Requiem for the "Jaga".
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Résumé

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Few myths about Africa or Africans have achieved greater fame on the basis of less evidence than stories of the sixteenth and seventeenth century “Jaga” invasions of Kongo and Angola. The standard authorities have consistently depicted the “Jaga” as skilled warriors who drove the Kongo ruler from his kingdom in 1568 (until recently, with the pejorative fillip that they were ferocious marauders and bloodthirsty cannibals), then assaulted the Mbundu populations living just to the south of Kongo in Angola, and finally disappeared after 1650 or so, except for a hardy few leaders who founded such states as Kasanje and some of the Ovimbundu kingdoms. In contrast to the generally accepted view, careful analysis of the sources for early Kongo and Angola history suggests that no such “Jaga” ever existed outside the imaginations of missionaries, slave dealers, and Government officials who created these mythical cannibals to justify or conceal their own activities in Africa. The extant data, fragmentary as they are, suggest at least two other explanations for the 1568 attack on the mani Kongo, both more plausible than the hypothesis of a mysterious deus ex machina from the far interior. Unrelated warrior bands, called Imbangala, account for all reported appearances of “Jaga” farther to the south.

* I am indebted to Professors Allen Isaacman, Paul Lovejoy, and Jan Vansina for their searching criticisms of an earlier draft of this article; any remaining faults are, of course, my own responsibility. I would also like to thank the Cartographic Laboratory of the University of Wisconsin for preparing the maps which accompany the text.

1. To cite only the most recent repetition of this version, Robert O. Collins, African History: Text and Readings, New York, 1971, p. 349: “Erupting from the Kwango region to the south and east, the Jaga destroyed the Congolese army and drove the king into exile on an island in the Congo river [. . .] the Governor of São Tomé, Francesco de Gouveia, rallied the Congolese and with his harquebuses drove the Jaga from the kingdom in 1571 [. . .]. The Jaga meanwhile established states to the east and south and from these continued to raid the Congo.”

No eyewitness has left a shred of direct evidence describing the people who invaded Kongo in 1568. Historians who have accepted the myth of the "Jaga" on the authority of standard secondary accounts will be surprised to learn that the only sixteenth century document purporting to illuminate the attack contains only an insignificant amount of factual material of authentic Kongo provenance. The bulk of this description draws on other sources: a specifically Portuguese legend about a mysterious nation of savages believed to inhabit the unknown African interior, generalized European beliefs about barbarian invaders of the civilized regions of the world, and a potpourri of rumors then current among Portuguese sailors on the Atlantic shores of Africa.

This document, ostensibly the mémoire of Duarte Lopes, a Portuguese merchant who first set foot in Kongo nearly ten years after the "Jaga" invasions (1578 or 1579),¹ in fact represents the product of interviews Lopes gave in Rome to Filippo Pigafetta, a noted sixteenth century Italian scholar. By Lopes' own admission, the "Jaga" had vanished completely by the time he arrived on the scene, and so his story must have contained numerous gaps which Pigafetta filled by incorporating his own notions about African geography and deep-seated European beliefs about barbarian invaders in other parts of the world. All later descriptions of these "Jaga" derive either from Lopes' highly suspect mémoire or from equally fictional seventeenth century Angolan Portuguese oral traditions.

The sixteenth century intellectual climate of opinion which influenced both Lopes and Pigafetta accounts for many elements in their colorful picture of the "Jaga." This background included a strong belief among Portuguese all over Africa that various intrusive peoples whom they had by then encountered in Abyssinia, Sierra Leone, and Kongo, all belonged to a single nation of "savages" living in the mysterious inner regions of the continent. Published evidence of this belief appeared in the 1566 description of the Ethiopian highlands written by João Bermudes, Portuguese ambassador to the court of the Abyssinian kings. Bermudes claimed that the Galla peoples from the southern Abyssinian highlands who had overrun the Christian kingdom of the negus during the 1540's, had close connections with the Sumbe or Mane who appeared not long afterward in Sierra Leone.

"These Gallas—he wrote—lived in the country near Magadoxo;² they are a fierce and cruel people, who make war on their neighbors, and on all, only to destroy and depopulate their countries. In the places they conquer, they slay all the men, cut off the privy parts of the boys, kill the old women, and keep the


². Author's note: Mogadishu, a trading town on the Indian Ocean coast, now located in the Somali Republic.
young for their own use and service. It would seem that hence came the çumbas who are destroying Guinea, for in cruelty they are alike.1

Bermudes’ description of the Galla first introduced several characteristics which later became standard features of such other African barbarians as the “Jaga.”

Superficial similarities on the level of Bermudes’ “cruelty” led Portuguese along Africa’s Atlantic coast to identify the “Jaga” in Kongo with the Galla and Mane. The belief that all three came from a single source became part of the common lore of the Portuguese maritime community (and its clerical adjuncts) before the end of the century.2 A Jesuit missionary, Father Barreira, made the first explicit statement of the theory in letters to his European superiors during the first decade of the seventeenth century.3 Barreira had spent fourteen years in Kongo, probably in the 1590’s and early 1600’s, where he certainly heard stories about the 1568 invasion, and then served in Sierra Leone from 1606 to 1610 where he would have encountered tales about the Mane, who had reached there during the 1550’s.4 These legends’ vitality among Portuguese sailors in the Atlantic contributed to the later extension of the same beliefs about the peoples of the unknown interior to another set of “barbarian” invaders, the Imbangala in Angola. The man who extended the myth to the Imbangala had travelled extensively on Portuguese trading vessels in the Atlantic and spoke in terms which revealed the influence of Portuguese from both Guinea and Kongo.6

1. Author’s note: Sumba, or Mane.
2. The original account appeared in João Bermudes, Breve relação da embai-xada ..., Lisboa, 1566 (reprinted 1875); I have taken the quotation from an English translation, R. S. Whiteman, Portuguese Expedition to Abyssinia in 1541-1545, London, 1902, pp. 228-229.
3. The most extensive description of the Mane, written in 1595 on the basis of the author’s experiences in Guinea from the 1560’s until 1580, showed that Portuguese in the Atlantic had already made the connection between the Mane and the “Jaga;” see the report of Alvares de Almeida, Biblioteca do Porto, MS. 603, copy as no. 207 of the Fundo Geral of the Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon (BNL); published by Diogo Kopkeas (“Tratado breve dos rios de Guinea do Cabo-Verde,” Porto, 1841) and reprinted in Antonio Brásio (Monumenta missionária africana, Lisboa, 1952—continuing Série II, vol. III, pp. 229-378, esp. p. 361).
6. The reference is to the report of Andrew Battell in E. G. Ravenstein, The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell of Leigh in Angola and Adjoining Regions, London, 1901. Battell’s use of the Senegambian word (Wolof?) tavale to describe an Imbangala drum in Angola showed that vocabulary, and presumably ideas as well, circulated freely along the entire western coast of Africa at that time; see Ravenstein, p. 21. Other linguistic evidence of the Portuguese community on the Atlantic appears in Miller (dissertation), App. G to Ch. V. In such an atmosphere, superficial similarities of the names Sumba and Mane to well-known Kikongo and Kimbundu terms (the title mani, or the inhabitants of the Angola coast north of Benguela called Sumbi, or even the final syllables -gala in the name Imbangala which provided a false link with the invaders in Abyssinia) might well have contributed to the confusion.
The equally mythical history of the Zimba in East Africa illustrates the ease with which these Portuguese beliefs expanded to encompass new attackers. In this case, a fourth and last mysterious invasion took place during the 1590's near the Tete outpost of Portuguese authority in upper Zambesia. There a real enough people called Zimba or Zimbo\(^1\) fought an inconclusive series of battles against armies led by the capitão-mor at Tete.\(^2\) Although these invasions produced no lasting effects

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\(^1\) I am so informed by the only scholar recently to perform fieldwork in the Tete region; my thanks to Professor Allen Isaacman of the University of Minnesota for this detail.

\(^2\) The source is João dos Santos, *Ethiopia Oriental*, Évora, 1609. I have
on the Zambezi river, a “Zimba” myth has attained a lasting place in the historiography of Portuguese East Africa, where the “Zimba” bear responsibility for numerous attacks on coastal city-states as far north as Mombasa. Even admitting that the Zimba or related groups may have reached the sea near Angoche (directly east of Tete), no substantive evidence supports the early seventeenth century thesis that these same Zimba also attacked Kilwa, Malindi, and Mombasa, the largest towns along the coast to the north. The originator of this theory personally witnessed none of the attacks he attributed to the “Zimba” and probably combined numerous unrelated and unidentified invaders under the catch-all category of “Zimba.” As a modern scholar has noted, “Zimba was a general [Portuguese] term for any fierce bellicose group.” The evidence for Zimba activities on the northern coast therefore rests on a single hearsay account and lacks any support in contemporary documents. The Zimba legend eventually expanded beyond the confines of Eastern Africa when a mid-seventeenth century writer argued that a single band of “Zimba” had besieged Kilwa, then continued north to Malindi and Mombasa before turning westward across southern Africa to reach Angola where they became the “Jaga.” The assimilation of the “Zimba” to the “Jaga”/Galla/Mane myth had finally linked intrusive attackers in all of the Portuguese-influenced regions of Africa.

