Trade and Tribute. Archaeological Evidence for the Origin of States in South Central Africa
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Résumé
M. S. Bisson — Commerce et tribut. Documents archéologiques sur l’origine des États du sud de V’Afrique centrale.
Cet article examine le rapport du négoce et du tribut avec le développement d’États préhistoriques en Afrique sud-centrale, à l’aide de données historiques et archéologiques. L’hypothèse selon laquelle le négoce organisé sur de longues distances aurait été la cause première de la formation des États est examinée en ce qui concerne les Yeke, le Monomatapa et les Lunda du Sud et de l’Est. Les données archéologiques porteraient à conclure que le commerce au long cours fut un facteur important dans la croissance de l’État. Toutefois, il y a aussi trace d’une formation d’État antérieure, et qui aurait été provoquée par le développement d’un réseau tributaire, avant l’apparition du négoce s’étendant aux littoraux.

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Trade and Tribute. Archaeological Evidence for the Origin of States in South Central Africa*

The political influence of trade, making for a steady increase of “power at the center”, appears to have become increasingly important after about 1300 [...]. Trade, and especially long distance trade, called for new types of economic organization which, in turn, required stronger authority “at the center” than any that had existed before. There came a need for appointed men who could take important trading decisions on behalf of their community. As elsewhere new forms of economic power led onward to new forms of political power [...]. The growth and expansion of trade aided the growth and expansion of States. As we shall see this was especially true in central Africa.

Davidson 1969: 54-55.

Davidson’s view of long-distance trade as a primary cause of State formation and growth in central Africa is shared by many historians and archaeologists (Oliver & Fage 1962; Vansina 1966; Wilson 1972; Huffman 1970; Summers 1969). These scholars see long-distance trade as, first, a direct stimulus of State formation by requiring the development of centralized authority for administrative purposes; second, a mechanism through which foreign ideas of hierarchical political organization were transmitted into the previously isolated African interior; and third, a stimulus toward territorial expansion in order to both control sources of trade items and protect trade routes. From this perspective long-distance trading activities not only were the chief cause of central African State formation, but also exerted a strong influence on the particular organization of African States and their territorial goals. The purpose of this paper is to test this model of political evolution in central Africa.

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against ethnographic and archaeological fact. We will begin with a
discussion of the history and organizational characteristics of some well-
known savanna States. The archaeological evidence for their history and
their relationship to trade will then be examined. In conclusion some
alternate interpretations of this data will be suggested.

The relevance of archaeology to the task of studying social and
political evolution may not be readily apparent to readers unfamiliar
with recent theoretical developments in the discipline. Indeed, much of
the archaeological research on the Iron Age in sub-Saharan Africa has
produced data solely on the distributions in space and time of traditions
of ceramic decoration. This information helps to establish the chronolo-
gical control necessary to test other hypotheses, but is itself of little
use in the search for the origins of inequality in African societies. The
notion that social and political structures are reflected in the patterns in
which a society discards its refuse (the artifacts and features that archae-
ologists find) has been most forcefully emphasized by Binford (1964), who
asserts that, through problem-oriented research designs using appropriate
sampling procedures, it is possible to provide a fair outline of the social
relations that existed in a prehistoric group. This can only be done, of
course, by carefully structuring research projects to collect appropriate
information. In this case we will deal primarily with two classes of data.
The first are trade items, particularly copper. The rationale for this
choice is that as inequality develops in a society, valuable items will tend
to become concentrated in the hands of the elite. In addition, as political
and economic power becomes more centralized, societies increase their
ability to organize and control more complex activities such as operating
copper and gold mines. The second class of data are funerary practices,
the underlying assumption being that a person's social roles are reflected
in the treatment of the body after death and in the grave goods deposited
with it. The archaeological information presented here are primarily
conclusions based on interpretations of available field data. Readers
interested in more detail should consult the cited original reports.

