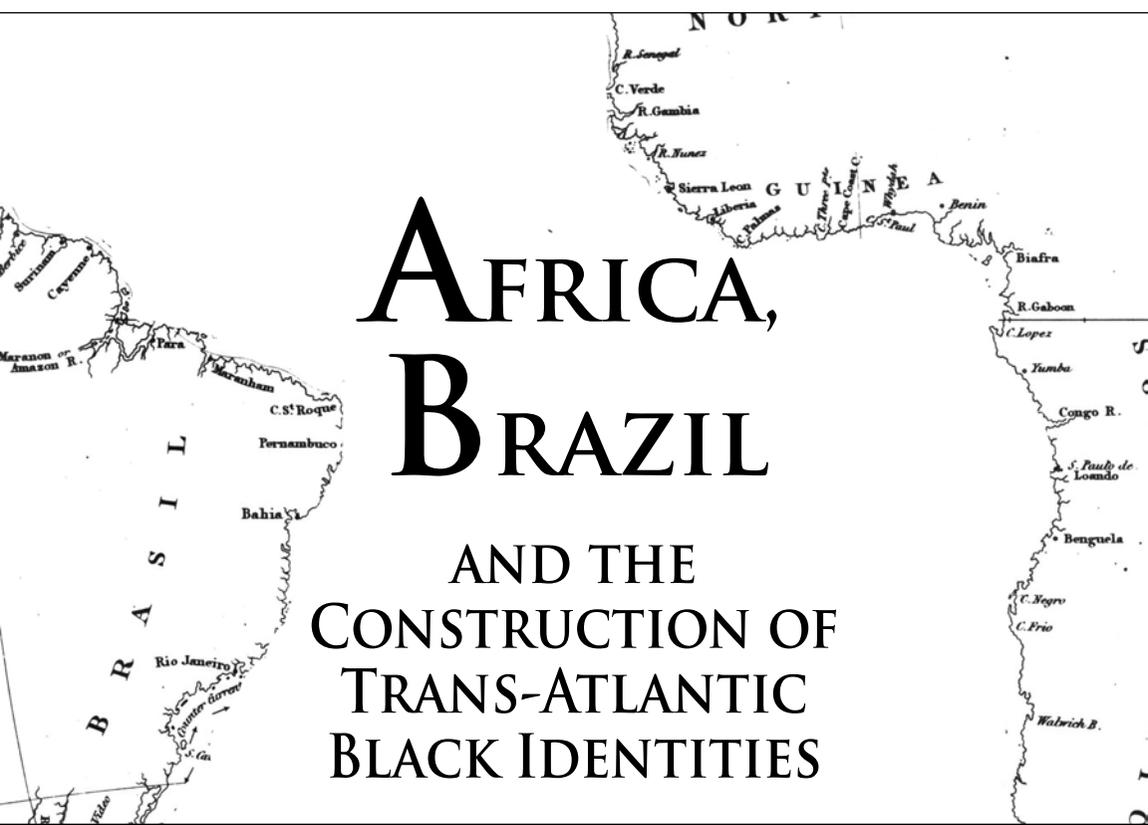


**Africa, Brazil and the Construction
of Trans-Atlantic Black Identities**



AFRICA, BRAZIL

AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF TRANS-ATLANTIC BLACK IDENTITIES

Edited by

Livio Sansone,
Elisée Soumonni
and Boubacar Barry

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Table of Contents



Foreword	vii
<i>Boubacar Barry, Eliséé Soumonni and Livio Sansone</i>	
Introduction	1
<i>Livio Sansone</i>	
PART I: AFRICA	
Chapter 1 Colonialism and the Creation of Racial Identities in Lourenço Marques, Mozambique	19
<i>Valdemir Zamparoni</i>	
Chapter 2 Every House has a Story: The Archaeology of Gorée Island, Sénégal	45
<i>Ibrahima Thiaw</i>	
Chapter 3 An Imaginary Ocean: Carnival in Cape Town and the Black Atlantic	63
<i>Denis-Constant Martin</i>	
Chapter 4 Transatlantic Transformations: The Origins and Identities of Africans in the Americas	81
<i>Paul E. Lovejoy</i>	
Chapter 5 Making Place, Making Race: St. Helena and the South Atlantic World	113
<i>Daniel A. Yon</i>	
Chapter 6 Looking Through a Broken Mirror: Blackness, Shared Memory, Shared Identity and Shared Destiny	127
<i>Chris O. Uroh</i>	
PART II: THE NEW WORLD	
Chapter 7 Global Names, Creolized Identities	147
<i>Alex van Stipriaan</i>	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 8	Ethnic-Religious Modes of Identification among the Gbe-Speaking People in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Brazil	179
	<i>Luis Nicolau Parés</i>	
Chapter 9	Saint Anthony at the Crossroads in Kongo and Brazil: 'Creolization' and Identity Politics in the Black South Atlantic, ca. 1700/1850	209
	<i>Robert W. Slenes</i>	
Chapter 10	The Construction of a Black Catholic Identity in Brazil during the Time of Slavery: Saints and <i>Minkisi</i> a Reflection of Cultural Miscegenation	255
	<i>Marina de Mello e Souza</i>	
Chapter 11	"From 'Near White' to 'Almost Black': Racial Classifications in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Brazil	269
	<i>Jocélio Teles dos Santos</i>	
Chapter 12	'Terras de Quilombo': Land Rights, Memory of Slavery, and Ethnic Identification in Contemporary Brazil	293
	<i>Hebe Mattos</i>	
Chapter 13	The Atlantic Connection: History, Memory and Identities	319
	<i>Ubiratan Castro de Araújo</i>	
	The Contributors	335
	Index	341

Chapter 9

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS IN KONGO AND BRAZIL: “CREOLIZATION” AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE BLACK SOUTH ATLANTIC, ca. 1700/1850

Robert W. Slenes



In the dismembered Kingdom of Kongo in 1704-1706, a prophetess named Beatriz Kimpa Vita gathered a remarkable popular following. Representing herself as having died and been reborn as Saint Anthony, Kimpa Vita promised to reunite the Kingdom, officially Christian since 1491,¹ so as to end the constant violence and slave raiding that had beset it for decades. To this purpose, she worked to restore the Kongolese people to harmony with the spirit world by destroying sacred charms, including Christian crosses, which could be weapons for witchcraft. Her aims and actions, particularly her death and rebirth to a new identity by spirit possession, reflected her movement's origins in an autochthonous “community cult of affliction” (a cult seeking to restore the “health” of its group of reference), named *Kimpassi*. In Brazil a century and a half later, at a time of intense traffic in slaves from Central Africa, especially from the Kongo culture area, similar events occurred. In Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo provinces in 1848 and 1854 political-religious movements among plantation slaves—the earlier one underlying a major plan for rebellion—also invoked Saint Anthony, while taking the form of community cults of affliction reminiscent of *Kimpassi*.²

These similarities demand an analysis of the understandings and interpretations of the people involved. Did the “Antonians” (the followers of Kimpa Vita) and the slaves who cultivated Saint Anthony in Brazil attribute the same meanings to this holy figure as the Portuguese and

Luso-Brazilians, for whom “Anthony of Lisbon and Padua” was virtually the patron saint?³ To what transformations had Anthony been subjected to make him compatible with the Kimpasi cults? Had a Central-African Saint Anthony gone to Brazil, along with slaves from Kongo and the Portuguese sphere of influence centred in Luanda?

Saint Anthony, integrated into Kimpasi-related movements on both sides of the “Portuguese Atlantic”, offers a unique opportunity for the study of “creolization”. By “creolization” I mean “transculturation”: the selective appropriation and reinterpretation of the culture of the “other”, as engaged in by all groups involved in a given situation of contact and conflict.⁴ On the African side, the question has been intensively studied, notably in recent years by John K. Thornton. I share Thornton’s basic approach: first, his insistence on the achievement of enslaved Africans in the Americas—as groups of origin—in re-founding and maintaining to a significant degree their native cultural communities, while engaging in transculturation with other groups from their home continent; second, the idea that African/European creolization was an active process from the beginning and commenced, particularly in the Portuguese world, in Africa, not in the Americas.⁵

Thornton has shown that a “naturalized” Christianity, reinterpreted within the matrix of the autochthonous religion, was thoroughly rooted in the Kongo by the eighteenth century.⁶ I build on this idea to argue that European ideas and texts on Saint Anthony had penetrated certain sectors in the Kongo to a greater extent than even Thornton has suggested. Indeed, the accusation by Capuchin missionaries that Kimpa Vita was a heretic was in a sense true; she knew the Catholic tradition so well that she could radically reinterpret it “from within”, even while reading it from a Central-African perspective.

On the other hand, Thornton has also given considerable attention to the “culture wars” over Christianity in the Kongo: that is, the contrasting ways of re-signifying Catholic dogmas and icons for different political purposes.⁷ I attempt to further sharpen this focus here, on the assumption that political strategies, elaborated to define contending social identities, are central to the process of creolization/transculturation. From new data regarding the clash of missionaries and native authorities at the local level and a new interpretation of Kimpa Vita’s allegories regarding the different origins of blacks and (white) missionaries, I argue, more emphatically than Thornton, that the Antonian movement rejected missionary Christianity as witchcraft, at the same time that it appropriated Saint Anthony and other Christian holy figures for the Kongolese peasantry, integrating them

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

in new ways into the indigenous religious system. In addition, it used the new synthesis to press political leaders to remedy the situation of endemic instability and re-embrace autochthonous values if they wished to maintain their legitimacy. In sum, the Antonian cult was both a nativist movement and a denunciation of the ruling elites' betrayal of trust.⁸

In later years, Kimpasi-like movements in Brazil's South-east incorporated Saint Anthony in a similar manner, as part of the formation of a Central-African identity among plantation slaves in opposition to that of their masters. In doing so, these cults probably built on Anthony's prior "naturalization" in the Kongo, which continued through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. In the political and cultural crossroads of Kongo and Brazil, Saint Anthony was directed by Central-Africans and their children down unexpected paths. In both cases, this creolized holy figure contributed to forming new social identities, often defined in opposition to those of the people from whom he had been appropriated.

I

In 1965, sociologist Georges Balandier argued that the Kongo king converted to Christianity in order to acquire a new but not exclusive source of *ngolo*, or "power". The idea was developed in depth by John Thornton and Anne Hilton in their books on the Kingdom of Kongo, published respectively in 1983 and 1985.⁹ For both authors, Kongo royalty saw in Catholicism the opportunity to build a centralized religious hierarchy under the control of the state, much as the Portuguese monarch had done under the *padroado*, and thereby strengthen their political control over the conquered provinces. These Central-African rulers never obtained the Pope's authorization of an African *padroado*, nor even the permanent establishment of a Church hierarchy subordinated to Rome, which would at least have allowed the ordainment of native Kongolese. They did, however, receive a significant number of secular and regular priests (particularly Italian Capuchin missionaries, from 1645), adopt Portuguese as the official language of correspondence, encourage the residence of a substantial, largely Portuguese, trading community in the capital, Mbanza Kongo (also given the name São Salvador), and embrace Christianity as the state religion, without necessarily discarding indigenous religious sources of *ngolo*. As a result of their efforts, in the beginning of the eighteenth century it was possible for a female "Saint Anthony" to realize the extraordinary feat of building a broad-based prophetic movement with strong support among the peasantry.

By far the most thorough study of Kimpa Vita and the Antonian movement is Thornton's *The Kongolese Saint Anthony* (1998b). For my purposes here, three lines of argument in the book stand out. First, there is the detailed documentation of the degree to which Christian religious festivals (for instance, All Saints' Day and St. James' Day) took root in the Kongo, particularly in the capital, the extent to which Christianity was propagated (largely through lay catechists and preachers—*mestres*, “teachers”—literate in Portuguese, recruited from the Kongolese nobility) and the fervour with which this originally “imported” faith was professed by the Kongolese elite. Second, there is the clear demonstration of how Christianity was “naturalized” by selective reinterpretation, based on autochthonous categories. (Thus, among Christian celebrations, All Saints' Day lent itself particularly to cultivation by people concerned with honouring the recent dead and the ancestors of their matrilineal clans, or *kanda*.)¹⁰ Third, there is an emphasis on conflict, arising out of the confrontation of different religious actors (for instance, Capuchin missionaries and *Kitome*, or native high priests who mediated between the human community and the *bisimbi*, regional tutelary earth and water spirits) and of Kongolese proposing contrasting interpretations of Christianity.

