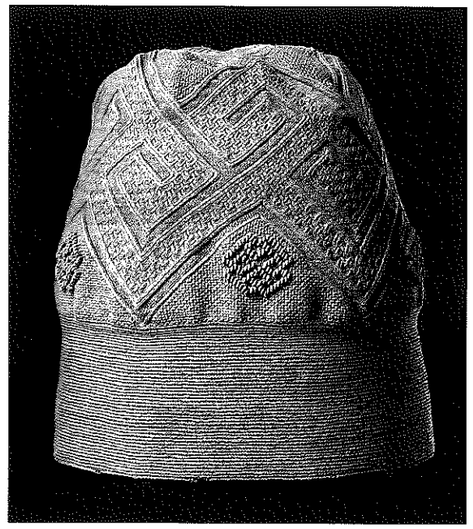


FIGURE 52 Mpu Cap of Status. Kongo kingdom, before 1674. Vegetal fibers, height 18 cm. The National Museum of Denmark inv. no. Dc. 123 Hat. Photograph © The National Museum of Denmark, Ethnographic Collection

the rhythm of the interlacing designs, from which they otherwise differ in almost all aspects. Unlike the rest of the patterns, the crosses are raised, finite, individual, and free floating. This distinct treatment of crosses suggests that the hat appealed to and ostentatiously combined distinct visual lexica. On the one hand, it used geometric interlaces, a sophisticated and ubiquitous central African genre. On the other hand, it employed the singular motif of the cross, the significance of which we can, at least partly, understand.[12]

In 1696, the Capuchin Marcellino d'Atri saw during the coronation of Pedro IV Agua Rosada Nusamu a Mvemba (r. 1696–1718) a peculiar hat that functioned in a manner similar to the mpu in Figure 52 (Plate 24). Coming to power in the midst of a civil war, the new king ascended to a much-weakened Kongo throne in a modest ceremony conducted on the site of the abandoned capital of São Salvador. Unable to use the European-style crown of his predecessors (pictured in Figure 5), which was lost to the Portuguese

12. Weaving in central Africa is a male activity. For a discussion of the cap, see Bassani, *African Art and Artefacts*, ed. McLeod, 20.

in the disastrous Mbwila battle of 1665, Pedro was coronated instead with a makeshift crown on which featured the royal coat of arms of the Kongo, described by Marcellino d'Atri as five unsheathed swords of shiny silver hue embroidered or pinned on the front of the headgear. The crown crafted for the occasion, seemingly cut from a European hat, replaced the gold-plated silver crown the pope had offered to Kongo kings (a once-foreign object described in Olfert Dapper's 1668 *Naukeurige beschrijvinge* as "a crown decorated [gewerkt] with gold, silk and silver thread") that had become essential to the royal regalia of the Christian central African monarchs by at least 1651.[13]

The substitution of the hat for the crown relied on the Kongo Christian correlation of local and foreign conceptions and manifestations of power and prestige. It concurrently drew from the intrinsic symbolic value of prestigious headgear such as zimpu as a central African insignia of rulership and from the significance of the Kongo coat of arms as a potent emblem of royal power. Swords, as we recall, formed the central motif of the escutcheon adopted by the early Christian king Afonso circa 1500, when they evoked through heraldry the story of the triumph of Catholicism in the Kongo. Thereafter, Kongo rulers used the coat of arms on seals, regalia, and banners as symbols of their office. The five swords on Pedro IV's hat evoked through heraldry Afonso's reformulation of the nature and origins of Kongo rulership from a local narrative to one that encompassed a Christian dimension expressed through ideas and symbols introduced from Europe.

With the addition of the heraldic signs, Pedro IV's lowly hat became a valid insignia of Kongo Christian kingship. The swords on the surface of the

13. For the description of the crown-hat, see Marcellino Canzani d'Atri, "Giornate apostoliche fatte a me Fra Marcellino d'Atri predicatore Cappucino nelle missioni de regno d'Angola e Congo, nella Etiopia inferiore parte occidentale nell'Africa 1690," 1690–1708, 141, 518, Convento Santi Francesco e Chiara, L'Aquila, published with original pagination in Carlo Toso, *L'anarchia congolese nel sec. XVII: La relazione inedita di Marcellino d'Atri,* Studi di storia delle esplorazioni, 15 (Genova, 1984), 68, 276. The type of hat ("cappello") Pedro used as a crown is unclear from the description, although it seems to be a European-style hat extravagantly reworked ("sfoggiatamente ritagliato . . . con alcune curiosità") in the shape of a crown. For Dapper's description of the earlier crown, see *Naukeurige beschrijvinge,* 582. The sources Dapper used for this description are unknown, and it is unclear what period he describes. John K. Thornton gives a vivid portrait of the period and of Pedro IV's accession to the throne in *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684–1706* (Cambridge, 1998). For the Battle of Mbwila (or Ambuila), see António de Oliveira de Cadornega, *História geral das guerras Angolanas, 1680[–1681],* ed. José Matias Delgado ([Lisbon], 1940), II, 526. For discussion of the crown, see Giacinto Brugiotti da Vetralla in a 1655 account copied in the later manuscript by Giuseppe Monari da Modena, "Viaggio al Congo, fatto da me fra Giuseppe da Modena Missionario Apostolico, e predicatore Capuccino, incomentiato alli 11 del mese di Novembre del anno 1711, e terminato alli 22 di Febraro del anno 1713 etc. . .," 1723, Manoscritti Italiani 1380, Alfa N. 9–7, 436, 440, 442, Biblioteca Estense, Modena. Luca da Caltanisetta also mentions the golden crown in a 1651 coronation in Scritture originali riferite nelle congregazioni generali, vol. 249, fols. 431v, 434r–435v, Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide; see François Bontinck, ed. and trans., *Diaire congolais (1690–1701) de Fra Luca da Caltanisetta,* Publications de l'Université Lovanium de Kinshasa (Leuven, 1970), 101.

headgear functioned as other objects often attached to or designed on central African caps of status, such as claws, fangs, snakes, and feathers, which metaphorically attributed the skills of mighty animals to rulers. The ruler of Soyo, for example, greeted European visitors in 1491 wearing "on his head a cap on which slithered a very finely embroidered snake." Animal claws also enhance another mpu that arrived in Europe in the eighteenth century, which is now in the National Museum of Scotland (Figure 51). In a similar form of metonymy, the coat of arms on Pedro's hat linked its wearer to the supernatural powers of Saint James and his miraculous army of knights that enabled and sanctioned the rule of his Christian predecessors. The European-derived heraldic signs there became Kongo tropes. In other words, in Pedro's makeshift crown, the imagery of the coat of arms functioned not only as a Portuguese-inspired emblem but also as a full-fledged Kongo metaphor that expressed conceptions of regal power honed in its foundation myth.[14]

Pedro IV invoked in his hat the story of the miraculous advent of Christianity under the Kongo's first great Catholic king, Afonso, in a multivalent effort to legitimate his own claim to the throne. Using the coat of arms on his crown, Pedro positioned himself in the lineage of Kongo Christian monarchs. As other incumbents to the kingdom's throne before him, he drew a parallel between the establishment of his reign in troubled times and Afonso's beginnings in the midst of similar strife. The nature of Pedro's gesture is profoundly historical. Formulated at a time of political, social, and symbolic unrest, the visual and symbolic discourse of his coronation regalia mobilized and recast elements of the past to legitimize his present reign. This move not only borrowed Afonso's story and imagery, but it to a large extent repeated the early king's gesture of reinvention, demonstrating once more the profound significance and lasting influence of the original reformulation.[15]

Pedro IV did not evoke the past only in his hat. He made every effort to receive the crown according to the centuries-old tradition of Kongo Christian coronations. He hiked with his followers to São Salvador to receive the crown in the ancient, if then abandoned, capital of the Kongo and site of the early divine miracles at the very foundation of Kongo Christianity. He also insisted on the presence and involvement in the ceremony of a Catholic priest. Because the clergy that once officiated at the capital had dispersed after its destruction, and priests now looked to Luanda rather than the Kongo for a successful central African career, the new king had to bring the vicar Luis

14. Chronicler Rui de Pina describes the Soyo cap; see the transcription in Brásio, ed., *Monumenta*, I, 61.

15. Álvaro I had performed a similar gesture in the late sixteenth century. See the discussion below in Chapter 4.

de Mendonça to the scene against his will. Pedro's efforts followed a primarily political and strategic logic. He rose to the throne during a period often qualified as "general anarchy" in which, since 1641, the centralized kingdom had descended into decades of civil wars, and he needed to establish his legitimacy to a disputed crown. Yet, the means by which he hoped to achieve this goal are significant. His insistence on the presence of the priest, his conspicuous recourse to the coat of arms, and his long journey to São Salvador for a single day all highlight the vivid currency of the symbolism and imagery derived from Afonso's time. Known as the restorer of the kingdom, albeit one irrevocably transformed by decades of unrest, Pedro called upon the Kongo Christian creation myth and asserted its continued relevance for the political organization of the realm. In turn, he did not hesitate to adapt insignia and rituals in response to altered circumstances. He creatively found new possibilities encapsulated in the makeshift crown and in the redesigned ceremony to assert and herald Kongo Christian might and legitimacy.[16]

This episode allows us to understand that the political and symbolic changes that unfolded throughout the history of the kingdom did not adhere to a teleological pattern of acculturation or appropriation, in particular with regard to the kingdom's relationship to European ideas and objects. The kings of Kongo did not adopt the gilded European crown or other items of regalia only to emulate European rulers. And neither were the foreign objects fully taken over by local worldviews. Rather, they were part of a sophisticated reflection about the nature of power and legitimacy in the Kongo in the face of altered religious and material circumstances. And this reflection was one of correlation, transforming local logic and foreign input into intrinsically interrelated parts of a new whole. That a gilded crown may be used as a mpu and that later a locally crafted object may equally serve in place of an imported gilded crown showcases well the contingent, strategic, iterative, and cumulative path that Kongo Christianity followed from its advent circa 1500 through centuries of dense history.

The mpu in Figure 52 (Plate 24) functioned in a manner similar to the coronation hat. It combined motifs in low relief typical of Kongo textiles with crosses in high relief, visibly distinct from the main pattern as the silver-colored swords were from the rest of Pedro's hat. The *X*-shaped cross, as discussed in Chapter 2, was a central motif in the visual and symbolic conversation between Kongo and Christian religious thought. In tombstones, cru-

16. Marcellino d'Atri, "Giornate apostoliche," 1690–1708, 131, published with original pagination in Toso, *L'anarchia congolese nel sec. XVII*, 65. For the clergy's new orientation, see John K. Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641–1718* (Madison, Wis., 1983), 90–91.

cifixes, and medals, this sign, often combined with the Latin cross, brought together Christian and central African notions of life, death, and immanence. Yet the crosses on the Copenhagen mpu also functioned as the swords on Pedro's hat or the claws on the other mpu, as emblems qualifying the nature and origins of their wearers' prestige. In this case, the distinct hollow branches of the crosses linked the noble cap wearer to the Order of Christ.

The Order was introduced to central Africa in the first moments of contact with Europe and soon became a staple of the kingdom's political life. Although in principle only the king of Portugal could bestow the distinction, Kongo rulers routinely knighted their own nobles and even, on occasion, Europeans. Portuguese authorities repeatedly denounced the practice to no avail. The Order enjoyed great popularity and respect in the region. The desecration of the emblem of the Order, for instance, incurred a severe financial penalty. For the most modest transgressors, the fine could even mean the loss of their freedom, since they could only produce such a sum by being sold into the Atlantic slave trade. Early modern depictions and archaeological evidence placed the Order's insignia, a cross with hollow branches of equal length, among the most prominent regalia of the central African elite. Medallions made of precious metals (such as the one recovered at the eighteenth-century cemetery of Ngongo Mbata or the one depicted on the chest of the Kongo king painted by Portuguese chronicler Cadornega in the 1680s), embroideries on the coats of the rulers as seen in the vignettes in Bernardino d'Asti's "Missione in prattica," wax seals and signatures in the autograph correspondence of the elite, rock paintings, and engravings all heralded the emblem of the Order. The high-relief crosses of the Copenhagen mpu recall the insignia, rendered in raffia fiber and rotated forty-five degrees to fit with the rhythm and patterns of the textile. Attached to the cap, the crosses turned the mpu into an emblem of Christian nobility while they also served as metaphors of the power and legitimacy that the cap's wearer derived from the ability to call upon Christianity's numinous realm. Here again, in successive, cumulative strokes, ideas and motifs linked to both Kongo and European religious and political thought met, blurred, and, eventually, redeployed into a single, cohesive object.[17]

17. For a history of the Order of Christ in the Kongo, see André L'Hoist, "L'ordre du Christ au Congo," *Revue de l'Aucam*, VII (1932), 258–266. For the penalty, see Brásio, "Informação de Raimondo de Dicomano," *Studia*, XLVI (1987), 303–330 (fol. 14). Afonso's 1517 seal is in Corpo Cronológico, parte I, maço 21, doc. 109, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon. See the insignia in Cadornega, "Historia geral das guerras Angolanas," 1680, Manuscrito Vermelho 77, frontispiece. For rock painting, see Paul Raymaekers and Hendrik van Moorsel, *Lovo: Contribution à l'étude de la protohistoire de l'Ouest centrafricain* ([Léopoldville], 1964). The signature of the ruler of Soyo appears in "Receipt from D. António Mani of Soyo to the Pilot of the Ship Conceição Bernardo Corço for 3 Oufits," in Corpo Cronológico, parte II, maço 92, doc. 142.

FIGURE 53 Mpu Cap of Status. Kongo kingdom, before 1876, likely eighteenth century. Raffia palm or pineapple fiber, height 21 cm. Museo Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini," Rome, inv. no. MPE 5423. Photograph © S-MNPE, "L. Pigorini," Roma-EUR, by permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali

Medals and crucifixes pinned on other zimpu during the Christian period conveyed a similar association. They recast a once wholly central African marker of status into insignia of Christian nobility, a practice that might have inspired the maker of the Copenhagen cap. In tomb VII at Ngongo Mbata, five brass medals and three small crucifixes found around a skull, along with "fragments of a mat made of woven plant fiber," indicate a mpu richly adorned with Christian paraphernalia. In another instance, Marcellino d'Atri reported seeing a brass cross proudly pinned on a cap. Unlike these last examples, the Copenhagen mpu rendered the insignia with the same material as the rest of the hat and demonstrated a sophisticated reflection on the possibilities of different forms of artistic representation. The Copenhagen cap as well as the one in Figure 53 from the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Lugi Pigorini" in Rome are remarkable for the way in which their makers challenged their medium in order to find a formal solution that would render European emblems both seamlessly and conspicuously in Kongo textiles. A spiraling top and intricate interlacing geometric patterns form the basis of the elegant, finely worked Pigorini mpu. A frieze of interlocking geometric patterns cinch the cap's top and bottom. Four square frames of knotted lines feature between them on the vertical part of the cap. Decorative *S* figures emerge from the plain background of these decorative quadrangles. They resemble initial letters found in European printed or manuscript texts. The cameos are clearly distinct from the other patterns on the cap, including the

vertical endless knots alternating with them. Like the crosses on the Copenhagen cap, they also seem to function as objects pinned to the mpu and as foreign motifs translated in textile form.[18]

These enigmatic figures could have been the emblem of a prominent family emulating the Kongo royalty's practice of wearing its coat of arms on its crown. The cameos are in some regard even more intriguing than the crosses on the Copenhagen mpu. If the crosses suggest three-dimensional objects pinned on the caps in a manner that echoes established local practices of attaching claws, fangs, or even crucifixes to the hats, the cameos instead emulate two-dimensional European graphic signs and suggest alphabetic literacy. Written documents often served in the Kongo as emblems of power. A bull with indulgences the pope sent to Diogo I (r. 1543–1561), kept in a brocade bag called *Sanctissimo Sacramento* worn around the neck of the king, was one of the principal royal insignia. The medallion of the Order of Christ unearthed at Ngongo Mbata also held in between its two articulated sides a piece of paper, likely an attestation of its owner's induction into the Order. The letters or pages pinned on the Pigorini mpu probably evoked such documents and turned them into emblematic signs. This transposition demonstrates a careful engagement on the part of the cap maker with the differences in artistic representation across media and across cultures. The letters also take part in the same kind of appropriation demonstrated in Álvaro VII's letter to the king of Loango, discussed below, in which writing—once a European import—serves as a medium for the expression of central African thoughts and values. Here, textile techniques bridge the gap between two modes of visual expression but also endow the European alphabet with the status and significance of a local emblem of power.[19]

Foreign Cloths, Local Habits

Power and elite regalia encompassed not only a political and religious dimension but also a social and economic one. The prominent role that textiles played in regalia formed a space of correlation that drew together wealth, power, and devotion. Textiles heralded in the Kongo, as in the wider

18. Vandenhoute, "De Begraafplaats van Ngongo Mbata," 63; Toso, *L'anarchia congolese nel sec. XVII,* 42. The collection date of the Pigorini mpu is unclear. Although it was recorded for the first time in 1876, it likely belonged to the Musaeum Kircherianum collection as early as the eighteenth century. See Bassani, *African Art and Artefacts,* ed. McLeod, 166.