I. -- States in Central Africa

The Southern Lunda

The most comprehensive history and description of the Southern
Lunda State is Kingdoms of the Savanna, by Jan Vansina. The historical
sections of his account are based almost entirely on tribal oral traditions.
Vansina's assumption that oral traditions do describe real persons and
events that can be identified and dated by the historian has recently come
under attack from two directions. Joseph Miller, like Vansina, sees oral
traditions as images of real events, but on a much different level. To
Miller 'apparent figures such as Kinguri represent permanent named
political positions rather than individuals [. . .] all genealogies, for example, describe networks of perpetual titles related to each other by fictional ties, rather than biological families' (1972: 551). He adds that these titles were possessed by kin groups, and that recounted fights between these fictitious characters probably represent conflicts between lineages for political power. Thus to Miller, African traditional histories are symbolic representations, through personification, of complex political processes.

![Map of Central Africa showing the distribution of the Lunda, Yeke, and Monomotapa States.](image)

A more radical attack on Vansina's position has recently come from students of structuralism (De Heusch 1972; Wrigley 1974). They argue that the historical content of many oral traditions, particularly origin
myths, is negligible, and that the main concern of these myths is with individuality and time, not with specific events. Referring to the Lunda, Wrigley asserts that: 'We must suspect, therefore, that the origins of kingship in Africa lie far beyond the reach of the historian, and that interpretations of oral tradition which depict it as being introduced to particular areas in the fifteenth or sixteenth century are wide off the mark. On the other hand the economic conditions in which ritual kingdoms could be converted into states, into large articulated structures of coercion, were not actually present in most of sub-Saharan Africa, least of all perhaps in "Bantu" Africa. For some centuries before 1500 the production and distribution of copper may have provided a partial basis for such structures in Katanga, but their full emergence surely had to await the opening of Atlantic commerce.' (1974: 135.)

While the structuralist assault would seem to have effectively demolished Vansina's original position, a real problem nevertheless remains. Lunda origin myths do merge into recognizable history. Some individuals mentioned in the myths were encountered by 19th-century explorers (Miller 1972: 551) and the structuralists do admit a continuity between some elements of the Lunda origin stories and historical reality (Wrigley 1974: 132). To deny, as Wrigley does, any great antiquity for the Lunda State simply on the grounds that Lunda kinglists do not reflect historical truth is a potentially serious logical error. If the genealogies have no chronological significance, then the argument can logically be reversed, particularly in light of Miller's assertion that oral histories may tend to telescope events by listing an entire dynasty as a single individual. Clearly, the history of the Lunda State cannot be discovered by the study of oral traditions alone. In the absence of significant documentary sources dating before 1800, archaeology is the only other available tool.

If the history of the Southern Lunda State remains in doubt, its form, at least during the 19th and 20th centuries, is well documented. The basic units of Lunda political organization were the villages with their surrounding land. These were linked by ties of perpetual kinship between headmen. Village headmen were in turn under the control of political district chiefs, who collected taxes or tribute for the paramount, mwaant yaav. At Musumba, the Lunda capital, the paramount chief ruled over a court consisting of hereditary and appointed titleholders. These titleholders were of three categories. The first were the headmen of the fifteen oldest villages in the core area of the Lunda State. Second were the capital officials, all linked to the paramount chief through a bond of perpetual kinship, and who were tied to the district chiefs who paid tribute to the ruler through them. The final set of titles belonged to those tributary chiefs who lived away from the capital but who had permanent representatives in residence there (Vansina 1966: 77-80).

A notable feature of the Lunda State was that it possessed 'no regular standing army' (ibid.: 81). Nevertheless, it did have a permanent police
force at Musumba as well as a few chiefs who travelled about the fringes of the ‘empire’ with an armed guard to collect tribute. As a whole, Lunda military strength was surprisingly small considering the large size of the territory ruled. In spite of this, tribute was regularly paid at least once a year by those owing allegiance to the mwaant yaav. Indeed, the payment of tribute has been described as ‘the outstanding characteristic of the Lunda empire’ (ibid.: 82). Vansina contends that the Lunda system was able to expand at a much greater rate than other central African States because the customs of positional succession and perpetual kinship allowed diverse cultural groups to be absorbed into its structure with a minimum of disruption.