Sixteenth century notions about the role of barbarians in European history also help explain the description of the “Jaga” left by Lopes and his editor, Pigafetta. Lopes’ introductory remarks, perhaps added by Pigafetta, made explicit reference to these ideas, likening the “Jaga” to the Zimba.

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1. This is the hypothesis of Edward A. Alpers (“The Mutapa and Malawi Political Systems to the time of the Ngoni Invasions,” in Terence O. Ranger, ed., Aspects of Central African History, London, 1968, p. 21). Alpers’ evidence for the Zimba at Angoche seems tenuous at best, since even if one accepts his identification of Angoche political authorities called marundu with the Malawi king Lundu, the connection of Lundu with the Zimba remains problematic.

2. We may expect significant enlightenment on the true nature of these repeated attacks on the coastal city-states when Professor Steven Feierman of the University of Wisconsin publishes the results of his current work on the problem. Professor Feierman’s research confirms the possibility that invaders other than the Zimba committed these attacks.

3. Dos Santos was in Sofala, over five hundred miles from Tete, at the time the Zimba appeared in Zambesi; nor was he present to witness the attacks on Kilwa, Malindi, and Mombasa; see Freeman-Grenville, p. 146.


to "people living like Arabs, and ancient nomads." Their cruelty, warlike habits, cannibalism, origin in an unknown part of the interior, and so on, qualities which linked them to such other invaders as the Mane and Galla, derived in the main from characteristics automatically attributed to all peoples considered "barbarians" by Europeans of the time. Pigafetta almost certainly knew of these generalized European beliefs and had had ample opportunity to encounter the Portuguese legend identifying the Mane and Galla before he spoke to Lopes.

The Lopes-Pigafetta description of the "Jaga" gave particular emphasis to a religious theme found in the generalized European image of barbarians by associating them with the forces of the Christian Devil. Their account became a Christian allegory of sin and Divine punishment, in which the disaster of the "Jaga" invasion represented Divine retribution for the derelictions of most Europeans and Kongo nobles at the Kongo king's court. The "Jaga", Lopes related, first appeared in the Eastern Kongo province of Mbata, which they destroyed without meeting serious opposition. They then marched on the king's capital at São Salvador where the mani Kongo Alvaro tried to stem their advance but quickly suffered defeat and withdrew to the security of his fortified town. Even there, however, Alvaro felt unsafe, "abandoned—as Lopes-Pigafetta phrased it—by the Divine Grace because of his sins." He and the Portuguese priests attending his court then fled to an island in the Congo river and left the "Jaga" in complete mastery of the kingdom. The Kongo people who remained on the mainland abandoned their villages and churches to the invading "Jaga" and fled to remote and inaccessible places. King, nobles, people, and Portuguese alike, the account makes clear, were paying for their sins against God:

"Therefore the king clearly knew that it was on account of his misdeeds so much misery had come upon them [. . .]. Grieved to the heart by these calamities, the king was converted to God, asking pardon for his offences, and doing penance for his sins."

The story reached its appropriately happy conclusion when Alvaro's rapprochement with God brought prompt salvation through his restoration to the good graces of the Portuguese. The Portuguese king, Dom Sebastião, sent aid to his beleaguered brother in Kongo in the form of a six hundred man army under the command of Francisco de Gouveia.

1. BAL, p. 106; quoted from Margarite Hutchinson, \textit{A Report of the Kingdom of Congo and of the Surrounding Countries Drawn out the Writings and Discourses of the Portuguese Duarte Lopez in Rome (1591)}, London, 1881, p. 96.
3. Bermudes' account had been published by the time Pigafetta recorded Lopes' story in 1588; Alves de Almeida's story, while not published until 1594, must have been current among interested geographers in Europe.
5. Quoted from Hutchinson, pp. 97-98.
6. BAL, p. 106.
the governor of São Tomé. This military force rescued Alvaro from his refuge on the island and joined with the remaining Kongo armies to effect his return to the mainland. They then drove out the remaining “Jaga” within a year and a half, routing them so completely with the noise of their firearms that almost no trace of the invasion remained. Alvaro became a good Christian and friend to his European benefactors, who did not finally leave his side until 1576.¹

The Lopes-Pigafetta account of the “Jaga” invasion shows nothing more definite about these wars than the fact that the description probably came from the Kongo king and his advisors, since it gives the vaguest sort of information on the origins of the “Jaga” in the east and becomes specific only when they finally engaged the king’s armies near São Salvador. The activities of the “Jaga” on the mainland again fade into vagueness after the king’s flight to the island in the Congo river. The remainder of the narrative deals exclusively with events on the island, detailing the sufferings of Alvaro and his courtiers who, through the similarities of their hunger to the plagues visited on the recalcitrant Egyptian pharaoh in retribution for his persecution of the Jews, effectively maintain the Christian allegorical tone of the story.² Missionaries, perhaps those who fled São Salvador with Alvaro, very likely contributed to Lopes’ version of the story, since only they would have included implied criticism of slavers who exploited the Kongo starving on the island;³ missionaries would also have been likely to see the analogy between events in sixteenth century Africa and those in biblical Egypt.

If analysis of the Lopes-Pigafetta text reveals its genesis in medieval European ideas about barbarians and their role in Christian eschatology, the name “Jaga” indicates the influence of sixteenth century European notions about African geography. The lack of accurate chronometers at that time had prevented European navigators and geographers from establishing correct longitudes for most of the coastline of Africa. Although they had gained a fairly good idea of the general shape of the continent, particularly in its north-south dimension, it appeared much narrower from west to east than it later proved to be. Both Lopes and Pigafetta, as well as all of their contemporaries, drastically underestimated the true distances which separated Portuguese possessions on the Atlantic Ocean from those on the Indian Ocean and the countries

¹. The total lack of documentation on the “Jaga” invasions extends to Gouveia’s rescue mission, thus reinforcing the mystery surrounding these events. Available documents do no more than establish Gouveia’s presence in São Tomé shortly before he led the expedition to Kongo and the favor he enjoyed after his return to Portugal. Letters from the mani Kongo about the momentous happenings appear only after 1575; see Delgado’s note in António de Oliveira de Cadornega, História geral das guerras angolanas (ed. José Matias Delgado), Lisboa, 1940-1942, I, pp. 12-13.
³. Lopes, himself a trader, would have been unlikely to mention this aspect of the events. See BAL, p. 107.
on the Red Sea, placing, for example, Kongo quite close to the Abyssinian highlands.

Sixteenth century cartographers exaggerated the importance and extent of familiar portions of Africa, thus diminishing the size of the unknown interior until the eastern borders of Kongo appeared to touch the southwestern marches of the Abyssinian empire. It happened that, among the numerous peoples of southwestern Ethiopia, those best known to European scholarship included the Agao, or Agagi (Agag in the singular). These Agagi had independently acquired a reputation which made them appear products of the same barbarian mold which had produced the Galla and Mane. European classicists knew them as fierce warriors who had repeatedly invaded Egypt in the third millennium B.C., while the Agagi had more recently reinforced their barbarian image by overwhelming the Monophysite Abyssinian dynasty of the tenth century, driving the king from place to place and devastating the churches in a war which Christian Abyssinians later interpreted as divine punishment for disturbances connected with their church. The barbarian Agagi, from the perspective of Portuguese resident in Kongo, seemed to live somewhere just east of the furthest European knowledge of the interior and, on the basis of the known propensity of the Agagi to harass the outposts of civilization, must have been regarded as a potential menace to the Christian Kongo of the sixteenth century.

The presence of a widespread Bantu root meaning “foreigner” in Kikongo apparently provided the key which led Europeans to associate the mysterious invaders of 1568 with the Agagi and to call them by the similar name “Jaga.” Although copyists’ errors and irregularities in sixteenth century orthographies have obscured the exact form of the Kikongo word which Europeans thought sounded like Agagi, the root resembled -aga or -aka with the consonant perhaps approximating an unaspirated “k” found today in eastern Kimbundu. The coincidence

1. Avelino Teixeira da Mota (A cartografia antiga da África central e a travessia entre Angola e Moçambique, 1500-1860, Lourenço Marques, 1964), W. G. L. HANDES (“Southeast Africa and the Empire of Monomotapa as Shown on Selected Printed Maps of the 16th Century,” Studia, 2, 1958, pp. 103-164, esp. 117-120), and Jacques DENIS (Les Yaka du Kwango: contribution à une étude ethno-démographique, Turin, 1964) discuss the maps which illustrate this point.