19. See Jesuit Mateus Cardoso's description of the bag in 1622 in Brásio, ed., *Monumenta,* XV, 491–492. See also G. Schellings, "Importante découverte au Bas-Congo: Les ruines de la première église congolaise construite au XVIe siècle, à Mbanza Mbata dia Madiadia," *Le Courrier d'Afrique,* nos. 19–20 (August 1950), 13.

central African area, essential ideas of wealth and prestige. In addition to their prominent role in political insignia, they circulated as currency, served as construction material for palatial architecture, and inspired the decoration program of objects of luxury and status. Olfert Dapper's depiction of the textile-rich environment of central African courts in Figure 73, below, fleshes out the ubiquitous presence of textiles in elite spaces at all levels. In the Atlantic context, these ideas extended to the imported fabrics the kingdom's elite acquired from the foreign traders active in the region in exchange for copper and ivory but also for enslaved men and women. Cloth, metals, precious beads, and coral formed the main means of exchange on the central African coast, where they served as a visual expression of prestige. Girolamo Merolla da Sorrento insists, for instance, on the use of *missangas,* imported red glass beads, "coralli di vetro, portitali da Portoghesi," as both currency and personal ornament in Benguela, a coastal settlement in Angola; the same held true for the Kongo. Velvet cushions, European carpets, and silver crosses graced the royal court of the Kongo in the same manner that central African raffia cloth or ivory horns entered the treasure rooms of European rulers.[20]

Foreign traders paid careful attention to the central African elite's tastes and recorded their discriminating demand for foreign imports in a range of documents. For example, the ledgers of the Luanda-based Portuguese merchant Antonio Coelho Guerreiro, active between 1684 and 1692, provide detailed lists of what he deemed the most profitable items on the central African markets. Guerreiro brought into the region thin red-and-white-striped linens, Indian blue-striped cotton fabric, dark cotton cloth produced specifically for the African trade as well as thicker wools made in Portugal and fine taffetas, lamés, and silks. This inventory complements the one that Dutch merchant F. Cappelle left in a report to Johan Maurits van Nassau and the Oud West Indiche Compagnie around 1640, listing the merchandise that in his opinion the inhabitants of the Kongo and the neighboring kingdom of Loango most desired. Textiles, beads of coral or glass, and objects made of brass rank high on the list.[21]

All three categories that prominently featured on the merchants' lists—

20. Merolla and Piccardo, *Breve, e succinta relatione,* 69.

21. Joseph C. Miller, "Capitalism and Slaving: The Financial and Commercial Organization of the Angolan Slave Trade, according to the Accounts of Antonio Coelho Guerreiro (1684–1692)," *International Journal of African Historical Studies,* XVII, (1984), 1–56. See the French edition of Cappelle in Louis Jadin, "Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Sohio, Congo, 1600–1675: Tentatives missionaires des récollets flamands et tribulations des capucins italiens, 1670–1675," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome,* XXXVII (1966), 229–230, 236–237. Alcohol and weapons also figured prominently in the overall exchange, in particular in the eighteenth century.

beads, copper alloys, and textiles—occupied a social and economic function at the intersection of currency and regalia in central Africa. As part of elite outfits or individually, they expressed closely interrelated ideas of wealth and power. In the Bantu linguistic zone to which the Kongo belongs, the lexica for wealth and power specifically share a strong etymological and symbolic bond. The social context of textile production and use further materialized this lexical connection. The finest central African cloths were the creation of high-ranking men who acquired the specialized technical skills necessary for their creation through exclusive training. Formal rules also directed the use and ownership of different categories of textiles according to social and political rank. The prestige associated with high-status local textiles then transferred to the imported cloths that entered the country through the hands of its elite. Foreign textiles thus became prized not only for their exotic origins and relative scarcity but also because of their association with the local elite, who controlled access to the most-prized local types and, by extension, conferred status to the newly available imports they eagerly sought and conspicuously wore.[22]

Wealth, then, and its interrelated attributes of political power and social prestige manifested themselves in the sartorial practices of the Kongo in terms that correlated the innovations a broadening world brought to the kingdom's shores with deeply rooted local views and practices. The social trajectory of checkered cloth in central Africa, an inexpensive European trade good, illustrates this correlation. The Kongo elite singled out and transformed this very recognizable import into an item of regalia that graced, for instance, the belt of the ambassadors in Figures 45 (Plate 18) and 47 (Plate 20), where it is shown alongside the animal pelt and the bright red sash, a juxtaposition that inscribed the foreign import into visual expressions of power rooted in central African thought. This articulation of local and foreign finery showcases an understanding of prestige that grew to rely on the ability to access Atlantic networks and to acquire imported goods.

The incorporation of foreign imports into local elite sartorial practices tells us much about the open attitude of the inhabitants of central Africa vis-à-vis novelties but also about their involvement in the slave trade, the main avenue through which foreign luxuries became available in the region. At

22. For the links between ideas of wealth and power, see Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison, Wis., 1990), 73–74, 100. For textile making, see Andrew Battel, *The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell of Leigh, in Angola and the Adjoining Regions; Reprinted from "Purchas His Pilgrimes,"* ed. E. G. Ravenstein, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2d Ser., no. 6 (London, 1901), 10. See sumptuary laws described, for example, in J[ean] Cuvelier, *Relations sur le Congo du père Laurent de Lucques (1700–1717)* (Brussels, 1953), 56.

the outset, the Kongo rulers' early gestures of correlation that used foreign emblems and textiles as keys to shaping and heralding their new identity as a cosmopolitan, Christian elite contributed to establishing their status as an independent land and a valued diplomatic interlocutor for European powers. The adoption of foreign emblems, however, would also have a pernicious effect. The symbolic power of these insignia did not fade even in the context of intense competition for local control between elite lineages and warlords in the late seventeenth century and for much of the eighteenth century. On the contrary, to assert their power, contenders relied on the regalia that graced the great rulers of the past, creating a strong demand for foreign goods paid for chiefly in slaves, the region's predominant international currency. That demand and its cost in captives became an increasingly important factor of strife and instability in the weakened kingdom, fueling feuds and violent competition between potentates.[23]

The central Africans' involvement with Atlantic networks would seem to imply they were "Atlantic creoles," individuals or groups for whom contact with these networks brought change in a process that was directed outward toward greater commonality with Europeans and measured with the yardstick of Europeanization. They inhabited a space that functioned at the intersection of the three worlds connected by the ocean: Africa, Europe, and the Americas. They used European languages, professed Christianity, and promoted ecological changes with the introduction of new plants. Two crops imported from the Americas, in particular, corn and tobacco, quickly grew to be staples. Corn became central to the local diet, and tobacco was smoked "incessantly." Giovanni Belotti da Romano, among others, described the popularity of tobacco in the Kongo, unkindly concluding that central Africans would rather starve than give up smoking. These innovations went hand in hand with changes in daily life that to some extent brought Africans closer to their European interlocutors.[24]

However, although the Kongo elite embraced with enthusiasm some of these novelties, they did so on their own terms and managed the changes in a way that the concept "Atlantic creole" does not appropriately describe.

23. Joseph C. Miller discusses how "African consumers" occasionally "singl[ed] out a single color or pattern" according to their own taste rather than European values; see Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison, Wis., 1988), 70. For a description of the role of the slave trade in the Kongo, see Linda M. Heywood, "Slavery and Its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491–1800," *Journal of African History,* L (2009), 1–22.

24. Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d Ser., LIII (1996), 251–288; Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660* (Cambridge, 2007); Belotti, "Giornate apostoliche," 1680, AB 75, 146.

For them, novelties took part in a generative process of correlation through which they reinvented notions and expressions of prestige in the new Atlantic context. The once-foreign white-and-blue-checkered cloth did signify access to foreign trade and links to European trade routes, but it also worked in tandem with local regalia and eventually came to herald new notions of power. The cloth served as a space of correlation. Used in conjunction with animal pelts and other locally significant insignia, it recast the entire regalia of the Kongo elite as an expression of status that functioned within this broader Atlantic context. Yet the cloth simultaneously inscribed the novelties and the changes it encapsulated firmly within the realm of tradition as it became one of several modes of expressing might and prestige.

The new significance of the white-and-blue-checkered cloth as a central African emblem of power may seem trivial, but its enduring presence reveals otherwise. A century and a half after it appeared around the waist of the ambassadors to Recife, the checkered cotton continued to feature in nineteenth-century power figures created by the heirs to the Kongo kingdom (Figure 14 [Plate 7]). Wrapped around the bodies of *minkondi* as around those of powerful men in centuries past, combined with furs and raffia cloth, and knotted around nails and shards stuck into the figures' flesh to spring them into action, the checkered cloth continued in the eighteen and nineteen hundreds to signify and demonstrate might in awe-inspiring visual displays. The singular power that imported cloth was believed to yield in the region may also be measured in the short-lived prohibition by the kings of neighboring Kakongo in the eighteenth century to own or even touch foreign fabric or to give audience to courtiers dressed in them.[25]

Foreign items from near and far became indispensable necessities for the expression of prestige, power, and wealth. In 1666, Álvaro VII of Kongo (r. 1665–1666) appealed to his counterpart north of the Kongo River, the ruler of Loango, to obtain the imported fabrics he needed as he attempted to assert his authority during a time of civil war and aggression from Portugal. This exceptional letter, written in Portuguese, documents a transaction between two African kings whose realms functioned within overlapping local and long-distance networks of trade, diplomacy, and cultural norms. The note, which must have been intercepted by the Portuguese and is now in Lisbon, goes straight to the point: "Here comes my boy *[mosso]* so that Your Majesty, as my brother, may send me what is written in here and I trust that Your Majesty as a friend will send this." The king of Kongo here used the first person

25. [Liévin-Bonaventure] Proyart, *Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres royaumes d'Afrique; rédigée d'après les mémoires des préfets apostoliques de la mission françoise; enrichie d'une carte utile aux navigateurs: Dédiée à monsieur* (Paris, 1776), 145.

and direct address so that the text would function as a record of his own spoken words. It was a distinctive use of writing technology, a doubling of the oral message surely also entrusted to the mosso. Álvaro VII—perhaps inadvertently in the course of his dictation, perhaps intentionally—acknowledges the unusual format of the request by mentioning the written medium within the body of the text. A palpable awkwardness appears from the situation, but Álvaro nonetheless deemed it useful, and probably the most efficient method for presenting a royal plea to his worldly colleague. Both the writing and the purpose of the letter highlight local uses of once-foreign but eventually wholly integrated materials and practices. The main part of the brief records a list of the items Álvaro sought: blue, red, and black velvet and silk cloth of the same colors. The Kongo ruler intended to "cut three capes" in each of these luxurious imported fabrics, crafting cloaks in the local fashion, the kind shown on the shoulders of the many high-ranking men pictured here.[26]

The overall language of the letter is Portuguese with varying degrees of Kikongo flavor. Álvaro describes the foreign merchandise in European terms. Qualitative ideas, however, come in turns of phrase typical of the two dialects of the Kikongo language he and his intended reader spoke. The quality of the fabrics clearly mattered. Álvaro insisted that the textiles "be beautiful" or, in his exact phrase in creolized Portuguese, "that they be things [each] with its perfection" ("couzas com a sua perfeição"). The Portuguese words here transpose not only Kikongo grammar but also larger Kongo aesthetic considerations. The phrase "with its" conveys the widely used Kikongo attributive *kia*. "Perfection," in turn, translates the idea of *mbote,* the Kikongo term for beauty understood in terms of strength, goodness, and wholeness. The text of the letter illustrates the linguistic, cultural, but also aesthetic diglossia of these early worldly kings, who, for all their reveling in imported luxuries, still judged them according to a local system of taste and used local turns of phrase to express quality, value, and beauty.[27]

In addition to overseas wares, Álvaro also asked for "different colors of the most excellent cloths that are in your lands," indicating that textiles circulated in kind from one region of central Africa to the other. Specifically, he asked for "escarlate vermelha," possibly the *dimba tukula* that Cuénot translates as "drap rouge" a century later. He also mentions "grão fino," literally "fine grain," maybe another type of cloth or possibly small corals or red beads. Finally, he asked for gunpowder and reveals why he needed the help of his neighbor to secure these items; he had ordered the closing of the roads in

26. "Carta do Rei D. Álvaro 7º do Congo ao Rei de Loango," Mar. 1, 1666, Arquivo dos Marqueses de Olhão, Núcleo Ultramarino, Angola, maço 40 A, doc. 30, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo.
27. Ibid.

his kingdom, presumably because of his continuing conflict with the Portuguese or one of his rivals from inside the Kongo. Álvaro's words portray a worldview that fully integrates once-foreign and once wholly local practices, semantics, and aesthetic values. Material and immaterial imports such as cloth and language enriched the central African region with an increasingly complex and multivalent material and cultural frame. Clearly, a single set of adjectives could refer to and qualify both cloth from Loango and imported silks, because the fabrics all took part in a single reality within which they enjoyed commensurate status and expressed similar ideas of prestige. Álvaro's letter demonstrates how his relationship to European novelties makes him more than an Atlantic creole. Its combination of different languages is not used as a tool of communication between the African interior and Europeans; rather, it is an inward-looking demonstration of the possibilities foreign technologies and merchandise afforded within a worldview anchored in local conceptions—albeit one rapidly changing in response to its interactions with a widening world.[28]

The Look of Sainthood

In addition to power and prestige, sartorial practices among the Kongo elite also reflected ideas of religious affiliation essential to their social and political standing. In Friar Giuseppe da Modena's colorful words, "All the blacks here are like as many Saints, with staffs on the end of which they put erected the Holy Cross, and with chaplets around the neck, so that they all look like Anchorites." Albert Eckhout's images of the Kongo ambassadors and the drawing of Garcia II in Figure 5 captured this enthusiastic adoption of medals, rosaries, and crosses by fortunate men in spectacular displays of wealth and religious affiliation. On one level, the religious paraphernalia functioned similarly to other imports, as precious rarities alluding to privilege, wealth, and power. The possession of medals and crucifixes proved one's access to the European missionaries who imported them or it denoted an ability to own the precious metals used in local creations, to mobilize the labor of artists trained in the exclusive technologies of metalworking, and to collect prototypes from which to access the wide but limited catalog of motifs. It is likely that many of the Kongo Christian objects were created with imported metal. The brass objects featured in the merchants' lists discussed above reappeared in the medals, chains, and crosses of elite outfits. The transformation of imported metal into Kongo objects illustrates once

28. Ibid.; Cuénot, "Dictionnaire françois et Congo," 1773, MS 525, 642, s.v. "rouge."

more the complex, nonlinear processes through which Kongo Christian visual culture emerged. Central African metalworkers transformed European brass trade items into Kongo objects such as crucifixes and figures of saints; these Kongo objects drew their form from earlier operations of religious and artistic correlation that had naturalized Christ and the saints into local characters. In this circular and cumulative operation of transformation and appropriation, ideas of wealth and power and also visual manifestations of prestige and Christianity were mutually reinforced.[29]

Brass saints worn as pendants were a common part of elite outfits in the Christian Kongo. Objects made from precious metals collected in the twentieth century, about three inches tall and distinguished by a suspension loop at their back, offer exquisitely detailed depictions of richly dressed figures understood to represent Saint Anthony of Padua, patron saint of Portugal, and the Virgin Mary on iconographic grounds as well as in light of twentieth-century identifications. Both figures are likely seventeenth- and eighteenth-century objects passed down through generations or more recent creations carefully recast from older prototypes. The pendants identified as Saint Anthony display the attributes of the Portuguese saint, Franciscan habit, often with the pointed hood of the Capuchin order, a cross, and an infant. The female figures are richly dressed and stand in a modest prayer pose, in the manner of the Marian images on Kongo crucifixes (Figures 54 [Plate 25] and 55 [Plate 26]). Both Saint Anthony and the Virgin enjoyed great popularity in the Kongo since its first contact with the Iberian kingdom, and particularly after 1650 under the impetus of the Capuchins, who were great promoters of both devotions.[30]

The popularity of the figures not only demonstrated the interest of the Kongo elite in Christian devotional objects but also materialized the connection between Christianity and social and political prestige. The Saint Anthony in Figure 54 (Plate 25), now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, stands hieratically on a pedestal; he holds in his right hand a cross

29. Monari, "Viaggio al Congo," Manoscritti Italiani 1380, Alfa N. 9–7, 148. See an example of a list of objects imported by the Capuchins in the Kongo in Scritture originali riferite nelle congregazioni generali, vol. 250, fol. 528r, Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide, the Vatican. Metallographic analysis under way may confirm or disprove the hypothesis that crucifixes were made with imported brass.

30. For descriptions of pendants in the early modern period, see, for example, Luca da Caltanisetta's description in "Relatione del viaggio e missione di Congo fatta per me Fra Luca da Caltanisetta, missionario apostolico, olim lettore e predicatore cappuccino della provincia di Palermo nella Sicilia, nel 1689 sino al . . .," 1701, MS 35, 69r, Biblioteca Comunale di Caltanisetta, published with original pagination in Bontinck, ed. and trans., *Diaire congolais*; Romain Rainero, *Il Congo agli Inizi del Settecento nella relazione di P. Luca da Caltanisetta*, La Nuova Italia (Florence, 1974). For a discussion of the pendants in the twentieth century, see Rob L. Wannyn, *L'art ancien du métal au Bas-Congo*, Les Vieilles civilisations ouestafricaines (Champles par Wavre, Belgium, 1961), 40–41.