The Eastern Lunda

The history of one splinter group from the Southern Lunda State seems particularly interesting for a discussion of the role of trade in the expansion of Lunda hegemony. This group, the Eastern Lunda of chief Kazembe, was formed at a later date than the original Lunda State and its oral traditions contain historical information that has been confirmed by some of the earliest documentary sources available for all of the central African interior (Burton 1873). Like the Southern Lunda traditions, Eastern Lunda royal genealogies refer back to the obviously mythological common ancestors of both groups, but a recurrent theme in Eastern Lunda origin myths that is not present in the older ones is trade. In these stories the mwaant yaav became curious about the origin of copper crosses arriving (perhaps as trade items) in his capital. An expedition was sent out to investigate their source and in the process absorbed two chiefdoms of the Lualaba river area into the Lunda State. A quarrel between the two leaders of this expedition caused it to fail in its main purpose, conquest of the copper sources. The mwaant yaav was ultimately forced to send one and perhaps two more expeditions before his objective was achieved. The leader of the final expedition was given the title mwata kazembe. His army crossed the Lualaba river and overran much of the Lamba and Sanga tribal areas, including most of the rich copper deposits in Shaba (Katanga). His son, Kazembe II, eventually crossed the Luapula river and settled near the present chief’s capital. For a period of about ninety years this dynasty continued to consolidate and expand their control. By 1850 the Eastern Lunda were not only collecting tribute from a wide area of Zambia and Shaba, but also were effectively independent of Southern Lunda political control (Cunnison 1959: 151-155).

The political organization of Kazembe’s State was essentially the same as that of the mwaant yaav. Its success can be attributed to the ability to absorb conquered peoples by placing their leaders in the position of titled aristocrats with ties of perpetual kinship to the Lunda paramount. In this way a large number of tributary chiefs were consolidated around Kazembe and his nucleus of Lunda immigrants (Vansina 1966: 96).
The Yeke of Msiri

Nyahwezi traders from Tanzania had begun to visit the Zairian copper mines by about 1800, a period during which the mining peoples were tributary to Kazembe. They purchased copper, ivory, slaves and, perhaps, salt, and made alliances with many of the local chiefs. One of these traders was Msiri, the leader of a group known as the Yeke, who was granted permission to live near the copper mines by Kazembe in ca. 1856. Msiri first settled near chief Katanga, among a group of Yeke left there by his father. Within six years he was able to establish military superiority in the area and overthrow Katanga. He then engaged in a series of wars with invading Luba clans from the north. The continued military success of Msiri’s army allowed him to challenge a major army of Lunda in ca. 1865, and his victory against them established him as an independent chief. By 1871 he was overlord of all Eastern Lunda lands west of the Luapula (Vansina 1966: 228-231).

At the peak of his power, Msiri traded actively with both coasts. His export goods consisted primarily of copper, ivory and slaves, while he imported cloth, numerous western articles, and, perhaps most important, guns for his army. He was an expert politician who was careful to maintain alliances with such powerful forces as the Arabs and Swahili as well as any chiefs who were capable of stopping his caravans to the coast. Ultimately, however, Msiri’s taxation and acquiescence to slave raiding led to revolts near his capital at Bunkeya, revolts which resulted in the break-up of the Yeke empire after his murder by Belgian agents in 1891 (ibid.: 232-235).

Monomotapa

Some time during the 17th century the Shona tribe of Zimbabwe1 were politically unified by members of the Rozwi clan, who may initially have been religious leaders in an ancestral and rainmaking cult. This unification was brought about by the military conquests of a single leader, Mutota, who took as his royal title the name mwene mutapa, ‘Lord of the plundered lands’ or ‘master pillager’. By his death in 1450, Mutota ruled most of the Zimbabwean plateau. His son extended the empire westward to the Indian ocean from Sofala to the south bank of the Zambezi river (Davidson 1969: 254-257).