3. Variant spellings included Giachas, Giacas, Giachi, Jagas, Jagos, Jacas, Aiaccas, Aiacchi, Majaca, Mujac, Mujaca; list taken from BAL, p. 191.

4. Information from my own field research in Angola; the uncertainty among Europeans as to the exact consonant in the name persisted into the nineteenth century; see João Vieira Carneiro, “Observações feitas em 1848 relativas a diversos objectos que lhe pareceram não exactos no 3º volume dos Ensaios sobre a Estatística das Possessões Portuguezas da África Occidental pelo Conselheiro
of two superficially similar but unrelated terms, Agagi and jiaga or yaga (the most probable Bantu plural forms of a nominal built on the root -aga), which referred to intrusive warrior peoples, fit perfectly into the agglutinative myth of the African barbarian invader.

Resemblances between the characteristics attributed to the “Jaga” and the alleged attributes of other barbarian invaders in the Portuguese world show how little of the Lopes-Pigafetta description came from observed fact. The origins of the “Jaga,” according to this account, lay in the semi-legendary lands near the first lake of the Nile, a region known in the sixteenth century only from vague references in ancient texts but believed to lie in a province of the “Monemugi” empire. The mwene mugi was another half-mythical king whom geographers of the time commonly placed in the unknown interior of the continent. If he had any real analogue near Kongo, which is doubtful, he was very likely a local ruler in the Stanley Pool region or on the lower Kwa river, known to Portuguese from his trading contacts with Kongo. European scholars, however, preferred to locate his lands along the banks of the upper Nile for want of real knowledge about the interior and, although no direct evidence linked him with the “Jaga,” Lopes-Pigafetta put their home in a province of his empire by inference.

The homeland attributed to the “Jaga” underlined their overtly mythical qualities. Lopes-Pigafetta elsewhere, in a clearly legendary context, noted that the “Jaga” lived on the borders of the empire of the mwene Mutapa (still clothed in fanciful garments despite Portuguese contacts with the real Mutapa state in southeastern Africa) who had conducted great wars against both the Amazons and the “Jaga.” “They [the ‘Jaga’] are large in stature, but ill-proportioned, and live like wild beasts and feed on human flesh. When fighting they show great courage, and use frightful noises to terrify their enemies.”

The physical

José Joaquim Lopes de Lima,” Annaes do Conselho Ultramarino (parte não oficial), sér. II, 1859-1861, p. 173. See M. KADIMA, “Le thème pour ‘autre’ dans les langues bantoues,” Africana Linguistica III, Tervuren, 1967, pp. 30, 31, 33, for the root -aka, which has some reflexes of the form -aga. The modern Kikongo form is -kaka; Kimbundu, a neighboring language, has -eka, as do the two languages to the southeast, Cokwe and Lwena. The Bemba and Bisa in Zambia have -yake, and some western Tanzanian languages have -yage. J. VAN WING and C. PENDERS (Le plus ancien dictionnaire bantu, Louvain, 1928) show several related seventeenth century words in Kikongo, only a century or so after the “Jaga” had appeared; they give -aka meaning “the other” and mwaka-ani for “brigand,” pp. 1, 240. According to more recent dictionaries, akaka can mean “foreigners” as opposed to nzenza, which is employed in the sense of “stranger”; see W. Holman BENTLEY, Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language, London, 1887, p. 207. The same root also appears in muakaka meaning “elsewhere” (i.e. “the foreigners’ place”?). Tundaka means “foreigners or barbarians” in Cokwe; José REDINHA, “Metodo para a reconstituição historica das migrações,” Mensário administrativo, 22-23. 1949, p. 42.

1. François BONTINCK, Diaire congolais (1690-1701) de Fra Luca de Caltanisetta, Louvain-Paris, 1970, pp. xxxiv-xlvi; personal communication from Professor Jan Vansina.
2. BAL, pp. 135-136; I have followed the HUTCHINSON translation, p. 125.
features and behavior ascribed to the "Jaga" reversed all things familiar to Europeans; they were black rather than white, monstrous instead of handsome, ate human flesh in preference to the meat of animals, and fought and destroyed all forms of civilization. They even, symbolically, turned their eyelids inside out. They thus performed the same function in European mythology as the Amazons, with whom Lopes explicitly associated them, in expressing the opposite of all "civilized" values. The same point, translated into Christian terms, emerged from the truly satanic qualities given them by Lopes-Pigafetta in the belief that the infernal regions of the Devil contained all things opposed to Christian civilization.

Some details of "Jaga" appearance and armament derived from the generalized stereotype of the African savage and recurred from time to time all over the continent, usually with little or no basis in fact. The Mane and "Jaga" both allegedly possessed large rectangular shields which they used to protect their bodies when engaged in close fighting. Like the Mane, the "Jaga" had also developed coordinated military tactics in which the warriors threw their lances in torrents which rained down on their enemies during attacks. Lopes (or Pigafetta) apparently added the variant that the "Jaga" placed their shields side by side in the ground between battles to make a palisade around their camps. The large shields predictably reappeared once again in connection with the "Zimba" in Mozambique.

Even though European, especially Portuguese, beliefs about African geography and "barbarians" explain most of the Lopes-Pigafetta account of the "Jaga" invasion, the absence of authentic written evidence is no novelty for sixteenth century events in Africa and would not alone call the existence of the "Jaga" into question if local traditions preserved some trace of the alleged invaders. The Kongo, who reportedly suffered so greatly at the hands of the "Jaga," have no oral record of the disaster of 1568. Mid-nineteenth century travelers who inquired about the "Jaga" found a total lack of Kongo traditions on the subject. Although one investigator claimed to have viewed the site of the great marketplace where, local residents explained, the "Jaga" sold human flesh just as white men would buy mutton or beef in European marketplaces, this story clearly did not come from Kongo sources. It had first appeared in Lopes-Pigafetta's description of a different people, the Tyo (Teke, or Anziko), and had reappeared occasionally in later writings, always with the identifying detail that the various authors of the crime had sold

1. On the mythical functions of the Amazons, see Encyclopedia Britannica, article on "Amazon," 1969, 1, p. 709.
3. Dos Santos in Freeman-Grenville, p. 147.
human flesh just as Europeans dispensed mutton and beef. The same apocryphal tale, apparently memorable for its vivid imagery, undoubtedly circulated among the Portuguese in nineteenth century Angola, who repeated it to unsuspecting European visitors at São Salvador. Identification of this story as part of a lively Portuguese oral tradition, derived ultimately from the written account of Lopes-Pigafetta, relieves the Kongo of all responsibility for spreading the rumor that the "Jaga" had ever appeared in their lands.

The supposed descendants of the "Jaga," the Imbangala, might remember their ancestors' passage through the Kongo even if the victims did not. Although the Imbangala have extensive oral traditions covering this period, they place their ancestors far to the south and east during the middle years of the sixteenth century. This contradicts an English sailor who spent several months with the seventeenth century forebears of the modern Imbangala and reported that his African companions told him that they had come from Sierra Leone through Kongo to Angola. This account, like that of Lopes, contained numerous additions made by an editor in Europe, so that the reference to Kongo almost certainly comes from his editor's familiarity with the prevalent European mythology of the "Jaga"/Mane/Galla/Zimba. The modern Imbangala know the term "Jaga" only vaguely as a Portuguese administrative classification introduced briefly in the 1950's. Imbangala disclaimers of this sort place responsibility for the term once again on the Portuguese who used it to refer to Imbangala kings from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century.