(left) FIGURE 54 Saint Anthony Pendant. Kongo kingdom, possibly seventeenth to eighteenth century. Brass, height 10 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ernst Anspach, 1999, inv. 1999.295.1. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

(right) FIGURE 55 Female Figure. Kongo kingdom, possibly seventeenth century. Brass, 9 × 3 cm. Private Collection. From Julien Volper, *Ora pro nobis: Étude sur les crucifix bakongo* (Brussels, 2011), 95, plate 24. Photograph, P. Louis, © P. Louis and J. Volper

and in the other, the child Christ, who is standing on a book. His tonsure, the carefully molded hood on his otherwise bare back, and the knotted cord he wears as a belt make him a convincing representation of the Franciscan saint. But the folds of his habit fall around his shoulders as a cape and drape around his legs as a wrapper. Incisions on his chest also suggest a muscular, bare torso. Is he Saint Anthony or a Kongo noble in full regalia that could readily join the ranks of the sangamento dancers in Figure 2 (Plate 1)? Is not the bicolored cross he holds that of the Order of Christ? Maybe his tonsure is a mpu, his knotted belt a red sash. The child Christ himself, who wears a wrapper and stands with his shoulders covered by a fold of the larger figure's coat, would easily blend into the ranks of other Kongo Christians dressed in their regalia.

Figurines of the Virgin invite even more ambivalent readings. The Virgin in the brass pendant in Figure 55 (Plate 26) wears large lengths of cloth, art-

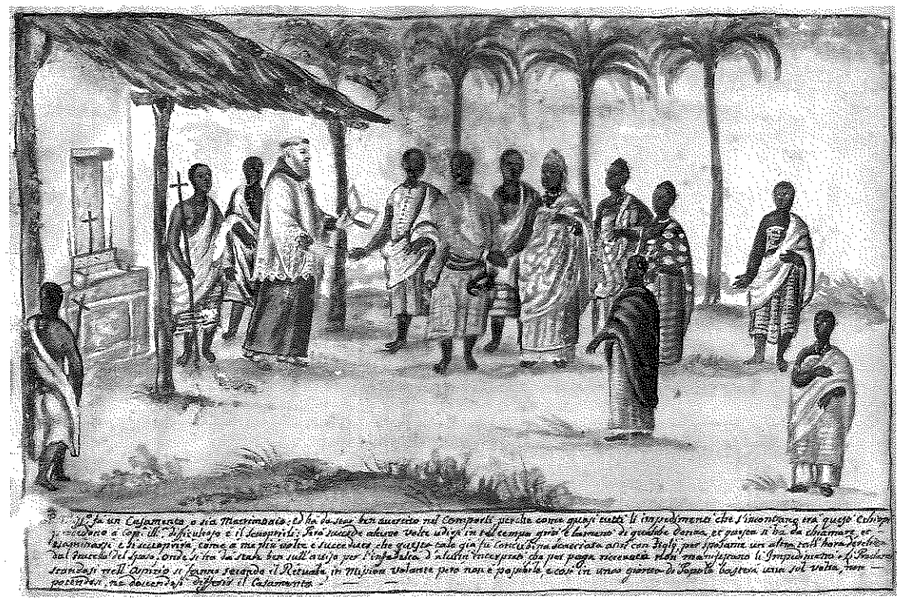


FIGURE 56 Bernardino d'Asti, *The Missionary Blesses a Wedding*. Circa 1750. Watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. From "Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," MS 457, fol. 12v, Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin. Photograph © Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin

fully draped and arranged in overlapping layers, enhanced with wavy lace at her feet, and accessorized with stacks of necklaces and bracelets. Her resemblance to the elite women depicted in the watercolor in Figure 56 (Plate 27), from the "Missione in prattica," is striking. In the painting, richly dressed men and women gather around a priest in an outdoor chapel for a wedding in the Kongo, or possibly in Angola, in the mid-eighteenth century. The bride and her attendants are exquisitely wrapped in extravagant lengths of imported textiles, dark wools and checkered and flowery cottons and linens. Layers and patterns artfully enclose their bodies in a mix of vertical flounces and sweeping diagonal drapes that closely echo the swooping lines of the female brass figure. The makers of the figurine painstakingly molded and etched the metal to evoke the different folds of light and heavy fabric and to capture details of textures and patterns, including lacy hems rendered in the metal with a wavy border. Elaborate coiffures enhanced with cloth and ribbons, stacks of bracelets, and necklaces appear on both the metal figurine

FIGURE 57 Saint Figure, Kongo kingdom. Possibly eighteenth century. Wood, height 50 cm. Private collection, Brussels. Photograph, Cécile Fromont

and in the painting. The brass Virgin could join the women of the wedding party. In addition to the metal pendants, other statues of the Virgin dressed in rich local styles and textiles encompassed even more vividly the multivalent connections between wealth, prestige, and Christianity in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century central Africa.[31]

The groom's outfit in the watercolor also echoes to some extent the brass figure of Saint Anthony, but it offers an excellent parallel to another enigmatic piece also collected in the twentieth century but in many regards linked to the early modern period (Figure 57). The figure, almost fifty centimeters high, is

31. For dressed Virgin figures, see Louis Jadin, "Le Congo et la secte des Antoniens: Restauration du royaume sous Pedro IV et la 'Saint Antoine' congolaise (1694–1718)," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, XXXIII (1961), 499. Capuchins also brought to the Kongo papier-mâché heads and hands to be clothed locally; see Bontinck, ed. and trans., *Diaire congolais*, 169, 209.

often described as Saint Peter because of the key-like object it holds in its left hand. The wooden figure as well as the groom of the watercolor wear tailored jackets and buttoned shirts in the European style juxtaposed with draped wrappers and cloaks. The man in the painting sports a gold chain across the chest as a sash and holds a black European hat in his left hand, possibly a beaver hat. The wooden figure displays the emblem of the Order of Christ on the right sleeve of his jacket and on the coat draped over his left arm. If the tonsure and facial features of the wooden piece point to the representation of a European, the articulation of clothing and regalia also links the figure to the Kongo elite. The wooden figure, the watercolor, the pendants, but also medals and crucifixes featuring similar imagery all captured the remarkable fluidity that existed between the appearance of the elite and representations of their saints. The ambiguity certainly contributed to making the distant holy men and women more familiar figures. Yet the presence of the same regalia also made manifest the three-way connection between social prestige, political might, and attachment to the Catholic Church. This link, in turn, encompassed a physical, bodily dimension as elite men and women wore the brass figurines, medals, and crucifixes as part of their finery. Figures and wearers visually echoed each other, a *mise en abyme* that further reinforced the interrelation between power, wealth, and Christianity.

Staffs and Mestres

Regalia and personal adornment expressed and enacted social status for the political elite but also for another category of prominent figures, mestres. Mestres, or church masters, were members of the elite who had received since childhood a Catholic education from European clergy or older mestres in schools attached to local churches. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the first generation of Kongo elites received a European education in Portugal, where they resided as envoys of their central African king. The emblematic persona of this early practice is Henrique, the son of Afonso I, who studied in Lisbon and became bishop *in partibus infidelium* of Utica in 1513. Influenced by returnees and European missionaries, local centers of instruction soon emerged in the Kongo in the early sixteenth century and continued to thrive throughout the Christian era. The kingdom, commented Portuguese vicar Rui de Aguiar in 1516, "has schools, and they teach our holy faith to the people and [they have] also schools for girls taught by [the king's] sister." The Kongo crown and elite supported some of the schools, while missionaries founded and maintained others. Serafino da Cortona in 1660 reported on such a local school, the structures and organi-

zation of which remained independent of Europeans. The Jesuits attempted to found a college in 1548 during their short-lived early mission and finally succeeded during their second stay in the region. Their college opened in 1626 and enrolled the sons of the local elite and the Portuguese living in the capital of São Salvador. The Capuchins, in turn, instituted more modest schools at each of their missions that offered catechism as well as advanced instruction to a broader population. European schools as well as local structures that could continue to function without foreign instructors for decades formed an elite with fluent knowledge of Catholic catechism, of Portuguese as well as other European languages, of reading and writing, and, for the most advanced students, of Latin and rhetoric. The education system, at least in São Salvador, created a group of well-educated men, some of whom were able to matriculate to the Collegio di Propaganda Fide in Rome, as several protégés of the Capuchins did in the seventeenth century.[32]

Mestres came from these educated circles. They enjoyed great prestige, and only the highest of the elite could assume the role. Rulers often previously held the position, as did António II Barretto da Silva, *mani* of Soyo at the turn of the eighteenth century. Such a privileged situation created much competition, the "candidates being always more numerous than the positions." In addition to prestige and political opportunities, mestres also benefited from a range of privileges. They were exempt from tribute, from civil responsibility, and from military duties. They had the enviable right to be buried in the church, at an honored location, alongside the ordained priests. The mestres' responsibilities consisted of taking care of the church buildings and adjoining monumental crosses, educating and catechizing the people,

32. Specific references to mestres in the Kongo can be found as early as 1607 in MS Vat. Lat. 12516, fols. 26–35, 108v, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. The Kikongo catechism of 1624, written before the arrival of the Capuchins, was composed with the help of the mestres; see François Bontinck and D. Ndembe Nsasi, *Le catéchisme kikongo de 1624: Réédition critique* (Brussels, 1978), 22. For the story of Henrique, see "Os Primeiros Missionários do Congo (1490-1508)," in Brásio, ed., *Monumenta*, I, 96. On local schools and curriculum, see "Carta do Vigário Rui de Aguiar a El-Rei D. Manuel (25-5-1516)," ibid., 361–363; Serafino da Cortona, quoted in Louis Jadin, "Le clergé séculier et les capucins du Congo et d'Angola aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles; Conflits de juridiction, 1700–1726," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, XXXVI (1964), 223. For the Jesuit college, see Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi, *Le catéchisme kikongo de 1624*, 34; Franco, *Synopsis annalium Societatis Jesu*, 1625, paragraph 15, 245. For Capuchin schools, see Belotti, "Giornate apostoliche," 1680, AB 75, 179; Giovanni Belotti da Romano, "Avvertimenti salutevoli agli apostolici missionari, specialmente nei regni del Congo, Angola e circonvicini," 1680, MS 45, 93, Biblioteca del Clero, Bergamo; Juan de Santiago, "Breve relacion de lo sucedido a doce religiosos cappuchinos de la santa sede apostolica enbio por missionarios apostolicos al reyno de Congo; recopilada por uno y el mas minimo indigno totalmente de tan sublime ministerio; dedicada a Nr. Rm. Pe. Fr. Inocencio de Catalagirona, Ministro General de los frailes menores cappuchinos de Nr. Serafico Pe. S. Francisco," circa 1650, II/772, 104, Real Biblioteca del Palacio, Madrid. For Kongo students in Rome, see Giacinto da Vetralla in Scritture originali riferite nelle congregazioni generali, vol. 250, fols. 192–201, Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide.

and transmitting their knowledge and function to the next generation of the elite who would ensure the continuation of the character and structure of Kongo Christianity over time.[33]

Mestres could exercise their office independently from ordained clergy. Christian prayers, rituals, and devotions survived for decades thanks to them, even in the absence of priests. This capacity played a crucial role in the Kongo, where a significant local clergy never emerged. Several attempts to create seminaries and promote the development of a local priesthood failed for reasons ranging from international conflicts between Portugal, Spain, and the papacy over *padroado* rights; internal resistance on the part of the elite to Episcopal authority over religious matters; and the often deplorable behavior of the clergy, who sometimes used their position to profit from alms or trade rather than to promote and organize the church. In spite of the endemic lack of priests, who were sometimes absent for decades, observers admired the ability of the inhabitants of the Kongo to continue to practice at least some of the Christian rituals, owing in large part to the teachings of the mestres. The Portuguese Franciscan visitor Rafael Castelo de Vide, for example, upon visiting the Kongo in 1780, marveled that, in places without a priest for eighteen years, he could "hear at night or in the early morning the prayers to Mary said at the bottom of a cross" or see "people kneel and start singing the Terce of Our Lady" at the prescribed hour, leaving behind any of their other business.[34]

If the mestres acted independently of ordained clergy, the missionaries, in contrast, depended heavily upon the mestres as linguistic as well as social translators. Although many of the Capuchin friars active in the seventeenth

33. For references to the prestige and competitive nature of the position of mestres, see Cuvelier, *Relations sur le Congo*, 68; Louis Jadin, "Andrea de Pavia au Congo, à Lisbonne, à Madère: Journal d'un missionnaire capucin, 1685–1702," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, XLI (1970), 446. On the privileges of mestres, see Bernardino d'Asti, "Missione in prattica," fol. 43, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. "Vi sono alcuni maestri della terra che insegnago alla gioventú à leggere e scrivere e la dottrina christiana"; see Rosario del Parco "Informazione della Missione del Regno di Congo, e delli Stati di Conquista di Angola, e Benguella," circa 1760, Scritture riferite nei congressi, Congo, Angola, V, fol. 307r, published in Louis Jadin, "Aperçu de la situation du Congo et rite d'élection des rois en 1775, d'après le P. Cherubino da Savona, missionnaire au Congo de 1759 à 1774," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, XXXV (1963), 360.

34. The rights of padroado conferred by the papacy to the crown of Portugal in the fifteenth century gave authority over church affairs in overseas territories to the Iberian kingdom. For a discussion of secular clergy, see Jadin, "Le clergé séculier," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, XXXVI (1964), 186–483; Rafael Castelo de Vide, "Reino do Congo; Relação da Viagem, que fizeram os padres missionarios, desde a cidade de Loanda, d'onde sahiram a 2 de agosto de 1780, até á presença do rei do congo, onde chegaram a 30 de junho de 1781," *Annaes do Conselho Ultramarino; parte não official*, 2d Ser. (1859), 64–65. See also, in the nineteenth century, *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire, Usually Called the Congo in South Africa, in 1816 under the Direction of Captain J. K. Tuckey, R. N.; to Which Is Added, the Journal of Professor Smith* . . . (London, 1818), 79.

and eighteenth centuries learned to speak Kikongo and acquired a level of sophistication in the idiom that allowed them to participate in the redaction of dictionaries and grammars, they also univocally agreed on the difficulty of the task. Girolamo de Montesarchio, for example, despite his industrious efforts to learn the language, copying "a vocabulary, the rules of the language, the elements of catechism to prepare adults to baptism, and a method to hear confession," did not master Kikongo until, he believed, God himself finally intervened and gave him the gift of the language.[35]

Beyond the language barrier, mestres served as cultural interpreters. In sharp contrast to their colleagues who officiated in Latin America as part of a colonial project, European missionaries worked in the Kongo as guests of the kingdom's elite and could not work, in friar Giuseppe da Modena's own words, "without the consent of the people, and the secular arm of the Prince." Missionaries also had to learn and adapt to local variations in the conduct of pastoral work, liturgy, and sacraments with the help of the mestres. "The Blacks are distrustful of the white Europeans," Friar Belotti remarked in 1680 about the inhabitants of Congo and Angola, "so that with the presence of men from their nation as interpreters, and almost as witnesses and advocates in their defense, thus reassured, they remain more content in particular in the act of the sacramental confession." The role mestres played in the sacrament of confession illustrates their pivotal importance in the shaping of Kongo Christianity. In the vignette describing the method of confessing in the "Missione in prattica," a friar and an interpreter sit side by side, and a penitent addresses his confession to the mestre while the priest overlooks the conversation (Figure 58 [Plate 28]). According to the accompanying text, the arrangement is "the custom of the land" and remains valid even in the absence of a language barrier. Already in the 1580s, Carmelites reported the use of local middlemen in confession. The author of the "Missione in prattica" even warned that, no matter his proficiency in the language, "the missionary should not risk hearing confession in this country, without the help of the interpreter." Mestres not only structured the religious experience of the Kongo in the absence of European clerics; they formed the backbone of the organization of Christianity in the country within which foreign missionaries had to inscribe their apostolate. In the Capuchin watercolors, mestres often shadow the friars in the position of enablers rather than helpers. Descriptions of ceremonials such as the coronation mentioned in Dapper's 1668 *Naukeu-*

35. A discussion of the linguistic competence of the Capuchins can be found in Adalbert de Postioma, "Méthodologie missionaire des Capucins au Congo-Matamba-Angola, 1645–1834," *Revue du clergé Africain,* XIX (1964), 368–371. See J. Cuvelier and O. de Bouveignes, *Jérôme de Montesarchio, apôtre du vieux Congo,* XXXIX, Collection Lavigerie (Namur, 1951), 52.