At its peak in 1480, Monomotapa was governed in much the same way as other African States. The ruler was at the top of a ‘pyramid of power’ and, with the support of a standing army, collected tribute from other kings and chiefs. A royal court with many appointed officials has been mentioned in Portuguese records, but the exact duties of each office

1. To avoid confusion, the nation that was formerly known as Rhodesia will be Zimbabwe and the major archaeological site of that name will be referred to as Great Zimbabwe.
holder was not accurately recorded. Nevertheless, we do know that trade was an important activity controlled by the ruler. The Portuguese went to great lengths first to befriend, and later to overthrow the mwene mutapa in order to usurp control of the gold and ivory trade (ibid.: 257-269).

It is clear from the oral traditions of the Eastern and Southern Lunda, Yeke, and Monomotapa that trade was an important component of economic and political life. Unfortunately, for some groups, particularly the Lunda, these accounts may refer to economic practices that obtained only during the later stages of their history. The question we wish to ask is this: did organized long-distance trade precede the development of hierarchical political institutions, or was it a consequence of them? Although our knowledge of the African Iron Age is far from complete, and major areas are still untouched by research, the archaeological record summarized below is now beginning to point to some tentative answers. It also demonstrates that the relationship of long-distance trade to the development of some of these kingdoms is not uniform.

II. — THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

Iron Age societies have existed in central Africa for perhaps the last 1,700 to 2,000 years (Soper 1971: 12). Their arrival marks the introduction of a simple farming, stock-raising, and metal-working subsistence economy into an area that had previously been occupied by hunting and gathering bands (Clark 1970: 187-218). The first Iron Age cultures in central Africa all produced pottery sharing a number of stylistic characteristics reflecting common origins. In central Africa archaeologists commonly refer to the period between ca. 0 and 1000 A.D. as the Early Iron Age, and the period from 1000 to 1900 A.D. as the Later Iron Age. Unfortunately, outside of the technological sphere, we know little about the social, political, and economic organization of Early Iron Age Africans. Archaeological studies of sites from this period have concentrated on descriptions of material culture and the development of dated ceramic sequences (Phillipson 1968; Soper 1971). While trade items are sometimes cited from this area, these references are usually incidental to the main purpose of describing ceramic assemblages, and few scholars have had the study of Early Iron Age trade as their specific objective (Fagan 1969).

A wide variety of items were traded in central Africa, but many were made of perishable materials and have not survived in significant quantities in the archaeological record. Indigenous trade included foodstuffs, textiles, hut poles, pottery, iron tools, salt, ivory and copper (ibid.). In most cases these objects or substances were exchanged over relatively short distances to relieve localized or periodic shortages. Pottery, for
example, was until recently a common trade item in some parts of western Zambia, where suitable sources of clay are rare. It was usually exchanged for other useful objects such as iron tools, salt cakes, or fish. Given the perishability of many subsistence-related trade goods, the tracing of localized trading networks is presently impossible.

Ivory and copper, both substances that circulated in the prestige spheres of African economies (i.e. to make marriage and tribute payments), are less subject to decay and so provide greater opportunities for the archaeological study of trade. In precolonial times sources of ivory were not as restricted as they are today, but the prehistoric ivory trade has been largely ignored by archaeologists since source areas cannot readily be identified. Copper ores, on the other hand, have a restricted distribution that has been very precisely defined during over seventy years of intensive modern prospecting activity. Metallic copper is not only durable enough to survive the rigors of Africa’s acidic soils, but it also held in African societies a unique position that makes the study of its prehistoric distribution extremely important.

Unlike iron, copper was used almost exclusively as a decorative and ornamental metal in central Africa. In virtually all recorded cases, everyday subsistence tools such as axes, hoes, and knives were fabricated of iron, while decorative items like bracelets, anklets, rings and collars were made of iron or copper, often the latter. Copper was not used to make heavy duty cutting tools, and aside from razors and bullets, there are no known cases of copper serving on an equal footing with iron as a metal for non ceremonial, utilitarian artifacts (Cline 1937: 90-101; Santos 1891: 218; Schweinfurth 1874: 109-111; Smith & Dale 1920: 211-221).

