

Teke-Loango contacts in the XVII - XIXth century

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Abstract

The history of contacts between the Loango kingdom and the Teke kingdom dates back to very ancient times. Early on, the two kingdom's Congolese space come into contact to develop a trading system based on interior products and products from the coast. From these contacts, many routes will emerge which should connect the populations of the kingdom of Makoko inland to those of King Maloango on the coast. This shows that before the contact with the West, the people of the Congo had come into with each other and with others. These contacts, which can be remembered as contacts of civilizations, have been beneficial for each other in building peoples and commercial centers at the level of the sub-region. They also highlight the diversity of products resulting from the economic activities of these peoples, but also the different ecosystems from which this production is derived. This study traces the milestones of cooperation between the two States from the XVIIth to the XIXth century, showing how the Congolese trade will mix the slave trade gradually introduced by Europeans on the Congolese coast.

Keywords: Loango Kingdom, Teke Kingdom, Contacts, Peoples, Congo

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I. INTRODUCTION

The organization and functioning of societies shows that it is difficult if not impossible for a people to develop or have a normal daily life without coming into contact with other peoples or civilizations. The Teke and Loango kingdoms understood these mechanisms very early on and established fruitful contacts between them which allowed both to open up to outside neighbors and to benefit from their know-how, their genius in production, techniques, commerce and organization of space. These two entities understood that no people can be developed by withdrawing into itself.

In this study we present the Teke and Loango kingdoms, their political, social, administrative and economic organization first. Then we will approach the contacts between the two kingdoms, that is to say the content of the exchanges between the two States with all the internal and external implications that this will have on the ground especially with the development of the slave trade on the coast and inland. This will finally lead to see the impact of the Teke-Loango contacts between the XVIIth and XIXth century. We want to see for that, what are the elements which would justify these contacts? and what are the different products involved in trade between the two kingdoms? These are the axes on which our study focuses, which aims to contribute to the knowledge of the Bantu kingdoms of the Congolese space.

1- Presentation of the Teke and Loango kingdoms

1.1- The Teke kingdom

The Teke kingdom once occupied a vast territory in the heart of Central Africa. Most of the researchers who have devoted studies on the latter, describe it in the same way. Abraham Constant NdingaMbo specifies in this paragraph:

The Teke kingdom or the kingdom of Makoko (after the title of the king) was the northern neighbor of that of Kongo and occupied all the space, all the current habitat of the Teke in central, western and eastern Africa, from southern Gabon to Zaire (current Democratic Republic of the Congo) from the region (department) of Pool via central Congo, Haut-Ogooué to Bolobo, left bank of Zaire (DRC) to the Bateke plateaus and high Alima¹

From this precision of NdingaMbo, we can emphasize that the limits of the Teke kingdom went beyond the current Congolese space with an extension overflowing to neighboring Gabon and even reaching the region

¹AC NdingaMbo, 1979-1980, *Protohistory of Central Africa*, Correspondence Course, Brazzaville, University MariemNgouabi, pp 84-96

of Ecuador in the current . DRC. This kingdom touched in its southern part, the Kongo kingdom. J. Vansina states to this effect:

At the end of the XVIIth century the kingdom grew considerably and boundaries were approximately in the south of the Congo River, upstream and downstream of the Stanley Pool. From the mouth of the Black River, the border follows the river, then along the watershed between the lower Kwango. From there, it continues to Bolobo, crosses the Congo River in the direction of the mouth of the Alima, and follows it upstream to its confluence with Lékéti. It follows Lékéti to its source, goes up to the upper course of the Niari, to the region of Mindouli, then crosses Mindouli towards the Congo river downstream from the mouth of the Loufoulakari²

The kingdom of Makoko occupies a large region of Central Africa. We can recognize the neighboring peoples of the Teke. North of the kingdom of Makoko is the country of Mbosi called *Ntsié-Imbwe* .

At this level, the inhabitants of the kingdom of Makoko are currently represented by the Mbéré and the Tege (Atee, Atege). The ancestors of the Mbosi have been in close contact with the inhabitants of the kingdom of Makoko. These contacts are perceptible at the level of the Mbosi lordship of Boundji(*OnkaniMbonzi*) . This confined to the region of the Tege around the current village of Okoyo. The exchange of blood and ideas are detectable between Mbéré and Mbosi³.