Nearly all references to the "Jaga," in fact, occur in Portuguese and/or missionary sources. Seventeenth century Dutch accounts, for example, found remarkably few indications of the presence of the "Jaga" during the same years that their Portuguese adversaries mentioned them repeatedly. The major Dutch compilation of information about

1. For examples, see Girolamo Merolla da Sorrento, "Voyage to Congo and Several Other Countries, Chiefly in Southern Africk in the Year 1682," trans. in John Pinkerton, A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in all Parts of the World... London, 1808-1814, XVI, p. 285; it appeared also in East Africa, attributed to the "Mumbos" in dos Santos; see Freeman-Grenville, p. 146. Offert Dapper (Naukeurige beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche gewestern, Amsterdam, 2nd ed., 1676, II, p. 180) accurately repeated the story in connection with the Tyo.
4. The editor was Samuel Purchas; Miller, 1972, contains further evidence on this point.
5. Based on interviews with Imbangala historians in 1969. The testimonies cited refer to tapes and field notes in my possession which will be deposited in appropriate archives in Africa and the US. I gratefully acknowledge receipt of a grant from the Foreign Area Fellowship Program of New York which made that research possible and which supported part of the composition of this article. The Program has no responsibility for the conclusions expressed here. Testimonies of Sousa Calunga, 11.9.1969; Mwanya a Shiba, 14.6.1969; António Cunha.
Angola, based on their experiences during the occupation of Angola in the 1640's, always located the "Jaga" somewhere outside the range of verifiable observation and carefully attributed most information about them to "Portuguese with long experience in the country," as if noting a disclaimer. The Dutch compiler sometimes identified the "Jaga" with the Tyo, elsewhere connected them with various Kongo groups, and finally placed them (correctly) in the legendary realms of the far interior, adding pointedly that no "Jaga" remained by the 1640's and that certain (unnamed) persons in Angola doubted the entire story.

The pattern of evidence on the "Jaga" corroborates Dutch suspicions to suggest that the true origins of the myth of the "Jaga" lie in Portuguese and missionary conceptions about Africa rather than in the history of Kongo or Angola. The later history of the legend reinforces this conclusion by pointing to the missionaries, administrators, and traders in Angola who had very good reasons for preserving and elaborating the story of the "Jaga," each for his own purposes.

Seventeenth century missionaries, whose predecessors had evidently helped to establish the Lopes-Pigafetta version of the "Jaga" myth, found the "Jaga" extremely useful exponents of the heathen practices which they intended to eradicate. One late seventeenth century missionary author described his call to bring the word of God to Kongo by pointing to them as the worst (or best) examples of the kind of people who needed Christian salvation. He had "expose[d] his life by reason that those people, especially the Giaghi ['Jaga'], were so far from paying any adoration to the true God, that they sacrificed directly to the devil; and, what is worse, their oblations were not sheep and oxen, but men and women."

Another missionary, author of an official history of the Angola missions, made the same point more explicitly:

"After narrating the extravagant customs of these kingdoms, it will be useful to describe in particular the customs of the Jaga, a people cruel and blood-thirsty, who, coming from other regions, settled among these kingdoms by means of violence and imposed laws so unworthy and inhuman that only the description of them is able to provoke horror, and they would appear to be exaggerated had not others before me already described them."

These missionaries depicted the "Jaga" in as terrible a manner as possible for the apparent purpose of arousing support for their endeavors in Africa. They might thus challenge idealistic young clerics in Europe

2. Ibid., p. 182.
3. Merolla da Sorrento in Pinkerton, XVI, p. 195. The "sheep and oxen" mentioned here once again recall the apocryphal tradition mistakenly attributed to Kongo sources.
to join the battle against such repulsive practices. They might also use the “Jaga” to engage the interest of their European superiors and to raise funds from wealthy patrons who dared not fail to show the proper sense of horror at these cannibals’ misdeeds. The missionary references to the “Jaga” excerpted such gruesome details from Lopes-Pigafetta as stories of fathers who survived at the cost of their sons’ lives while hiding from the terrible invaders. Although the original text had stated only that some fathers on the island in the Congo river had sold their sons to Portuguese slavers, later versions of the tale included substantial exaggeration, implying that father ate son to avoid starvation. These elaborated on the parallel between the “Jaga” invasions and the biblical plagues in Egypt to describe the invaders almost literally as divine scourges, who emerged from holes in the ground, fell upon the entire Kongo kingdom with extraordinary rapidity, and reduced it to utter ruin through rapine, destruction, and massacre. Disease, clouds of locusts, and famine then followed upon the initial disaster in the best Old Testament style. The spirit of the Lopes-Pigafetta account had clearly struck a responsive chord in the minds of later missionaries, and they enlarged it almost beyond recognition.

The myth of the “Jaga” served equally well the purposes of Portuguese government officials, since Gouveia’s rescue of the mani Kongo Dom Alvaro after the 1568 invasion had indebted all his successors to their European sponsors and gave the Portuguese a chance to claim formal sovereignty over their realm. Dom Alvaro had granted substantial concessions to Portuguese merchants and missionaries in recognition of his gratitude for the assistance sent by King Sebastião. Neither the Luanda governors nor the Kongo kings ever forgot the significance of that event. The Portuguese habitually referred to the “Jaga” whenever they wished to impose their will on a reluctant Kongo ruler, and the mani Kongo, for their part, mentioned them whenever they desired to remind Lisbon of its obligation to protect the dynasty it had enthroned in the 1570’s. The myth thus became enshrined as a diplomatic precedent which either side invoked as it suited their respective purposes.

The allegedly voracious “Jaga” appetite for human flesh received special attention from slave traders in Angola. Both private merchants and public officials used it to defend the morality of the slave trade by pointing to the bellies of the “Jaga” as the only alternative fate awaiting

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1. Ibid., I, p. 243.
2. Ibid., I, p. 243.
the oppressed Mbundu and Kongo villagers. Gory descriptions of “Jaga” feasting on the flesh of loyal subjects of the Portuguese Crown effectively carried the message that the slave trade, bad as it was, might save its victims from an even worse end. One chronicler of the Portuguese conquest in Angola made this point explicitly when he argued at the end of the seventeenth century that rescuing other Africans from the “Jaga” ranked as a blessing of the slave trade equal to salvation of the Africans' souls and the recruitment of converts to the Church.1 A missionary reported at the end of the century that Portuguese slavers in São Salvador openly used the myth of the “Jaga” to justify their activities there: “On this account, they [the merchants] pretend they have a license to buy slaves, which however they could never produce to this day.”2

Private slavers, actively engaged in avoiding the royal duties on slave exports from Kongo and Angola,3 found yet another function for the myth of the “Jaga” by using it to account for the obvious difference between the large numbers of captives taken in the interior and the smaller totals passing through the customs houses at the coast. The missing slaves, of course, left Africa illegally, but the illicit traders explained the discrepancy by accusing the “Jaga” of having eaten them.4 A slave allegedly consumed on the battlefield conveniently left no more traces than one actually shipped surreptitiously to Brazil. At least one newly-arrived governor in Luanda unsuspectingly collaborated in propagating this story when he accused the Portuguese in the interior of “robbing, killing, capturing, and giving the vassals of Your Majesty to the Jagas to eat.” In the same letter he also complained of the many slaves leaving Angola without paying the taxes due the king.5

One of the most experienced observers of early seventeenth century Angola, on the other hand, cast serious doubt on the validity of the prevailing excuse for relatively low exports of slaves. He pointed out that the blame for Angola’s financial distress should not fall on the “Jaga,” as many traders claimed it should, but rather on the Portuguese who regularly evaded duties imposed by their Spanish monarch. He admitted that the “Jaga” were cruel and stole whenever they could, but he significantly refrained from any reference to cannibalism on the scale cited by his contemporaries.6

2. Mezolla da Sorrento in Pinkerton, XVI, p. 285. Some modern apologists for Portuguese activities in Africa still repeat the point; see, for example, Ralph Delgado (História de Angola, Lobito, 1948-1955, III, pp. 129-130), where he argues that the slave trade was far better than the cannibalism which preceded it.
4. For example, see the Fajardo account published in Luciano Cordeiro, ed., Viagens, explorações e conquistas dos Portuguezes, Lisboa, 1881, VI, p. 23.
5. Governor Luís Mendes de Vasconcelos to el-Rei, 15.8.1617, AHU, Angola, cx. 1, dos. #129; Brásio, VI, p. 285.
The “Jaga” also received the blame for a related fact which some Portuguese offered as an excuse for relatively low shipments of slaves from Angola, the population density along the Kwanza which some European observers felt was abnormally low. Ignorant of the effects of soil quality and agricultural technology, they argued that attacks by wild beasts and the “demands of the Devil [...] running into thousands [of souls] wherever the cruel customs of the Jaga flourish” had severely reduced the numbers of the Mbundu.1 Cannibalism on the scale required to produce the effects which Portuguese attributed to it in this case has never been documented anywhere in the world, and the evidence on Imbangala cannibalism (the groups identified by most Europeans as “Jaga”) shows that the Imbangala restricted their consumption of human flesh to a relatively few ritual occasions.2 The emphasis given to the cannibalistic aspect of the “Jaga” myth, however, suggests that it must have helped to account for the otherwise inexplicably low slave exports reported at the royal customs houses.