I will attempt to advance further on all three of these fronts, taking as my starting point one of the high moments of Thornton's book, his analysis of the “Salve Antoniana”, Kimpa Vita's reworking of the “Salve Regina”. Thornton notes that a crucial change in the prayer was Beatriz's assertion that “Gods wants an intention, it is the intention that God grasps. Baptism [like marriage, confession, prayer, good works] serves nothing, it is the intention that God takes”. Remarks Thornton: “in Kongo ... intention is critical to determining whether the use of *kindoki* [otherworldly power] is positive or negative, and hence to be considered helpful or evil, so that these lines transport the concept of *kindoki* firmly into the prayer”.¹¹ Yet, Thornton does not convincingly explain why it made sense, in Kongolese terms, for Kimpa Vita's prayer to put Saint Anthony “above the angels and the Virgin Mary” and recognize him as “the second God”, *il secondo Dio* in the Capuchin sources. (Anthropologist Wyatt MacGaffey has suggested that the epithet “second God ... is strongly reminiscent of the position attributed to Funza, chief of all ... [bisimbi]”; but this still does not tell us what it was in the Saint that led Beatriz to make this identification.)¹² Furthermore, Thornton does not satisfactorily account for why Beatriz ended her prayer with repeated expressions of “mercy, mercy”, indeed, why this became virtually a *cri de guerre* of the movement.¹³

I begin with the problem of Saint Anthony, which requires looking first, in more detail, at the Kimpasi. These cults have appeared in the

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

Kongo historically during times of severe community affliction, attributed to witchcraft (evil *kindoki*) run rampant. Typically, they have exhibited the following characteristics, all part of the effort to place the human community in harmony again with the tutelary earth and water spirits: the holding in high regard of stones of spherical or other unusual shape, often taken from watercourses and deemed to be manifestations of *bisimbi*; the use of a “secret language” among cult members, consisting usually of the attachment of special prefixes or suffixes to normal words; meetings in clearings deep in the forest; the inclusion of both males and females as members and priests, initiated, at least in the twentieth century, as children or adolescents (but after “tribal initiation”/circumcision), or even when older; initiation through a ceremony of ritual death and rebirth, with the new member incorporating an individual guiding spirit (from the realm of the *bisimbi* or from that of ancient human “ancestors” associated with them) while in trance and taking its name and identity for the rest of his or her life.¹⁴ As Thornton and Hilton have observed, Kimpa Vita reported her “rebirth” as Saint Anthony in terms that would have been credible to people raised in the *bisimbi* and *Kimpassi* tradition.

Yet, practically no one who has written about Kimpa Vita’s movement has noticed that there is a remarkable similarity between elements of Antonian devotion, particularly the “*Salve Antoniana*”, and the traditions and teachings about the Saint in Portuguese and Italian sources. In sum, circumstantial evidence suggests that the Antonians, particularly Kimpa Vita, a member of the nobility, were well-versed in European lore. Yet, at the same time, the peculiar European configuration of Saint Anthony’s attributes and miracles lent itself, even more than Thornton suspected, to reinterpretation by people devoted to the *bisimbi* and steeped in the *Kimpassi* tradition.

Thornton notes that Kimpa Vita’s sermons presented “Saint Anthony . . . [as] the most important saint” and that “it was not difficult to convince people of this, for Saint Anthony, as patron of Portugal, was regarded as being a patron . . . of Kongo as well”.¹⁵ Furthermore, Anthony and Saint Francis were “[already] the saints most venerated in Kongo”. To this, it should be added that Saint Anthony was not only revered by the Lusitanian Court, but was also the saint most often called upon in the devotion of the Portuguese people. Then too, the high esteem given to Saints Francis and Anthony in the Kongo must, in part, have reflected the fact that the Italian Capuchins, the major missionary group in the kingdom and a suborder of the Franciscans (who counted Anthony as prominent member and Francis as founder), were particularly devoted to these holy figures. Thus, one might expect that Portuguese and Italian priests would

have brought to the Kongo books and manuscripts for proselytizing and teaching that gave a certain pride of place to Anthony. That they did have texts and valued them highly is beyond doubt; when a mission church in Soyo province was sacked in 1708, one Capuchin noted that “the missionaries ... were deprived of everything, even their sermons”.¹⁶ That Saint Anthony figured as author or theme of some of these texts is suggested by Bernardo da Gallo, the Capuchin missionary who is the main eyewitness source on the Antonians. Da Gallo wrote that Kimpa Vita “had perhaps heard some sermon of [or about?] Saint Anthony in Portuguese, that was in the hands of some black man of little account [*sic*], who knew how to read a bit”: that is, a mestre, and thus almost certainly a member of the Kongolese nobility.¹⁷

In the light of da Gallo’s statement, the compilation of sermons and writings attributed to Saint Anthony, most notably the 1641 and 1653 editions in Latin reputed to be the most complete, is the first possible source of Kongolese knowledge about this saint that should be mentioned. A second, perhaps even more important, is the *Book of Miracles* (later, the *Little Flowers*) of Saint Anthony, the most famous compilation of the marvellous deeds attributed to the saint, dating from the early 14th century. Another is Lorenzo Surio’s *Life of the Saints*, published in Latin in six volumes between 1570 and 1575, and subsequently in several vernacular translations, Italian included; Surio’s work recounted many of the stories about Anthony’s miracles and was “an obligatory presence in the library of every monastery, convent or parish house”.¹⁸

A fourth work, or set of texts, includes the nine sermons on Saint Anthony given by the Portuguese Jesuit preacher Antônio Vieira in various places between 1638 and 1672.¹⁹ Published versions of all nine sermons in Portuguese could have reached the Kongo by the end of the seventeenth century in the first edition of Vieira’s collected sermons, prepared by the author himself.²⁰ Some of them could also have arrived there in Spanish, Italian or Latin collections.²¹ Manuscript versions could have reached the Kongo earlier. One researcher has discovered that a copy of Vieira’s then unpublished *Clavis Prophetarum* was circulating amongst Jesuits in Minas Gerais, Brazil, ca. 1715-1719.²² Another has shown that Vieira commonly gave his sermons from rough outlines, which he then fleshed out later, in preliminary versions, attending to the requests of other priests, who naturally were interested in the pulpit speeches of this renowned preacher. First drafts then apparently circulated (and suffered revisions) in unauthorized copies, sometimes reaching publication in versions that were repudiated by Vieira himself.²³ Vieira’s seventh and eighth sermons on Saint Anthony were proffered in Rome in 1670 and 1671; thus, in view of the preacher’s

fame and the Capuchins' devotion to Saint Anthony, it is particularly plausible that preliminary versions of these sermons could have found their way to the mendicant order's headquarters in Italy and thence to the Kongo before their publication in Portuguese in 1682 and 1699. On the other hand, the fact that five of the sermons and the second half of a sixth were published in 1696 and 1699 meant that most of Vieira's preachments on Saint Anthony would have been relatively "hot off the press"—and thus perhaps still circulating as high-profile novelties among missionaries and *mestres*—at the time *Kimpa Vita* took on the Saint's identity. In any case, Vieira's sermons, while masterpieces of rhetoric, probably articulated the standard sources on Saint Anthony mentioned above in ways that were mostly familiar to his European audience; thus, independently of whether and how long they circulated in the Kongo, they provide us with some idea of the notions regarding the Saint that priests and missionaries would have carried with them and propagated in the Kongo, particularly through the *mestres*.

W. G. L. Randles was the first (and to my knowledge only) historian of Africa to speculate that *Kimpa Vita* might have been inspired by one of Antônio Vieira's sermons.²⁴ After quoting the phrase from Bernardo da Gallo cited above, Randles called attention to Vieira's 1638 sermon in Salvador, Bahia (published in Portuguese in 1690) in which the preacher gave Saint Anthony credit for forcing the Dutch to end their siege of that city. Vieira calls Anthony "Saint of all Saints", therefore the special protector of São Salvador, Brazil, located on the "Bay of all Saints"; furthermore, to face down the Dutch threat, God had particularly "delegated his powers" to Anthony. Randles cited the last part of *Kimpa Vita*'s "Salve Antoniana"—"Saint Anthony is the restorer of the kingdom of Kongo, . . . Saint Anthony is himself the second God"—and then asked: "would it be going too far to imagine that the Kongolese had seen, in the providential deliverance of São Salvador, Bahia . . . an example permitting the hope that São Salvador in the Kongo might have an analogous deliverance?" (He referred here to *Kimpa Vita*'s goal of resettling Mbanza Kongo, then in ruins, and making it once again the capital of a prosperous, peaceful kingdom.)

Randle's suggestion, while stimulating, remained at the level of speculation, since he called attention to only one of Antônio Vieira's sermons on Saint Anthony and made no attempt to put the preacher's work into a broader context. In fact, Vieira makes clear that Anthony was the "Saint of all Saints" because he occupied a place in all the various categories of saints and stood near the top in many of them; he was martyr among martyrs (he once had the intention to martyr himself), virgin among virgins (he was known to have a special resistance to temptations of the flesh), etc.²⁵ (It

has not been noted by specialists on the Antonians that Kimpa Vita's pregnancy must have been especially embarrassing to her, for she had assumed the identity not just of any saint but of the quintessential virgen among them—indeed, as we shall see, one whose purity had been received from the Madonna herself.) Vieira did not invent these notions with his rhetoric, but took them from popular tradition, the book of Anthony's miracles and hagiographic works. Still, he presents Anthony as "Great" in this and in the other sermons with hyperbole that could strike a listener unfamiliar with baroque rhetoric as blasphemy. In a 1658 sermon (published 1696) he compares Anthony to the triune God; Anthony is the "imitator" of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, combining their respective powers of "doing", "teaching", and "calling". Indeed, Vieira here refers to Anthony as "this Portuguese God, or Vice-God"; "just as divine providence made Moses god of Egypt, with power over the elements . . . , so also He made Saint Anthony with that same *power of doing* [*fazer*], not God of only one reign, or of part of the world, but of all of it, with universal dominion over all creatures".²⁶ The hyperbole here comes even closer to Kimpa Vita's "second God" than "Saint of all Saints". Developing this notion further, in the 1670 sermon in Rome (published 1699), Vieira compares Christ's miracles to Anthony's and finds them wanting—as anyone might, when comparing the respective deeds of these figures in the Bible and in the *Book of Miracles of Saint Anthony*.²⁷ Indeed, the Saint was commonly called the "Thaumaturge", or "miracle worker".

From such ideas as these—ideas that did not originate with Vieira, but that were inflated by his hyperbole—it was only a short step to the notion that Anthony could intervene in wars and win them. Historian Evaldo Cabral de Melo has persuasively argued that Vieira contributed powerfully to making this tradition; but he also shows that the decisive intervention attributed to Saint Anthony by the leaders of the successful uprising against the Dutch occupation of Pernambuco in 1645 was probably even more crucial. Certainly, by the second half of the seventeenth century Anthony was commonly called upon in the Lusitanian world to help Portuguese armed forces win battles (often being "enlisted", with a salary paid to the Franciscan Order, as an officer or common soldier—the latter, for instance, in the 1685 expedition against the runaway-slave community, Palmares).²⁸ The most famous occurrence of this nature in Brazil was in 1710, when Anthony was again credited with defeating a foreign siege: this time that of the French against Rio de Janeiro.²⁹

In 1704, Kimpa Vita probably did not have to learn about Anthony's prowess as a "warrior" from Antônio Vieira; acquaintances and relatives who had been educated as mestres in a mission school most likely could claim

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

such lore as part of their culture.³⁰ Thus, it would not have been a major step for her to conceive of Saint Anthony as “the restorer of the kingdom of Kongo”, particularly given his other attributes. Indeed, “restorer” is a key word. It should be emphasized that long before becoming a warrior saint, Anthony was appealed to in Europe as a restorer of lost objects. As Antônio Vieira put it, “God, as the author of all things, is the one who gives them; and when these things are lost, Saint Anthony, as the finder, is the one who recovers them”.³¹ Indeed, this is probably the key attribute of Anthony—in addition to his being the only saint of Portuguese nationality and the most popular saint in Pernambuco—which led to his “appointment” as the restorer of this “lost” province and subsequently to his military fame (especially in campaigns against runaway—i.e., “lost”—slaves). For Kimpa Vita, looking backward, it would have been hard to find a better saint to champion her cause.

Yet, Anthony had additional qualities. If God had delegated His powers to the Thaumaturge, the Virgin Mary had appointed him her defender and had given him guardianship over the Christ child. Vieira noted Anthony’s defense of the “purity of her Immaculate Conception”; indeed, Anthony was particularly known for his many sermons in praise of the Madonna. An early 18th century oil painting (ca. 1705-1716) by Antônio Pietro de Pietri expresses the close relationship between the two virgins, the Holy Mother and the Saint, mediated by the Christ child; it shows Anthony receiving a sprig of “madonna lilies”, symbol of purity and chastity, from Mary through the hand of the infant Jesus. Another painting from 1729, by Francisco Vieira de Matos (Vieira Lusitano) shows Mary about to hand her baby to Anthony’s outstretched arms.³² Finally, innumerable paintings and sculptures complete the sequence, portraying Anthony with the Christ child in one arm, usually mounted on a Bible, a symbol of the Saint’s knowledge of holy writ and his prowess as a preacher.³³ Christ in these works, as a child, is portrayed smaller than Anthony; as Antônio Vieira explained it, “[Anthony] made himself smaller [he joined a “minor” mendicant order] for love of Christ, and Christ in payment for this great decision made himself smaller than the Saint, when in Anthony’s presence”.³⁴ Can there be any doubt that the European tradition was one of the sources of another line in Kimpa Vita’s “Salve Antoniana”: “the Mother with the son on her knees. If there had not been Saint Anthony what would they have done? . . . Saint Anthony is above the Angels and the Virgin Mary”?³⁵ In the two paintings I have referred to, Anthony is portrayed *below* Mary and Christ; nonetheless, Kimpa Vita’s sentences do seem to resonate with the hyperbole of European praise for him.