The role of copper in precolonial West African society has been described by Eugenia Herbert (1973), and the similarity between her data and that from central Africa is striking. In both areas copper items served ‘as a medium of exchange, as objects of personal adornment, [and] emblems of status and kingship’ (ibid.: 181). The variety of copper ornaments from our area is well known and need not be described here. Chiefs or their wives often wore large quantities of the metal (Livingstone 1857: 276-277). Ingots and ornaments of copper formed an important part of royal gravegoods in some tribes, as copper was considered a sign of rank (Bisson 1975).

Copper currency occurred in a wide variety of forms. The best known are X-shaped ingots called *handa* that were widely traded in central Africa in the 19th century and still circulate in some areas (Monteiro 1875: II: 190; Hilton-Simpson 1911: 162; Vansina 1954: 18; Douglas 1963: 64). Other ingot varieties were recorded during the 19th century and these include large triangular cross-section bars (Livingstone 1874) and H-shaped flanged ingots (Arnot 1889: 238-239). Another common form of copper currencies were rings and bracelets. Unlike ingots, which in recent times were used in organized trade over long distances,
rings and bracelets were commonly employed in the local prestige economic sphere (Livingstone 1874: 120). In some areas bracelets even penetrated the subsistence economy. The best documented account of the use of copper bracelets in both prestige and subsistence spheres is by the Portuguese explorer Gaspar Boccaro, who purchased 1,000 bracelets to use for ‘small expenses’ such as food and to pay tribute to local rulers on one of his expeditions (Freeman-Grenville 1962: 165-166).

Foreign trade items that circulated in central African economic systems included cloth, Chinese porcelain, glass beads, and various types
of sea shells. Cloth is only preserved in the archaeological record under exceptional circumstances, and while it was certainly one of the most important Later Iron Age trade items, we know almost nothing about its distribution. Chinese porcelain, though durable, was relatively rare. While it has provided important dating evidence for Great Zimbabwe and other stone ruins, its distribution is too limited in time and space to give an accurate picture of the circulation of foreign trade goods (Garlake 1972: 110-136). Glass beads and sea shells are the earliest and most widespread foreign items encountered in African Iron Age archaeological sites. Like copper, beads and shells circulated in the prestige spheres of African economies and were often used as tribute payments to chiefs (ibid.). Unlike copper, which is present in most Early Iron Age sites, these items have not been found in sites earlier than the 8th century A.D. (Phillipson 1970: 106).

A comparison of the distribution of both indigenous and foreign trade goods in time and space conclusively shows that trade in indigenous materials was taking place long before the introduction of foreign items into central African trading systems. Copper, for example, has been found in small quantities in most Early Iron Age sites in Zambia, Zaire, Malawi and Zimbabwe, though many of these sites are hundreds of miles from potential source areas. In most cases Early Iron Age copper objects are simple decorative items, like bracelets and beads made of thin copper strips (Bisson 1975). Fragments of two wide, flat bars are the only known ingots from the first half of this period (Vogel 1971: 40), while medium-sized H-shaped crosses were being produced during the 9th century on the Zambia-Zaire border (Bisson 1976).

If the excavated sample of Early Iron Age sites is representative of the period as a whole, then small-scale production and trade of copper was taking place throughout its duration. While some of these sites may be far removed from ore deposits, there is no reason to postulate organized long-distance trading of this metal in most areas. Small numbers of ingots or finished ornaments could easily have passed through local barter networks or been transferred from village to village as part of bridewealth. In central Africa the Early Iron Age trade in copper is not likely to have been stimulated by outside agencies such as organized long-distance traders from the east coast. The few foreign articles present at this time could easily have arrived through simple barter networks and involved no contacts between interior and coastal peoples at all. A continuing, but low-level, demand for the metal as a consequence of its place in the prestige spheres of Early Iron Age social systems is the most likely stimulus for production and distribution. The relative simplicity of Early Iron Age trading systems is reflected in the small numbers and unstandardized forms of most copper artifacts. The standardization and widespread distribution of similar trade items that is characteristic of chiefdom or State-level societies is absent during this period.