FIGURE 58 Bernardino d'Asti, *The Missionary Hears Confession.* Circa 1750. Watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. From "Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," MS 457, fol. 8v, Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin. Photograph © Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin

rige beschrijvinge also record their presence at the side of ordained clerics even during the most solemn occasions.[36]

Holders of the prestigious office of mestre wore characteristic regalia that signaled their position. A large piece of white cloth draped on the left shoulder lends them a specific, recognizable look that makes them stand apart from other characters depicted in the Capuchin watercolors. The white textiles leave the mestre's right hand free to hold a staff, often topped with a

36. Monari, "Viaggio al Congo," 1723, Manoscritti Italiani 1380, Alfa N. 9–7, 172; Belotti, "Avvertimenti salutevoli," 1680, MS 45, 93, 73; Bernardino d'Asti, "Missione in prattica," fols. 43–44, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana; Dapper, *Naukeurige beschrijvinge,* 582. I have discussed confessions elsewhere in "Collecting and Translating Knowledge across Cultures: Capuchin Missionary Images of Early modern Central Africa," in Daniela Bleichmar and Peter C. Mancall, eds., *Collecting across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, 2011), 134–154. See the Carmelite history and description of Kongo in Vat. Lat. 12516, fols. 103–125, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, translated in J. Cuvelier and L. Jadin, *L'ancien Congo d'après les archives romaines (1518–1640)* (Brussels, 1954), 119.

cross (Figures 18 [Plate 10], and 56 [Plate 27]). Some mestres, as members of the ruling elite, also wear a mpu cap. In addition, their outfits often include quantities of medals, rosaries, and other devotional objects, ostentatious signs of dedication to the church as well as of elite status. Overall, the mestres' attire formed a variation on the sartorial practices of the political elite. They wore similarly arranged rich lengths of draped cloth and devotional objects, both locally crafted and imported, as markers of wealth and social distinction. Parallel to the recombination of local and originally foreign attributes of political rule, mestres' outfits also reframed and juxtaposed attributes of local significance, such as the mpu, with emblems of prestige derived partly from Europe, such as processional, confraternity, and pilgrim staffs. The attire of the mestres and the political elite conveyed commensurate ideas of prestige, wealth, and power anchored in a Christian, worldly outlook. The significance of the white or light-colored cloth is difficult to interpret, and little more has been recorded than its appearance. The staffs, in contrast, offer a rich terrain to investigate the operations of combination and redefinition observed in the outfits at large. They encoded ideas of prestige, power, and attachment to Christianity with designs and motifs that echoed the reformulations observed in other genres of Kongo Christian visual culture.[37]

None of the numerous staffs collected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in regions that once answered to the Kongo crown can be directly attributed to the Christian period. Among this large corpus, however, are specific examples, the formal traits of which illustrate practices of the Kongo Christian era known through textual and visual descriptions. The cane in Figure 59 from Lisbon's Museu Nacional de Etnologia and the one in Figure 41, for instance, encapsulate many of the characteristics of mestre staffs. The first of these traits are the prominent knobs spaced along the length of the shaft. A long wooden stick used as a processional object in one of Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi's 1650s watercolors, for instance, provides a direct comparison and places this feature in a seventeenth-century context (Figure 78 [Plate 35]). The staff in the watercolor, here used as a candlestick, is directly reminiscent of turned wood, a technique common in Europe, examples of which the Capuchins as well as Portuguese secular clergy could easily have introduced to central Africa in various forms of liturgical apparatus. Kongo artists also used the technique, mentioned in nineteenth-century documents as well as shown on several objects of wood and ivory collected in the twentieth century but of apparent antiquity. In the twentieth century, inhabitants from regions once part of the Kongo kingdom continued to associate this type of staff with the Portuguese- or Latin-derived name *santu spilitu,* or Holy Spirit, an appellation that could have emerged in the Christian period.[38]

In the case of many mestre staffs, however, central African artists created objects that replicated the formal effect of turned wood rather than directly used the technique. The Lisbon staff, for instance, displays round knobs and a shaft of varying thickness that recall the use of the technique. Yet its five parts do not connect on a common axis and lack the symmetry of objects created with the mechanical process. Instead, intricate hand carving created a plain elongated cone at the bottom, and a main, middle part was decorated with intricate textile-like low-relief motifs separated in three registers, each topped by a rosette-shaped bulbous knob. Finally, the top spirals into a vertical cylinder intersected by a plain rectangular transversal branch, together suggesting a cross. The knobs, the cross, and the textile motifs in the staff encoded ideas of prestige closely linked to the combinations articulated in Kongo Christian regalia at large. Appropriated foreign style in the knobs and partly adopted European emblems in the cross enter into dialogue with the intricate textile decorations of profound local significance to express ideas of prestige and power that are typical of the Kongo Christian era. As a space of correlation, the staff may be read as a Catholic object wrapped in central African empowered textile designs and, reciprocally, as a Kongo staff that summoned European formal features and Christian emblems in its discourse of prestige.[39]

37. For the uniforms of mestres, including their staffs, see Bernardino d'Asti, "Missione in prattica," fol. 43, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Dapper also describes the white outfit in *Naukeurige beschrijvinge,* 582. For textual references to staffs, see Monari, "Viaggio al Congo," 1723, Manoscritti Italiani 1380, Alfa N. 9–7, 148: "All the blacks, in the outside, as I said, they look all saintly, with staffs on which top they carry the Holy Cross, with rosaries around the neck so that they look like as many anchorites." See also Rafael Castelo de Vide, "Descricao da Viagem que fiz Para Angola e Congo o Missionario Fr Rafael de Castelo de Vide," 1780, Reservados 2, maço 4, doc. 74, 64, Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa; Bernardino d'Asti, "Missione in prattica," fol. 43, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: "Since they have a saintly vanity to be Christians and to baptize their kids, and to carry around the neck large Crosses and Crucifixes, others carry a Cross at the end of a walking sticks."

38. The double-page vignette, *Funeral Procession of Queen Njinga,* is in the front matter of the first volume of Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, "Missione evangelica al regno del Congo: Araldi Manuscript," 1665–1668, Araldi Collection, vol. A, book 2, chap. 16, between 210 and 211, Modena. For wood turning, see Marc Leo Felix, ed., *White Gold, Black Hands: Ivory Sculpture in Congo* (Qiquhar, Heilungkiang, China, 2010), 125–127. For *santu spilitu,* see Wannyn, *L'art ancien du métal au Bas-Congo,* 45.

39. Other mestres' staffs are housed in the collections of the Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, Netherlands, and others are known merely through photographs; see Rob L. Wannyn, *Les Arts au Congo Belge et au Ruanda-Urundi* (Brussels, 1950), fig. 75.

FIGURE 59 Mestre Staff, Kongo kingdom. Possibly sixteenth to nineteenth century. Wood, 118 cm. Museu Nacional de Etnologia, Lisbon, Portugal, inv. AI 206. Photograph, José Paulo Ruas, 2013. Photograph courtesy of Direção-Geral do Património Cultural / Arquivo e Documentação Fotográfica

Other correlations called upon figures of saints as finials, as seen in Figure 41, bringing the image of blessed men and women into the transactions of central African social relations. The crosses and images of saints not only referred to political and social prestige but also brought great power to the staffs, derived from the belief that they could conjure the invisible forces responsible for success, failure, ailments, and cures. The profuse number of objects produced in the Kongo that incorporated Christian motifs amply demonstrates their status as emblems of prestige but also as respected power objects. Crosses and saints provided trustworthy shields even in matters of life and death—in battle, for instance, where they provided soldiers with protection against wounds and defeat. They also brought comfort to their owners at the moment of passage from life to death, accompanying the deceased to the otherworld in their burials, as observed in Ngongo Mbata.[40]

Among the treasures unearthed at the eighteenth-century cemetery of Ngongo Mbata, a small pendant based on a coin imported from Portugal and reworked into a medal of Saint Anthony further illustrates the correlation operating in Kongo regalia (Figure 60). Like the sartorial practices of the Kongo Christian elite generally, the pendant challenged and to a large extent blurred distinctions between local and foreign. It creatively appropriated and reformulated central African and imported elements to form an entirely new object emblematic of Kongo Christianity. The current location of the pendant is unknown, but a photograph of it appeared in Victor Tourneur's 1939 study of medals from the Kongo. In 1947, Olivier de Bouveignes published a second, almost identical medal that had emerged in Luanda shortly before the excavation (Figure 61). The main part of each of the two pendants is a brass coin of twenty *réis* (sing: *real*), a Portuguese unit of currency. The coins were minted in Porto in 1697 and 1698 respectively for use in Africa, particularly Angola. On the obverse of each coin, a skilled metalworker delicately welded a low-relief depiction of Saint Anthony in Franciscan garb, holding a cross in his right hand and a child in his left. Above the head of the saint, the craftsman attached a suspension loop and, in one of the two pieces, a transversal cartouche bearing the Latin acronym INRI, a detail often observed on crucifixes crafted in the Kongo. He also cunningly placed the saint over the Portuguese coat of arms, in the middle of the coin, so that the decorative volutes that once framed the European escutcheon now brace the blessed man with glowing rays. In the Luanda pendant in Figure 61, the saint

40. See Felix, ed., *White Gold, Black Hands,* fig. 127 a, b. For the apotropaic role of crucifixes in battle, see Franco, *Synopsis annalium Societatis Jesu,* nos. 15–17, 217–273. See the discussion on crosses in Chapter 2, above.

(top) FIGURE 60 Medal of Saint Anthony. Kongo kingdom, eighteenth century. Silvered copper, 3.6 cm. Excavated from Ngongo Mbata cemetery, Democratic Republic of Congo. Current location unknown. Image from Victor Tourneur, "Médailles religieuses du XVIIIème siècle trouvées au Congo," *Revue Belge de Numismatique et de Sigillographie,* XCI (1939), 21–26, plate II, 1. Photograph by the University of Chicago Visual Resources Center, courtesy of the Royal Numismatic Society of Belgium, Brussels

(bottom) FIGURE 61 Medal of Saint Anthony. Kongo kingdom, eighteenth century. Copper, 3.6 cm. Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, inv. HO.1954.19.7. Photograph, J. Van de Vyver, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren ©

appears upside down from the alignment of the original designs and stands on the Iberian crown turned on its head. In the Ngongo Mbata example, the crown of Portugal graces the head of the holy man. The glorified, almost sarcastically anti-Portuguese position of the saint in both examples may link the medals to the Antonian movement, which peaked in the years surrounding the minting of the coins and promoted similar anti-European ideas. The reverse, only readable on one of the two examples, displays two *X*s, indicating the denomination of twenty réis in Roman numerals. The designs of this side remain formally untouched but in effect participate in a broad Kongo religious and political discourse of status, power, and legitimacy visually encoded in the figure of the *X*-shaped cross.[41]

41. Olivier de Bouveignes found the medal in an exhibition catalog published in Luanda; see Bouveignes, "Saint Antoine et la pièce de vingt reis," *Brousse: Organe trimestriel des "Amis de l'art indigène" du Congo Belge,* nos. 3–4 (1947), 17–22. See also Victor Tourneur, "Médailles religieuses du XVIIIème siècle trouvées au Congo," *Revue Belge de Numismatique et de Sigillographie,* XCI (1939), 21–26; Alberto Gomes and António Miguel Trigueiros, *Moedas portuguesas na época dos descobrimentos, 1385–1580 / Portuguese Coins in the Age of Discovery, 1385–1580* (Lisbon, 1992). The Antonian movement was a prophetic movement that emerged in the era of the civil war; see Chapter 4, below.

The medals embodied a gesture of appropriation that, far from a simple recasting of local and foreign, followed the cumulative logic of correlation typical of other Kongo Christian objects. The artists used two motifs essentially of European origins as means to transform the foreign coin into a central African medal. The image of Saint Anthony of Lisbon transforms the Portuguese coin into an object that called upon central African forms of devotion in which the saint and his visual characteristics played a central, evocative role. The Roman numeral for twenty, XX, similarly places the image of the Christian saint into the new context of Kongo religious thought. The numeral of foreign origin casts the pendant into a specifically Kongo visual and symbolic realm in which the *X*-shaped cross encodes multivalent notions of power, legitimacy, and the supernatural. It then enters into dialogue with crucifixes, monumental crosses, emblems of the Order of Christ and, with them, takes part in the layered and cumulative process of correlation through which Kongo Christianity emerged and evolved.

Heralding Kongo Christianity Abroad

The correlation operating in Kongo Christian regalia also contributed to elevating the status of the Kongo in the early modern Atlantic world. The slave trade factored heavily in the visibility of the kingdom on the global scene, but the close relationships the kingdom cultivated with the ruling elite of Europe—from Portugal and Rome to the Low Countries—through correspondence and diplomatic representations also shaped how it was perceived from Europe. A rich visual archive remains of these activities. Images of elegantly attired Kongo diplomats in paintings, prints, medals, and exquisite objects of wondrous form and exotic flair sent from the kingdom document how the Kongo presented itself on the international scene and chronicle the reception of its efforts in European courts. Yet, although the diplomatic efforts of the kingdom met with some success, the images and objects associated with them soon lost their original significance and faded into more prominent genres of European visual culture and their associated epistemological realms. Diplomatic gifts entered cabinets of curiosity where they became exotic specimens often without acknowledged links to Africa, and portraits of Kongo ambassadors were interpreted as generic representations of exotic peoples or grouped alongside images of black servants. The 1674 inventory of the Royal Danish Kunstkammer in Copenhagen, for example, described the portrait in Figure 67 (Plate 31), below, generically as "a moor with a hat with a red feather." Because of this trend, many important early modern depictions of the central African elite have not received scholarly attention as documents of African history.[42]

A striking example is the reworking of Albert Eckhout's portraits of the Kongo ambassadors to Brazil, discussed above, into cartoons for tapestries by the French Gobelins factory. Works such as *Le roi porté par deux Maures (The King Carried by Two Moors)* (Figure 62 [Plate 29]), manufactured after the cartoons between 1687 and 1740, feature some of the most precise depictions of Kongo dress and regalia of the period. The image of the so-called king in the hammock draws from the portrait of the ambassador in Figure 47 (Plate 19) and presents his regalia in even more detail. He wears a tall red-and-white mpu adorned with shells and triangular decorations in alternating white and black. A golden cross, perhaps of the Order of Christ, and two rows of coral beads falling beyond his waist hang from his neck. A red sash, white fur, and blue-checkered cloth cinch at the waist a rich yellow loincloth. A bow, arrows, and a quiver complete his look. The two men carrying the hammock also showcase detailed Kongo finery derived from Eckhout's paintings of the two junior envoys. Both wear nkutu nets over the shoulder and animal pelts around the legs. Tucked at the waist of the left bearer is a cloth depicting the geometric motifs common on Kongo textiles, as illustrated in Figure 72, below. The fringed border of the carrier to the right also hints at a finely worked raffia cloth. Yet the tapestry's detailed renderings, in their new context as palatial decoration in Europe, carried for their viewers little or no connection to the Kongo. Upon their arrival in France in 1679, the paintings sent from ex-governor of Dutch Brazil Johan Maurits van Nassau to Louis XIV that served as the basis for the tapestry cartoons described the scene as "representing how the Principal Negroes in Angola are carried in a hammock." A 1690 inventory of the cartoons, however, described the tableau as merely "a black King carried by two slaves, said King carrying an arrow."[43]

Research on images of Africans in early modern European art have endeavored to sort the portraits from the types, the eyewitness documents from

42. On the generic classification of African objects, particularly in Italian collections, see Ingrid Greenfield, "A Moveable Continent: Collecting Africa in Renaissance Italy" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, forthcoming). The inventory appears in P. J. P. Whitehead and M. Boeseman, *A Portrait of Dutch 17th Century Brazil: Animals, Plants, and People by the Artists of Johan Maurits of Nassau* (Amsterdam, 1989), 173.

43. "Le tableau representant, comme les Principaux Nègres en Angola se font porter dans une hamaque"; see Whitehead and Boeseman, *A Portrait of Dutch 17th Century Brazil,* 129; "Un Roy naigre porté par deux esclaves, lequel Roy tiens une flèche"; see M. Maurice Fenaille, *État général des tapisseries de la Manufacture des Gobelins depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours, 1600–1900* (Paris, 1903), II, 372. For the Gobelins cartoons, see ibid., 371–378.