I do not wish to argue, however, that the leader of the Antonians misunderstood baroque rhetoric. Rather, she actively reinterpreted Christian hagiography, engaging in a process of “transculturation”, that is, a selective appropriation of foreign elements of culture and their subordination initially—or even, as in this case, after 200 years of conversion—to indigenous conceptual schemes. Kimpa Vita fixed on the hyperbole of baroque rhetoric about Saint Anthony because it made striking sense to someone raised in the Kimpasi tradition, as this tradition was formed, or reforged, under crisis. To understand this, it is worth looking more closely at the Thaumaturge’s miracles.

The bisimbi spirits were deemed responsible for individual and community health (or the lack of it, if their ire was piqued). Significantly, of the 80 stories included in a modern edition of the *Miracles of Saint Anthony*³⁶—64 from the original edition, the rest culled from other sources—18 recount miraculous cures (from diseases and wounds) effected by Anthony, three display the Saint’s power to counteract nature and rescue people from disaster (a landslide, a shipwreck, immersion in boiling water), and nine recount cases in which the Saint resurrects people; i. e., a total of 30 stories, or 38%, present Anthony as a great healer who even has the power to reverse death.

The bisimbi were closely associated with water, particularly large bodies of water (lakes, rivers, the ocean). Significantly, eight of the Saint’s miracles—several of them among the best known today—take place in the water, including five of the resurrections, which are of people who had drowned. One of these water stories, which is set at a point where a river enters the sea, recounts Anthony’s famous “sermon to the fishes”. To confound disbelievers, Anthony preaches to the fish, which come in schools to hear him, raising their heads above the surface in rapt attention and arranging themselves in size from little fish in the shallow water to big ones in the deep. The Kongolese held chiefs who had the power of persuasion in high esteem. But they also believed that bisimbi spirits revealed themselves to people in the form of water animals, especially fish, and they told tales which relate the size of such “fish” to the importance of the spirit that thus presents itself.³⁷ Someone with Anthony’s attributes, who could enthral the various ranks of “fish” with a speech in their own language, clearly was a powerful *nganga* (doctor-priest): at the very least, similar to the holy men who called crocodiles and snakes to the surface of the water to negotiate a pact with them, according to stories recounted by missionary-ethnographer Karl Laman (resident among the Nsundi, a Kongo group, from 1891 to 1919).³⁸ Or, perhaps as MacGaffey has suggested, he was Funza itself, the biggest “fish” of them all.

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

Five of the miracles—some of them, again, among the best known today—portray Saint Anthony as being in two places at once (evidencing his powers of “bilocation”), that is, with his soul separated from his body; and an additional tale is about a woman whose soul is induced by the Saint to leave her flesh and experience a vision of the Other World. Probably Anthony’s most renowned miracle is that in which his spirit flies from Pavia in Italy across the sea to Lisbon, where it temporarily revives a murdered man, who then clears the Saint’s father of the charge of assassination.³⁹ Only the greatest *nganga* or a great spirit from the Other World itself could combine bilocation with such powerful divining. Finally, other stories and popular European tradition considered Anthony “a protector of love and marriage”, a quality linked to the promotion of fertility. Kimpa Vita certainly understood this. Da Gallo reported that “she ... boasted that she had the power to make sterile women become fertile”. Her followers were taught—or already had learned—to respond the way Portuguese women might (albeit, as Thornton notes, for autochthonous reasons). Says Gallo:

The women who wanted to have lots of children not only asked her for this, but in addition wound little cords and threads around her arms and feet, the way the Portuguese would bind or tie the statues of Saint Anthony as a sign of faith when they wanted to obtain a favour.⁴⁰

It was from this set of miraculous tales that Portuguese and Italian Catholicism elaborated the figure of the great Thaumaturge and healer, the promoter of “matrimony”, the delegate of the Virgin Mary and the triune God, the restorer of “lost” Pernambuco, the great warrior, the “Saint of All Saints”, the (Portuguese) “Vice-God”. And it was this combination of attributes that lent itself so well to being “read” through indigenous categories, centred on the spirit world of the *bisimbi*. In the Kongo in later years, perhaps also in 1704, Saint Anthony was known as *Ntoni Malau*. This translates as “Anthony of the good fortune”⁴¹ or “Anthony of prosperity”,⁴² meanings which are quite close to his nickname in Portuguese, “Antônio da Boaventura”; or, alternatively, it may be rendered as Anthony the “all-powerful”, which is what *lau* means in the dialect of São Salvador.⁴³

Yet there is one final, quintessential characteristic of the European Saint Anthony which needs to be examined, for it may have been particularly attractive to the Kongolese. The reader will have noted that Anthony brought with him to the Kongo a curious set of “hard” and “soft” qualities, combining the power of God the Father with the purity and motherly

concern of the Virgin Mary. In Antônio Vieira's sixth sermon on the Saint (1658, published 1696), the author highlights a peculiar quality of the Portuguese Thaumaturge which unites these two natures. Saint Anthony was known in Europe as the "hammer of the heretics"; "but I do not know what type of hammer this was", says Vieira, "which did not seem to be of iron but of wax, because he [Saint Anthony] always reduced the heretics with gentleness, never with severity".⁴⁴ "Hammer" in the Kongolese context would have suggested "blacksmith", an indigenous mediator with the bisimbi, who also combined "masculine" with "feminine" qualities (his forge was likened to a woman's womb, he promoted fertility, cured people with air from his bellows, and had the power of reviving people on the edge of death).⁴⁵ Indeed, Anthony's "soft hammer", along with his other attributes, could easily have been incorporated into the Kongolese linguistic field around "blacksmith", which included such words (with different "melodies", Kikongo being a tonal language) as *mfula* ("smith"), *fula* ("to work at the forge"), *fula* ("to ... revive a fire or someone who is sick to death"), *futumuna* ("make [someone] come to life again", which "would seem to be a reinforced form of *fula*"), and the contrasting *fuula* ("to destroy, exterminate").⁴⁶

In this context, the new foundation myth for the Kongo state, promoted by Pedro IV, the leading pretender to the throne of a united kingdom, may acquire a hitherto unsuspected significance. A high court official expressed this new history on Saint James' day (celebrating the founding of the Christian kingdom) in 1700, in a speech aimed at obtaining support from other regional leaders for Pedro's plan to reoccupy São Salvador. The speech was summarized by a Capuchin missionary and is reported by Thornton: "the kingdom of Kongo ... was founded long ago by a wise and skilful blacksmith who settled differences among the people". Thornton creates a plausible fiction by attributing the speech to Miguel de Castro, the court's royal interpreter and secretary, a mestre *and a member of Kimpa Vita's kanda (matrilineal clan)*. Could Kimpa Vita's new identity in 1704 and Castro's initial defence of her before missionary da Gallo be directly tied to high politics, at a time when Pedro was still casting about for support for his projects and she was looking for a champion? Did the Kongolese Saint Anthony believe she could present herself convincingly as that "wise blacksmith" who might forge a new political unity with her gently persuasive "wax" hammer?⁴⁷

Whatever the case, one may conclude that intense creolization, based on intimate knowledge of European texts, probably had proceeded further in this instance than even Thornton has argued. Yet, the conclusion that the original cultural matrix was not much modified by this process still

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

stands. Indeed, “Ntoni Malau” seems to have significantly reinforced indigenous understandings. The key to appreciating why this happened lies not just in the ease with which the Catholic tradition (particularly Anthony) lent itself to Kongolese “translation”, but in the fifty-year social and political crisis that preceded the Antonian movement, stimulated the multiplication of Kimpasi cults and predisposed ordinary Kongolese to appropriate Saint Anthony for their own purposes. Thornton, despite his attention to “reinterpretation”, his stress on the impact of decades of warfare (and accompanying slave raids) on the peasantry, and his portrayal of clashes between missionaries and local religious leaders at the time of Kimpa Vita, gives relatively little attention to the intertwining of religious conflict and politics in this previous period of crisis, in his discussion of the origins of the Antonian movement. Thus, historian Anne Hilton’s focus on this subject provides important insights: indeed, ones that may allow us to understand Kimpa vita’s cry of “mercy, mercy”.

II

Both Hilton and Thornton in their respective books on *The Kingdom of Kongo* have documented the rapacious effort of King Garcia II to extract revenue from the provinces during his twenty-year reign (1641-1661), through governors appointed from the capital’s elite. Both also show how the King into the 1650s and some of the governors into the 1660s supported the Capuchins’ attempts to stamp out “fetishism” and “devil worship” by attacking local religious leaders and movements, including the Kitome and the Kimpasi cults. (The latter flourished in the 1650s and 1660s, Hilton tells us, because of drought, plague, and warfare; I suspect, on her evidence and Thornton’s, that the excessive taxation of Garcia and his governors provided another stimulus.) Furthermore, both authors intimate that the religious struggle contributed to the royal attempt to break the power of local leaders (the Kitome, for instance, had important political functions and were also supported by “taxes”). Only Hilton, however, develops the argument that attacks on local Kitome and Kimpasi combined with political dissatisfaction to fuel local revolts. She notes that “the indigenous religious revival consciously opposed the Christian cult and the Mwissikongo [capital-province nobility’s] overlord-ship”. In 1663, “*nganga* burnt churches throughout [several provinces]”. As a result, “Both Garcia II in his later years and António I [1661-1665] found it prudent to accommodate themselves to the indigenous movements”. The former even “publicly associated himself” with the Kimpasi.⁴⁸ As late as 1664, however, missionary Girolamo da Montesarchio was able to browbeat the governor of Mpangu province and a local headman to march against “a very old

and much respected” Kimpasi to burn it; they were repulsed by the *nganga nkita* priests of the Kimpasi, who “marched against them with bows and arrows and all sorts of other arms, saying that they, Blacks, would not yield before other Blacks”.⁴⁹

At the turn of the century, on the eve of Kimpa Vita’s movement, missionary intolerance had not changed. What does seem different, at least in comparison to the situation described by da Montesarchio, is that village headman often gave cover to “fetishists” and Kimpasi members, which suggests that, although they felt the pressure of superiors to respect the persons of missionaries, they normally no longer had the obligation (in this period of acephalous central control and relatively weak government at the provincial level) actively to support the persecution of native religious actors. It is worth looking closely at one confrontation between a missionary and villagers in 1697 for insight into the tacit protection that local chiefs now offered Kimpasi adepts and also fully to perceive the impact such encounters must have had on the sensibilities of commoners and headmen.

In 1697, Luca da Caltanissetta visited the village (*libata*) of Nkasa in the province of Mpangu, only a half-day’s journey from the provincial capital.⁵⁰ There he found that “there were very few Christians”, that is, baptized people. Among the 183 persons he proceeded to christen (normally people turned out for this ceremony, seen as conferring protection against witches)⁵¹ was

a little boy who carried two small bags around his neck, full of diabolical amulets that had come from fetishists [nganga]; I ordered his old father to take them off him; the latter obeyed against his will and sought to recover them, but he did not succeed in the attempt; when he saw me burn them, he almost began to cry and went away very vexed.

The purses mentioned were probably *futu* bags—“small sack[s] made of European or indigenous cloth if not of animal skin”—described by missionary-ethnologist J. Van Wing among the Mpangu in the early twentieth century, in what was then the Belgian Congo.⁵² Van Wing did not indicate how the futu bag was used, but Karl Laman, active among the neighbouring Nsundi, provided this description:⁵³

In case of [a child’s] illness etc. the father and mother see that ... [nganga] are summoned. But even if the child is flourishing and comely it must be magically protected ... through futu-bags. The medicine in these is taken from venomous snakes.... Other

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

common medicines are put in them. Two or four futu-bags are made and tied around the chest. These counteract the evil intentions of bandoki ["witches", plural of ndoki] or nkisi [spirits, acting directly or through charms]. With futu-bags containing about the same medicine as mentioned above the grown-up child may also be consecrated to a great nkisi".

One understands, then, the father's near tears when his son, having been presented to da Caltanissetta for baptism, had his health-protecting futu-bags removed and burned. Here was one father whose native ways must have been reinforced by the shock of the particular "creolization" promoted by missionary aggression.

He was not an exception to the rule. In the same village da Caltanissetta found

a bundle of thick half-burned sticks before the door of the *mani* [headman], placed on a forked support; I had the question posed to a relative of the *mani* about what was the meaning of these sticks . . .; he responded that it was a diabolical exorcism so that the elephants would not come to destroy the palm groves [a major economic resource], which were very abundant in that *libata*, nor the homes of the inhabitants.

The missionary ordered the forked support and the bundle of sticks to be taken away, but when his translator told him that the job was being done by a member of a "Kimpasi sect" (clearly operating under the nose of the headman) whose intent was to hide the objects in a safe place, he had the "fetish" burned in public "in front of the people, who had quickly gathered out of curiosity". He then planted a "holy cross" on the spot where the "diabolical exorcism" had stood.

The object of da Caltanissetta's ire was probably the principal *nkisi* (here meaning "charm, sacred medicine", a conduit for a particular spirit) that guaranteed the well-being of the village. In the early twentieth century the Mpungu called the consecrated object that served this purpose "*Mpungu*", a name also reserved for the supreme being, *Nzambi*.⁵⁴ Mpungu was also called *Kinda gata*, "that which makes and keeps the village prosperous", and was said to have "a hundred eyes", meaning immense power to see spiritual forces.⁵⁵

The emplacement of Mpungu required complex rituals, as befitted an nkisi that was considered associated with the village's founding ancestor. Like the object of da Caltanissetta's pique, Mpungu was located in front of the headman's house. It was not "a bundle of thick half-burned sticks", but it

was something recognizably related: a sack filled mainly with “wood charcoal and white clay”. Mpungu was supported by a tree branch with a three-pronged fork, perhaps not dissimilar to the “forked support” described by the earlier missionary in 1697. Flanked by a banana palm and “three posts about one meter high joined at the top by a liana and surrounded by palm laths”, Mpungu with its accoutrements was more elaborate than the nkisi described by da Caltanissetta. The twentieth-century ensemble represented “a sort of throne, and this is the reason that one also gives it the title of king: *Mpungu mayala*, the Mpungu who reigns”.