The transition period from the Early to Later Iron Ages is from the
9th to 12th centuries A.D. Unfortunately only a few sites from this critical period have been investigated. The data that is available suggests regional variation in the degree and complexity of trading activities. In Zimbabwe, the production and export of gold was beginning during this period. While the specific mechanisms of the early Zimbabwean gold trade remain a mystery, we know that it was soon brought under the control of a few individuals. Gold was exchanged for foreign goods (beads, cloth, porcelain) at the coast. The proceeds were brought inland, with chiefs receiving the largest share. During this period trading centers increased in both number and size and rulers began to build their villages and palaces with stone. The largest of these sites have also produced the greatest number of foreign trade goods, suggesting the accumulation of these goods by chiefs (Summers 1969).
Southern Zambia stands in sharp contrast to this situation. While considerable research has been done on the Kalomo tradition of the 10th and 11th centuries, remarkably little evidence of any trading activities has been found. Sites of the Kalomo tradition, which characterize this area, contain small numbers of copper-wire bangles. Copper sheet and a cast ring have also been recorded (Vogel 1971). Glass beads and other foreign materials are likewise rare. The design, distribution and frequency of Kalomo tradition trade artifacts is thus similar to the Early Iron Age pattern.

The three excavated sites dating from the 9th to 12th centuries A.D. in northwestern Zambia all contained copper ingots or evidence of their use. At Kamusongolwa, a refuge cave near Kasempa, a cache of metal artifacts was found containing a flat copper bar (Daniels 1967: 48). Near Kansanshi mine the author excavated an 11th-century village site containing pottery similar to the Kamusongolwa collection and, among other copper artifacts, the broken arm of an H-shaped ingot. A second site, dating from the 9th to 12th centuries, was excavated on the north bank of the Kafue river near the prehistoric mine at Kipushi in Zaire. Unlike the Kansanshi village, this site was probably a temporary campsite for miners who were smelting Kipushi ore. A total of eight fragmentary ingot molds were collected within this campsite. The ingots were shaped like a capital H with short arms and an elongated midsection. Standardization of form and size at Kipushi may be the first manifestation of a universally accepted standard of value in that area. Ingots of this type are completely absent in Zambian sites prior to the 19th century (Inskeep 1962: 171) and thus the Kipushi crosses were probably being traded northwards into Zaire.

The distribution of trade materials in the Later Iron Age follows a similar pattern. In Zimbabwe there is a great influx of foreign goods as payment for ivory and gold. During the early part of this period the State centered around Great Zimbabwe ruins, and when for unclear reasons that site was abandoned, other States emerged to control mining and trade. One of these was Monomotapa. Excavations in the central Zambezi valley of Zambia and the Urungwe district of Zimbabwe have given insights into the extent of trade in this empire. At Ingombe Ilede near Chirundu, Zambia, eleven richly decorated burials from this period were unearthed. These graves contained thousands of copper bracelets, large H-shaped copper ingots, glass beads, sea shells, gold beads and wire (Fagan, Phillipson & Daniels 1969: 70-76). Some foreign trade cloth lying against some copper bracelets and an ingot were also preserved. Large copper ingots like those from Ingombe Ilede have been found throughout the Urungwe region and appear to postdate the period of Great Zimbabwe (Garlake 1970: 38). For years it was assumed that they were manufactured in Zimbabwe, for over one hundred fifty ancient copper mines are known in that country. Nevertheless, trace-element analysis in an attempt to link these bars to specific Zimbabwean sources
has been unsuccessful (Fagan, Phillipson & Daniels 1969: 102–103). In spite of considerable activity by both professional and amateur archaeologists no suitably shaped molds for these ingots have been found in or near Zimbabwean mines. The discovery of molds designed to produce identical crosses near Kipushi mine in Zaire (Bisson 1975) raises the possibility that Monomotapa was carrying on extensive trading activities with the north as well as with the east coast.