FIGURE 62 *The King Carried by Two Moors (Le roi porté par deux maures),* Anciennes Indes series. Eighteenth century. Manufacture des Gobelins tapestry, France, wool and silk, 384 × 355 cm. After cartoons by Albert Eckhout. Photograph courtesy of Instituto Ricardo Brennand—Recife—PE—Brasil

the fanciful allegories and have greatly refined our knowledge of Europe's understanding of race and difference in the rapidly expanding early modern world. Looking at this visual archive with a clearer understanding of Kongo Christian visual culture allows us not only to understand better European views of the African realm but also to recognize the Kongo elite's own agency in fashioning their image and staking out a presence abroad. As the central African ruling class transfigured itself into a Christian aristocracy, it also brought to Christendom through its ambassadors the new and in some regards influential figure of the Kongo Catholic noble.[44]

Throughout the early modern period, the Kongo crown implemented an active diplomatic agenda, corresponding with and dispatching ambassadors to European courts. The emissaries sometimes were Europeans whom the king entrusted to use knowledge of their native lands to conduct his affairs. Yet Kongo men also often confidently set off for Europe to carry out their monarch's business with a keen understanding of the status that their conversion to Christianity should ensure them among other Christian princes. Except for the intriguing figure of the "Manicongo" king in the 1558 "Queen Mary Atlas," there are no extant European depictions of Kongo elites from the sixteenth century before the publication of the influential *Relatione del reame di Congo et delle circonvicine contrade* in 1591, which was based on the testimonies of Portuguese-born ambassador of the Kongo, Duarte Lopes (see Figure 43). Only luxury objects kept in cabinets of curiosities, such as the carved ivories and similar items found in the Medici collection, seem to have represented the Kongo in the Italian territories of the cinquecento (see Figure 21). The many central Africans residing in Portugal in the sixteenth century did not become the subject of known visual representations either. In contrast, the next half century saw a proliferation of depictions of Kongo nobles in European visual culture, reflecting the African realm's invigorated diplomatic agenda. Through correspondence, embassies, and gifts, the rulers of the Kongo endeavored to position themselves advantageously in relation to the events and shifting allegiances that rocked the geopolitical landscape of the troubled global scene in the seventeenth century. In parallel, Europe's overseas interests also intensified at that time and spread rapidly beyond the Iberian sphere; the post-Tridentine church became increasingly involved in extra-European evangelization. The visit of António Manuel, envoy of the

44. See, for example, the discussions of Africans in Renaissance art in Joaneath A. Spicer et al., eds., *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore, 2012). See also the series edited by David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, new ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 2010–).

king of Kongo to Portugal, Spain, and Rome between 1604 and 1608, engendered, in this context, an unprecedented reception and artistic celebration.[45]

The beginning of the seventeenth century marked a particularly delicate period for the Kongo and its relationship with Europe, owing in large part to the incorporation of Portugal into the Spanish crown between 1580 and 1640 and to the heightened conflict between Dutch and Iberian interests both in Europe and in the southern Atlantic. This era was also one of increased pressure on Kongo territories from the colony of Angola, strategically founded by the Portuguese in 1575, at the kingdom's southern frontier. Under such circumstances, the Kongo launched into a range of diplomatic negotiations with Holland, Spain, and Rome, seeking alliances and political support that would buttress its position as an independent, Catholic realm and keep Portuguese ambitions in check. António Manuel's visit was part of these efforts. The goal of the trip, according to extant archival records, was to ensure the standing of the Kongo king among Christian princes and to establish a direct relationship between the kingdom and Rome. The Kongo demanded recognition as a direct vassal of the pope, a strategic move that would effectively end the oversight that Portugal enjoyed over the central African church under the padroado, or patronage rights, on overseas religious affairs bestowed by the papacy to Lisbon in the course of the fifteenth century. This demand responded to the shortcomings of the preceding embassy of Duarte Lopes, during which the pope invoked the padroado and refused to consider the requests of the king of Kongo. Direct allegiance to Rome and the recognition it conferred on the kingdom as an independent, Catholic land would also help protect the realm against territorial invasion by Portugal through Angola. António Manuel had convincing arguments to sway the pope. As overlord, the papacy would receive part of the kingdom's precious ore; it would also be associated with the crusading efforts of the Kongo monarchs, who had already succeeded in converting several of their neighboring rulers. These proselytizing efforts were particularly important because they seemingly forged a path toward the realm of Prester John, Europe's legendary

45. Homem, "Queen Mary Atlas," 1558, Department of Manuscripts, Add. MS 5415A, fol. 14r. See the images included in [Lopes and Pigafetta], *Relatione*. A good summary of António Manuel's visit is published in Luis Martínez Ferrer and Marco Nocca, *"Coisas do outro mundo": A missão em Roma de António Manuel, Príncipe de N'Funta, conhecido por "o Negrita" (1604–1608), na Roma de Paulo V: Luanda, exposição documental* (Vatican City, 2003). African objects in early modern Italian collections have been discussed, for example, in Ezio Bassani, "Oggetti Africani in antiche collezioni Italiane, 1," *Critica d'Arte,* XLII, no. 151 (1977), 151–182; Bassani, "Oggetti Africani in antiche collezioni Italiane, 2," ibid., no. 154 (1977), 187–202. See the essay on António Manuel in Paul H. D. Kaplan, "Italy, 1490–1700," in David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *The Image of the Black in Western Art from the "Age of Discovery" to the Age of Abolition: Artists of the Renaissance and Baroque* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010), 93–190.

Christian ally beyond Muslim territories. Indeed, the ambassador cunningly sought permission from the pope to start building a road from the Kongo to Prester John's lands.[46]

The ambitious visit in reality suffered from disastrous travel conditions, difficulties made by the disdainful king of Spain, Philip III, and simple ill fortune. António Manuel died only days after reaching Rome and never officially appeared in front of Paul V. Symbolically, however, the visit had a deep impact on the Roman imagination and contributed to shaping the papacy's visual vocabulary of cosmopolitanism. In the years following the short-lived embassy, a range of artwork was created that featured the figure of the Kongo Christian noble drawn from the image of António Manuel. These works demonstrate the keen interest that the ambassador elicited in Rome; they also illustrate how his image as a metonymy for the Christian Kongo was strategically put to work in politically driven papal artistic commissions.

That the pope took a personal interest in the visit of António Manuel is clear. He hosted him in his palace, visited him on his sickbed, and, upon the envoy's passing, financed his funeral and ordered his death mask to be taken. António Manuel's visit aligned with papal interest in overseas evangelization. Kongo Christianity had recently been on the minds of Romans with the visit of Lopes as envoy of the king of Kongo in the 1580s, the publication in the city of Lopes's account of central Africa in 1591, and the closely related elevation of the Kongo's capital, São Salvador, to bishopric in 1595–1596. The visit of the

46. For an analysis of the geopolitical situation in this period that centers on Kongo, see John Thornton and Andrea Mosterman, "A Re-interpretation of the Kongo-Portuguese War of 1622 according to New Documentary Evidence," *Journal of African History,* LI (2010), 235–248. See also Jadin, "Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Sohio," *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome,* XXXVII (1966), 137–337. A summary of the instructions to António Manuel written in São Salvador, June 29, 1604, are found in Vat. Lat. 12516, fols. 47–49, Bibiblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, and another Letter from Álvaro II to Clement VIII, written in São Salvador, July 3, 1604, is in Miscellanea Armario I (91), fol. 200r–v, Archivio Segreto Vaticano; these documents are published in Brásio, *Monumenta,* V, 121–122. The other petitions are listed in Misc. Arm. XV (101), 51–52v, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, published ibid., 369–371. For Lopes's earlier diplomatic mission, see [Lopes and Pigafetta], *Relatione,* book II, chap. 6, 60–66. Álvaro I had already offered some mines to Clement XIII via the embassy of Duarte Lopes in 1583–1591; see Teobaldo Filesi, *Le relazioni tra il regno del Congo e la Sede apostolica nel XVI secolo* (Como, 1968), 150–151. For a discussion of the *padroado régio,* or royal patronage, see António Da Silva Rego, *Le Patronage Portugais de l'Orient: Un aperçu Historique* (Lisbon, 1957); Isabel dos Guimarães Sa, "Ecclesiastical Structures and Religious Action," in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, eds., *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400–1800* (New York, 2007), 257–259. Although there is no mention of the road to Prester John's realm in the papers concerning the visit of António Manuel, a 1620 document mentions that "opening the road from Congo to Prester John" was "one of the most important things that the ambassador D. Antonio Manuele, who died in Rome, had to discuss with Pope Clement"; see "Relazione data a Monsignrore Accorambono . . . circa la strada . . .," in Brásio, *Monumenta,* VI, doc. 143, 492 (quotation). Among Europeans, the perceived location of Prester John's lands moved over time from China to India and eventually, in the seventeenth century, was placed in Abyssinia. At the time, the Congo River and the Nile River were thought to flow from a common source.

ambassador from the African Christian kingdom was, therefore, cause for celebration. The fortunate coincidence of his visit with the epiphany, the day on which his official reception should have occurred but on which his funeral took place instead, offered a convenient theme for the ceremonials, which would echo the arrival of the faraway magi, or three kings, to Bethlehem. In spite of the premature death of the ambassador, Paul V and, after 1623, Urban VIII used the visit as an illustrative cameo of their foreign-policy ambitions. A lavish funeral for António Manuel brought his remains to Santa Maria Maggiore, a church known for its *presepe,* or crèche, and where a monument marked his tomb, later enhanced in 1629 with a polychrome marble bust by Francesco Caporale (Figure 63 [Plate 30]). A 1608 papal medal portrays the apocryphal reception of the ambassador by the pope (Figure 64), a 1610–1611 fresco in the Sala Paulina of today's Vatican Library shows Paul V at António's deathbed, and a 1616–1617 depiction of a Kongo ambassador is among the figures of the Quirinal Palace's Sala Regia. Finally, several engravings created shortly after the events also contribute to the *fama* of the visit (Figures 65 and 66).[47]

Many of the pages written about these images of António Manuel focus on the proportion of savagery and civilization lent to him by the artists in view of the peculiar mix of European and exotic attributes displayed in his portrayals. Although these discussions are important for exploring the European perspective on Africans at the time, they understandably suffer from a lack of knowledge about Kongo sartorial practices. As a consequence, they pay little heed to the part that the ambassador and his retinue played in the construction of their own image. The above discussion of Kongo elite regalia, however, allows for different interpretations. The portrait bust of António Manuel, for instance, carved from his death mask in a polychrome marble, provides a detailed depiction of not only the physiognomy of the ambassador but also his regalia (Figure 63 [Plate 30]). Francesco Caporale, almost twenty years after the death of António, minutely carved the nktutu net, the coat loosely draped over the shoulders in the Kongo fashion as well as arrows and quivers, and he elegantly transitioned the red belt and wrapper into the bust's pedestal. Similarly, the papal medal struck in 1608 portrays the short-haired, bearded ambassador apocryphally kneeling in front of Paul V, clad in the nkutu, a wrapper covering his legs, and a coat loosely hanging from

47. Black magi were not as common in Roman art as they were in artwork from other regions of Europe, but the date was propitious for the arrival of an exotic envoy. For a discussion of black magi in Italian art, see Kaplan, "Italy," in Bindman and Gates, eds., *The Image of the Black in Western Art,* 93–190. Kaplan also describes papal ambitions against secular powers, in particular the Holy Roman Empire, and discusses these artworks.

FIGURE 63 Francesco Caporale, *Bust of António Manuel ne Vunda*. 1629. Polychrome marble. Santa Maria Maggiore Baptistry, Rome. Photograph, Mario Carrieri, Milan / The Menil Foundation

FIGURE 64 Commemorative Medal of the Embassy of António Manuel ne Vunda (ambassador of Álvaro II, king of Kongo) to Paul V Borghese. 1608. Bronze, 3 cm. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, Medaglie papali, nn. 1435, 1436. Photograph © 2013 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, reproduced by permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved

his shoulders (Figure 64). These artworks, in other words, do not depict the ambassador in clothing vaguely evocative of exotic lands; they represent the specific details of Kongo Christian elite insignia.[48]

Two prints preserved together in the exemplar of Duarte Lopes's *Relatione del reame di Congo* in the Biblioteca Angelica in Rome gives the measure of the political moment invested in the trip of António Manuel and outlines the reception of the image that the Kongo diplomats projected of themselves (Figures 65 and 66). Both prints were published in 1608 by the Roman publisher Giovanni Antonio de Paoli, who was closely linked to the pope. They each present the likeness of António Manuel in an elaborate architectural

48. For an analysis of the artworks, see Kate Lowe, "'Representing' Africa: Ambassadors and Princes from Christian Africa to Renaissance Italy and Portugal, 1402–1608," Royal Historical Society, *Transactions,* 6th Ser., XVII (2007), 101–128. For a discussion of the medal and a bibliographical summary, see Martínez Ferrer and Nocca, *"Coisas do outro mundo,"* 111–114.

FIGURE 65 Guillermus du Mortier, *Don Antonio Manuel, marquis of Wnth, and Ambassador of the King of Kongo*. Rome: Giovanni Antonio di Paoli, 1608. Engraving, 25.3 × 19.4 cm. Private Collection, London

FIGURE 66 Attributed to Raffaello Schiaminossi (Italian, 1572–1622), *Don Antonio Manuele de Funta, Ambassador of the King of the Kongo to the Pope*. Rome: Giovanni Antonio di Paoli, 1608. Etching and engraving, 27.5 × 19.7 cm. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Purchased as the gift of Lorraine and Mark Schapiro, Baltimore, and Print & Drawing Society Fund, inv. BMA 1997.155. Photograph courtesy of the Baltimore Museum of Art

frame enhanced with allegorical figures and small scenes from the journey of the ambassador. The first, authored by Guillermus du Mortier, was commissioned by the Spanish cardinal Antonio Zapata y Cisneros, since 1606 cardinal-priest of Santa Croce in Jerusalem and soon to serve as the official representative of Spain in Rome. The portrait of António at the center of the print is encircled by a Latin inscription, "D. Antonius Emanuel Marquis of Wnth *[sic]* and Ambassador of the King of Kongo." Allegorical figures of Faith and Fortitude frame the cameo. Directly under the bust, a coat of arms is surrounded by a battle scene in which men using bows and arrows retreat under the assault of sword-bearing troops and cavalry. The escutcheon resembles that of the Spanish Inquisition, which Zapata led, but could also have derived from the coat of arms that António, as a prominent Kongo noble, would have possessed. The iconography of the escutcheon could echo known Kongo heraldic emblems, such as the prominent sword, the large cross, and, to the right, possibly a representation of a celestial apparition. The battle scene juxtaposed with the coat of arms would then make sense as a depiction of the battle in the story of the founding of the Christian Kongo.[49]

The ambassador appears here in indigenous Kongo regalia, with his muscular arms and chest bare under a fine nkutu net decorated at the neck with a medal and with a long span of fabric draped over his shoulders under a fly whisk. The martial iconography suggested by the battle scene and the weaponry shown in the architectural frame echoes the attributes António carries, bows and arrows in his tightly clenched right fist and a quiver on his back. His travels to Rome are suggested in the four triangular vignettes around the cameo, showing clockwise from the top right his journey by sea, his trek on horseback, the visit of the pope to his deathbed, and his body carried on a pall. Overall, the print presents António as a strong and exotic warrior whose might is literally and metaphorically framed by his Faith and Fortitude. The Kongo man represents just the kind of powerful, Christian ally that Rome sought in support of its project to expand its direct influence overseas. The pope's interest in António Manuel seems to have quickly changed Spain's attitude toward the ambassador. No longer was he disdainfully dismissed by the king as he had been before in Madrid; instead, as depicted in the print, he was positioned as an important figure within the orbit of Spain and under the auspices of one of its most prominent cardinals.

The second print, attributed to Raffaello Schiamiossi, presents, in contrast, António Manuel clad in European garb with the attributes of his role; he holds a folded and sealed letter in his right hand and points his left index finger in the attitude of speech toward the missive. The allegorical figures framing the central portrait evoke the diplomatic virtues of Faith and Prudence. The Latin inscription around the cameo also insists on the diplomatic mission of the African man, "Don Antonio Emanuel Marquis of Wnth *[sic]* Envoy of the king of Kongo to the Sovereign Pontiff." The four vignettes above and under the cameo present the eventful story of the embassy. At the top left, António kneels in front of Álvaro, king of Kongo, who gives António his benediction. To the right, the envoy arrives at the papal palace on horseback. At the bottom left, Paul V visits the ambassador on his deathbed, and, to the right, a large funerary cortege brings his body to rest in Santa Maria Maggiore "with regal Pomp . . . on the day of the Epiphany." Directly under the portrait, a ship at sea and men traveling on horseback evoke the rest of the voyage. These two scenes as well as the ones at the bottom are also the episodes included in the first print. The same coat of arms features above the bust, and under it is a skull and bones as a fitting *memento mori*. A text at the bottom of the print tells the story of António's travels and death and provides information on the Kongo, ruled by its "fourth Christian king," located in "the furthest part of Africa," and "very rich in ivory but very poor in metals." It also explains the appearance of the ambassador in the portrait. The people of the Kongo are all black like him, it notes, and "there is the custom to go naked with a simple cover of palm-frond cloth, but he [António] came to Rome in the clothing seen here."[50]

The ambassador's appearance clearly was a concern for contemporary observers. A detailed description of António in the Papal Ceremonial Diaries entry for January 2, 1608, stressed, in terms similar to the prints, his "noble appearance" and his "black face and flesh" and characterized him as "pious, devout, and very zealous of the Catholic Church" as well as "very prudent." The two prints depict the central African envoys in rich and specific detail. Far from token, formulaic representations of black men as servants or savages, these images captured the likeness of the Kongo man dressed as a European gentleman or in his impressive regalia of African Christian nobles. It is significant that António Manuel would be represented in his Kongo regalia in the presence of the pope when cermonies at the papal court were regulated by exacting sumptuary laws. In highlighting the foreign, exotic

49. For the volume containing the two prints, see inv. II 7. 24, Biblioteca Angelica, Rome. The illustrations used here are not from the Biblioteca Angelica but are from better-preserved prints in other collections. The word "Wnth," or "Vunth," in the title of the two prints refers to "Vunda," a part of the Kongo name and title of António Manuel.