Once consecrated, Mpungu was the centre of village affairs. “For important events all the villagers receive a few lines of charcoal on their foreheads and temples. This is done especially on the approach of a White Official of the State [*un Blanc de l'État*]”, a fearsome event, indeed, during the early Belgian Congo, when such an authority was called *Bula Matadi*, literally “break-rocks”.⁵⁶ People’s faces were also marked with the sacred charcoal “when the chief goes away for an important palaver, or when a villager falls gravely ill”. In addition, “in many villages, one addresses solemn invocations to Mpungu and one makes him resolute at the beginning of the great hunts, before setting fire to the brush”. Hunters’ faces on these occasions were marked by charcoal and white clay, the latter also associated with the spirit world, to guarantee their success.

We do not have to assume an absolute cultural continuity between 1697 and the early twentieth century to conclude that Father da Caltanissetta went straight to the sacred centre of the township’s life and desecrated it. Indeed, the equivalent in Europe would have been to burn not only the village church but also the prefecture; for the half-burned sticks (like the later charcoal in the Mpungu), located on an “altar” in front of the headman’s hut, surely came from the “sacred fire” kept alive in the latter’s residence, which was his channel of communication to the ancestors and *bisimbi*.⁵⁷ That da Caltanissetta was not torn apart by the people is a testimony to his recognized *kindoki* and also to the power of the provincial Courts and nobility, reaching to the headmen at the village level through ties of kinship and clientelism. Christianity, after all, was the state religion and Capuchin missionaries, as recognized chief *nganga* of the Christian cult, had the benefit of state protection.

Yet, fifty years of missionary abuse must have left its marks. Surely one was to alienate local religious leaders, especially those of the Kimpasi cults. Another was to repulse Kimpasi members as well, who—after several decades of crisis and the continual existence of the cults—now may have included the greater part of village elders. (It should be noted that among

the Mpangu in the early twentieth-century Belgian Congo, after another long period of severe social dislocation under the Congo Free State, the great majority of elderly men had been initiated at some point into Kimpasi.)⁵⁸ In other words, the missionaries had probably obtained the enmity of the most prestigious figures of the local religious world, who were now tolerated openly (or fully supported) by headmen. In Kongo cosmology, individuals with *kindoki* who worked against the common weal were deemed witches. Those who openly destroyed community *minkisi* (plural of *nkisi*) would have been so considered, unless they had succeeded in convincing the people that it was the consecrators of these altars who were the witches—something that the Capuchins could scarcely have achieved, if da Caltanissetta's account (consistent with Hilton's general analysis of the missionaries' arrogance) is any guide.

Thornton's discussion of missionary intolerance focuses on the actions of Marcellino d'Atri at the court of Pedro IV, prior to Kimpa Vita's possession by Saint Anthony. In order to get d'Atri to establish residence in Kibangu, his capital city, and thereby obtain the Capuchin's implicit support for his ambitions, Pedro gave the missionary a relatively free hand against the Kitome and Kimpasi. Repeating da Montesarchio's iconoclasm, d'Atri proceeded to burn Kimpasi and took possession of the Kibangu Kitome's sacred stone. According to Thornton, "it was not long after the Capuchins arrived in Kibangu that ... [Kimpa Vita] decided to stop her practice of *nganga* Marinda [a Kimpasi-related priesthood devoted to the *bisimbi*]. She concluded that the practice was too close to evil *kindoki*".⁵⁹ This interpretation, however, accepts almost to the letter Kimpa Vita's statements under duress (after being condemned to death) in her 1706 abjuration before missionaries Bernardo da Gallo and Lorenzo da Lucca, as recounted by the latter.⁶⁰ Surely, it is more likely that she stopped practicing because she recognized the danger she faced, not because the Capuchins had suddenly convinced her "to renounce the Kimpasi society and her own calling".⁶¹ By the same token, Thornton's portrayal of her incipient "suspicions about the priests as well as about other *ngangas*" and his suggestion that she now began to listen to growing accusations that the priests were *bandoki* (witches) are probably much too understated. In the light of fifty years of Capuchin intolerance, from da Montesarchio to da Caltanissetta, it surely did not take the actions of d'Atri and the pressures of da Lucca and da Gallo in Kibangu, in whose jurisdiction Kimpa Vita resided, to wake her to a fundamental fact of Kongo political and religious life.

Further evidence in this direction is provided by Kimpa Vita's allegories about the contrasting origins of the Kongolese and the missionaries, recounted by Bernardo da Gallo. Whereas Thornton sees her metaphors as

expressing a rather ambiguous, perhaps inchoate contrast between these two sides at the religious level, I see them as strong affirmations of a radical opposition. Much of da Gallo's information on Kimpa Vita comes from the "private abjuration that she made [to him and Lorenzo da Lucca] just before the unhappy end of her life", while awaiting execution. Other facts, however, seem to come from third party sources, and it is difficult to know the provenance of individual details. In any case, da Gallo was one of the few missionaries who spoke Kikongo well enough to dispense with interpreters, so that we may be sure that his information was not distorted by linguistic intermediaries. On the other hand, as we shall see, he does not seem particularly attuned to the subtleties of Kongo cosmology, which means that his informants—particularly Kimpa Vita, speaking to him out of a situation of extreme danger—could have played on his ignorance of sacred signs and metaphors to conceal details that were essential for a full comprehension of the Antonian movement.

Da Gallo's description of Kimpa Vita's beliefs regarding Christ, the Madonna and Saint Francis is quite detailed, suggesting that this information came directly from her abjuration. "She said that Jesus Christ had been born in S. Salvador [Mbanza Kongo], which was Bethlehem, [and] that he was baptized in [Mbanza] Nsundi, which was Nazareth". Furthermore, she maintained that "if Jesus Christ with the Madonna, as well as S. Francis, had their origin in the [K]ongo, from the race of the blacks..., S. Francis had issued from the House of the Marquis of Vunda, and the Madonna ... had been born of a slave woman, who was the servant of the Marchioness Nzimba npanghi [mpangi]".⁶² Both "Vunda" and "Nzimba" were Kitome titles, the Marquis of Vunda (as Thornton notes) being the Kitome charged with crowning the King of Kongo.⁶³ (Curiously, the idea that the Virgin and Christ were from a slave lineage on their mother's side may be further evidence that Kimpa Vita knew Catholic "traditions" well; in the seventeenth century the notion became widespread that the Virgin had replied to the Angel of the Annunciation, "Behold the slave of the Lord". In a sermon published in the 1680s, Antônio Vieira explained: "As the Son of his Father, [Christ] is the lord of mankind; but as the Son of his Mother, that very Mother wished that he also be the Slave of mankind".)⁶⁴

The next paragraph of the missionary's account maintains this level of detail and therefore may also be based on Kimpa Vita's recantation. In addition, however, it suggests an incomplete understanding on da Gallo's part of Kongo metaphors, or even a deliberate attempt by Kimpa Vita—if indeed her abjuration is his source—to deceive him. Kimpa Vita, says da Gallo,

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

taught that whites originated from a certain soft white stone called “fuma”, and for that reason are white. Blacks had their origin in a tree called musanda [*nsanda* in most Kikongo dialects, a species of fig, *Ficus psilopoga Welwitsch*], from the bark or cortex of which they make rope and the cloths with which they cover and dress themselves, and for this reason they are black, or the colour of this bark.

Da Gallo adds that “from this came her invention of certain things that she called crowns, made of the bark of this same . . . [*nsanda*] tree”, which were worn by her and the leading men in her movement, including the rival pretender to the throne who was now the defender of her cause.

The two English-language scholars who have analyzed this passage in detail have regarded it as a direct window on Kimpa Vita’s preachings, emphasizing the black/white contrast it establishes and not considering the possibility that da Gallo could have misunderstood his sources or been misled. Thus, Wyatt MacGaffey (1986) takes da Gallo’s explanation literally and analyzes it with reference to the colour symbolism of the Kongo and the fact that fuma is a “whitish . . . riverine clay”. “The symbols are easily decoded: whites are the dead, whose sphere is the water, whereas blacks are the living” (since white symbolizes the realm of the spirits and of the ancestors, and black signifies “This World”). MacGaffey does add, however, that “the fig tree, at least one species of which is propagated only by human agency, is especially associated with domesticity and kinship”; along this line, he notes that *nsanda* bark, according to seventeenth-century sources, “provided a kind of natural cloth prescribed as maternity wear to ease childbirth and as swaddling material”, and adds that “the connexion was made by Beatrice [Kimpa Vita] herself”.⁶⁵ (Actually, the source he cites—the 1707 account of missionary Lorenzo da Lucca—goes further than this, noting that for Kimpa Vita “[the *nsanda* bark] Crown . . . was made from the same cloth as that with which the [Kongolese] baby Jesus was dressed for the first time”.⁶⁶) Furthermore, MacGaffey notes that the name of the *nsanda* crown—in da Gallo’s account, “*ne yari*” (equivalent to *ne yadi* in present-day Kikongo)—is also “a title that proclaims a governor (*n’yaadi*)”.⁶⁷ (Indeed, Laman’s dictionary—using a slightly different orthographical system—indicates that “*ne yaadi*” can be translated as “Sir, good ruler”).⁶⁸ What this suggests is a possible relation between *nsanda* bark and political authority. Indeed, MacGaffey had noted in an earlier study that the *nsanda* “to this day is a sign of the authority of the elders in the village”.⁶⁹ These insights, however, are not developed, and one is left essentially with the idea of a contrast between the origins of blacks and whites

(This and the Other World, respectively), which, if it had any political connotations, might well have denoted white superiority.

Thornton essentially repeats MacGaffey's formulation, based on Kongo colour symbolism: blacks were associated with the world of the living, whites with the world of the ancestors. He does note in passing that the nsanda tree "was regarded as sacred—a nsanda tree shaded Lusunzi's stone [a shrine] at Kibangu" (the stone apprehended by d'Atri); nonetheless, he interprets nsanda bark cloth as "closely associated with the living and with This World". As confirmation of this, he paraphrases Lorenzo da Lucca's observation (immediately following the passage I have quoted above) that "to those wearing it [the crown of nsanda bark] nothing could be lacking, gold, silver, silk clothing, and all that they may have thought of desiring".⁷⁰

Other scholars, however, while still taking da Gallo's account at face value, have collectively produced a more convincing interpretation of it, or at least of the metaphor identifying blacks with the nsanda tree. In 1968 G. W. Randles, writing in French, noted that "in Loango [part of the Kongo culture area] the *musenda* [nsanda] is planted near the tombs of the kings", which suggests that the tree had political/religious connotations; yet he did not risk drawing any conclusions from this.⁷¹ In the same year, however, the Portuguese scholar A. Margarido wrote of the nsanda that this "sacred tree, connected to royal sovereignty by almost all the peoples of this region of the Congo, is also considered sacred by practically all Angolan peoples". Thus, for him, Kimpa Vita's "imposing [sic] the return to nsanda clothing" was a nativist political reaction, a way of denouncing "the foreign character of the customs of the court", just as attributing (holy) nsanda-bark swaddling clothes to the (holy) infant Christ was a way of "rescuing him from the monopoly of the foreign missionaries".⁷² In 1972 Portuguese anthropologist José Redinha contributed additional elements to the analysis by noting that "a rite of the ancestor cult that is very widespread in Angola and much practiced by the peoples who are descended from the ancient hunters of the savannas [in north-western Angola, including the southern Kongo region] consists in planting living trunks of ritual trees. The most common is the *mulemba* ['nsanda' in Kimbundu, the language of the Mbundu, a people from the hinterland of Luanda]".⁷³

Building on these contributions, another Portuguese anthropologist, António Custódio Gonçalves, provided the most satisfying explanation of Kimpa Vita's nsanda metaphor in a 1985 book on the political dynamics of the Old Kingdom of Kongo. Gonçalves showed that

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

The “nsanda” ... is a tree with very strong symbolic connotations, serving on the one hand to indicate the link with the earth spirits, the principle of authority, ... and, on the other, to make perceptible the passing of the spirits through the night air by the movement of its leaves or branches. The connection with the earth spirits, on whom political authority and the survival of the community rested, required that migrant groups take with them the root of a “nsanda” tree: if this took hold, the village could be founded, since this root assured the protection of the spirits.