In the east we find the people called Abanon said people of water (*Assi-Nzali*) by the inhabitants of Mbé. This population group brings together the Apfourou navigators the current Likuba, the Bayanzi and Bubangui.

In the West, the ancient Teke designated the country subject to King Maloango *Ntsié a -Vili or Mpurukundzaliogwa* that is to say, towards the great water (the sea). Intense commercial activity will develop between the two kingdoms until the end of the XIXth century.

The foundation of this kingdom probably dates back to VII^e -VIIIth century AD.⁴

The date of founding of the Teke kingdom still gives rise to many hypotheses on the part of many researchers. Some argue that the Teke kingdom was founded in the middle of the III^e and IXth century of the Christian era. While think that it was between XIVth and XVth century.

Ebiantsa-Hopiel-Opiel states:

The foundation of the Tio kingdom dates back to the African Middle Ages. As much debate as controversy, the founding of the Teke kingdom makes one. From Xth to the XIIth century, the Teke kingdom was a «pre-state» and between the XIIIth and XVIth century, it was only a «proto-state»⁵.

Pacheco Pereira, who wrote around 1506-1508 and Pigafetta who wrote him, in 1591, are the first two authors to mention the kingdom of Makoko, located in the interior of lower Ethiopia in the , east of the kingdom of Kongo . Not until the end of the XIXth century to possess with Leo Guiral, the scientific mission of the Ogooue (1889), a provided description of the kingdom of Makoko and at that time, details of the court of the ruler of Teke are particularly precise .

The political organization of the Teke kingdom rests on the administrative and provincial authorities, the government and the Queen Mother. The government is responsible to the authority of the king or the council of high politico-religious dignitaries . This council is composed of twelve (12) members, five of whom formed the king's committee of grand electors. Not all senior dignitaries necessarily resided in the kingdom's capital, Mbé. A good number evolved inside the country, in their respective sanctuaries (*Nkobi*). King Makoko resided in Mbé . To access the throne, the latter is chosen by six (6) lineages of the royal clan which are :Impio, Tson, Impan, Ondzala, Inkou, Okotson.

The king wears as insignia for his investiture, a red loincloth (*Mbye*), a scarlet blanket

(*Nkaon*) two cheetah skins (*Ibaningo*) , a necklace, a cane (*Umpaa*) , a crown, a raffia fabric (*Ndzouona*) , a lion's skin spread on his throne. After his investiture, the king became the master of men and nature, the holder of Kwe-Mbali. He is surrounded by distinguished advisers with the rank of Minister, among whom:

- Ngailinon, Prime Minister, Coordinator of the committee of the electors, of the action of the council. He supervises the ceremonies of the royal palace. His task during the king's enthronement is to help him bathe and

²J. Vansina, 1961, *On oral tradition. Historical method test* , Brussels, IRES, p73.

³E. Adzou, 1973, *The Kingdom of Makoko : History and Civilization* , Master's Thesis, Brazzaville, University of Brazzaville, p. 7.

⁴Z. Sah, 2013 , *medicine and society in Kukua (Teke Congo) XVIIIth -XXth century* history PhD thesis, Brazzaville, University MarienNgouabi, p.22.

⁵E. Hopiel-Opiel, 1977, *The traditional belief system among the Teke : the religion of the Tio* , Master's thesis in history, Brazzaville, University MarienNgouabi, p.59.

make him wear insignia of royal power. He also presides over the royal court of justice and reports to the king on all daily activities held within the kingdom⁶.

- Ngâmbion, Minister Blacksmith of the metal industry, responsible for the eternal fire of the king's residence as well as the royal kitchen. He is responsible for making the necklaces of the King,
- Muidzou, Minister representing the Prime Minister beyond Léfini, coordinator of traditional chiefdoms. He is the king's tribute collector,
- Ngâlion, Minister of Defense, administrator of traditional chiefdoms,
- Ngâliond'Inkoui, Minister responsible for the household, supreme judge of the prosecution and permanent of the throne,
- Ngaimpan, Minister Delegate near Muidzou,
- Nguia, Minister of Royal Security, High Priest in charge of health in the kingdom,
- Ngaliéme, Minister acting in the absence of the king, he plays the role of viceroy,
- Ngantsou, border guard,
- Ngobila, Minister of Transport and River Navigation,
- Ibanon, high priest, in charge of initiating the king and the queen.