At present, so few Iron Age sites have been excavated in southern Zaire itself that we know nothing of the prehistoric distribution of trade items in that area. The sites excavated in northwestern Zambia have failed to yield significant quantities of foreign trade goods, and amateur collectors have likewise reported the discovery of few exotic pieces. While foreign items may have been rare until relatively recent times (post 16th and 17th centuries), the presence of over a hundred prehistoric mines points to a lively trade in indigenous products, particularly copper. It is during the Later Iron Age that large scale exploitation (perhaps in excess of 500 kg per year, as compared to less than 100 kg per year in the Early Iron Age) of copper deposits was carried out at both Kansanshi and Kipushi mines. At both sites major mining activities had commenced no later than the 14th century and could conceivably have developed as early as the 12th century (Bisson 1975). Inventories of exports on both the east and west coasts do not show significant quantities until the late 16th and 17th centuries (Birmingham 1966; Freeman-Grenville 1962). If the copper was not being exported, then it must have circulated internally, and the rise in production probably reflects an increased indigenous demand rather than one created by organized trade for foreign objects.

If export can be eliminated as a stimulus for the start of large-scale copper production at Kansanshi and Kipushi, then two alternate hypotheses should be investigated. The first of these views the rise in mining activity as a direct result of increases in population size. It assumes that there were no fundamental changes either in the role of copper or the social organization in central Africa at this time, and that demand for copper will reflect actual population size. While sufficient archaeological data to test this hypothesis is, at present, unavailable, the information we do have does not seem to support this theory. Population densities around these mines have always been low, perhaps less than twelve people per square kilometer (Davies 1972: 43), and preliminary archaeological surveys in the area have produced no evidence of major fluctuations in the past (Bisson 1980). There is always the possibility that rapid and sudden population increases took place in the Luba and Lunda areas to the north, and that copper mining activity reflects these changes. While this alternative remains untested, it is theoretically unlikely. A major rise in population cannot normally take place unless brought about by significant environmental and/or technological changes that raise the carrying capacity of land. The only event that satisfies
this criterion during the thousand years prior to colonization in central Africa was the introduction of New World food crops. This, of course, could not predate the 16th century and in fact was likely to be more than hundred years later in the interior. Since the rise in copper production preceded New World crops by at least two hundred years, a direct proportional relationship between population size and copper consumption cannot yet be demonstrated.

The second hypothesis is that increased copper consumption in the Later Iron Age reflects the evolution of primitive States from previously uncentralized societies. In this theory the total demand for prestige goods and materials, including copper, will increase in proportion to the number of high status positions available in a society rather than being directly connected to population size. This hypothesis, like the first, has not yet been adequately tested but presently available data from Kansanshi and Kipushi appears to support it. Furthermore, the one major Iron Age site that has been excavated in Zaire may point to where and when the transition from stratified to State societies was taking place. This site is the famous burial ground at Sanga on the shores of lake Kisale.

In 1957 and 1958, a total of one hundred and forty five graves were opened at Sanga (Nenquin 1963; Hiernaux, Longrée & De Buyst 1971). Originally three separate groups of burials were distinguished on the basis of the pottery they contained and were named the ‘Kisalian’, ‘Mulongo’, and ‘Red Slip’ respectively. Jean Hiernaux first concluded that the three groups were contemporary and dated to around the 8th or 9th centuries A.D., however more recent excavations by Pierre de Maret have established a sequence beginning with the ‘Ancient Kisalian’ dating from the 8th to 10th centuries A.D., the ‘Classic Kisalian’, from the 11th to 14th centuries, and the ‘Kalambian’ (an amalgamation of the Red Slip and Mulongo) from the 15th to 18th centuries (Maret 1977: 328). More important, Maret’s work has clarified the picture of how trade items fit into the Sanga sequence.