The 1568 invasion of Kongo served still different purposes in the nineteenth century, when Portuguese diplomats tried to justify Portugal’s claim to the mouth of the Congo river against challenges from rival European powers. Lisbon officials attempted to establish the legal basis for their control by resurrecting the Kongo-Portuguese agreements of the 1570’s, in which Alvaro had declared his subservience, to show that the “Jaga” threat had resulted in Portuguese suzerainty in Kongo.3 The “Jaga” performed a final and curious service in the studies of the Conde de Ficalho, a late nineteenth century scholar who made extensive studies on plants found in Angola. His review of the evidence on the “Jaga” convinced him that they had carried Eleusine coracana from its origins in northeastern Africa to the Mbundu and Kongo farmers in Angola.4 As his nominees for this role, the “Jaga” not only aided the development of African agriculture but—in ironic contrast to their original function as the prototypical barbarians of the sixteenth century—became prime examples of the tall, light-skinned, culturally superior invaders favored by proponents of the “Hamitic hypothesis.” Time had completely transformed originally dark, savage “Jaga” into the bringers of civilization to southern Africa.

1. Cavazzi, I, p. 81. Fajardo had earlier listed the same factors affecting Angolan demography; see Cordeiro, VI, p. 23.
2. Full discussion on this point appears in Miller, dissertation, Ch. VII.
3. José Joaquim Lopes de Lima (“Descobrimento e posse do Reino do Congo pelos Portugueses no Seculo XV, sua conquista por as Nossas armas no seculo XVI,” Annaes Maritimos e Coloniaes, V, 3, 1845, pp. 102-103) first developed this argument.
The Lopes-Pigafetta description of the “Jaga” shows only that unidentified enemies attacked São Salvador from Mbata province in 1568, driving the mani Kongo Alvaro and his followers into exile on an island where they suffered from extreme shortages of food. Elimination of the mythical elements leaves the historian with the task of discovering the groups most likely to have attacked the mani Kongo at that time.

Although the bulk of the available evidence indicates that local Kongo rebels attacked their own king in 1568, conditions in at least two neighboring regions could have caused small groups of alien invaders to join in the domestic Kongo uprising. The turbulent Matamba highlands provide one possible origin for a foreign invasion on the basis of the factual material in Lopes’ often fanciful accounts of the regions east of Kongo. The pattern of the identifiable landmarks mentioned by Lopes suggests that an ancient trade route ran southeast from Kongo through Matamba and that economic rivalries caused hostilities which could have led the Matamba kings to attack São Salvador. This hypothesis depends on the assumption that Europeans like Lopes heard rumors about the geography of the far interior primarily from African traders who had travelled there.1 Pigafetta attempted to reconcile Lopes’ fragmentary data with sixteenth century European notions about African geography, but despite such distortions the text contains one remarkably accurate description which fits the lands lying along a trail leading from Kongo through Matamba to important salt pans near the Luhanda river, an affluent of the Lui.

Matamba was originally a relatively small province on the southeastern slopes of the mountainous watershed near the modern towns of Carmona and Negage. Lopes confirmed this location by noting that the air there was healthful for Europeans, a very good indication that the region lay at relatively high altitudes.2 All earlier documentary references agreed, vaguely, that mountains separated Matamba from Kongo,3 and later sources identified them as the semi-legendary “Mountains of Silver,” perhaps owing to the two silver bracelets which Matamba

1. The Portuguese would have had little direct interest in this route since it primarily handled salt, a commodity of negligible interest to them except as competition to their own salt industries on the coast. Such reasons as these explain the relative obscurity of this trading system in documents of the time.

2. BNL, p. 39.

3. Only one writer named them: “Nambuadcamblo;” Apontamentos of Sebastião de Souto (ca. 1561), BNL, MS. 3767, fos 9-12; BRASIO, II, pp. 477-481. The first portion of this name evidently corresponds to a common southern Kongo political title, nambo, plus a connecting particle, a; the latter portion has been misread, as it corresponds to no known vowel or consonant cluster in Kikongo or Kimbundu.
rulers had sent to the mani Kongo in 1530.¹ An equally likely origin for the name came from the fact that such toponyms as "Mountains of Silver" or "Mountains of Crystal" occurred frequently on maps of the Angolan interior, generally indicating only a distantly known mountainous area with exposed rock faces on its western slopes. When seen from afar, these cliffs, wet and glistening during the rainy season, seemed to sparkle like silver or crystal in the afternoon sun. The name "Mountains of Silver" therefore came to denote any number of highland regions, and the location of similarly named mountains elsewhere in Angola does

¹ Letter from el-Rei do Congo to D. João III, 28.1.1530; Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisboa (ANTT), Corpo Chronologico, I-44-70; Brásio, I, pp. 540-541. These bracelets made a strong impression on the Portuguese and fueled their fruitless search for the reputedly fabulous silver mines in other "Mountains of Silver" near Cambambe on the Kwanza river. See, for one account, Alfredo de Albuquerque Felner, Angola: apontamentos sobre a ocupação e início do estabelecimento dos Portugueses no Congo, Angola e Benguela, estrádios de documentos históricos, Coimbra, 1933, p. 90.
not exclude the Carmona highlands as those mentioned by Lopes in this context.

Lopes gave a single specific detail in the midst of his otherwise vague and imprecise description which confirmed the location of these “Mountains of Silver” in Matamba and lent credence to his description of this remote region. The eastern boundary of the province, he said, crossed a river “Coari” at one point, almost certainly the Kwale which rises just east of the Carmona highlands.1 His further attempt to place “Mountains of the Moon” south of Matamba also coincides with a real geographical feature, a long line of cliffs called Katanya which separates the Matamba highlands from the low Baixa de Cassanje to the south and east.

A simple correction for a systematic error, present in nearly all sixteenth century maps of Kongo, converts other apparently incoherent data in Lopes’ account to a fairly accurate description of now-familiar mountains and rivers, all located on a line leading from Matamba to the Luhanda salt pans. European cartographers did not realize that most rivers in Angola, which ran from east to west near the coast, came from the southeast or south in the higher elevations of the interior.2 They therefore calculated the location of distant landmarks in the far interior known only from hearsay on the basis of an erroneous assumption that the watercourses, which their informants used to describe these regions, maintained their east to west orientation. This error caused them to misplace geographical features by 45° to 90° angles from the point where the rivers changed direction, so that northeast-flowing rivers like the Kwango appeared to flow northwest or even west. Mountains believed situated east of a known location at the coast often turned out to lie southeast or south.

The Lopes passage which exhibits close correspondence to real geographical features, making allowance for the systematic error in orientation of 45° to 90°, occurs in the context of defining the eastern Kongo border:

“One may draw a line southward [.] to the mountain of Crystal which rises very high to uninhabited summits[. . .]. Further on, the line passes the so-called mountains of the Sun, due to their great height, which are nevertheless never covered by snow; they are infertile, and bare and destitute of trees. To the left rise other mountains called the Mountains of Saltpeter since that substance is found there in abundance. Finally, one crosses the river Berbela, which comes from the first lake [of the Nile].”

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1. BAL, p. 39; the name stands out amidst numerous other less authentic details. Cf. H. CAPELLO and R. Ivens (From Benguella to the Territory of the Yacca [trans. A. Elwes], London, 1882, II, p. 52) who confirmed this location for Matamba. The center of the original kingdom apparently lay northwest of the later state built in the 1630’s by Nzinga.
2. Maps of Angola retained this error through the 1850’s.
3. BAL, p. 36; translation of the author.
The “line” to which Lopes referred appears to have marked the trade route from São Salvador through Matamba and on to the Baixa de Cassanje salt pans.

The “Mountains of Crystal” in this section appeared to be the same highlands designated as the Matamba “Mountains of Silver” since the two names could occur almost interchangeably, and since Lopes elsewhere remarked that the “Mountains of Crystal” lay some four hundred and fifty “miles” east of the mouth of the Rio das Barreiras Vermelhas, probably the Chiloango river north of the mouth of the Congo. In modern measures, and still allowing for the probable error in the bearing of interior landmarks in relation to the coast, this distance would correspond to 330 to 380 miles and would follow an arc southeast rather than the specified easterly direction. Within reasonable limits of accuracy for the time and place, such a line would reach the Carmona highlands and Matamba at approximately the place where these “Mountains of Crystal” should rise.

The so-called “Mountains of the Sun” probably correspond to the same barren cliffs which rise abruptly out of the Kambo river basin and which Lopes elsewhere called the “Mountains of the Moon.” The description fits this escarpment in detail, since further south it forms the right side of a pass between the Quela highlands and the Yongo Hills, which would correspond to Lopes’ “Mountains of Saltpeter.” The Yongo Hills lie between the Kwango and lower Lui rivers, just beyond the extensive salt pans of the Luhanda and its affluent, the Kihongwa. The Kihongwa river, which actually drains the salt pans, takes its name from the Kimbundu word for saltpeter, and very likely explains Lopes’ terms for the region.