Apart from these high dignitaries, the king's entourage counts : Ngasa, the king's first wife, the Queen Mother, Wafi-Intièré, the king's second wife, responsible for preparing her meals and keeping the king's sacred water. N ga a Likuba, young girl guardian of the royal throne and Mapiémé responsible for supplying the king with sacred water. The Makoko, the king, is the supreme leader. He reigns over all the provinces, lands and villages forming his kingdom.

The kingdom of *Onkoo*, the all-powerful King Teke, the Anzicana, is a truly highly centralized state . A solid rating organization administrative, military and legal, ensuring coordination of social processes; monopolization by the power of political control device. The administrative organization of the kingdom is of the feudal type.

At the top of the social pyramid sits the *Onkoo*, the king revered in the manner of a deity.

His powers are extensive, he remains the master who has the eye on everything, on the temporary as on the spiritual.

After reaching a high level in its organization, the kingdom of Anzicana faced many difficulties which would make it downhill. Indeed, the appearance of a certain number of social factors, following a series of historical ruptures and the social metamorphoses which they entail progressively weaken the authority of the *Onkoo* and bring out from the shadow unexpected personalities.

The enrichment of certain local notables by the slave trade played in the same direction. It benefited those who were best positioned in the slave market.

Later with another level in the organization of power twelve provinces appeared administered by the representatives of the king whose symbol of power was the *nkobi*. The names of the twelve administrative courts clustered around Mbe, the capital of the kingdom are : *Inlinon, Muyu, Impaon, Andzion, Ampoh, Leo, Angia- Obuh, Mwangaon, Onzala, Anzobo, Mvula*. Each bearing the name a *ncobi* from the country. Two provincial governors have remained famous: Ngâlinon and Mwidzuh.

Ngâlinon, sitting in Nkouo, an immense district of Mbé, extended his authority over the Awun, the Ambey-Mbey, Asise and the Lali. Mwidzuh held Abali and reigned over the Küküa, Azynziu, Abun and Agwengwel. But the *Onkoo* remains a true divinity before whom everyone bends, he is the supreme authority of the kingdom.

1.2 The Loango kingdom

In the XVIth century, Loango is still certainly a part of Kongo Kingdom. When it separates from the latter, he takes with it the Kakongo and the Ngoyo who then come under his control.

The Loango kingdom, the former maritime vassal of Kongo, is the result of the anarchy that reigned in the state of Kongo. Dapper⁷ relating a tradition, wrote that the people of this country have lived long in small chiefdoms perpetually in war with each another before coming under the domination of Kongo.

Dominique Ngoïe Ngalla gives here an overview of the territorial limits of Loango :

Former vassal or former possession of the kingdom of Kongo from which it separated at a date already far back, at the time when Dapper relates the fact, the Loango had in fact grown from the former northern possessions of the kingdom of Kongo, its neighbors by language, culture or geography. According to the tradition taken up by Dapper, the Loango extended in this way, heading north to Cape Sainte Catherine, in

⁶S. Ndinga Mbonga, 2016, *contacts between the United Kingdom and Loango Teke XVIth to the XIXth century*, Master thesis in history, Brazzaville, University Marien Ngouabi, p. 29.

⁷Cf. O. Dapper

Gabon. To the east, it confined to Anzikoteke ; Louémé and Tchiloango and their extension, the Niari Valley, now constituted its southern limit ⁸.

The king of the kingdom of Loango is Ma-Loango and the capital is Diosso.

Within the limits of the Loango kingdom, today live the Vili from whom the inhabitants of Loango descend. The territory then included seven (7) provinces : Mâpili, Matsilônga, Mâkuni, Mayôbe, Mânganga, Kanu and Malwâdjili ⁹.