Gonçalves also argued that “the tree with its latex [the nsanda has a white, milky sap], the expression of the matrilineal descent group, a symbol of the mythical origin of the Kongo and of the vertical continuity of the natural kinship group and of lineage solidarity, becomes the axis of the political system and the insignia of the Antonians”.⁷⁴

Indeed, a closer look at Kimpa Vita’s metaphor, as reported by Bernardo da Gallo, reveals that it points directly to the matrilineal principle.⁷⁵ MacGaffey has called attention to the extensive use of what might be called “serious word play” among the Kongolese to point to ontological links between different elements of nature and society. For instance, “birds suggest spirits (*mpeve*) because their wings (*maveve*) stir the air (*vevila*, ‘to fan’). By the same token, he notes, comparisons between people and trees are encouraged by the fact that both “skin” and “bark” are expressed by the same word, *nkanda*.⁷⁶ Given this propensity of the Kongolese to think associatively by linking homonyms or near homonyms, Kimpa Vita’s simile, asserting the origin of the black skin of indigenous people in the black bark of the *fig* tree, would surely have induced native speakers to go one step further: to *kanda*, “matrilineal clan”, whose emblem was precisely the bisimbi-blown nsanda. Thus, the play on the double meaning of “black *nkanda*”, rather than pointing to “This World”, establishes the identity of the Kongolese as an extended matrilineal clan, linked to the land and its protective spirits. “Black” actually leads to “white’: to the milky (matrilineal) latex of the nsanda and to mother’s milk (both underlying *nkanda* in its two meanings, as well as *kanda*), which in turn embody and reaffirm the whiteness attributed by the Kongolese to the (bisimbi) spirit realm.

In sum, Kimpa Vita’s nsanda tree metaphor “grounded” the Kongolese firmly in the *Other World*, as it was imagined by indigenous Kongo cosmology. “Made” from nsanda bark, the Kongolese had a privileged relationship with local territorial spirits and with the most ancient ancestors (subsumed to, or associated with, the bisimbi), who were responsible for community

welfare. Their political institutions, particularly their headmen and their matrilineal lineages, were assured a divine legitimacy. Within this context, the redefinition of Christ, the Madonna, Saint Francis and Saint Anthony (incorporated in Kimpa Vita) as Africans, with the Christ child explicitly linked to the nsanda and identified, along with the other holy figures, with bisimbi-based chiefdoms or clans that were centres of political power, constituted nothing less than the seizure of the essential symbols of Christianity for the Kongolese, as Gonçalves argues.⁷⁷

But what are we to make of the other part of Kimpa Vita's reported analogy, that which traces white origins to the "soft white stone called fuma"? Here, Gonçalves's argument fails to convince me. He sees the (nsanda) "tree" and the (riverine) "stone" as the fundamental symbols of traditional Kongo culture. For him, the redefinition of meanings operated by Kimpa Vita with respect to the nsanda, without a corresponding change in the significations of the "stone", apparently breaks the harmony between the two symbols. Following the sentence quoted above about "the tree with its latex", he writes: "The stone, an expression of socio-political solidarities, of a system of social norms necessary to action and to the future wellbeing of the group, of solidarity with the ancestral spirits, becomes [for the Antonians] a sign of discontinuity with the 'normal' plant world, with the principle of patrilocality and the system of power".⁷⁸

There may be a simpler way of understanding Kimpa Vita's trope. I start by observing how strange it now seems, after decoding the meanings of the nsanda, that da Gallo reports her analogy as one built on an opposition of colours. By now it is clear that what links blacks to the nsanda is not primarily the similar colour of their respective skin and bark; this is an incidental feature, or a secondary metaphor. The fact that da Gallo reduces a complex trope to a simple question of colour indicates that he knew very little about the central metaphors of Kongo culture. It may also mean—if his information came from Kimpa Vita's abjuration—that he was manipulated, in his ignorance, into framing the question in terms of "Black" and "White". His description of fuma as "una certa pietra bianca molle" ('a certain soft white stone') is consistent with this hypothesis; in fact, according to Carl Laman's early twentieth-century Kikongo-French dictionary, fuma is "red" (*rouge*) in colour, perhaps not altogether unlike Europeans' skin, but not literally "White".⁷⁹

Indeed, along this line it is quite possible that Kimpa Vita did not even say "fuma"; or, if she did, that she actually meant something else. MacGaffey's observations regarding Kongolese analogies are crucial here. "Often a given plant or creature", says MacGaffey, "has several symbolic

values. In practice it is nearly always paired with another, reptile with reptile, tree with tree, rodent with rodent, the contrast between the two serving to specify the value of each ...". Furthermore, "so general is the pairing rule" that "one can be sure that [missionary-ethnographer] Van Wing has mistranslated" the paired pun on *nsiki* and *mbendi* in the phrase "Who has eaten *n'siki*, let him be justified (*sikalala*); who has eaten *mbendi* [cf. *m'bedi*, "loser"], let him lose (*bela*)". "Nsiki" is a type of tree, notes MacGaffey, therefore "mbendi" "cannot be the striped field rat (*mbendi*), as Van Wing supposes, and must be the tree with striped bark, *m'bendi*".⁸⁰

If this is so, then what tree might have a name that could be confused with "fuma", yet offer a symbolic contrast to *nsanda*? The answer is *mfuma*, the "silk cotton tree" (*Ceiba pentandra*). Thornton notes that "in regular spoken Kikongo" an initial nasal sound before a consonant "is often not pronounced or is pronounced so softly and quickly that it almost disappears".⁸¹ This leads to phonetic variation; in this case, *mfuma* is pronounced *fuma* in the western (Yombe) dialect of Kikongo.⁸² In sum, it is not at all implausible that da Gallo confused or was misled into confusing *fuma* and its virtual homonym *mfuma*.

The hypothesis becomes especially compelling when the ethical and otherworldly connotations of *mfuma* are taken into account. I follow MacGaffey again: "[Mfuma,] the silk-cotton tree ..., which so dominates the forest that vultures . . . perch in it, resembles the chief (*mfumu*) but also is a haunt of witches (*fumana* 'to conspire'); like power itself, the tree is ambivalent". Note also *vanga mfuma*, "to conspire", literally "to make an 'assembly'", for the silk cotton tree is a metonym for (unsavoury) "meeting". Indeed, the tree's reputation carries over to its vultures, which usually congregate in crowds: "the vulture ... is a witch ... because it is black and white, perches on the ... [*mfuma*-assembly] tree, and lives on carrion and fish (the dead)".⁸³ Finally, John Janzen and Wyatt Macgaffey note that, because of these connotations, "prophets 'cleaning up' a village [eliminating bad *kindoki*] sometimes decree that one or more such trees be cut down". These authors cite verses recorded by Laman among the Nsundi, addressed to an *nkisi* to obtain the punishment of thieves: "Cut down the *mfuma* tree, ... where they sealed their agreement".⁸⁴

These observations, of course, come from twentieth-century dictionaries and ethnographic research. A glimpse further into the past, however, can be obtained by looking at Cuba, where Central Africans, particularly from Kongo, featured prominently among people brought by the nineteenth-century slave trade. There, under the silk-cotton tree (*Ceiba*), *ganguleros* (priests of the Regla Palo Monte religion, whose origins are in Central

Africa; cf. Kikongo *nganga*) compose their charms (*ngangas y prendas*). “*Indoki es el árbol brujo*”—“an Indoki [cf. Kikongo *ndoki*, ‘witch’] is what the witch tree is”—says one of the Palo Monte informants of folklorist Lydia Cabrera, referring to the Ceiba; “whoever wishes to ruin [*perder a*] a person whom he/she hates will go up next to this tree at midnight or midday” and move around it, singing special songs, “*mambos*” (cf. Kikongo *mambu*, “words, business, lawsuit”).

The spirits called upon for this witchcraft are apparently those of the dead, for according to another of Cabrera’s informants the Ceiba “attracts the dead like a magnet”. Indeed, the tree is also called “*Nfumba* or *Fumbe*, ‘dead person’”, or “*mamá fumbe*” or “mother of the *nkitas*”.⁸⁵ The link here to *mfuma* is evident, as is the word play with Kikongo *mvumbi*, “cadaver, dead person” (Bembe dialect) or “the name of a child because of witchcraft” (western dialect).⁸⁶ Also clear is the tie to Kikongo *nkita*, the “soul of the dead person who has established his home in the water or the ravines” (associating him/herself with the *bisimbi*), or—among the Mpangu in the early twentieth century—the spirits of people who had experienced a violent death, foremost among them (but not exclusively) those “ancestors from the beginning” who had so suffered.⁸⁷ Because of these associations with the dead, ritual baths in the Palo Monte tradition are made with the Ceiba’s leaves for those wishing to make contact with human spirits. However, “one does not put its leaves on a *ntu* (‘head’ or medium [cf. Kikongo *ntu*, ‘head’]), of Baluande, *Mamá Fúngue*, *Mamá Chóya* or *Kisimba* [my italics], who are Mother of Water [Spanish *Madre de Agua*]”.⁸⁸ The reference here is to Kongolese tutelary *bisimbi* (*kisimbi* or *simbi* in the singular), whose preferred habitat is the water of nature. There could not be a clearer statement of the opposition drawn by the Kongolese between the recent dead, who are still interested in the affairs of their living kin and willing to be called upon by the latter (acting as “witches”) to bring woe to their enemies, and the *bisimbi*, the tutelary earth/water spirits, who are offended by witchcraft and concerned with the good of the wider community.⁸⁹

In addition to these ethical and spiritual contrasts between the *nsanda* and the *mfuma*, there is also an opposition of colours: that between the black bark of the *nsanda* and the white “cotton” of the *mfuma*’s seed pods. “When its seeds burst”, *mfuma* “appears covered in a white cloud”, says MacGaffey. The *mfuma*’s “bare upper branches, on which the vulture often perches, are likened in certain conceits and wordplays to a man’s bald or shaven head”, adds MacGaffey, which suggests that “the white cloud” covering the tree when its seeds are fully mature might easily be likened to an old man’s white hair, elder patriarchs being called—along with the

dead—*bakulu*.⁹⁰ In any case, the tree's association with the "recent" dead would mean that its cotton would indeed recall the "White" spirit world, but not that of the tutelary bisimbi. In sum, Kimpa Vita's metaphor, by opposing the nsanda and mfuma trees, drew a clear distinction between the Kongolese, linked to the ancient matrilineages and the bisimbi of the spirit world, and the capuchin missionaries, devoted to conspiring like witches in the human world—breaking consecrated minkisi and then brandishing the cross, the object on which a *Kongo-born* Christ had been crucified. The metaphor's colour symbolism also seems to have worked in parallel, with black nsanda bark ultimately pointing (through the milk of the matrilineage) to the bisimbi spirit world (connoting good kindoki), while the white silk-cotton of the mfuma leads to the realm of human patriarchs (the mfumu and his brothers) and the still all-too human sphere of the intriguing "recent" dead (who *vanga mfuma*, "conspire", that is, apply evil kindoki).⁹¹

One may conclude, then, that Kimpa Vita's allegory drew a sharp contrast between blacks and whites, or at least white missionaries, which was not at all flattering to the latter. Da Gallo may have confused "fuma" and "mfuma" or, alternatively, Kimpa Vita may have misled him into thinking her reference was to the first, not the second. She would have had good reasons for doing this, for she knew that the missionary, speaking fluent kikongo, might have understood enough about Kongo religious culture to understand the respective connotations of "white" riverine stones and silk-cotton trees. Thus, she could have believed it safer, in the dangerous but perhaps not hopeless moment of her abjuration, to pretend to him that she traced whites' origins to the former, rather than the latter.⁹²

This analysis of Kimpa Vita's allegory permits a further hypothesis regarding its meaning within the context of Kongolese politics. Anne Hilton, in reviewing the relationship between political power and kinship at the beginning of the eighteenth century, notes that "the Mwisikongo [elite] of the centre [of the former kingdom] increasingly used a cognatic mode of descent reckoning to establish a claim to the throne or to align themselves to the major contenders". Furthermore, "the unstable conditions of the time encouraged people to use the 'individual' mode of kinship reckoning to establish [and use expediently] relationships with powerful contenders". As a result of this and other factors,

The ... strength of the contending warlords was based, first, on personal slaves; second on the precarious loyalties of Mwisikongo slaveholders seeking personal advancement; third, on individuals and groups seeking protection through client status,

and, forth, on traders ... who purchased the slaves the wars produced.⁹³

The matrilineal kanda, in other words, were no longer the central political institutions they once had been, or were thought to have been. Within this context, Beatriz Kimpa Vita's reaffirmation of the kanda principle seems significant. It suggests that her approximation of the missionaries, the protégés of high rulers, to the mfuma implied a criticism of the mfumu (from local chief to kanda elder to "extra-kanda chieftain", in Hilton's phrase) for having deviated from kanda principles of political succession, or otherwise betrayed his trust.⁹⁴ In this regard, the name the Antonians gave to their nsanda-bark crown, *Ne yaadi*, "Sir good ruler" (close in form to *ki-yaadi*, "ruler, governor"), as well as their rallying cry *ky-adi*, "mercy", are intriguing.⁹⁵ As Hilton has noted, the nsanda-bark crown clearly was meant to contrast with the *mpu*, the traditional bonnet that was the insignia of the Kongo kings and their appointed provincial governors.⁹⁶ Thus, the Antonians appear to have been affirming that legitimate "ki-yaadi", wearing "ne-yaadi" would show, above all, "ky-adi" (the quality of "mercy") to their own people.⁹⁷

