

A PORTUGUESE EXPEDITION TO THE KINGDOM OF KAZEMBE

Kazembe, today roughly corresponding to the Katanga territory and part of Zambia, formed a kingdom (or empire, as it is also quoted) that traditionally constituted itself as a vassal of Luba-Lunda culture, and particularly a vassal and symbolic representative of the Muratorian Empire.

The Muata Kazembe - literally Marshal Kazembe - was descended from the matrilineal lineage of the Lundas, as was his remaining court and aristocracy. The geostrategic importance of the Kazembe territory is due to several and very revealing factors that explain the entire social and economic organisation of the Central African nations: the location of the main trade routes traversed for centuries between the eastern and western coasts by the "pombeiros" (considered traders in general and slave traders in particular); their existence in the centre of the Great Lakes region which allowed them to self-subsist; the difficulty of foreigners passing through the marshy and sick regions (the Portuguese having failed the numerous attempts to cross Africa completely for almost 400 years); the monopoly of ivory imposed on other kingdoms bordering Kazembe; and the deep wealth of copper mines that allowed Kazembe to be the main "issuer" of this African currency (the relative value is found in Gamito's monograph, when this second commander receives 2 slaves as a gift, while Commander Monteiro receives a copper bar).

The copper wealth, sought after and mapped out by the Gamitto expedition, is not listed in the text, but is hidden and refers to the various other riches of the territory, such as pastures and other aspects of the people's subsistence.

The Muata Kazembe had a territory stretching from the Lualaba river (to the west the Luba-Lunda kingdom, to the north the Luba kingdom, and to the east the Luba-Bemba territory). According to the Portuguese, the Muata had the possibility of enrolling 20,000 men.

The Portuguese hoped to establish a trade route in the interior, linking the territories of Angola and Mozambique. However, human geography and its complex power relations were then unknown. Arab merchants' trade routes were well established inland. The only information from European sources was the travel journal of Dr. Lacerda who had died in Kazembe in 1798. The voyages undertaken in 1831-32, and later in 1843-46, 1847-50 and 53 were intended to extend Portuguese dominance of the coastal areas to the interior, which had not actually been carried out in the time after the Discoveries. (see "The Journeys of Capello and Ivens", Teresa Bernardino, in *Nation and Defence*).

The territory of the Lunda Empire, which exercised suzerainty over Kazembe, had an area of influence and even a nominal existence, if not unknown, at least much discussed at the time, with the explorers omitting the word and the concept of Lunda. When this work was already in print, a handwritten letter was received from J. Rodrigues Graça, dated from Banza or Muata lamvo on 20 October 1847. It contained the travel diary of this explorer since 1843 (see Vol. II page 205). Gamitto mentions in the comparative final notes of his diary that this traveller (Vol. II, p. 210) speaks of Mastriano, but never mentions Lunda or Lundas.

Gamitto decides to call Lunda to the capital of Kazembe, placing this name at the end of the route map, *hors text*. Later Capelo and Ivens (*De Angola à Contra-costa*, 1886, p. 16) state that "Correia Monteiro and António Gamitto undertake and carry out a journey from Zambezi to Lunda of Kazembe". It should be said, *stritu sensu*, the Kazembe of Lunda. However, until the end of the 19th century political relations in Central Africa are confused for Europeans. Gamito seeks to clarify these relations between the natives from coast to coast, correctly demonstrating the relations of suzerainty, referring to the parts of the text of the diary where the author himself had already made this survey (see 1st edition pp. 335, 348, 349 and 486; *idem* vide translation of Cunissson Vol. II, p. 204 and following); and not forgetting to mention the very subsidiarity (according to the native concept) of the King of Portugal (the so-called kingdom of the Muene Puto) to the Empire of Lunda.

The current historical approach (*vide* Kisangani & Scott, 2010, lvii) mentions that 'the Lunda Empire and its Kazembe offshoot (...) Lunda subcultures, one this was Kazembe'. The same authors referring to Lacerda's expeditions say: "Portuguese merchants made contact with Kazembe after the Empire had already existed for more than 50 years".

The first edition - of which we present this magnificent copy - is an item of great value as it contains an exquisitely printed text and beautiful engravings, with precious data tables for the understanding

of the economic power relations between the Lunda Empire and its tributary kingdoms; for presenting a descriptive table of the march of the expedition, which was expressly omitted in the 20th century editions; and also for containing in the text the author's and publisher's references to the central parts of the text where the above-mentioned relations of suzerainty and vassalage are clarified.

Above all, we can affirm that this work is an important historical and ethnographic source for the knowledge of the peoples who inhabited these territories of Central Africa at that time.

In the history of European colonialism, the key moment of the expedition is the arrival in the capital of Kazembe, which the explorers call Lunda, being in fact a Lunda *latu sensu*:

In Muata Kazembe see 9 November, [...] We arrived at the small Chempire mountain range. The place where we are, belongs to Fumo Insipo, which is a second order Kilôlo (chieftain). We are waiting for the Muita's order to march to Lunda. [...].

Having reached the capital, the expedition was not, however, allowed to proceed westwards, to Lunda itself, and to reach the West African coast. The Muata Kazembe was not content with fabrics, beads and knickknacks. The rifles were known and used by the Kazembe's to hunt the elephant and the king needed all the powder he could get. He suspected that travellers were hiding the gunpowder (which we understand from the Gamitto Diary to be true). The Muata ordered a complete blockade of his people's contacts and exchanges with the expedition. Since he did not wish to touch the explorers, he addressed his threats to his subjects, torturing them as they approached the expedition, which deeply impressed the Europeans, finally leading them back to Tete. Eugenia W. Herbert, in 'Red Gold of Africa. Cooper in Precolonial History and Culture' says: "Despotic Kazembe had ruined, through his wars, the lands from which ivory, cooper and green stone came".

From 1860 onwards, Kazembe declined with the end of the first Lunda Empire. Its trade in copper and ivory was taken over by the traders Msiri and Tippu Tip, who attacked and killed the Muata Kazembe VIII. Until Msiri's death in 1890, he interfered with the succession of the Kazembe Muatas.

In 1894 the Luapula valley and the western shores of Lake Meru were divided between Northeast Rhodesia (run by the British South Africa Company) and the wrongly named Free State of the Congo belonging to Belgium, being the greatest paradigm of colonial division, ignoring the existence of a nation and a people, and dividing the territory in half. The Belgians appointed chiefs who were not subordinate to the Muata Kazembe and its traditional structure, but who belonged to the Luba-Lundas structure, prior to the Kazembe's, called "the owners of the land". The English appointed officials establishing an "indirect rule", where the traditional justice of the leopard chiefs lost its authority. In the 19th and 20th centuries, intensive exploitation of copper was opened up, transported along transcontinental lines such as the Benguela Railway, draining the riches to both African coasts.