King Ma-loango was chosen from among the princes born in the kingdom, provided he was deemed worthy by the council of regency (council of notables), which council governs the kingdom during the inter-reign. Kings are taken from the royal matrilineal clan¹⁰. Gradually, other clans will also give kings. The court (*Mikawaluangu*) included the king (*Ma-Loango*), the ministers (*Mifuka*) and the notables (*Si fumusi*).

The king once elected, received from the population a great mark of respect. The administrative organization of the kingdom is centralized. There are several structures including: the Council of State, the Government and the Generating Queen. The Council of State played an important role, it assisted the king. It is in a way, a “college of electors”. It was led by the Ma-Mboma. The king is surrounded by a government composed of nine (9) Ministers:

- the Ma -M boma , Prime Minister who reported directly to the king. He is in charge of the affairs of the sea that is to say of the trade with the Whites. He acted as the king and could replace the king on the throne after his death. He most often come from the country of the Kugni.

- the Ma-K a ka , Minister of War,

- Ma-Fouka, Minister of Commerce, he is in charge of trade between Loango and the other States. He was also responsible for tax collection on behalf of the king.

- Ma-Safi, Minister of Finance,

- Ma-Gofu, Minister of Foreign Affairs,

- the Ma-Kimba, Minister of Water and Forests,

- the Ma-Mbele , Minister spokesperson and messenger of the king who held a copper knife, *Mbele* ,

- the Ma-Tchiyendi, Customs Ministers,

- the Ma-Mpoutou, Minister Delegate to the Minister of Foreign Affairs

To better administer his kingdom, the king appointed in each province, a *MFumu*

(Prince) in the royal clan. This explains why the names of provincial governors were always preceded by the prefix Moe or Ma.

The provinces of Loango were divided into two groups:

- the coastal provinces and,

- the interior provinces.

The coastal provinces included: Tchilunga which was the largest province between the Kouilou river and the Noubi river, the province of Loandjili which started from Diosso to Cabinda and the province of Mampili which surrounded the capital of the kingdom, Bouali .

In the interior provinces, there was Nganga-Kanu, located between Mayombe and Mampili. Ma-Kangu is the province of Lumbu located north of Tchilunga and which extends to Gabon. Ma-Kuni, is the Kugni province which extended to Sibiti and to the Dondo, Sundi.

Judicial power was exercised by the king, governors and village chiefs for civilians and criminals.

2. Economic life in the Teke Kingdom and Loango

Economic life was based on agricultural activities, hunting, fishing, forging, pottery, weaving, and salt making by drying ocean water.

Agriculture, mainly practiced by women, provides the populations with sufficient food. In this, the proportion of food crops is more important.

2. 1 InTeke Kingdom

Among the Teke, there are in the traditional industry activities such as the processing of agricultural products (wine making, palm oil manufacturing, etc.), weaving, basketry and other specific activities such as, the forge and pottery.

The Teke make various qualities of wine:

- Palm wine (*mali ma Bâ*), is obtained by making a hole in the trunk of the *Elaeisguineensis* palm tree at the base of young palm trees . On this device, we suspend a calabash, *Un ssak i*, *Mfula* above the opening from which the juice flows after two or three days.

⁸D. Ngoi e Ngalla, 2010, *In the kingdom of Loango, the athletes of God 1880-1930* , Editions Publibook, p. 15 .

⁹Z. Sah, 2015, *African Kingdoms - LIHG-ENS course*, ron. p.10 .

¹⁰Th. Obenga, “ La civilization Loango ”, ron. p.54 .

Palm wine is always present and highly appreciated in religious and customary ceremonies.

- One rarely meets among Teke people, banana wines, *mali ma anko* , pineapple wine , *mali ma intu* .

The production of palm oil is done by palm nuts, *Mba* , *Nkènè* . The most common way to extract palm oil is to pound previously prepared palm nuts in a mortar. The fibers obtained from *Nkama* are then pressed to obtain palm oil which is subsequently stored in terracotta canaries.

Regarding the weaving, among the Teke, that of raffia (*Ndzuona*) , by its technique and its improvement, remains the most elaborate traditional activity of the kingdom of Makoko as underlined by Emmanuel Adzou :

Many Europeans have largely emphasized the degree of development of this activity in Central Africa.