This is a set of ideas constructed within the Kikongo linguistic field. Yet, given Kimpa Vita's knowledge of Christian texts, it is doubtful that "ky-adi" (present in the "Salve Regina" and "Salve Antoniana") was innocent of the meanings attached at that time to *misericórdia* (the word it translated) in the Portuguese world, as institutionalized in the charitable hospitals of the "*Santa Casa de Misericórdia*" from Lisbon to Goa and Salvador, Bahia. Likewise, the implicit obligation of powerful "ki-yaadi" to show "ky-adi" probably would not have been untouched by the phrase from the Gospel of Mathew, *Beati misericordes*, "blessed are the merciful [for they will receive mercy]", which inspired the noble governors of the various "Misericórdias" and was used by them (and the Portuguese King above them, the high patron of the "Santas Casas") to justify their stewardship.⁹⁸ *Beati pauperes*, *Beati misericordes* was the theme of a 1647 sermon by Antônio Vieira, who argued that the poor (*pauperes*) are blessed "because God [Christ] is in them"; yet, the *misericordes* are even more blessed because "he who gives alms to the poor ... makes himself God", for "Mankind has nothing so divine, and so peculiar to God, than to do good [to others]."⁹⁹ Could this idea have helped inspire the Antonians to crown themselves with the indigenous nsanda cloth that had wrapped the native Christ child, thereby "making themselves God", as an affirmation of what would constitute the base of legitimacy for an Antonian political leadership? If so, then creolization in this case involved the appropriation of a "naturalized" foreign

tradition by a Kongolese popular movement to bolster its attempt to hold its own rulers accountable. In short, Kimpa Vita may have redefined the royalty's Christian ngolo as a principle for the people.¹⁰⁰

III

Like Saint Anthony himself, let us now “bilocate” across the Atlantic to south-eastern Brazil.¹⁰¹ On the plantations of this region (in the Paraíba Valley of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, in central-western São Paulo, and in parts of southern Minas Gerais) during the first half of the nineteenth century, commonly 80 percent or more of adult male slaves and two-thirds of adult females (people over 15 years of age) were African; the great majority of these were West Central African; and at least a large minority of the latter—enough to define the cultural matrix of the slave quarters—were from Kongo, Mbundu and closely related cultures.¹⁰² Thus, it is not surprising that a major slave conspiracy in 1848, apparently centred on the counties of Vassouras and Valença in Rio's Paraíba Valley, had Central-African, indeed Kongo/Mbundu roots.¹⁰³ The vocabulary of the religious cult around which the movement was organized—*cambono*, *tate*, *gola* [*ngola?*], *mocamba do anjo*, *cangeré*, *ubanda* [*sic*]¹⁰⁴—is related to the lexicon of Kimbundu and/or Kikongo, the respective languages of the Mbundu and Kongo. At the same time, along with the expression *filhos de terreiro* (“children of the cleared, ritual circle”), this vocabulary points to a subsequent link with twentieth-century *Umbanda*, which suggests that some form of spirit possession was at the centre of the cult. Both men and women seem to have been involved. Finally, the lexicon in the 1848 movement, along with the ritual clothing of its leaders (a small cap with feathers, a white apron), the title attributed to them (*tate*, clearly derived from a widespread root in the western Bantu languages meaning “father”) and their individual names in Portuguese, particularly *Guieiro*, “One who guides”, all suggest a linkage with another cult, also with anti-slavery overtones, which appeared in São Roque in south-western São Paulo province in 1854.

In the São Roque movement, the religious vocabulary was predominantly Kikongo; for instance, *kwenda landa ma-lavu*, “go get palm wine [i.e., alcoholic beverage]”, *kwiza*, “come”. Furthermore, the leader, José Cabinda, used typically Kongo devices for divination: for instance, a “*vungo*” or “ox horn” (cf. Kikongo *vungu*, “animal horn”) with a mirror on its base. This was clearly an initiatory cult that met in or near a wooded area and that involved spirit possession. At its heart was a process of ritual death, followed by the purification of the initiates and their ritual rebirth. Adepts took on a new

name, receiving the title *Pai* (Portuguese “father”), evidently a translation of Kikongo *taata*, “father, uncle, chief”. The new names evoked power and aggressiveness, or some image of spirits (birds, rapidly moving wings) or of the spirit world (the “Kongo cosmogram”, formed by a four-cornered “cross” [“+”]): for instance, the Portuguese names, *Gavião*, “hawk” (the leader’s sobriquet), *Rompe ferro*, “Break iron”, *Chupa-flor*, “Humming bird”, and *Quatro cantos*, “Four corners”; and the non-Portuguese name *Quinuano* (cf. Kikongo *ki-nwani*, “warrior”; *ki-nwana*, “combative spirit”).

The São Roque cult, together with the 1848 movement, points ahead to the “Cabula”, a spirit possession cult in northern Espírito Santo, described in great detail in 1900 by the region’s bishop.¹⁰⁴ “Cabula”, which before abolition was said to have been a movement of slaves and ex-slaves, had an extensive ritual vocabulary that was clearly derived largely from Kimbundu and/or Kikongo. It was structured like the São Roque ritual and exhibited virtually all the major traits of a Kimpasi cult cited earlier. One of its adepts expressed devotion to a stone shaped like those found in ancient Indian burial sites, which recalls the association of smooth riverine rocks with the bisimbi. (Note that Central Africans would naturally have supposed that the most ancient spirits of the original inhabitants of their new land had been subsumed to, or become associates of, the local bisimbi.)¹⁰⁵ The Cabula’s meetings were held at night in a forest clearing, marked ritually like a Kongo cosmogram, with an altar on the eastern side in honour of *karunga* (cf. Kikongo and Kimbundu *kalunga*, “ocean, death”). As in the case of Kimpasi, the adepts used a “secret” ritual language (“*ca-*” was frequently attached to words as a prefix). Men and women were initiated in ceremonies that involved ritual death, purification and “rebirth” through possession by a “guiding” or “protective” spirit. The latter had the title of *tatá* (clearly, like the 1848 *tate*, reminiscent of Kikongo *taata*) and aggressive or other-worldly names in Portuguese: *Rompe Ponte* and *Rompe Serra*, “Break-bridge” and “Break-mountain” (cf. São Roque’s “Break Iron”); *Guerreiro*, “warrior” (cf. São Roque’s *Quinuano*); and *Flor da Carunga*, “Surface of Kalunga”.¹⁰⁶ The aggressive names here and in São Roque seem significant in view of the fact that in a Kimpasi among the Mpangu in the early twentieth century, the possessing spirits were ancient human souls (*nkita*) who had died violent deaths (thus were particularly angry), but which had now become assimilated to, or associated with, the bisimbi.¹⁰⁷ In view of the several “break” names in these cults, I suspect that “Cabula” is derived from Kikongo *bula*, “break”, with the cult’s “secret” prefix “*ca-*” before it. *Bula ntu* in Kikongo—literally “to break the head”—means “to fall into ecstasy” (to enter into trance).

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

It would appear, therefore, that Kimpasi-like cults were present among slaves in nineteenth-century south-eastern Brazil—indeed, omnipresent, given that they have been documented in three far-flung areas of the region. This conclusion is hardly surprising. Just as Kongolese in seventeenth, eighteenth and early twentieth-century Africa turned to Kimpasi community cults of affliction, which often had political overtones, when they faced conditions of extreme duress—war, enslavement, forced labour, disease—so too did Central Africans in Brazil, organized around a large nucleus of Kongo, Mbundu and other closely related peoples, when they confronted analogous evils.

Where was Saint Anthony when all this was happening? According to a former judge of Vassouras, who witnessed the trial of the 1848 conspirators in that county, the plan for revolt was drawn up by a “secret association . . . known by the name of *Ubanda*”, which “was of a mystic nature, because, with its aspirations for freedom, it was devoted to a superstitious adoration of Saint Anthony”.¹⁰⁸ *Umbanda* meant in late nineteenth-century Kimbundu “the faculty, science, art . . . of healing, . . . of divining . . . and of inducing . . . [the] spirits to influence men and nature for human weal or woe”.¹⁰⁹ Clearly Anthony, the healer, the diviner, the Thaumaturge, had been initiated into a Central-African institution. Although I have found no further information on the exact place of the Saint in this conspiracy, Saint Anthony was also present in the 1854 São Roque cult. Two wooden images of him, made from *nó-de-pinho*, the hard, twisted knot of the Araucária pine tree, were present on José Cabinda’s altar. One of these images had been beheaded: perhaps a literal enactment of “bula ntu” to make sure the Saint’s spirit would enter it.

Data in any case is not lacking on the broader “creolization” of Anthony in south-eastern Brazil, particularly from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. The American traveller, Thomas Ewbank, visited the Monastery of Saint Anthony in Rio de Janeiro in 1846 and described several of its paintings, which illustrated some of the Thaumaturge’s most well-known miracles: his bilocation to absolve his father, his sermon to the fishes, and various acts of healing. Clearly, the *Book of Miracles of Saint Anthony* was alive and well in Brazil. In addition, Ewbank noted slave-owners’ confidence that the Saint could find “lost objects”, in particular runaway slaves.¹¹⁰ In the Paraíba Valley, the elite’s penchant for the Saint was demonstrated by the considerable number of parishes and plantations that bore his name. Anthony’s prestige at the Brazilian Court was also high. Since 1814, in keeping with his long tradition as a “warrior”, he held a patent in the army (as lieutenant colonel) and the title of “Commanding Cavalier of the Military Order of Portugal and Brazil”; in other words, his

position as a patron saint of the Portuguese Empire and then, after Independence, of the Brazilian state, had long been formally recognized.¹¹¹

Ewbank also observed the popularity of Saint Anthony among all classes in the city of Rio, remarking on the devotional aspect as well as on the prevalence of small, inexpensive images representing the Saint.¹¹² Historian Mary Karasch has demonstrated the esteem accorded to Saint Anthony by the black population of the city in the nineteenth century,¹¹³ reinforcing Stanley Stein's similar comments (based on interviews with ex-slaves) regarding the devotion to this saint among plantation workers in the Paraíba Valley:

“Most preferred” [of all saints in the slave quarters] was Saint Anthony, described as “always on the table [probably *mesa*, “table/altar”] of the quimbandeiros” [Kimbundu for slave doctor-priests, who most certainly worked *umbanda*, a word derived from the same root]. Saint Anthony frequently held in his left arm a small Black child who sat upon a peg or nail from which he could be easily removed. The child played an important role for if a slave wished to obtain a request, he removed the child while promising to return it only after the request was performed.¹¹⁴

“Punishing” Saint Anthony until he accedes to one's wishes is a venerable Portuguese custom that still exists in Brazil today. Yet, the child in Saint Anthony's arms, in traditional representations by whites, was the Christ child. The slaves surely knew this. Thus, their substitution of a black boy may have been a way of appropriating Christ for themselves, as Kimpa Vita had done when she preached that Jesus had really been born in the Kongo.

Stein's observations, in other words, point not to a passive “syncretism” but to reinterpretation, or transculturation, an argument that Karasch also endorses. Indeed, other evidence makes it clear that the Saint Anthony of slaves and free blacks was pressed largely from a central-African mould, yet with attention to details from the Portuguese tradition. In a criminal trial record from the interior of São Paulo in 1875,¹¹⁵ we are told that “every Friday night” a *feiticeiro*, or sorcerer, whose name was José Português (Portuguese Joe)

held cabalistic meetings, in which the adepts of his fabulous art twisted and jumped in extravagant dances, to which they gave the name of *cangirês*, in front of an image of Saint Anthony, mutilated all over and with the nose and hands severed; all of

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

them would look at themselves in small round mirrors, which they held in their hands, making grimaces and scowls.

José Português, described as a “magician, witch and conjurer [*mezinheiro*]”, “created charm pots [*descobria panelas de encantamento*]”: perhaps a reference to a certain form of charm prepared in a clay pot and very common in Kongo and related cultures. Later, José Português was found murdered, “lying on his back with a small round mirror over his eyes”. Judging from his name, José Português probably was not black; neither, apparently, were his followers slaves. Yet, the word *cangirê*—a variant of the *cangeré* (“meeting”) mentioned by the sources on the 1848 conspiracy—appears here and in a study of remnants of a largely Central African vocabulary in Minas Gerais.¹¹⁶ More impressively, the symbolism permeating these particular *cangirês* and surrounding José Português’s own death was quite clearly that of the Kongo and related groups. As we have seen, among the Kongo and Mbundu “*kalunga*” meant “death” or “ocean”. Among the Kongo, at least, it also referred to the interface, or point of passage, between the world of the living and that of the dead, and was often represented as a reflective surface or a line dividing a round or oval plane.¹¹⁷ The small round mirrors described in the trial record are like the mirrors on José Cabinda’s divining horns; explicitly meant to encourage a trip to the Other World, they are unmistakable symbols of *kalunga*. Saint Anthony again was in the middle of all this, with his body mutilated: here, perhaps, in accordance with the Portuguese tradition of punishing him until he produced the desired results.¹¹⁸

Also indicative of the reinterpretation of Saint Anthony along Central-African lines are the small figurines representing him that have been collected in the São Paulo Paraíba Valley and that apparently date from the beginning of the twentieth century.¹¹⁹ According to the specialized literature on the subject, figurines of other sacred personages also have been collected, but Anthony is more often represented than any of the other saints and cedes first place in frequency only to the Virgin Mary.¹²⁰ These Saint Anthonies are made of wood of various types, horn or other materials; however, they are most often carved from the same raw material of José Cabinda’s statues: the extremely hard knot of the Araucária pine tree, which grows high in the Mantiqueira mountains behind the Valley. Why would Afro-Brazilian artisans have preferred this hard-to-get and very hard-to-work material to other woods?