Lopes’ “Berbela,” finally, can refer only to the Kwango, which salt

1. Identification based on BAL, pp. 66, 149, n. 75.
2. The Italian mile varied greatly, from 1 250 meters to 1 460 meters or more; see BAL, p. 152, n. 5.
3. Although Lopes-Pigafetta did not specifically mention “Mountains of Crystal” in the other description of Matamba, they did add that the country there was rich in crystal, thus implying a connection; BAL, p. 39.
4. A possible linguistic connection may link the name “Mountains of the Sun” with the Kimbundu words for sunlight (mwanja) and the sun (iwanya); J. P. FERREIRA DO NASCIMENTO, Dicionario Portuguez-Kimbundu, Huilla, 1903, p. 100. The variation in the initial consonant of these related words makes it likely that the nineteenth century name for the same escarpment, Katanya, may once have meant “Mountains of the Sun;” see CAPELLO and IVENS, II, 15; testimonies of Sousa Calunga, 20.7.1969 and 22.7.1969 confirm the name. An initial t- appears in the Kikongo root for sun -tangwa ntangwa etc.) BENTLEY, I, p. 210.
5. The Kimbundu word is mongwa; Antonio DE Assis, Jr., Dicionario Kimbundu-Portugues, Luanda, n.d., p. 136. A similar linguistic relationship may link the root for salt peter and the name of the Yongo Hills. If the name Yongo came from mongwa by shifting the initial consonant and shortening the final -wa to -o, “Yongo” may have meant, literally, “Mountains of Saltpeter.” The same root occurred elsewhere in toponyms associated with sources of salt; the Portuguese once defeated the owner of the famous Kisama salt deposits at a site called “Agoa-caiongo” or “Angoykayongo” (Anonymous account in CORDEIRO, IV, and RAVENSTEIN, p. 37).
traders would have known only by hearsay since it ran east of the termination of this trade route. Real knowledge of these regions obviously ended at the salt pans, since the vagueness of Lopes' further data evidently allowed Pigafetta to replace facts with the semi-mythical Berbela and even the great interior lake "Aquelunda," from which the river supposedly flowed. All of Lopes' definite information on the regions east of Kongo, therefore, related to a single trade route which began in Matamba, dropped down into the lowlands of the Baixa de Cassanje near the Kambo river, passed below the Katanya cliffs, and ended at the Kihongwa, where local residents processed and sold salt from the salt marshes located there.

The small amount of information available on the sixteenth century history of Matamba seems to indicate that a dispute over control of this trade route might have brought rulers there into conflict with the mani Kongo. Kongo kings had claimed suzerainty over Matamba since at least 1530, when the name first appeared in the list of conquered provinces appended to each king's name. Rulers in Matamba, believed to have been females, soon attempted to make direct contact with the Portuguese, presumably with the intent of escaping Kongo domination by evading the kings in São Salvador who stood between them and the Europeans. A Matamba queen around the middle of the century sent ambassadors to request missionaries and instruction in Christianity. This embassy may have indicated the first stirrings of Matamba revolt against its

1. Various Europeans may have attempted to identify different African rivers with the "Berbela." The conclusion offered here does not invalidate the possibility that the name may have referred at other times to the Nkisi or Serbele. See I. STRUYF, "Migrations des Bapende et des Bambunda," Congo, I, 5, 1931, p. 667.

2. It may not be excessive to suggest that these same traders also created the widespread legend of the great lake "Aquelunda" out of rumors they heard of one of the small lakes in Songo territory not far from where the Lui took its source. A small lake, now called Kalungra, lies between the Jombo and Luhando rivers there. This vague knowledge, together with European assumptions that large rivers known only along their lower courses began in some sort of interior lake, could have accounted for this legend. The prefix on the name "Aquelunda" also locates the lake near the sources of the Kwango, since it is distinctively Umbundu (oki- or oci-), the language spoken in the southern highlands where the river begins. Lopes confirmed this location when he noted that the lake "Aquelunda" lay near the home of the Malemba people (BAL, p. 36); other sources locate the Malemba south of Hako in the Ovimbundu (Umbundu-speaking) regions beyond the Kwanza. All those hints agree in pointing to the area near the source of the Kwango, the "Berbela" which Lopes said flowed from this lake.

3. Letter from el-Rei do Congo to D. João III, 28.11.1530, ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, I-44-70; BRÁSIO, I, pp. 540-544. Mentioned again in letter from el-Rei do Congo (D. Afonso) to Paulo III, 21.2.1535, ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, I-3-6 and I-48-4; BRÁSIO, II, pp. 38-40. The Kongo kings continued to claim that they controlled Matamba long after it became independent; see, for example, letters from D. Alvaro IV (rei do Congo) to Geral da Companhia de Jesus, 25.10.1632, Arquivo Romano da Sociedade de Jesus (ARSI), Lus. Cod. 55, fos 125-125 vs; BRÁSIO, VIII, pp. 190-200; also D. Garcia II (rei do Congo) to João Mauricio de Nassau, 12.5.1642, Algemeen Rijksarchief (The Hague), Raporten en Breeven: Congo, 1642-1645, WIC, Brazilee no. 58; trans. in BRÁSIO, VIII, pp. 584-587.

Kongo overlords, since a ruler of the region embarked shortly afterwards on open rebellion, proclaiming himself independent under the title of "Kombolo." Kombolo became a great warrior and conquered many new provinces for Matamba, especially lands formerly held by a king known as "Bututa."¹

Kombolo's conquest of "Bututa" supports the hypothesis that control over the trade route to the Luhanda salt pans figured in the expansion of Matamba. Butatu a Kuhongo kwa Wutu wa Nyama was a very ancient king who ruled the Pende occupying the Baixa de Cassanje at that time.² Although modern traditions recall little more than Butatu's title, this king probably based his power on control of the salt trade from the Luhanda. Matamba appears to have wrested this valuable source of wealth from him during its expansionary phase and could have coincidentally attempted to dominate the western end of the same trade route leading to Kongo. The date of these events, while uncertain, coincides roughly with the 1568 "Jaga" invasions, since the "king of Matamba" had already acquired a reputation as a great conqueror by the 1580's.³ The known facts do not prove that invaders from Matamba participated in the attack of 1568, but all available data fit the hypothesis that Kombolo's armies may have to assume responsibility for deeds formerly laid at the feet of the "Jaga."

A second, equally plausible non-Kongo candidate for "Jaga" emerges from the hypothesis that trade provided the casus belli for the 1568 attack on the mani Kongo. The provinces northeast of São Salvador had troubled the mani Kongo since at least the late fifteenth century when a Kongo ruler requested Portuguese assistance in an expedition against the peoples near the "lake from which the river Zaire [Congo] flows."⁴ He probably intended the proposed expedition to extend his control over a well-established trade route, then dominated by the rulers who lived upstream, leading to the Tyo near Stanley Pool.⁵

¹ Cavazzi, I, p. 22.
² Testimonies of Sokola; Kasanje ka Nzaje; Domingos Vaz; Sousa Calunga, 16.6.1969. A somewhat longer discussion of Butatu appears in Miller (dissertation), pp. 163-165. Evidence for Butatu's former importance takes the form of other political titles derived from his own and from the fact that his name appears at all in the very sparse traditions from this early period.
⁴ João de Barros, Da Asia, 1ª decada, liv. III, cap. 9, p. 113 (1945 ed.); the date was probably June 1491.
⁵ Traces of this ancient network of trade routes remained even in the twentieth century; these radiated outward from the pre-European Kongo capital (mhanza Kongo) like the spokes on a wheel, touching nearly all provinces of the kingdom. Regional centers at the ends of the spokes sent cloths, iron, pottery, carved wood,
The Stanley Pool trade route acquired added importance for the Kongo kings soon after the Portuguese began to buy quantities of the slaves and ivory coming from the upper Congo river. The mani Kongo evidently wished to protect their own position in this trade by preventing European exploration to the northeast, but the Portuguese resisted these controls for several reasons. In addition to the obvious economic goals which attracted them, the Portuguese hoped to contact the legendary Prester John of the Indies by opening a water route to his kingdom which they believed lay not far beyond the eastern borders of Kongo.\(^1\) Their interests had already resulted in some familiarity with the geography of the Stanley Pool area by 1491,\(^2\) less than a decade after their first ships had sailed into the lower river, and fairly accurate knowledge had reached Lisbon by the 1520’s. Increasing penetration during the latter period had brought the Portuguese into conflict with unnamed “rebellious” peoples living to the northeast, probably those who controlled the growing commerce from Pumbo (as the Stanley Pool region was known) and who would have resisted European efforts to displace them.\(^3\)