The art of weaving has a great socio logical significance because the essential part of the matrimonial compensation and the funeral of famous personages consumes the manufactured fabrics of prestige. The work of the weaver, *Umbulumpuhu* , occupies him for a good part of the year. It is accomplished in several stages. It all begins with the picking of young raffia excavations from which white threads are extracted. These are dried for a certain period of time. Then they are reduce into much finer threads that will be woven.¹¹

The importance of this loom among the Teke obliges them to make a reduced quantity of pieces such as *Tsulu* , a raffia rectangle measuring almost 50 x 70 cm.

The assembly of these pieces by the weaver allows to obtain after sewing, great qualities of loincloths, of which three of the best known are distinguished according to their shape and color:

- The *Varga* , *Voro* , is a yellow or black loincloth made up of twelve (12) pieces together, serving as everyday clothing.

- The *Ndzuona*, fabric composed of sixteen (16) assembled parts. It is used for the payment of the dowry and as linen in the bedding. It was these two raffia teke fabrics that were often on the markets.

- The *Ntah-a-Ngo*, panther fabric, is a large luxury loincloth, reserved for king and Teke dignitaries. It shows a certain degree of perfection and a remarkable artistic level. It also includes sixteen (16) pieces. Its fabric is reminiscent of European velvet.

For the composition of certain patterns, the weaver varies the colors. In this case she uses specific plants from his ecosystem to obtain the different colors: blue or black are obtained from leaves harvested in the forest, *antsuiri-usuru* .

Red is obtained by grinding the fruits of a shrub called in the Teke language, *Ongâbâ* t.

In basketry, there are different kinds of baskets linked to transport on the head or on the back. The main baskets made by Teke basket makers are:

- *Ontere* , large elongated basket suitable for carrying on the head for women or on the shoulder for men . We find in the category of this large basket, two forms: a high quality, *Onterew'onkira* , used in long distance transactions and,

- smaller quality , *Onterew'onkiéré* , which allows women to carry their tools and supplies when they go to the fields.

- the other form of basket, with a conical appearance, is the one the Teke call *Linguli* . Multipurpose basket used for storing precious objects or for fishing in ponds. To these baskets, we must also add the making of *Ikala* and *Kikala* mats.

The forge is also one of the activities practiced by the populations of the kingdom of Makoko. On the importance of this character in this society, Emmanuel Adzou affirms:

The blacksmith enjoys a great privilege in society. He occupies a place of choice in traditional society because the profession he exercises is a noble art. This is due to two fundamental reasons: its economic and social importance on the one hand, and its religious role on the one hand.

The articles produced by him are essential to traditional life. This means that all economic production is based on the activity of the forge, as one can well judge by the diversity of manufactured articles. Farmers use axes, machetes and hoes to clear and plow their crops. Hunters and warriors require spears, javelins, arrowheads, spears (*anlwo*) and knives of all types (*mbiélé*, *ibiélé*, *baka*, *sâma*) and rare rifles for their profession.

Sculptors have a strong need for adze (*nkwere*) to work with wood ...

The religious role of the blacksmith is therefore obvious. The art of the blacksmith, who handles the bellows, the fire of the hearth (*mbâ*), the quenching water and the iron extracted from the earth, is considered as a supernatural art¹².

Other activities such as pottery, domestic herding, gathering, hunting and fishing also contribute to production for subsistence and marketing.

¹¹E. Adzou, *op. cit* , p.44.

¹²E. Adzou, *op. cit* . p. 49.

2.2 In the Loango kingdom

As with the Teke, in the Loango kingdom, all everyday consumer products come from the lineage mode of production.

The populations of Loango had several activities: the artisanal production of salt. The salt produced at the coast was placed either in circular baskets or in baskets with a flat bottom, made with two neatly braided palm branches. At a time when the demand for salt became stronger, the basket makers of Loango will make *mustet*.

The relatively poor country provides little more than cassava and peanuts for the food of its inhabitants, bananas themselves are extremely rare. On the other hand, there are quite a number of oil palm trees. The area of Loango-Diosso up to the entrance of Mayombe, is as a whole a poor country, badly watered, little fertile; the only products which can later be of value to trade are palm oil and peanuts.