The answer may well lie in the analogy the Kongolese often make between the “force” (or moral quality) of a person, spirit or charm and the degree of hardness of a given tree or type of wood.¹²¹ (It is exactly this

metaphor that Brazilian slaves used in the *jongo*, or challenge song, that compared planters to the soft, no-good *embaúba* tree—a song registered by Stanley Stein in the Paraíba Valley: “with so many trees in the forest, [how is it that] *embaúba* is the colonel [big man, or local political boss]”?¹²² Especially appreciated by the Kongoleses for making a charm was wood that was not only hard, but also twisted, or with gnarled veins, as in the case of certain roots. Twisted objects were another form of “crossroads”: such conjunctures, just as in West Africa, formed a sacred point that provided a more ready access to the spirit world. Ewbank was witness to the fact that this preference in charms had crossed the Atlantic. According to him, “the first money that a slave [in Rio de Janeiro] earns is spent on the purchase of a *figa* [a representation of a fist, with thumb placed between index and forefinger], which sometimes is made from the root of the [very hard] rosewood tree [*jacarandá*]”.¹²³ It is within this context that one should interpret the use of *nó-de-pinho* (not only very hard wood, but also gnarled, like a root) in the confection of the Saint Anthony figures. The material required considerably more effort from the artist or ritual expert who carved it, but the power of the charm was correspondingly much greater—as befitted the “Saint of All Saints”, the bilocating miracle worker who constantly crossed back and forth between This World and *kalunga*.

Once the choice of material was made, the confection of the Paraíba Valley Saint Anthonies may well have followed Kongoleses (or broader Central African) patterns. Many of these small Saint Anthonies (generally from five to fifteen centimetres tall) resemble the tiny anthropomorphic figures included as ingredients in a Kongo *nkisi*, as illustrated in Karl Laman’s study of the Nsundi.¹²⁴ The very simple nature of the carvings in both cases reflects their small size; that is, there is not much scope here for detail. Within this simplicity, however, there are resemblances between the Brazilian and African figures, particularly with respect to their caps and the way their hands are crossed, usually over the stomach, which may be more than casual.¹²⁵ In any case, the day-to-day use of these Saint Anthony images seems to have been similar on both sides of the Atlantic. The copper Ntoni Malau from eighteenth century Kongo, photographed and described by art historian R. Wannyn, shows severe signs of wear from “rubbing”, just as many of the pine knot Anthonies from the early twentieth century.¹²⁶ Probably on both sides of the Atlantic these figures were used as instruments to rub (and cure) the body.

In South-eastern Brazil in the mid-nineteenth-century, at the height of the slave trade, Central Africans had formed a creole culture through close encounters with Luso-Catholicism, particularly with Saint Anthony. As in the Kongo of the early eighteenth century, however, Anthony had

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

largely been configured by a Central-African matrix; in the 1848 and 1854 episodes, he appears to have been inducted into the Kimpassi tradition, as he had been in the Kongo by Kimpa Vita. John Thornton and Linda Heywood (the latter writing about the Angolan “connection” with Brazil) have rightly warned us not to see such Brazilian transculturations as entirely a New World process. Indeed, historian Hein Vanhee has demonstrated that the Christian lay catechists—the *mestres*—continued to exist in the Kongo into the second half of the eighteenth century. By 1760, they continued to be “quite numerous”, but most were now “initiated by chiefs and noblemen on behalf of local interest groups”, rather than being selected, as before, by missionaries, whose numbers had dwindled.¹²⁷ Thornton cites a Capuchin source for 1781, which reports that the *mestres* and their helpers still maintained well-kept chapels in Kongo and that many high nobles still held titles such as “Master of the Church”.¹²⁸ In 1816, the English explorer of the Zaire River, J. K. Tuckey, described a man who was surely one of the indigenous *mestres*. Tuckey took on board a group of African Christians from Soyo, a former Kongo province, among them a priest or lay preacher who could “read the Romish litany in Latin” and “write ... [his own name] and that of Saint Antonio”. Here we have proof, then, that at least some active devotion to Saint Anthony continued in the region of the former Kingdom into the early nineteenth century.¹²⁹ Thus, it is likely that among the thousands of Central Africans who poured into Brazil in the decades before 1848—at least a large minority of them Kongo and Mbundu—there were many who brought with them a significant familiarity with a transculturated Saint Anthony, even if this latter-day Ntoni may have been less engaged in dialogue with the latest European texts and sermons than he had been in 1704.

In any case, it seems likely that cosmological orientations that were common to Kongolese, Mbundu and other peoples would have predisposed most Central Africans, once in Brazil, to follow paths traced earlier in the Kongo: on one hand, the forging of community cults of affliction aimed at coping with the crisis of enslavement; on the other, the creation of a transculturated Central-African Saint Anthony, similar in many respects to Ntoni Malau. Indeed, the joining together in a new Antonian devotion of people who brought Ntoni Malau with them and persons who had never met him in Africa may have been facilitated by Anthony’s status in Brazil as a patron saint. The *bisimbi* spirits, after all were local territorial genii who were arranged in a hierarchy with Funza on top, as the supreme lord of all the land. Who else in Brazil could hold that title, if not Saint Anthony himself? How could slave revolts—or strategies of assimilation, which may have been more common in non-plantation contexts—*not* be

successful, if Anthony, the “Saint of All Saints”, the *Brazilian* “Vice-God”, could be persuaded to lend his support?¹³⁰

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Notes

1. Or continuously from 1509, after a civil war between a Christian and a supposedly non-Christian pretender. (I use Thornton's dating, after F. Bontinck: Thornton, 1984: 148, note 7.) In 1704, the dismembered kingdom was located in the lower Zaire basin, almost entirely south of the River, in

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo and northern Angola, and extended from the ocean almost to Malebo Pool. The larger Kongo culture area reached somewhat further east and considerably further north.

2. On Kimpassi-like cults in Brazil and their relation to the Kimpassi and similar cults of the Kongo, see Slenes (2006, forthcoming).
3. Saint Anthony (ca. 1195-1231), born in Lisbon, spent most of his life in Padua. He was canonized in 1232.
4. “Transculturation” was first coined by Fernando Ortiz, in opposition to “acculturation”, i.e., to emphasize the two-way nature of cultural exchanges: Ortiz (1970), “introduction” and pp. 97-103. Pratt (1992), ch. 1, placed “political” struggle, particularly over the formation of contrasting social identities, at the heart of the concept. “Creolization”, a more familiar word, but one that has acquired many significations, can perhaps be given a more precise meaning by equating it with “transculturation”, as redefined by Pratt.
5. Both sets of themes are particularly developed in Thornton’s articles: for instance (1988), (1991), (1998c). Thornton’s book, *Africa and Africans* (1998a), also looks at both, but in separate chapters and (perhaps because it is a general textbook) with less attention to Africans’ strategies in specific contexts. Thus, it has been criticized as too Afro-centric or, alternatively, as too much concerned with the creolization (indeed, acculturation) of Africans to European standards. See, respectively, Price (2003) and Sweet (2003), especially ch. 5. On creolization in the Luso-Angolan-Brazilian world, see Heywood (1999), (2002).
6. See especially Thornton (1984).
7. He takes this approach in *The Kongoese Saint Anthony* (1998b), but much less so in his earlier *The Kingdom of Kongo* (1983), as I show below. Note, however, Thornton’s own assertion (1998b, p. 6) that his interpretation of the Antonian movement did not change between the two books.
8. I use “nativist” advisedly. I believe that in *Kongoese* (1998b) Thornton moves away from his rejection of an earlier historiography in *Kingdom* (1983)—e.g., Balandier (1968) and Fiesi (1972), who saw the Antonians as a proto-nationalist movement—despite his own affirmation of continuity between his books (1998b: 6); compare *Kongoese*, pp. 138-9, with *Kingdom*, pp. 106-9. I go one step further in this direction.
9. Balandier (1968: 47), Thornton (1983, ch. 5), Hilton (1985, chs. 2-3). Hilton’s and Thornton’s works were originally doctoral dissertations, Hilton’s from 1977 and Thornton’s from 1979.
10. For the orthography of Kikongo, the language of the Kongo, I follow Laman (1936), except in quotes from other authors; however, I drop Laman’s diacritical (tonal) marks.
11. Thornton (1998b: 117, 215-6). On “kindoki” among the Kongo today: Bockie (1993, ch. 2).
12. MacGaffey (1986: 211). Thornton (1998b: 117), simply notes that Anthony, the Virgin and the other saints were viewed as powerful (*ba*)*nkita* (the sev-

- enteenth and eighteenth-century word for “bisimbi” in the São Salvador dialect).
13. He notes only (1998b: 117) that appeals for “mercy” figure in the *Salve Regina* and were made by earlier prophetic voices in the Kongo. On Antonians crying “mercy” as a badge (and as an affront to missionaries), see the eye-witness accounts of da Gallo, 1972 (ms. 1710: 59), p. 59, and da Lucca (1972 [ms. 1707]), pp. 95, 103.
 14. See Slenes (2006, forthcoming), for sources and a fuller analysis. These characteristics are a composite of details recorded by missionaries in the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries. Movements inspired by Kimpasi ideals did not necessarily espouse Kimpa Vita’s extreme iconoclasm; early twentieth-century Kimpasi, for instance, used man-made charms in their rituals. On cults (or *ngoma*, “drums”) of affliction in central and southern Africa, see especially Janzen (1982), (1992), and Van Dijk, et al., eds. (2000).
 15. Thornton (1998b: 112-3).
 16. Da Lucca (1953 [ms. 1709]), p. 290.
 17. Da Gallo (1972 [ms. 1710]), p. 76, my translation (here and in subsequent citations from foreign-language sources): “forse haveva udito qualche sermone di S. Antonio in portuguese, che stava nelle mani di qualche bagattello negro, che sapeva leggere alquanto”. Editor T. Filesi suggests in a footnote that “bagattello” probably means “uomo di poco conto”. See Thornton (1984: 155-6), on King Afonso I (reigned 1509-1543) as an avid reader of Christian texts and on the 1555 Kikongo catechism, elaborated with input from mestres.
 18. Neotti (1997: 19-20), for sources and quote.
 19. I use “Antônio”, the usual way of writing the name in Brazil, but respect citations that use “António”, the Portuguese spelling. The first version of this article was written in 2002, following my earlier attempt to compare Saint Anthony in the Kongo and in Brazil in a 1991-92 article, published later in English: Slenes (2000). Since then, Ronaldo Vainfas (2003) anticipated part of my argument regarding Saint Anthony’s importance in the Luso-Brazilian world, emphasizing the role of Antônio Vieira’s sermons in constructing the saint’s image as warrior and “restorer” of lost things.
 20. In the collected sermons, first Portuguese edition: Antônio Vieira, *Sermoens do P. Antonio Vieyra, da Companhia de Jesu ...*, 15 vols. (1679-1748). The Saint Anthony sermons, numbered as follows according to the dates of their deliverance, are spread over five volumes (‘Parts’), all published in Lisbon by Miguel Deslandes: Vol. II (1682), sermons 4 and 8 (first part); III (1683), sermon 5; VI (1690), sermon 1; XI (1696), sermons 2 and 6; and XII (1699), sermons 3, 7, 8 (2nd part) and 9. By order, place and year of deliverance, the sermons are: 1) Salvador, Bahia, 1638; 2) Lisbon, 1642; 3) São Luís do Maranhão, 1653; 4) S. Luís, 1654; 5) S. Luís, 1657; 6) S. Luís, 1658; 7) Rome, 1670; 8) Rome, 1671; 9) Rome, 1672 (prepared but never delivered). Sermon 2 was also published separately in several editions between 1642

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

- and 1672; see Paiva (1999), p. 271 ff. I use Neotti's edition of these sermons: Vieira (1997).
21. See the list of volumes in Paiva (1999: 327-31), with no indication of the sermons included.
 22. Romeiro (2001: 151-3).
 23. Castro (1997: 79-94).
 24. Randles (1968: 159). This was my point of departure for studying Vieira's sermons. A specialist in Brazilian history, Ronaldo Vainfas (2003: 37), has recently suggested (without citing Randles) that Luso-Brazilian ideas about Saint Anthony, influenced decisively by Vieira, may have had an impact on Kimpa Vita.
 25. Vieira (1997: 34-9), sermon 1 (Salvador, 16 June, 1638; published in Vieira, *Sermoens*, Vol. VI [1690]).
 26. Vieira (1997: 211), sermon 6 (São Luís, 13 January, 1658; published in Vieira, *Sermoens*, Vol. XI [1696]).
 27. Vieira (1997: 251-77), sermon 7 (Rome, 13 January, 1670; published in Vieira, *Sermoens*, Vol. XII, [1699]).
 28. Melo (1997: 306-12, 317-8).
 29. Fazenda (1920: 379).
 30. Thornton (1998b: 28), for a description of one prominent mestre, Kimpa Vita's kinsman.
 31. Cited in Melo (1997: 311).
 32. For reproductions of these paintings, see: Various authors (1996: 88, 91).
 33. Neotti in Vieira (1997: 192), observes that the book appears in Anthony's iconography from the 14th century, while the Christ child and the sprig of lilies dates from the 16th.
 34. Vieira (1997: 274), sermon 7.
 35. Thornton (1998b: 117).
 36. Gamboso (1995).
 37. Vaz (1970: Vol. II, 331-3); for a similar tale from the Mbundu, Chatelain (1969 [1894]), story IV, p. 83.
 38. Laman (1953-1968: Vol. III, 38, 40).
 39. This story could have marked Anthony as a *nganga* of *atombola*, a cult that *resurrected* lineage elders, made them talk and then reburied them. See the description of *atombola* in Hilton (1985: 11, 196-8).
 40. Da Gallo (1972 [ms. 1710], p. 68). Thornton (1998b: 133), observes the indigenous meanings of "*kanga*", "tie"; but he notes neither Saint Anthony's link with fertility in Portugal, nor da Gallo's comment on the similarity between coeval Portuguese and Kongo practices of tying cords around Saint Anthony's limbs.
 41. Randles (1968: 151).
 42. Filesi (1972: 34, note).