50. For the print's attribution, see Spicer et al., eds., *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe*, 135. A broadsheet showing António Manuel, after Figure 66, appeared in the year of the ambassador's death in northern Europe with a German-language gloss; see John Roger Paas, *The German Political Broadsheet, 1600–1700* (Wiesbaden, 1985), 201.

features of the ambassador and, through him, the Kongo Christian kingdom, these images suggest a larger strategy by the papacy to showcase the span of its influence in an age marked by competition among European powers to encompass the world. This strategy is perhaps best illustrated in the frieze in the reception room of Rome's Quirinal Palace; a Kongo man is conspicuously placed among other envoys from faraway lands of particular missionary interest, including Japan and Persia. But, beyond the European perspective on António's visit, these images provide strong evidence for Kongo agency. They demonstrate that António and his entourage of Kongo men arrived in Rome prepared to make a full display of their African Christian regalia and, indeed, modeled it on subsequent occasions during the trip in displays from which Roman artists derived their images.[51]

The Sala Regia of the Quirinal Palace—in which frescoes painted between 1616 and 1617 form a visual manifesto of Paul V's foreign interests—also included a portrait of a Kongo ambassador probably inspired from António. There he appears among other distant envoys, but he alone wears European garb. An attendant standing close to him holds a large sword, which may be a reference to Kongo regalia in general, and possibly to António Manuel's coat of arms in particular. Directly facing the Kongo ambassador, across the ceremonial hall, is another African man wearing, notably, a large yellow cloak draped over his shoulders and a netted shirt reminiscent of the Kongo nkutu. This figure, generally understood to be an ambassador from the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia, thus appears in recognizably central African clothing, a revealing sign that the image of the Kongo Christian noble served at the time as the template for representations of African Christianity.

A comparison of the Roman visit with the one to Dutch Brazil in the 1640s, discussed above, helps us better understand how Kongo diplomats displayed their two looks. On May 12, 1642, Dom Garcia II of Kongo sent a letter to Johan Maurits van Nassau, the governor of Dutch Brazil, reaffirming his dedication to their alliance against Portugal while sternly stating his refusal to receive in his realm the protestant preachers the Dutchmen offered to send. "The evil of the Portuguese," Garcia warned Nassau, "is not enough to abandon the Catholic Faith." After the creation of the West India Company (West-Indische Compagnie, WIC) in 1621, the large Dutch commercial and war fleet occupied the Brazilian captaincy of Pernambuco in 1630, and,

51. See the diaries in Fondo Borghese, Serie I, vol. 721, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, published in Brásio, *Monumenta*, V, 393–403. Lowe explains that European clothing was usually required in papal receptions in "'Representing' Africa," Royal Hist. Soc., *Trans.*, 6th Ser., XVII (2007), 119–120. For a discussion of the Quirinal paintings, see Laura Laureati and Ludovica Trezzani, *Pittura antica*, 2 vols., Il patrimonio artistico del Quirinale (Rome, 1993).

from there, the Dutch expanded their presence in Brazil. Dutch interests then turned to Angola, the source for the enslaved manpower necessary to run their Brazilian plantations. They seized the opportunity offered by the time lag between the signing and the ratification of the Treaty of The Hague, which decreed a ten-year armistice between Holland and Portugal, to take control of a number of Portuguese ports, including Luanda in August 1642. The conquest of the capital of Angola took place as Portuguese troops were engaged with the army of the Kongo in the interior, executing a long-planned strategy the two allies had designed decades earlier. Brought together by a common enemy, the Kongo and the Dutch had shortly before renewed their decades-long alliance against Portugal.[52]

Following proper diplomatic custom, Garcia II sent along with his letter luxurious presents to Nassau. He mentions them at the end of his letter: a gold necklace, precious stones, and "a large silver plate." For this generous gesture, Garcia chose from his royal collection a gold-plated silver basin that had been sent to the Kongo from Peru in the preceding decades. Ironically, Nassau later presented the basin, which signified the proud claim of Garcia's grandeur and attachment to the Catholic Church, to the Reformed Saint Nicholas Church in Siegen, Germany, where it was reworked into a baptismal font. It can still be seen there today, bearing on its back an inscription describing its provenance: "The Prince Johan Maurits van Nassau dedicates this gift, which he received from the king of the Africans in Congo, to be used as holy baptism fount, to the Reformed Church of Siegen, 1658." The platter, produced around 1586 in Potosí, probably made its way to the Kongo through the illegal but well-traveled road linking the Peruvian altiplano to La Plata and Brazil, a clandestine trade route for the exchange of Peruvian silver for African slaves. The elegant and precious plate then entered the royal treasury of Kongo, where it sat alongside a range of precious diplomatic gifts bestowed to the Christian rulers by various European leaders and merchants.[53]

52. Garcia II's letter to Johan Maurits van Nassau, May 12, 1642, is in inv. 171 Z 4306, Hauptstaatsarchiv Hessen, Wiesbaden, Germany. For the role of the Kongo-Dutch alliance in the conquest of Angola, see Thornton and Mosterman, "A Re-interpretation of the Kongo-Portuguese War," *Journal of African History*, LI (2010), 235–248.

53. The gifts appear in an added paragraph alongside the signature in 171 Z 4306, verso, Hauptstaatsarchiv Hessen. See a description of the plate in Siegen in Friedrich Muthmann, "Die silberne Taufschale zu Siegen: Ein Werk der spanischen Kolonialzeit Perus," *Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, I (1956), 17. Latin American silverwork specialist Cristina Esteras Martín summarized the historiography on the platter. She is mistaken in dismissing the voyage of the platter to Kongo. Dom Garcia, who signed the letter, was indeed the king of Kongo and wrote from "Sam Salvador," the capital of his realm, not the homonymous Brazilian city, as she suggests. See "Basin," in Elena Phipps et al., eds., *The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530–1830* (New York, 2004), 211–212. I am grateful for Dr. Esteras's generous help in clarifying some of the sources on which she based her argument.

FIGURE 67 Jaspar Beckx, *Don Miguel de Castro, Emissary of Congo*. Circa 1643–1650. Oil on panel, 72 × 60 cm. National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen, inv. KMS 7. Photograph by permission of the National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen, © SMK Photo

The details of this exchange between Kongo king and Dutch governor shed new light on other visual traces of the diplomatic encounters between the Dutch and the Kongo, paintings produced on both sides of the Atlantic in which, as in the Roman case, Kongo ambassadors appear in both African and European attire. Court artist Albert Eckhout, as discussed above, painted Kongo envoys from Soyo during their stay in Brazil in a series of oil studies that depict them in full Kongo Christian regalia, which they wore to impress their host in an official reception and during the acrobatic sangamento they staged for the occasion. Ambassador Miguel de Castro and two of his attendants, Pedro Sunda and Diego Bemba, perhaps the younger men in Eckhout's oil studies, also posed for another series of portraits, now in Copenhagen, during their subsequent stay in the Low Countries (Figures 67 [Plate 31] and 68 [Plate 32]). Inscriptions at the back of the canvases identify the three men, represented in contemporary European clothing of varying sophistication according to their rank. Each of the two attendants present to the viewer one or more objects emblematic of the diplomatic exchanges between the Kongo and the Low Countries. One holds a woven box, and the other, an ivory tusk, prized gifts that the central African envoys offered to their European interlocutors. The tusk and the box are similar to known examples deposited in cabinets of curiosity during the period—that is, they are identifiable, coveted, and much-admired Kongo items. The ambassador, in contrast, does not carry presents but rather displays the gifts he received earlier from the

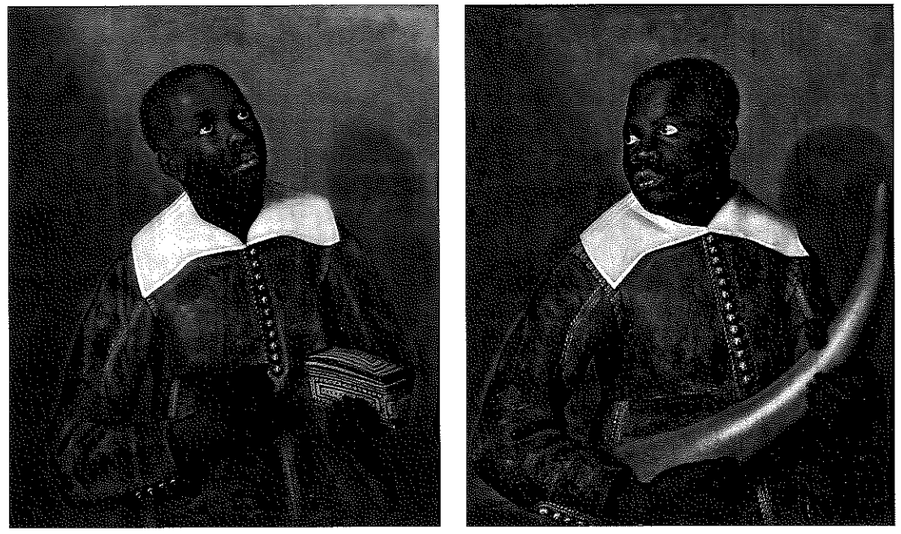


FIGURE 68 Jaspar Beckx, *Pedro Sunda and Diego Bemba, Attendants to Don Miguel de Castro*. Circa 1643–1650. Oil on panel, each 72 × 59 cm. National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen, inv. KMS 8 and KMS 9. Photograph by permission of the National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen, © SMK Photo

Dutch authorities while in Brazil, a black beaver hat enhanced with metal chains and red feathers and a sword the hilt of which peeks out at the lower right corner. The three canvases thus capture a reciprocal gift exchange between the Dutch and the Kongo, two allies whose mutual support was the key to their standing in the southern Atlantic in the mid-seventeenth century. They are not, as later inventories soon assumed, innocuous genre scenes displaying generic exotic objects and bodies for the entertainment of European viewers. On the contrary, they contain a political claim similar to the one the papacy formulated with its conspicuous heralding of images of António Manuel around Rome. The three canvases are a visual statement with which the Dutch made manifest their connections with the Kongo, an important ally who chose to support them rather than Portugal in their expansionist claims in the southern Atlantic.[54]

54. The men painted in Brazil could have been members of another diplomatic mission from the Kongo rather than Soyo, but they are likely the same people as in the Copenhagen canvases. These three paintings might have been painted by Albert Eckhout or by Jasper Becx; see Whitehead and Boeseman, *Portrait of Dutch 17th Century Brazil*, 173–174. Rebecca Parker Brienen mentions another existing version of Castro's painting in a private collection in Brazil; see Brienen, *Albert Eckhout:*

Dom Miguel de Castro, in fact, almost certainly took an active role in the composition of the paintings. While in the Low Countries in 1643, he asked the WIC for his portrait as well as a mirror to take home with him, demonstrating an intriguing interest in both his likeness and its representation. This interest—which perhaps emerged from seeing Eckhout's studies in Brazil—continued, and he later posed for artists in Europe. The WIC indeed commissioned six portraits of Castro and his men from painter Jasper Becx. One fulfilled the wish of the ambassador to bring home his likeness. Three others, intended as a gift to the count of Soyo and described as featuring Castro and his two attendants, could be the ones now in Copenhagen whose attribution remains debated; they may easily have failed to reach their intended destination. Finally, two canvases remained with the WIC in Zeeland, showing the sitter in both Portuguese and African dress. These representations of the diplomats in both European and Kongo finery underline how the African men put forward a public image that captivated Europeans with its flexible use of elite European dress as well as stunning and exotic African regalia—staged, on occasion, in spectacular performances such as the Recife sangamento.[55]

Literate, polyglot, and worldly, Kongo ambassadors successfully took up the visual challenges of diplomatic representation and furthered the cause of their homeland. In the reception hall of the Quirinal or at the seat of the WIC, images of Kongo Christians stood for their allies' belief in the kingdom as a potent asset for the realization of their overseas endeavors. In the case of António, his visit, even though it was cut short, would have as a direct effect a promise from the pope to send missionaries to central Africa. Indirectly, the visit also yielded the nomination of Spaniard Juan Bautista Vivès as permanent ambassador for the Kongo in Rome. He initiated plans for the Capuchin mission to central Africa and played an active role in the creation and early years of the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, the papal agency dedicated to global evangelization programs. Both the Capuchin mission and the Propaganda Fide answered the insistent requests of Kongo kings for a Christian clergy that would function outside the realm of the Spanish and Portuguese padroado. Embassies to Dutch Brazil and the Low Countries similarly advanced the Kongo's diplomatic agenda to distance itself from Portugal. Eventually, even if the images and objects linked to these visits

Visões do paraíso selvagem: Obra completa, trans. Julio Bandeira (Rio de Janeiro, 2010), 317. For the gift from Nassau, see Clarival do Prado Valladares and Luiz Emygdio de Mello Filho, *Albert Eckhout: A presença da Holanda no Brasil, século XVII* (Rio de Janeiro, 1989), 126. See the 1674 inventory describing the portraits in Whitehead and Boeseman, *Portrait of Dutch 17th Century Brazil*, 173.

55. About the canvases, see Whitehead and Boeseman, *Portrait of Dutch 17th Century Brazil*, 173–174.

FIGURE 69 André Reinoso, *Saint Francis Xavier Preaching in Goa*. 1619. Oil on canvas, 96 × 162 cm. São Roque Museum, Sacristy of the Church of São Roque, inv. 96. Photograph, Júlio Marques, courtesy of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa / Museu de São Roque

soon lost their potency, these two episodes tell an important story about the Kongo's partly successful engagement with the diplomatic networks of the Atlantic world.[56]

The evocative use of the figure of the Kongo noble to illustrate global missionary ambition was not limited to Rome. In the cycle celebrating the life of Saint Francis Xavier in Lisbon's Jesuit church of São Roque executed in 1619, Portuguese painter André Reinoso called upon a figure whose attributes closely connect to images of Kongo Christian elites (Figure 69 [Plate 33]). In an image of the saint preaching in Asia in front of a cosmopolitan congregation, Reinoso included two men dressed in the manner of the Kongo. Standing in front of a white horse to highlight their dark skin, both men wear strings of red beads around their necks and golden bracelets. The man in front also sports a loosely draped coat on one shoulder and a wrapper, and a

56. New missions for the Kongo are discussed in Misc. Arm., XV (101), 43–45, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, published in Brásio, *Monumenta*, V, 408–409. See also F. Bontinck, "Jean-Baptiste Vivès: Ambassadeur des Rois de Congo auprès du Saint Siège," *Revue du clergé Africain*, VII (1952), 262.

cross hangs from a coral string. Another painting in the cycle also depicts a similarly attired black man among a crowd of various nationalities gathered around the saint in a naval scene. This series of paintings was commissioned in the context of the renewed interest of the Jesuits in the Kongo. After an early mission to central Africa that lasted from 1548 to 1555, the members of the Society of Jesus returned to the kingdom in 1619, a date that coincides with the commission of Reinoso's cycle. The figure of the Kongo Christian, which in Lisbon would have been inspired by the presence of envoys from Africa—including António Manuel himself, who traveled through the city a decade earlier—is used here again as a metaphor for missionary success and the expansion of the church. Decades later, another painting, created in 1655 under Jesuit auspices for the Propaganda Fide and representing Gregory XIII's founding of "seminaries and colleges in and out of Europe," included among a crowd of foreign supplicants, directly to the left of the pope, a black man whose pose and costume closely echo Reinoso's figure.[57]

The ambassadors from the central African kingdom were thus successful in heralding Kongo Christianity abroad, partly fulfilling the goal of their mission to ensure the standing of their land as an independent member of Christendom. In the first half of the senventeenth century, their image, and the idea of a faraway Christian land, found fertile ground in Europe and prominently figures in the visual and political agenda of European powers for a short but notable moment.

Conclusion

More than a combination of mix-and-match pieces, Kongo Christian regalia formed a cohesive whole in which the symbols of prestige borrowed from Europe, as well as Christianity in general, entered into a complex and evolving dialogue with preexisting local visual expressions of might and prestige and their concomitant mythological and religious base. The conceptions, imagery, and symbolism that were brought together in the regalia outlined correlations that were cross-cultural but also historical, writing and rewriting Kongo history. The Kongo elite correlated in cumulative and interlacing streams objects and ideas that expressed their status as Christian nobles and participants in the Atlantic world while making sense of change according to their own worldview. Clothing and regalia offered one of the spaces of

57. The painting of Gregory XIII is published in Nobuo Watanabe, *Sekai to Nihon: Tenshō Keichō no shisetsu: Shinkan kaikan 10-shūnen kinen tokubetsuten / The World and Japan: Tensho and Keicho Missions to Europe 16th–17th Centuries* (Sendai-shi, 1995).

correlation within which this sophisticated conversation between Kongo religious, political, and historical thought and the novelties brought to their shore by an expanding world unfolded. Central African caps becoming an emblem of Christian elite status, a wrapper of Indian cotton transforming the Virgin Mary into a wealthy Kongo noblewoman, and even a European saint and Roman numerals recasting a Portuguese coin into a central African object of status and devotion all showcase the ways in which Kongo Christianity emerged and endured throughout the early modern period.