One of the regions of the Loango countries which offers many economic advantages is the village of Dumangu, formerly located on the road, in a clearing of the forest. What makes Joseph KimfokoMadoungousay:

Very village rich in food, namely potatoes, yams, peanuts and bananas. At this level, when a stranger arrived in a wealthy village like this, the chief would always go out to meet him, indicating a place to lodge and bringing him some poultry, a pig or a kid, a bunch of bananas. In this forest the inhabitants worked a lot to collect rubber¹³.

The village Diangala is located before Loudima, despite its arid aspect, it is a very rich country: it is it which who supplied all the sheep on the coast; cotton is also found there; moreover, it is the land of mines; copper iron abound. The natives do not know how to work the first metal but the second, they know how to makerings and bracelets. Diangala is the land of the Kunis.

From the XVIIth century, the main business of the kingdom of Loango like other kingdoms (Kongo Kakongo, Anzicana ...) was the slave, sold to Europeans in exchange for coins.

The kingdom of Loango seems to have experienced its great period of economic activity between 1896 and 1897¹⁴.

Weakened by the same causes which had led to the decline of the kingdom of Kongo : the traffic in slaves whose control escapes him, the emergence, as a result, of a new aristocracy which shows itself to be rebellious, the king cannot intervene effectively. The upheaval of the traditional socio-political and socio-cultural order was fatal in Loango, as it had been in Kongo¹⁵.

3-Teke-Loango commercial relations

Contacts between the Teke kingdom and the Loango kingdom resulted in cultural mixing and borrowing from one society to another.

The main exchanges will take place within the main markets. In the Loango kingdom for example, there are days corresponding to commercial activity. The Teke week like Loango's has four days (the quatrain). Certain days are set aside for the holding of markets. In the Loango kingdom we have: *Ntono* , *Nsilou* , *Sona* , and *Nduk* day of rest¹⁶.

And in the Tekekingdom: *odzuka* or *bazooka* , markets of Ntchoumou and Mangèle ; *mukila* ,Angiéomé , Okwango, Mfoa , Lékana and Ngouloukila markets ; *bukwobi* , *Enkou* market ; *mpika* , Akana and Kébara markets¹⁷ .

The table below illustrates the geographical distribution of the various pre-colonial markets.

Markets	Location
<i>Ntamo</i> or <i>Ncuna</i>	Market located on the site that now houses the city of Brazzaville
The coast	Contact line between Congo and the outside world, located in Pointe-Noire
<i>Kituka</i>	Located at the exit of Mayombe, north-west of Bouenza
<i>Ntina</i>	Located in the northeastern part, region corresponding to the Teke Plateaus, Junction point between the Vili (Loango) and the Teke
Mbanza-Kongo	Former capital of the Kongo Kingdom. With the detachment of other entities, it corresponds nowadays to Angola

¹³J. KimfokoMandoungou, 1999, *Regional Museum "Ma Loango" Le guide du Musée*, Pointe-Noire, ron., p.10.

¹⁴Th. Obenga, *Op. Cit* . p.58.

¹⁵D. Ngoie-Ngalla, 2007, "Table of the kingdom of Loango in the 19th century " in *Saison des Ruie* , n ° 5, p.170 .

¹⁶T. Obenga, 1973, *Introduction to knowledge of the people of the People's Republic of Congo*, Brazzaville, ONLP, p. 83.

¹⁷Z. Sah, 2013, *Op.cit*, p.68.

<i>Manyanga</i>	The area housing the current Itatolo cemetery (Brazzaville)
Yangala	Site located not far from the current town of Dolisie in Niari

Source : *Théophile Obenga* , 1974, *L'Afrique centrale précoloniale*, Paris, Présence Africaine, p.77.

In their trade circuit, the peoples of the two kingdoms of the Congolese space have taken various paths. The trade routes between the 16th and 17th centuries show the intensity of the trade circuit between the regions of *Pumbo* ,Loango, Luanda and Matamba.

3.1- The external trade

Great trade routes crossed the Loango, Teke and Kongo kingdoms towards the Atlantic Ocean. They have greatly contributed to strengthening the cultural and economic links of the Central African sub-region with the outside world.