Kongo dynastic struggles in the sixteenth century revolved around control over this trade route and its southwestern extension to the sea. Although pretenders to the Kongo throne ostensibly fought over the issue of the royal family’s conversion to Christianity under the king Nzinga a Nkuwu (or João), economic interests seem to have played a role as well, since his most powerful opponents came from Nsundi, the province nearest the trading peoples at Stanley Pool and the area where the trade route passed. Conflict between the king and those who controlled this commerce came into the open in 1504-1506 when Nzinga a Nkuwu found himself facing the combined opposition of the merchants

and other articles to the central king’s market near his capital; the king then redistributed these commodities, supplying each part of his realm with products from the other provinces. The most important of these routes ran from mbanza Kongo northeast through Kimpesi to the Stanley Pool. See Robert L. Wannyn, L’art ancien du métal au Bas-Congo, Champsels, 1961, pp. 18-26. Linguistic data also support the importance of this route to the northeast. One of the names used for the Stanley Pool markets, “Pumbo,” became the common word for “trader” (pumbeiro in its Portuguese form), or “an individual at the Pumbo.” Since this linguistic development occurred very early in the sixteenth century, the northeastern trade route must have been very important at that time: see Willy Bal, “Portugais pombeiro, commerçant ambulant du sertão,” Annali Istituto Universitario Orientale (Napoli), VII, 2, 1965, pp. 135-136.

1. In conformity with sixteenth century misconceptions about African geography (see above), they believed that Abyssinia lay just beyond the eastern limits of Kongo, near the sources of the Nile in the “Mountains of the Moon;” see Leite de Faria, “Una relazione di Rui de Pina sobre o Congo escrita em 1492,” Studia, 19, 1966, p. 249.

2. De Barros.

involved in the trade and the leaders of Mpangu, Soyo, and Nsundi, the three provinces where the Pumbo trade route ran.1

The Nsundi leader of the opposition to Nzinga a Nkuwu, Afonso, became mani Kongo in 1506 and quickly introduced policies favorable to the European sponsors who had aided his quest for power, presumably the traders who hoped to maintain their contacts with Pumbo through

--- Major Trade Routes

MAP 3. — Kongo and surrounding regions in the sixteenth century

1. Most scholars have emphasized the religious dimension of these conflicts which, while real enough, seems to correspond in this case to a pattern based on economic interests. Cf. Jan VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, Madison, 1966, p. 46; also Georges BALANDIER, *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo* (trans. Helen Weaver), New York, 1969, pp. 48-49. I have made no attempt in the limited space available, to discuss the themes of general Kongo history, but draw selectively on the data which support the arguments raised in connection with the "Jaga."
Afonso’s influence in his home province. He embraced their religion and launched an assault against traditional Kongo religious beliefs, destroying the sacred houses at his capital, and placed the slave trade on a firmer basis by allowing Portuguese merchants to follow the trails all the way to Stanley Pool.

Afonso’s arrangement with the local European trading community did not extend to their official sponsors in Portugal who had designs of their own on the northeastern trade route. His hostility to Lisbon apparently placed him in alliance with the São Tomé slave traders in their continuous disputes with the representatives of their king, since Afonso and his local European collaborators opposed further Lisbon-sponsored exploration to the northeast as soon as they had secured domestic control in Kongo. They probably feared that royal agents might interfere with their domination of the slave, ivory, and other commerce from Pumbo. Afonso, many of his nobles, and all the Portuguese traders in São Salvador, for example, opposed King Manoel’s 1520 attempt to send an expedition up the Congo river. They succeeded to the extent that the leader of the frustrated official expedition, Balthasar de Castro, still remained in São Salvador in 1536 begging Afonso to allow him to proceed.

The details of the Lisbon proposal for the 1520 expedition reveal the economic strategies of the two parties and underline the crucial importance of the trade route to Afonso’s fortunes. The Portuguese king’s advisors intended to develop a waterborne trade route up the river (since they did not know of the rapids which blocked navigation immediately below Stanley Pool) in the hope of bypassing the land-based commercial system controlled by Afonso and his allies. The expedition intended, for example, to build bergantines to carry goods on the unknown stretches of the river above the lower falls then known. The Lisbon proponents of this plan justified the necessary expense on the basis of the reputedly large numbers of slaves, some 4,000 to 5,000 per year, which came from the northeast. Their plan made good sense strategically since it capitalized on Portuguese superiority in maritime technology to overcome the mani Kongo’s strength on the land. The political tensions between Afonso and Lisbon which clustered around the great northeastern trade route continued the economic rivalries which had earlier propelled Afonso to the kingship.

Persistent reports of wars near Pumbo against the “Anziko” or Tyo (Teke) during the 1560’s provided further indications of the importance

3. Philip D. Curtin (*The Atlantic Slave Trade*, Madison, 1969, p. 101) suggests that this estimate was either atypical or far too high. The actual figures matter less in this context, of course, than Portuguese beliefs about them.
of the northeastern region to the Kongo kings. Since these troubles reached serious proportions in 1567, when two Kongo kings died within a year in wars against people believed to have been Tyo, the growing tensions in this quarter could have led directly to the 1568 “Jaga” invasion of São Salvador. If these hostilities, in fact, formed a prelude to the 1568 attack, the unknown warriors who gave rise to the myth of the “Jaga” may have been Tyo. A century later, the Dutch identified the legendary qualities of the “Jaga” with the still barely-known “Anziko.” Competition over control of the northeastern trade route provided more than sufficient motivation for Tyo conquests intended to establish direct commercial links with the Europeans.

Whichever explanation one accepts, Matamba or Tyo, for the possibility of alien participation in the 1568 “Jaga” invasion, the more likely hypothesis that one or more Kongo provinces led or supported the attack against the mani Kongo explains several otherwise puzzling aspects of these events. Many people in Kongo, both provincial nobility and common folk, abandoned their loyalty to the mani Kongo during the course of the sixteenth century. Ideological disputes over the court’s adoption of Christianity and political fragmentation resulting from the slave trade heightened disunity at the same time as Kongo kings attempted to enforce a greater degree of centralized control than ever before. The increased pressure on local nobles and royal attempts to extend Kongo control to neighboring regions had already provoked several wars by the 1560’s. Along the southern Kongo border, the ngola a kiluanje, an increasingly powerful Mbundu king, had become more and more assertive until a 1556 war between his armies and those of the mani Kongo brought tensions to a peak.

Evidence of disaffection in the integral Kongo provinces appeared at about the same time. The mani Kongo Diogo I (ca. 1545-1561) fought rebellions led by a pretender to his title but supported by many local chiefs in both Mbata and Nsundi. The similarity of this alignment to the coalition of provincial rulers who had backed Afonso’s 1506 rise to power suggests that the wealth of the northeastern trade route may once again have generated opposition to the king at São Salvador. If so, the 1556-1567 wars which caused the deaths of two mani Kongo might well have involved rebellious Kongo subjects in addition to, or even instead of, the Tyo. The first appearance of the “Jaga” in Mbata,

2. Identification has been based on the word cucu, believed to represent the Tyo king’s title, makoho; see Bal, p. 104. 
3. For example, see Dapper, II, pp. 216-217. 
5. Vansina, pp. 52-53. 
7. Felner, pp. 102-103. 
in the heart of this region, and the later presence of a class of mercenary warriors known as majaka in the same area (in Nsundi) make this a likely possibility.¹

Lopes' account of the "Jaga" invasion, in fact, makes sense only under the assumption that local Kongo peoples attacked their own king at São Salvador. Lopes' only concrete information concerned an assault against the mani Kongo and made no mention of wars directed against his subjects. The strategy of Alvaro's Portuguese rescuers weighs heavily in favor of this interpretation, since Gouveia prepared the king to meet future threats from the "Jaga" by erecting a stout wall around his capital, an obvious defense against not only foreign invaders but also his own subjects.² The civil war hypothesis would also account for the total disappearance of the "Jaga" after Gouveia's campaigns, since native Kongo subjects in rebellion would have left few cultural traces of their presence. Policies subsequently adopted by the mani Kongo Alvaro also seemed to show his fear of domestic rebellion, since he refused to permit most provincial governors to possess arquebuses.³ In this case, the "invasion" should more accurately be described as a civil war.