In turn, the correlation of local and foreign regalia formulated by the Kongo elite as a reflection on their own history of conversion endowed the kingdom's elite with a defined image that, as it traveled to Europe, contributed to the promotion of the kingdom and became a motif in European imagery of overseas Christianity. The image of the Kongo elite, if only for a few decades in the early seventeenth century, functioned in European missionary circles as a metaphor for the expansion of the church in Africa and in the world.

PLATE 1 Bernardino d'Asti, *The Missionary Gives His Blessing to the Mani during a Sangamento*. Circa 1750. Watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. From "Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," MS 457, fol. 12r., Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin. Photograph © Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin

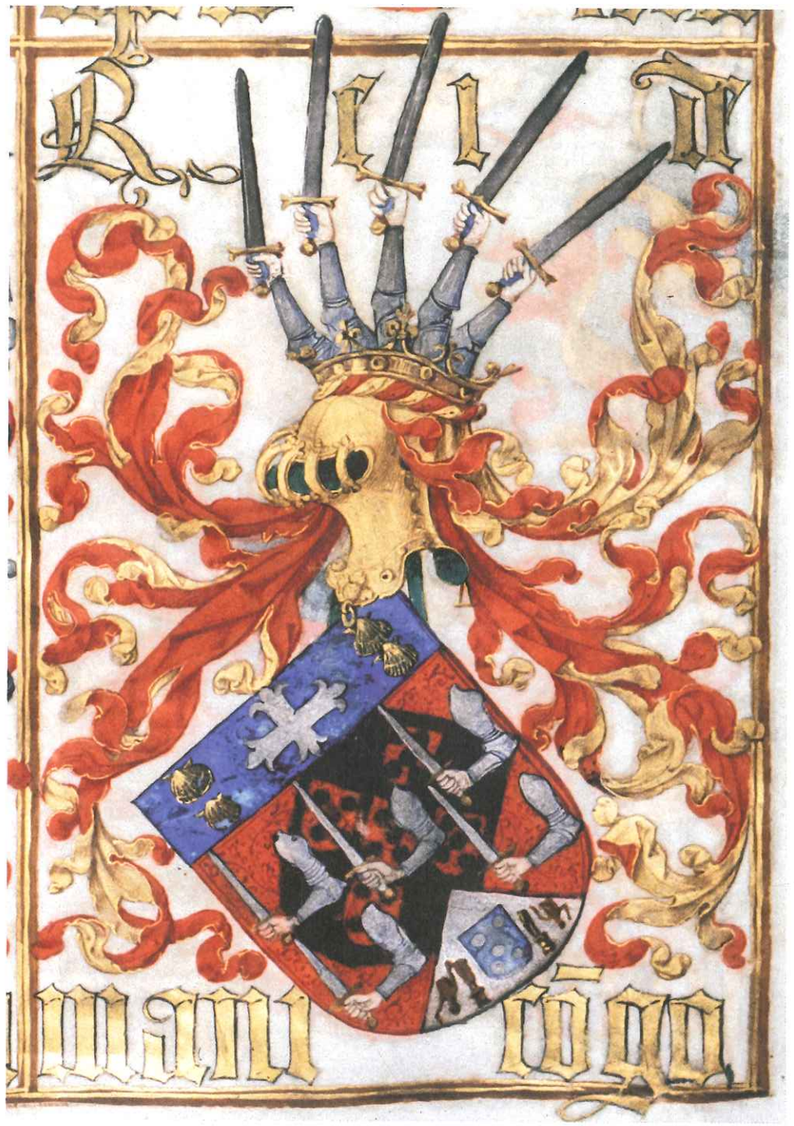


PLATE 2 António Godinho, *Coat of Arms of the Manicongo Kings*. 1528–1541. Ink on parchment, 43 × 32 cm. (full page). From "Livro da nobreza e da perfeição das armas dos reis cristãos e nobres linhagens dos reinos e senhorios de Portugal," Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, fol. 7, PT/TT/CR/D-A/001/20. Photograph courtesy of the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo

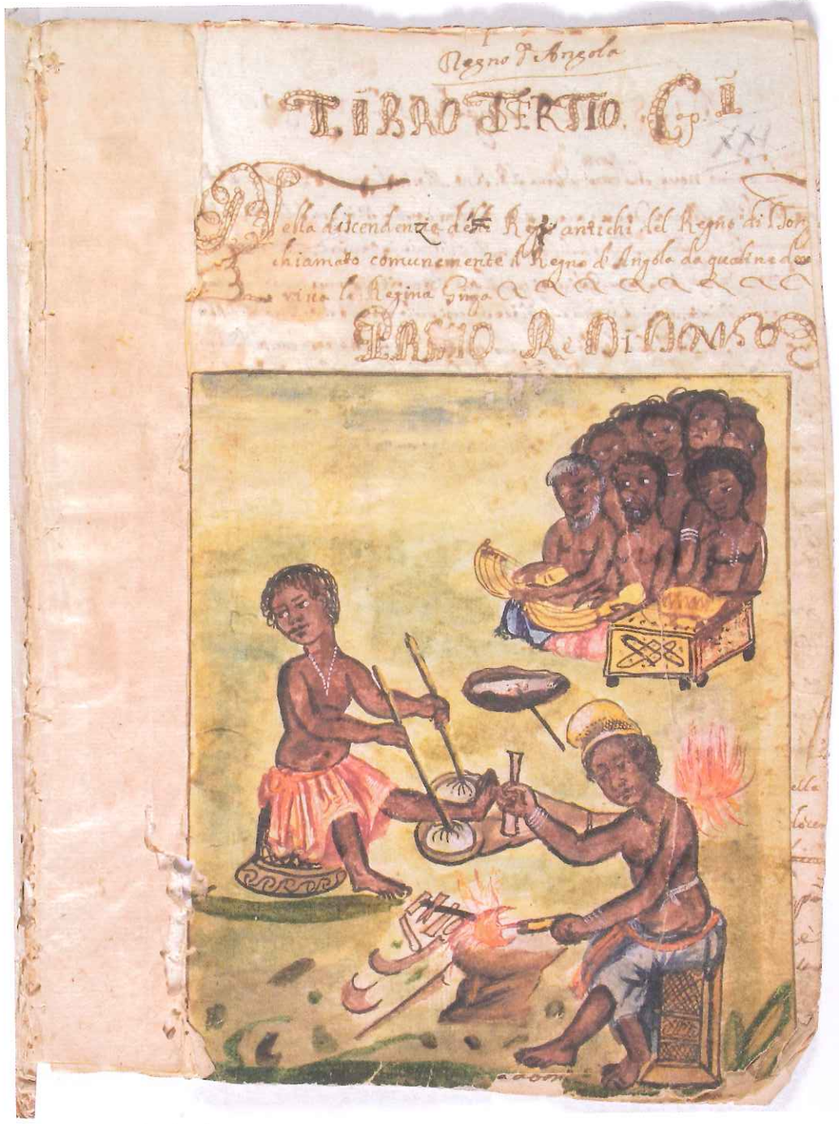


PLATE 3 Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, *First King of Dongo*. Circa 1665–1668. Watercolor on paper, 17 × 23 cm. (page), 13 × 15 cm. (watercolor). "Missione evangelica al regno del Congo," circa 1665–1668, Araldi Collection, vol. A, book 1, fol. XXI. Photograph by V. Negro, courtesy of the Araldi Collection, Modena

(opposite) PLATE 4 School of Juan de Flandes, *Saint James Matamoros at the Battle of Clavijo*. Early sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 96.5 × 68.3 cm. Museo Lázaro Galdiano, inv. 3025. Photograph courtesy of the Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid

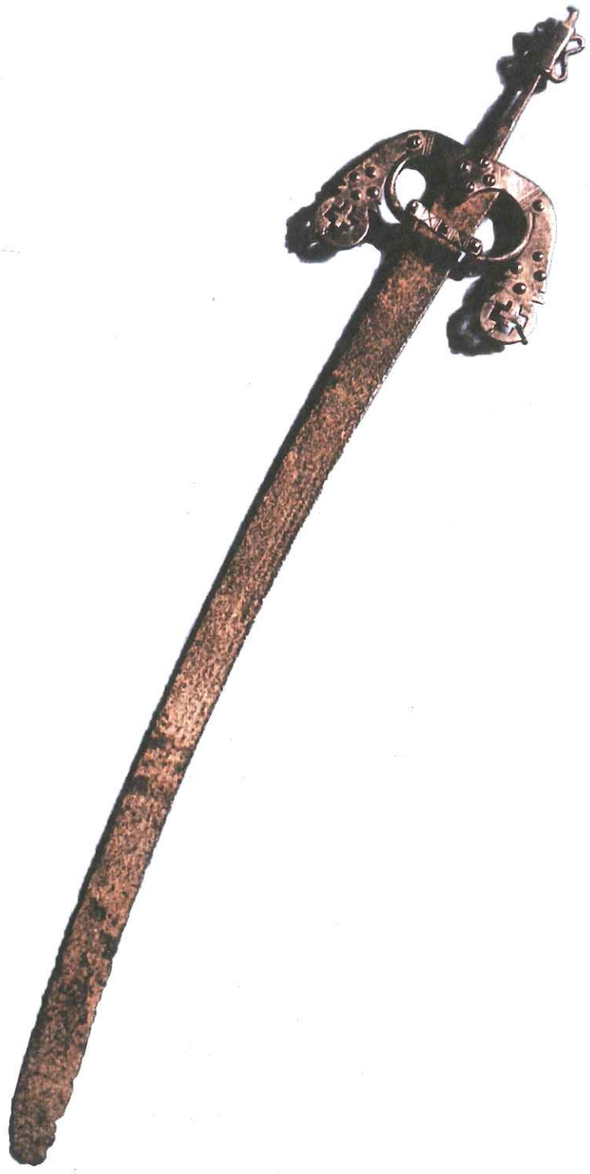


PLATE 5 Sword of Status. Kongo kingdom, sixteenth to nineteenth century. Iron, height 55 cm. Ethnological Museum—Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. III C 44945. Photograph courtesy of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

PLATE 6 Nkisi Nkondi. Bakongo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, before 1914. Wood, metal, cloth, shell, other material, height 85 cm. Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, inv. EO.0.0.22438. Photograph by Schneebeli, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren ©

PLATE 7 Nkisi Nkondi. Bakongo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, before 1878. Wood, metal, fabric, pigment, fibers, glass, 115 × 45 × 33 cm. Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, inv. EO.0.0.7943. Photograph, R. Asselberghs, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren ©

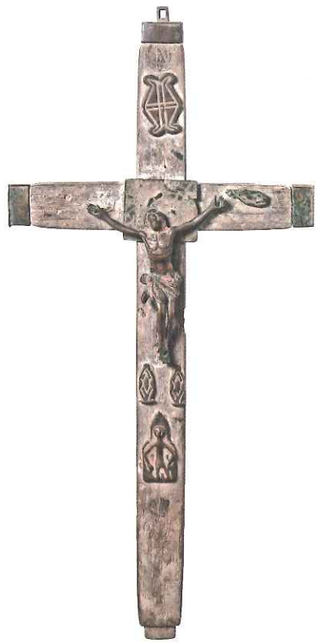
PLATE 8 Detail of a Sword of Status in the Chest of an Nkisi Nkondi. Bakongo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, before 1878. Wood, metal, fabric, pigment, fibers, glass, 115 × 45 × 33 cm. Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, inv. EO.0.0.7943. Photograph, J. M. Vandyck, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren ©

PLATE 9 Carlos Julião, *Black King Festival*. Last quarter of the eighteenth century. Watercolor on paper, 45.5 × 35 cm. (album). Iconografia C.I.2.8, drawing 49, Collection of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional—Brazil

(opposite) PLATE 10 Bernardino d'Asti, *The Father Missionary Helped by the Mestres Sings an Office of the Dead*. Circa 1750. Watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. From "Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," MS 457, fol. 8r, Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin. Photograph © Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin

PLATE 11 Kongo Crucifix. Kongo kingdom, possibly eighteenth century. Brass, 40 × 15 cm. Collection Albert Cochaux, Ohain. Photograph, Cécile Fromont

PLATE 12 Cross of the Order of Christ on the first page of a 1504 printed Rule of the Order. From "A Regra et Diffinçoões Da Ordem Do Mestrado De Nosso Senhor Ihũ Xp̃o," circa 1504, RES 127 V. fol. 1, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon. Photograph courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal



(top left) PLATE 13
Kongo Crucifix. Kongo kingdom, likely second half of the seventeenth century or eighteenth century. Wood and copper alloy, 20 × 11 cm. Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, Netherlands, inv. 29-381. Photograph, Studio Herrebrugh, © Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal

(top right) PLATE 14
Kongo Crucifix. Kongo kingdom, possibly seventeenth to nineteenth century. Brass and wood, 64 × 27 cm. Current location unknown. Image from Josef Franz Thiel, *Christliches Afrika: Kunst und Kunsthandwerk in Schwarzafrika* (Sankt Augustin, 1978), plate 87. Photograph courtesy of the Anthropos Institute, Sankt Augustin, Germany

(bottom left) PLATE 15
Kongo Cruxifix. Kongo kingdom, possibly seventeenth to nineteenth century. Wood and copper alloy, 54 × 26 cm. Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, Netherlands, inv. 29-377. Photograph, Studio Herrebrugh, © Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal

(bottom right) PLATE 16
Kongo Crucifix. Kongo kingdom, possibly seventeenth or eighteenth century. Wood and brass, 52 × 25 cm. Museu de Arte Sacra e Etnologia, Missionários da Consolata (Fátima, Portugal), inv. SMP 601. Photograph, Ana Paula Ribeiro, 2012, Museu de Arte Sacra e Etnologia, Fátima, Portugal

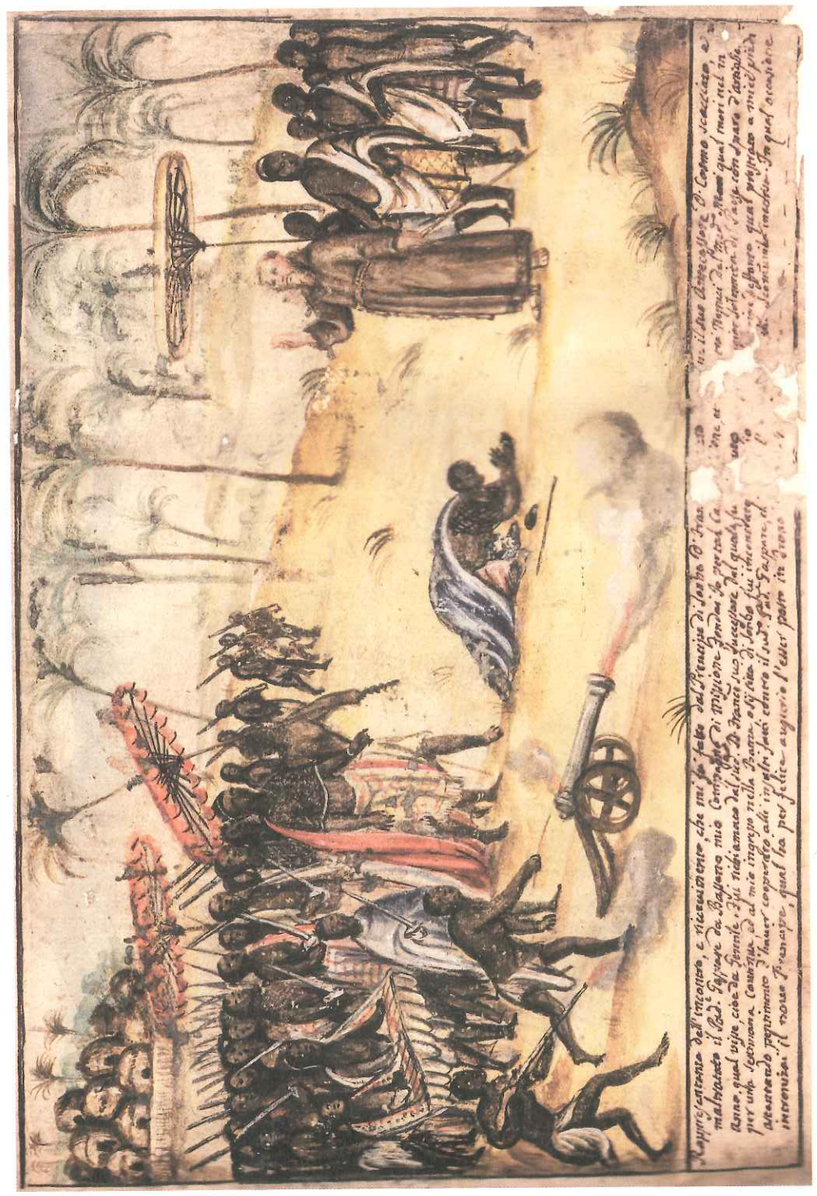
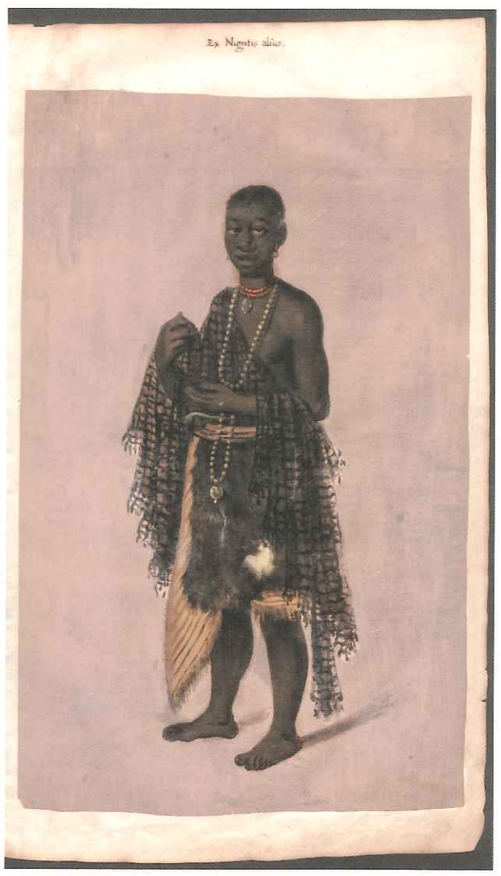