The *Ma-Loango* and the *Onkoo* encouraged distant trade and among the traded products we can mention: salt, gold, animal skins and other products from Africa against fine cotton fabrics, weapons, jewelry and other luxury items.

Internal trade was carried out along two main axes: by the caravan trail and by the Congo River. Thanks to its vast hinterland and its strategic position, Loango became an important commercial center. Most of the European foreigners who come to Loango are merchants and artisans.

3.2- Trade between Teke and Loango

The geographical position of the Loango kingdom, the junction of the caravan trail and the seafront will allow the Loango kingdom to develop intense commercial activity before the arrival of Europeans (Portuguese, French and English). In the markets, there are various products including salt. The salt with its trade, is at the origin of the creation of several tracks on the whole of the kingdom. What makes *Théophile Obenga* say:

There was fish, cassava and other roots, salt, palm nuts, sugar cane, bananas, figs and a variety of fruit. All transactions were carried out with mutual respect without the slightest dispute and without deception¹⁸.

The salt produced on the coast was placed either in circular baskets as noted by 17th century sources, or in baskets with a flat bottom, made with two palm branches whose leaves are carefully braided together to be carried in different points sales of the kingdom and neighboring regions. In this trade, the Teke will often play the role of commercial intermediaries between the populations of the upstream and those of the downstream since the XVIth century¹⁹.

It was in these markets and through the many tracks that crisscross the Loango kingdom that salt was sold. The salt trade between Loango and Teke is not a European invention, but a traditional activity specific to the two peoples.

About other economic activities in the Loango Kingdom, *Zéphirin* writes:

Economic life was based on agricultural activities, hunting, fishing, blacksmithing, pottery, weaving, and salt making by drying ocean water²⁰.

In 1851, long-distance commerce took off again. European products take the old circuits which have long linked the Loango, Teke, Kongo kingdoms and beyond, the Congolese basin. They see more and more people passing by, exchanging essential goods in larger volumes. The mixing of populations is accelerating, especially at the limits of the territories of ethnic groups.

In the 17th century, all of Central Africa was reorganized, commercial networks now dominate more than the States. A merchant class replaces the old dominant classes.

Two trafficking networks will coexist: one Portuguese, trafficker from Angola to Brazil, the other in the north with the other European powers. But commerce on land remains firmly in the hands of the peoples of the Loango Kingdom and the Teke Kingdom. The trade of the provinces of these two kingdoms is supplied by the companies which finance the triangular trade.

The commercial relations of *Anzico* with Kongo and Loango were active : the Teke sold raffia fabrics, ivory, sandalwood (a sort of mahogany) ... caravans transport these goods to the coast, from where they return with shells (serving as currency), canvas, salt, glassware ... There is also the slave trade on the arrival of the Portuguese in 1482. Exchange currencies were therefore shells or copper bars. This copper was mined in Mindouli region and worked into bars, bracelets and necklaces by the Kougni and the Vili.

¹⁸T. Obenga, *op. cit* . pp. 82-83

¹⁹E. Adzou, 1973, *The Kingdom of Makoko : History and Civilization* , Université de Brazzaville, ron., p.60 .

²⁰Z. Sah, 2020, *Societies and civilizations of pre-colonial black Africa* , Chisinau, Generis PUBLISHING, p.70.

II. CONCLUSION

The contacts between the Loango kingdom and the Teke kingdom are very old, fruitful and have stood the test of time. These two kingdoms of the Congolese space present common traits of civilizations. Their contacts through commercial exchanges allowed a cultural mixing between the Vili people and the Teke people and intensified the network of exchanges and commercial routes in the sub-region.

The Teke and the Loango are organized societies; they built their homes in non-durable materials: earth, straw, palm tree tiles, bamboo, tree bark and planks spread apart, depending on the ecosystem of each geographic area. In the XVIIth century the Teke kingdom controlled copper production of the Niari valley (Mindouli region, 150 km west of Brazzaville). At Loango, the salt workers evaporated over a large fire sea water which deposited its salt at the bottom of the vessels used for this purpose. The two major areas that constitute *Pumbo in* Teke kingdom and the coast in the Loango kingdom have made the current Congo, one of the nerve centres of in the central Africa sub-region.

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