43. Balandier (1968: 241), following Laman (1936).
44. Vieira (1997: 212-3), sermon 6.
45. MacGaffey (1986: 65-9, 196). In the twentieth century (p. 65) smiths were initiated through a community cult of affliction. See also Herbert (1993), especially chs. 3, 6.
46. Laman (1936). Van Wing (1959: Vol. II, 458), for *futumuka* and its relation to *fula*.
47. Thornton (1998b: 77, 120-3).
48. Hilton (1985: 197). Compare Thornton (1983), ch. 5, particularly p. 65, where the conflict between “priests ... [and] local nganga” (as if Kitome and Kimpasi were not involved) is isolated from politics—it becomes “a struggle between rival religious actors for control of the same religion”—even though the priests were “fully supported by Kongo’s ruling class and nobility”.
49. Bouveignes and Cuvelier (1951: 164). I use Thornton’s dating of this episode (1983: 61).
50. Da Caltanissetta (1970: 70-1) for the discussion that follows. Da Caltanissetta was convinced he had been poisoned several times by “fetishers” (e.g., *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 25, 32); if so, this was another sign that many people rejected his presence.
51. Hilton (1985: 98, 101-02).
52. Van Wing (1959: 386).
53. Laman (1953-1968: Vol. II, 20).
54. Van Wing (1959: Vol. II, 400-05), for what follows. *Mpungu* means “the highest, greatest”; Laman (1936).
55. See MacGaffey (1977: 188), and (1986: 132), on the idea that diviners have extra eyes to see the Other World. The notion seems to carry over here to *minkisi* (plural of *nkisi*).
56. Axelson (1970: 203, 251).
57. See the review of the evidence on this custom in Slenes (1999: 249-52).
58. Van Wing (1959: Vol. II, 429). The same seems to have been true in the Kimpasi-related Bakhimba cult among the Yombe; see Bittremieux (1936: 14).
59. Thornton (1998b: 74).
60. Da Lucca (1972 [ms. 1707]), p. 97: “ma che conoscendo esser [l’Arte Magica] cose diaboliche, haveva traslasciato quell’esercizio”.
61. Thornton (1998b: 74), for this and subsequent quotes in this paragraph.
62. Da Gallo (1972 [ms. 1710]), p. 78, for this and subsequent quotes.
63. Thornton (1983: 108-9), for Marquis of Vunda: title, role; Hilton (1985: 23), for Nzimba: title.
64. Souza, Juliana (2001: 393), citing the 20th *Maria Rosa Mistica* sermon, published in 1686 or 1688.
65. MacGaffey (1986: 210), for this and subsequent quotes.

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

66. Da Lucca (1972 [ms. 1707]), p. 94.
67. MacGaffey (1986: 210), da Gallo (1972 [ms. 1710]), p. 78. Note that Jadin's French translation of da Gallo's manuscript attributes the correct date to it (17 December, 1710), but gratuitously inserts "c'est à dire la miséricorde" (not in the original Italian) after "Ne Yari"; Jadin (1961: 517). See Thornton (1998b: 117), on the replacement of intervocalic *r* by *d* in the Kikongo of the eighteenth century (*yaari* becoming today's *yaadi*).
68. Laman (1936): *ne* or (southern dialect) *na* (pp. 296, 362), "a title of respect"; *yaadi* (p. 1110), "one who reigns well, ruler".
69. MacGaffey (1977: 187).
70. Thornton (1998b: 12, 161), da Lucca (1972 [ms. 1707]), p. 94.
71. Randles (1968: 158).
72. Margarido (1968: 546-7), cited in Filesi (1972: 30, note 33).
73. Redinha (1972: 757), cited by Gonçalves (1985: 177, note 34).
74. Gonçalves (1985: 167). See also Abranches (1991: 83), (Thompson 1993: 69-72). On the similar significations of the *mulemba* (Kimbundu for *nsanda*) among the Mbundu, see Miller (1976: 48-53).
75. I borrow here from the analysis in Slenes (2006, forthcoming).
76. MacGaffey (1986: 132, 127).
77. Gonçalves (1985: 164-5).
78. Gonçalves (1985: 168).
79. Laman (1936); but note what MacGaffey's informants say (1977: 187, note 23).
80. MacGaffey (1986: 133-4).
81. Thornton (1998b: 9).
82. Laman (1936: 161). In Laman's "SB" dialect in the area of Mbanza Kongo (p. lix) the prefix *mu-* always replaces that of "n"; indeed Gallo gives *musanda* for the fig tree, not *nsanda*. Conceivably this was the case with the other nasal prefix "m", in which case *mufuma* would have been the southern version of *mfuma*. (Swartenbroeckx [1973: 336], gives *mufuma* as a variant of *mfuma*, but does not indicate its regional use.) *Mufuma* is still close enough to *fuma*, however, for the hypothesis of error on Gallo's part or deception on Kimpa Vita's to remain plausible.
83. MacGaffey (1986: 130, 133). See also Pierre Swartenbroeckx (1973: 336, *mfuma*), which gives "ganga-mfuma", also "to conspire". This combines *mfuma* with *nganga*, the "priest doctor" who normally works to solve an individual's problems; it is tempting to speculate that this may have been Kimpa Vita's private name for the Christian priests, who were commonly called "nganga". I could not find this expression, however, in Laman (1936). Other relevant words from Laman are: *mfuma avondwa*, "to combine to kill, assassinate"; *mfumbi*, "assassin".
84. Janzen and MacGaffey (1974: 7).
85. Lydia Cabrera (1983: 150, 158, 166, 175, 177).

86. Laman (1936). Note that Swartenbroeckx (1973) gives *m̄vumbi*, “cadaver, deceased” as standard Kikongo, common to all dialects.
87. Laman (1936: 638). Van Wing (1959: Vol. II, 292). In the bibliography on the Kongo, the status of the oldest nkita—as a separate spirit group or as one subsumed to the bisimbi—is unclear; see Slenes (2006, forthcoming). In any case, in Kongo (Thornton, 1998b: 117), these nkita had “lived long ago but were the ancestors of no one in particular. ... They were positive, even stern, moral figures who were nevertheless non-partisan and protecting”. In this Cuban source, however, “nkita” seems associated with the recent dead, which is consistent with the ambiguity in Van Wing’s account.
88. Cabrera (1983: 175).
89. See Thornton (1998b: 117), on “the petty concerns and willingness to do evil on behalf of their descendants” which characterized “the recently dead ancestors”.
90. MacGaffey (1986: 133). Laman (1936), entry for *nkulu* (singular). *Bakulu* can also mean “the oldest ancestors”, i. e. presumably those who eventually become associates (or a subclass) of bisimbi.
91. The opposition between nsanda and mfuma brings to mind the one noted by MacGaffey (1986: 178), between “charms of the below”, “associated with terrestrial waters, women’s activities, healing and fertility”, and “charms of the above” (of “land, with respect to water, or sky with respect to earth”), which “are associated ... with men’s affairs” and “are used primarily in combat with witches”. This opposition is also central to Hilton’s analysis of the “sky-spirit” and “water-spirit” dimensions, the Christian priests being primarily associated with the former, but also seen as having qualities related to the latter (at least before the Capuchins began truly acting like witches). The opposition was first stated in Dupré (1975: 12-28).
92. Kimpa Vita’s analogy is so consistent that I believe my argument stands, even if she did say *fuma* (“white/red riverine stone”); for *fuma* (according to MacGaffey “associated with the dead”), would still have led Kikongo speakers to *mfumu*, *mfuma*, *fumana*, *vanga mfuma* and other words cited in the notes above, thereby establishing a set of meanings/connotations in contrast to that of *nsanda*.
93. Hilton (1985: 200-01).
94. Note that “mfumu” can also mean “king, noble”; *ki-mfumu* is “reign”, also “authority, nobility, royalty”, among other meanings. Laman (1936).
95. See note 67, and Laman (1936): *ki-yaadi* (p. 296) and *ky-adi* (p. 362). See also Thornton (1998: 117, note 5; 219, note 16), who translates Italian *miseri-cordia* (“mercy”) as *kiyadi* (or *kiyari*, at the time of the Salve Antoniana).
96. Hilton (1985: 209).
97. See Thornton’s hypothesis (1998b: 44) that commoners increasingly believed the high nobility was acting with evil kindoki.
98. Sá (1997: 210-221).

SAINT ANTHONY AT THE CROSSROADS

99. In: Vieira (2000-2001: 78, 89).
100. Why Kimpa Vita, a member of the nobility, would have taken this stance is probably in good part explained by Thornton (1998b: 14, 54-6): her material conditions of existence were not radically different from those of the majority; her practice as Nganga Marinda brought her closer to the people. I suspect that one may add to this something that is implicit in both Thornton's and Hilton's analyses: the severe loss of material benefits by the greater part of the nobility over the previous several decades because of shrinking possibilities of royal patronage, in the context of economic decline and the shattering of centralized control.
101. In this section, I borrow and add to material in Slenes (2006, forthcoming) and Slenes (2000). Since the publication of the latter (the original Portuguese version of 1991-1992), other important studies have appeared on Saint Anthony in Brazil: Mott (1996); Souza, Marina (2001); Vainfas (2003).
102. See Slenes (2000: 223); the strong presence of Kongo and related cultures after ca. 1810 (following the massive shift in the focus of the trade away from "Benguela" and toward "Congo North"—the mouth of the Zaire and the coastline above it) is emphasized in Slenes (2006, forthcoming).
103. This and the following paragraphs are based on Slenes (2006, forthcoming).
104. The main document on Cabula has been published several times: see, in English, Bastide (1978 [1960]), pp. 202-4.
105. Cabula is clearly related to the present-day possession cult, Umbanda. Thus, in view of its connection to Kimpasi, it is significant that one of the most commonly called-upon group of spirits in Umbanda is that of the *Caboclos Velhos* ("Old Indians"). See Slenes (2006, forthcoming).
106. Laman (1936), entry for *bula*. Note that Saint Anthony entered Kimpa Vita through her head; Thornton (1998b: 10).
107. See Slenes (2006, forthcoming), which also notes that the "Caboclo Velho" spirits in present-day Umbanda are considered powerful and aggressive.
108. Siqueira (1975 [1852]), p. 109.
109. Chatelain (1969 [1894]), p. 268.
110. Ewbank (1976 [1856]), pp. 250-1.
111. Fazenda (1920: 379).
112. Ewbank (1976 [1856]), pp. 188-9.
113. Karasch (1987: 266-7, 277, 282, 284).
114. Stein (1985: 203).
115. *O Direito* (1880: Vol. 21 [January/April], 12).
116. Machado Filho (1985: 67-8, 129): *canjira*, *canjerê*, meaning "charm", also the name of a dance; perhaps from Kimbundu *ka-* (diminutive particle) + *njila* (cf. Kikongo *nzila*), "path".
117. MacGaffey (1986: 146), Thompson (1985: 121-5).
118. See Neotti's note in Vieira (1997: 190). José Português had been hired by a planter to obtain the marriage of a spinster daughter. This case allows a

- glimpse into a world of transculturated meanings where social actors of all types found some common ground.
119. I draw here on my observations regarding these figurines in Slenes (2000); see also the recent article by Souza, Marina (2001).
 120. Etzel (1971: 152-6), Lemos (1988: 192-7).
 121. Volavkova (1972: 52-89), Thompson (1985: 138-9), MacGaffey (1977: 127-31).
 122. “*Com tanto pau no mato / Embaúba é corone!*”; Stein (1985: 208).
 123. Ewbank (1976 [1856]), p. 187.
 124. Laman (1953-1968: Vol. III, figure p. 93).
 125. The hands on the stomach could represent the Kongo gesture of *simbidila* (‘holding firm’), a form of prayer and meditation “to prepare the ground” for further action. See Thompson (1981: 75-6).
 126. Wannyn (1961), plate xxiv (unpaginated) and p. 79.
 127. Vanhee (2002: 243-64).
 128. Thornton (1984: 165).
 129. J. K. Tuckey (1967 [1818]), pp. 79-81. Tuckey’s observation is much stronger evidence of this than the very small number of carved statues of Saint Anthony found in the possession of elite Kongo families at the end of the nineteenth century, who regarded them as ancient heirlooms. For two such figures, see Bentley (1900: Vol. I, 39, 259).
 130. Manumission rates appear to have been much higher in small properties, even for Africans; thus, in these properties, processes of transculturation and identity formation may have been different from those sketched here. See Slenes (2006, forthcoming).