PLATE 17 Bernardino d'Asti, *The Missionary Comes Back to Soyo*. Circa 1750. Watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. From "Missione in pratticha: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," MS 457, fol. 91, Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin. Photograph © Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin

PLATE 18 Albert Eckhout, *Portrait of a Kongo Ambassador to Recife, Brazil*. Circa 1637–1644. Oil on paper, 30 × 50 cm. Libri Picturati A 34, fol. 3, Jagiellonian Library, Krakow. Photograph courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library Photographic Services

PLATE 19 Albert Eckhout, *Portrait of a Kongo Ambassador to Recife, Brazil*. Circa 1637–1644. Oil on paper, 30 × 50 cm. Libri Picturati A 34, fol. 1. Jagiellonian Library, Krakow. Photograph courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library Photographic Services



(left) PLATE 20 Albert Eckhout, *Portrait of a Kongo Ambassador to Recife, Brazil.* Circa 1637–1644. Oil on paper, 30 × 50 cm. Libri Picturati A 34, fol. 5. Jagiellonian Library, Krakow. Photograph courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library Photographic Services

(right) PLATE 21 Albert Eckhout, *Portrait of a Kongo Youth in Recife, Brazil.* Circa 1637–1644. Oil on paper, 30 × 50 cm. Libri Picturati 34, fol. 11, Jagiellonian Library, Krakow. Photograph courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library Photographic Services

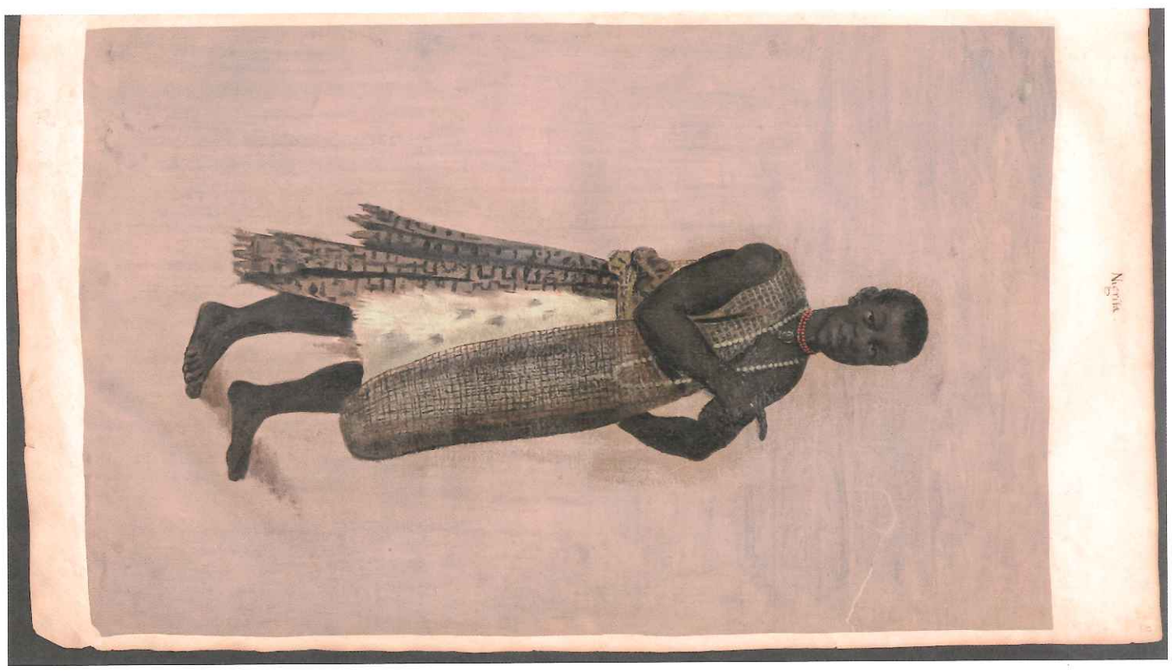


PLATE 22 Albert Eckhout, *Portrait of a Kongo Youth in Recife, Brazil.* Circa 1637–1644. Oil on paper, 30 × 50 cm. Libri Picturati 34, fol. 9, Jagiellonian Library, Krakow. Photograph courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library Photographic Services

PLATE 23 António de Oliveira de Cadornega, *King of Congo and King of Angola*. 1680. Watercolor on paper, 30 × 20.5 cm. (manuscript). Manuscrito Vermelho 77, frontispiece, Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, Portugal. Photograph courtesy of the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa

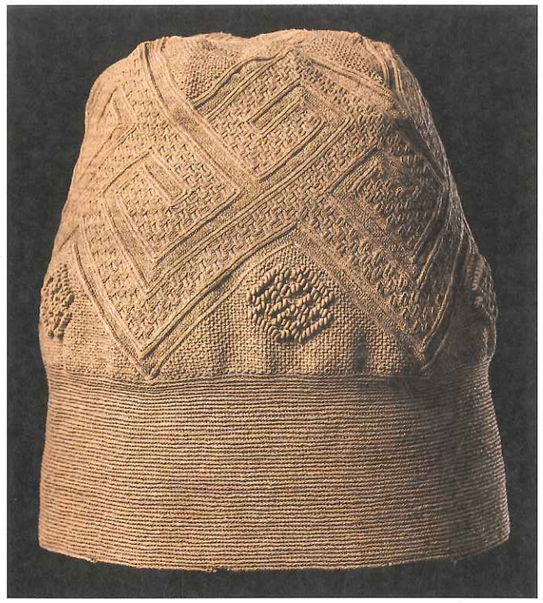


PLATE 24 Mpu Cap of Status. Kongo kingdom, before 1674. Vegetal fibers, height 18 cm. The National Museum of Denmark inv. no. Dc. 123 Hat. Photograph © The National Museum of Denmark, Ethnographic Collection

(left) PLATE 25 Saint Anthony Pendant. Kongo kingdom, possibly seventeenth to eighteenth century. Brass, height 10 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ernst Anspach, 1999, inv. 1999.295.1. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

(right) PLATE 26 Female Figure. Kongo kingdom, possibly seventeenth century. Brass, 9 × 3 cm. Private Collection. From Julien Volper, *Ora pro nobis: Étude sur les crucifix bakongo* (Brussels, 2011), plate 24. Photograph, P. Louis, © P. Louis and J. Volper

PLATE 27 Bernardino d'Asti, *The Missionary Blesses a Wedding*. Circa 1750. Watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. From "Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," MS 457, fol. 12v, Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin. Photograph © Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin

(opposite) PLATE 28 Bernardino d'Asti, *The Missionary Hears Confession*. Circa 1750. Watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. From "Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," MS 457, fol. 8v, Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin. Photograph © Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin

PLATE 29 *The King Carried by Two Moors (Le roi porté par deux maures)*, Anciennes Indes series. Eighteenth century. Manufacture des Gobelins tapestry, France, wool and silk, 384 × 355 cm. After cartoons by Albert Eckhout. Photograph courtesy of Instituto Ricardo Brennand—Recife—PE—Brasil

PLATE 30 Francesco Caporale, *Bust of António Manuel ne Vunda*. 1629. Polychrome marble. Santa Maria Maggiore Baptistry, Rome. Photograph, Mario Carrieri, Milan / The Menil Foundation

PLATE 31 Jaspar Beckx, *Don Miguel de Castro, Emissary of Congo*. Circa 1643–1650. Oil on panel, 72 × 60 cm. National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen, inv. KMS 7. Photograph by permission of the National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen, © SMK Photo

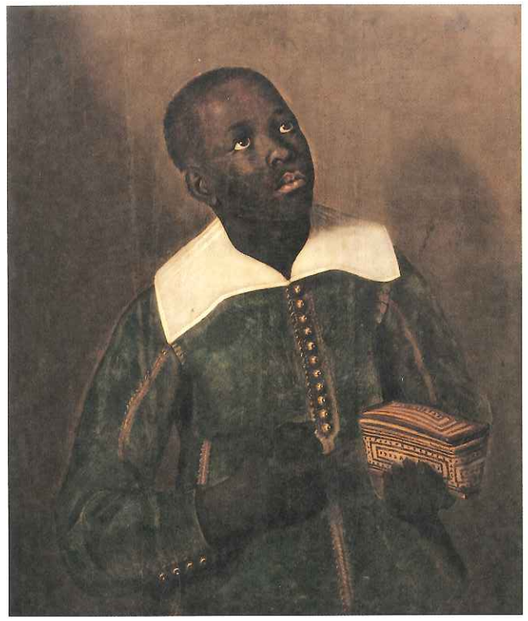


PLATE 32 Jaspar Beckx, *Pedro Sunda and Diego Bemba, Attendants to Don Miguel de Castro*. Circa 1643–1650. Oil on panel, each 72 × 59 cm. National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen, inv. KMS 8 and KMS 9. Photograph by permission of the National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen, © SMK Photo

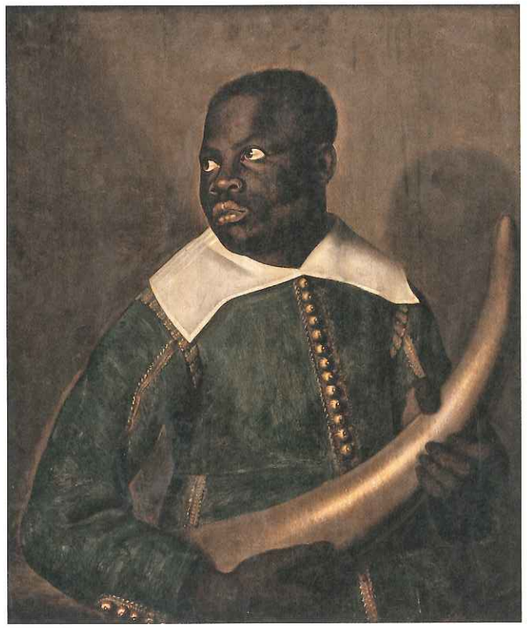
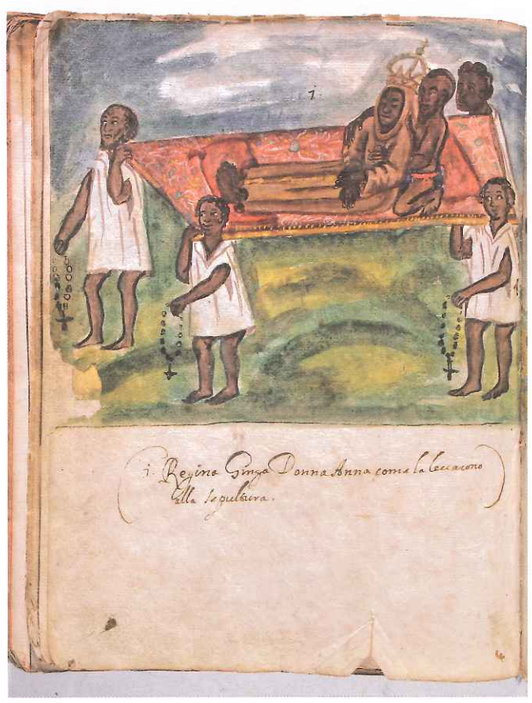
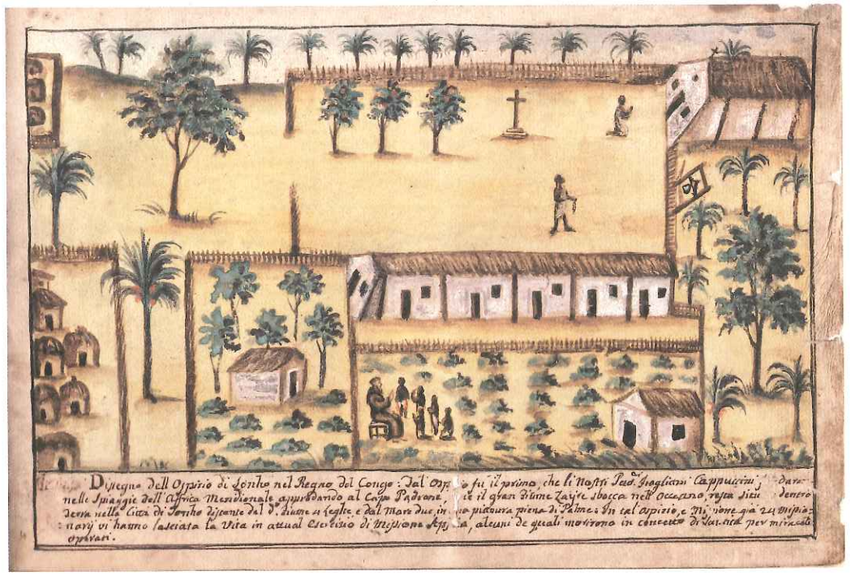


PLATE 33 André Reinoso, *Saint Francis Xavier Preaching in Goa*. 1619. Oil on canvas, 96 × 162 cm. São Roque Museum, Sacristy of the Church of São Roque, inv. 96. Photograph, Júlio Marques, courtesy of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa / Museu de São Roque



(left) PLATE 34 Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, *Queen Njinga Dona Ana Being Brought to Her Sepulcher*. Circa 1665–1668. Watercolor on paper, 17 × 23 cm (page). "Missione evangelica al regno del Congo," circa 1665–1668, Araldi Collection, vol. A, book 2, between fols. 210 and 211. Photograph, V. Negro, courtesy of the Araldi Collection, Modena

(right) PLATE 35 Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, *Catholic Procession in Angola*. Circa 1665–1668. Watercolor on paper, 17 × 23 cm (page). "Missione evangelica al regno del Congo," circa 1665–1668, Araldi Collection, vol. A, book 2, between fols. 210 and 211. Photograph, V. Negro, courtesy of the Araldi Collection, Modena



(above) PLATE 36 Bernardino d'Asti, *Plan of the Convent of Soyo in the Kingdom of Kongo*. Circa 1750. Watercolor on paper, 19.5 × 28 cm. From "Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti," MS 457, fol. 4r, Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin. Photograph © Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin

(left) PLATE 37 Charles Callewaert, *Fetish Hut in Lutele 1883*. Watercolor on paper, 29 cm. × 19 cm. Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, inv. HO.0.1.3114. Photograph Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren ©

4

Negotiating Time and Space

Architecture, Rituals, and Power in the Christian Kongo

Dance, regalia, objects of devotion, liturgy, and mythology come together in the *sangamento* and the funeral ceremony vividly recorded in Bernardino d'Asti's vignettes in the "Missione in prattica" (see Figures 2 [Plate 1] and 18 [Plate 10]). Framed in a space that a church and a monumental cross render visibly Christian, they enact correlations that defined the Catholic Kongo. The religious, political, and social changes embedded in the visual and symbolic manifestations of Kongo Catholicism unfolded in an environment that itself had been transformed by the kingdom's conversion. Churches and towering crosses created a politically and religiously charged landscape that monumentalized the history of the advent of the new faith, heralded the legitimacy it conferred to the new political order, and represented a new understanding of the nexus between the visible and the invisible worlds.

Cross as Nexus

The central plazas of Kongo towns, large open spaces called *mbazi,* served as the venue for the kingdom's political and religious rituals. The plazas extended in front of the rulers' residences and, in the Christian era, were next to the principal church and monumental cross erected in each locality. The monumental crosses and the churches were grand and permanent visual manifestations of the mythological and religious ideas on which the kingdom's political organization relied. They directly celebrated and memorialized the victory of Afonso over his heathen opponents and the ensuing conversion of the kingdom to Catholicism. Immediately after his triumphant advent to the throne of the Kongo in 1509, Afonso erected a towering cross in front of the church his father had built in the kingdom's capital, Mbanza Kongo. The gesture, as reported in sixteenth-century oral traditions, commemorated the momentous apparition of the sign of the cross during the fateful battle, after which the young prince became king and ensured a Christian future for the Kongo. The new monarch then ordered