The opposition of the mani Kongo and many Portuguese residents in Kongo to close regulation from Lisbon explains the remaining ambiguities in the story of the "Jaga" invasion: the striking lack of documentation and the sudden interest of the royal authorities in sending several hundred men to a region where they had previously resisted committing substantial sums of money. Kongo kings, from Afonso's last years through his successors up to 1568, had to steer a precarious course between threats from Europe, rebellion by their own subjects, and pressures from local Portuguese interests. In this welter of conflicting demands, Lisbon's desires generally received with little attention and officials at the Portuguese court became increasingly dissatisfied with the kings who ruled in São Salvador. Their frustrations led directly to Gouveia's rescue mission and indirectly created the "Jaga" myth as a smokescreen to hide the fact that they had engineered the restoration of an unwanted king to the throne.

Several factors contributed to misunderstandings between Lisbon

1. De Cadornega, III, pp. 190-191, 278; Cavazzi, I, pp. 18, 252; letter from Padre Jerónimo de Montesarchio to Padre Boaventura de Sorrento, 22.3.1650; Arquivo da Propaganda Fide, Scriptrere riferite nelle congregazioni generali, vol. 240, fos 81-82 vs; Brásio, X, pp. 483-487. The mani Nsundi used his majaka to attack the Kongo king Antonio I (once again?) in 1665, this time with results which did not approach the legendary successes of the "Jaga" but which perhaps sprang from the same economic factors which had divided Kongo in the 1560's.

². Carta regia to Francisco de Gouveia, 19.3.1574; Brásio, III, pp. 120-121.

³. Alvaro permitted only the duke of Mbata to retain a corps of arquebusiers, ostensibly to thwart the return of the "Jaga" from the eastern banks of the Nile beyond the "Mountains of the Sun." Bat, p. 70. The location of Mbata on the trade route to Stanley Pool suggests that Alvaro may have directed this precaution against the Tyo.
and Salvador throughout the sixteenth century. Portuguese at the Kongo court tended to misrepresent events there in their reports to Europe, portraying developments exclusively in terms of their effects on the various European factions and distorting the true dimensions of Kongo politics. Officials in Lisbon consequently blamed the Kongo kings for the failures of their own subjects. Missionaries, for example, consistently appropriated domestic Kongo issues to vilify each other, with the Jesuits most often in conflict with the regular religious orders. These conditions intensified especially after D. Diogo (mani Kongo from ca. 1545 to 1561), who became something of a béte noire in official Lisbon circles.¹

Specific issues which contributed to the deterioration of D. Diogo’s relations with Lisbon included his attempts to circumvent the hostile Portuguese court by opening direct diplomatic relations with the Papacy.² He further worsened the situation when he tried to expel all Portuguese from Kongo in 1555. Spreading resentment of the Europeans turned to open violence in 1561 when disorders attending the accession of the next mani Kongo, D. Bernardo, caused the deaths of several Portuguese.³

Economic factors simultaneously worsened Portuguese-Kongo relations and increased Lisbon’s desires to reestablish firm control at São Salvador. As traders found conditions there less and less conducive to profitable slave trading, they fled south in increasing numbers to the Mbandu region where they initiated more satisfactory commercial contacts with the ngola a kiluanje.⁴ João III shifted his policy to active support of the Mbandu king during the 1550’s, and Paulo Dias de Novaes’ 1560 mission to the court of the ngola a kiluanje indicated Lisbon’s willingness to seek new African allies to replace the mani Kongo.⁵

The contradictory impulse to regain control in Kongo came from the long-standing Portuguese goal of discovering the reputedly rich mines believed to lie somewhere in Kongo. The silver bracelets which mani Kongo Afonso had sent to D. João III in 1530 had prompted a Portuguese expedition in 1536 to search for the legendary “Mountains of Silver” from which the metal reportedly had come. Afonso had refused on that occasion to allow prospecting of any kind, but renewed reports of mineral wealth in the 1560’s rekindled Portuguese hopes and brought the issue to a head once again.⁶ When Paulo Dias de Novaes returned

¹ The literature on these disputes is enormous; for the specific effect noted, see letter from Padre Jorge Vas to Capitão de São Tomé, 11.2.1549, ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, I-82-48; Brásio, II, pp. 228-230. Cf. Balandier, pp. 65-67.
³ Vansina, p. 66.
⁴ Fénel (pp. 97-110) gives a convincing analysis of Portuguese policy at this juncture.
⁵ Álvaro de el-Rei D. João III (ca. 1553), ANTT, C.M., 4-463; Brásio, II, pp. 323-324.
⁶ António Vieira brought his plan for exploiting the Bembe copper mines to
to Lisbon in 1565, he must have indicated that the Mbundu king seemed likely to allow no easier access to the mines in his territories than the mani Kongo to those in the north. All these developments would have stimulated Lisbon’s search for a way to circumvent the recalcitrant kings at São Salvador.

The bad news from Africa combined with pressures at the Portuguese court to force armed intervention in Kongo. Martim Gonçalves da Camara, president of the influential Mesa de Consciencia e Ordens, represented a powerful Lisbon faction which favored an aggressive Kongo policy. Shortly after Dias de Novaes’ return, he wrote a letter recommending that the regent (then ruling during the minority of Dom Sebastião) take positive steps to restore “order;” by this he meant conditions favorable to peaceful and profitable Portuguese commerce.¹ His advice came on the heels of Dias de Novaes’ discouraging report from Luanda and the hopeful data on the existence of rich copper mines in Kongo. Combined with the well-known predilections of Dom Sebastião and his advisors for adventurous overseas projects,² it could well have led them to welcome, if not actively promote, an opportunity to reimpose Portuguese authority in Kongo by rescuing the beleaguered Alvaro from his exile on the Congo river island and then restoring him as a puppet king loyal to European advisors.

The hypothesis that Gouveia intervened for such purposes explains why the “Jaga” invasion ultimately benefited the Portuguese at least as much as it helped the restored Kongo monarchs. An English trader who travelled through the area in 1597–98 noted that the mani Kongo of that time (Alvaro II) had surrounded himself with Portuguese advisors whom he greatly favored.³ Lopes remarked somewhat earlier that many of Gouveia’s companions had stayed in Kongo after their campaign had ended, where they became rich and prosperous.⁴ Since Lopes, the originator of the myth of the “Jaga,” was himself a Portuguese merchant and one of the prime beneficiaries of the restoration of Portuguese control, he had good reason to obscure this aspect of the Portuguese role in the “Jaga” assault. If Sebastião and his advisors in Lisbon used Kongo civil disturbances of the 1560’s to impose a king favorable to Portuguese interests, the European coup may have created a need

² Dom Sebastião met his death a decade later in the most adventurous and disastrous project of all, near Ceuta in 1578.
³ Anthony Knivet in Ravenstein, p. 98.
⁴ Bal, pp. 109–110.
for secrecy which contributed to the total lack of solid documentation on both the "Jaga" and the Portuguese invasions.

While acknowledging the tentative nature of these conclusions, unsettled Kongo domestic politics during the 1560's suggest that the "Jaga" invasion was in fact an attack against the mani Kongo by one or more local enemies, probably the inhabitants of Nsundi and Mbata, aided by the Tyo or, less likely, by Matamba. The Kongo kings' bad reputation in Portugal coincidentally prompted Lisbon to appropriate the rebellion as a means of restoring firm Portuguese control at São Salvador, which Gouveia accomplished from 1570 to 1574. Diplomatic protocol and political realities guaranteed that the Portuguese role in the "invasion" did not receive publicity. Lisbon, in fact, may never have correctly understood events in Kongo, as Alvaro could have fabricated the myth of the "Jaga" himself in order to draw the Portuguese into the conflict on his side. Whatever the origin of the myth of the "Jaga," which still remains uncertain, the story fit perfectly with sixteenth century European misconceptions about Africa and Africans. Its adaptability to the purposes of later Portuguese in Africa gave it a long and vigorous history which may now be laid respectfully to rest.

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J. C. MILLER — Requiem pour les "Jaga". Les "héros Jaga" qui, d'après tous les historiens classiques du Kongo, ont envahi ce royaume, ainsi que celui de Ngola, aux xvi\textsuperscript{e} et xvii\textsuperscript{-}siècles, n'ont jamais existé. Il s'agit, en fait, d'une sorte de légende d'origine portugaise et non appuyée sur des faits. La décadence du royaume de Kongo s'explique par des causes internes. L'explication par une invasion étrangère résulte de l'image de l'Afrique prévalente chez les Portugais du xvii\textsuperscript{e} siècle, et d'autant mieux acceptée qu'elle servait leurs intérêts.

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1. Professor David Birmingham, of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, has independently reached this conclusion with regard to the nature of the 1568 disturbances in Kongo, although for somewhat different reasons; see his "Traditions, Migrations and Cannibalism: an Entertainment on the Problems of Historical Evidence," unpublished paper presented to the History Seminar, University of East Africa, Dar es-Salaam, 1971, p. 5.