The most elaborately decorated burials occur in the Classic Kisalian and the finely made grave goods uncovered there stand in sharp contrast to other finds from the same period in many parts of Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Sanga skeletons were decorated with a wide variety of carefully crafted utilitarian, ceremonial and decorative objects. An inventory of the Sanga finds will not be given here. The most important point to consider is that while most Classic Kisalian graves contained one or more finely made pots, prestige objects such as ivory and copper bracelets, iron ceremonial knives, and spears were not uniformly distributed among the population. One grave, according to Maret, contained ‘at least forty-four vessels, numerous jewels of iron and copper, two cowries and an ivory pendant; this could signify a person of high rank’ (ibid.: 325). It should be noted that although copper is found in many graves, one of the richest of these was that of a child, and since it is rare
in graves of other infants and children, it is possible that a person's position in society was inherited rather than achieved. The Classic Kisalian also appears to have been a society with a limited degree of occupational specialization. This would include the craftsmen who produced the many finely made copper, iron, and ivory ornaments as well as traders who supplied them with needed raw materials.

Nevertheless, involvement in trade was not in itself a key to social or political status. The most richly decorated of the Kisalian graves lack the standardized copper ingots and have very few exotic trade items. It is not until the Kabambian period that a significant number of trade items occur. Whether or not the Classic Kisalian represents an incipient State, perhaps related to the Luba, is likewise difficult to assess. However, Maret believes that 'we could at any rate regard Luba stories of their first kings as representing memories of political structures far older than their royal genealogies seem to suggest' (ibid.: 333).

III. — TRADE AND STATES IN CENTRAL AFRICA

The foregoing discussion amply demonstrates that Davidson's model of the relationship between trade and State formation does not correspond to all of the observed cases in the central African interior. In Zimbabwe his model seems adequate. Organized long-distance trade in gold required both organizational control of the mines themselves and unimpeded trade routes to the coast. The Zimbabwe culture and subsequent Monomotapa empire both appear to have had these as their primary functions. Davidson's model also fits many of the recent central African States like those of Kazembe and Msiri. These groups were both offshoots of older States or chiefdoms and seem to have been specifically set up to control the production and trade of copper, ivory, and slaves. But these are all secondary States. What of the relationship between trade and pristine State formation in this area?

At the level of pristine State formation the trade model breaks down. It is argued here that the Sanga necropolis at the time of the Classic Kisalian was the product of an incipient State and that the early large-scale exploitation of Kansanshi and Kipushi copper mines was also a response to a State organization. As all of these sites predate the development of organized trade to the coasts, then the notion that hierarchical political organization arose as a consequence of this trade must be abandoned. This does not deny that the economy and some forms of exchange did play an important, perhaps pivotal role in the origins of social inequality and ultimately the development of States in the central African interior. It is certain that some forms of trade did take place from the beginnings of the Iron Age, but we do not yet have sufficient archaeological data to assess the political significance of this early indigenous trade. We do, however, have information from Kan-
sanshi and Kipushi mines that points to the use of the copper being mined as tribute.

Tributary relationships are fundamentally unequal. The payer of tribute may benefit by being granted an office and title, or by receiving protection, but more often than not merely escapes military or legal harassment for some specified period of time. The receiver of tribute accumulates goods and services, which will normally be reflected in architecture, burial practices, and other traits studied by archaeologists. Identification of the payment of tribute is particularly important in tracing the development and expansion of States in central Africa both because the ethnohistorical record has shown that tribute was a major characteristic of these States, and because evidence of it is a clear indication of the coercion that is a central characteristic of State-level societies. How coercive power developed is unknown, as are the ways in which it was exercised. It is possible that the armed contingents under military leaders or chiefs as employed by the Lunda were the standard practice from the beginning, but this hypothesis will require further testing. What should be noted here is that although tribute practices may have developed very early in the history of State formation, they, like long-distance trade, should not be seen as a simple cause of political centralization. Both trade and tribute probably developed hand in hand in order to satisfy new demands for prestige and exotic goods. The process was possibly similar to the 'positive feedback' of systems theorists, where expansion and elaboration of one element of a system triggers parallel developments in others. At present the archaeological identification of these systems is only beginning and further studies of the relationship of trade and tribute to State formation should be a major goal of future archaeological research in central Africa.

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