NINETEENTH-CENTURY AFRICAN PROTEST IN ANGOLA:
PRINCE NICOLAS OF KONGO (1830?-1860)1
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Introduction

In the history of Angolan resistance to Portuguese rule the traditional and most common form of protest has been armed rebellion. In the late nineteenth century, however, new forms of protest appeared. African and mestigo assimilados (Angolans with varying degrees of Western education) began to express their protests in writing, both in letters to authorities and in colonial newspapers. Perhaps the earliest case of Angolan written protest came in 1859-1860 in the activities of a prince of the Kongo Kingdom, Nicolau de Agua Rosada de Sardonia. Nicolau, or Nicolas, protested against Portuguese commercial and political activity and military expansion by publishing a letter in a Portuguese newspaper in Lisbon. His written protest, as far as I know, is the first case of Angolan written assertion against modern colonial influence and, therefore, represents an antecedent to later Angolan nationalism.

This brief paper is not a definitive study, for a number of questions about the life of Nicolas and about the motives and influences of his contemporaries remain unanswered. But, after various periods of research on this problem since my original discovery of Nicolas' existence from documents in the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino in Lisbon in 1962, I feel that this interesting case warrants publication at this time.

1. The author is indebted to the archives personnel who helped him in Lisbon in 1962, in the National Archives, Washington, D.C. in 1963, in Boston in 1962-1963, and in Luanda in 1966. Jeffrey Butler of Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., was generous with his time and judicious with his advice on several drafts of this paper. James Duffy of Brandeis University very kindly allowed me the use of his notes on file F.O. 84/1105, Public Record Office, London; I am also indebted to his generosity for the interpretation of Gabriel's role in the Prince Nicolas affair. Thanks are due also to Norman R. Bennett of Boston University for his aid in this project.
The life of Prince Nicolas is inextricably woven into the fabric of the fortunes of the Kingdom of Kongo and of Angola, a Portuguese colony to the south of the Congo River. By the time of Prince Nicolas' birth in the first third of the nineteenth century the Kingdom of Kongo had become a de facto, if not a de jure, colonial puppet of the government-general of Angola. Portuguese military and political expansion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which involved wars and slave-trading activities, as well as internecine warfare among the Kongo provinces, had effectively ruined the power and sovereignty of the Kongo kings. Although the Kongo Kingdom was not formally annexed to Angola until 1885, as the "District of Congo," the kings of Kongo were dependent upon Luanda for supplies of food, wine, and arms, and for political support and Catholic priests long before. Moreover, the tradition that the Portuguese educated Kongo royal princes for the priesthood, in Luanda and in Lisbon, continued -- albeit with some lapses -- from the time of the original Bishop Henrique, son of Dom Affonso I (1508-1543?), through the lifetime of Nicolas.

The weakness and dependence of the Kongo Kingdom coincided with a colonial revival on the part of the Portuguese authorities in Angola. The official decree of 1836 abolishing the slave trade in Portuguese Africa was followed by a new colonial program which was designed to replace the slave trade revenue with legitimate trade profits; Portuguese commercial, political, and military expansion between 1845 and 1865 was thus an attempt to renovate the post-abolition economy of the territory. Part of the plan to increase the government revenue involved Portuguese expansion of customs house control north of Luanda. A number of active governors-general, beginning in 1842, sought to capture most of the coastal trade north of Luanda, including trade in the mouth of the Congo River, and thereby to gain profits for Portuguese merchants and customs revenue for the provincial government. The Kongo Kingdom, which was directly behind the coastal area of this coveted trade, was, by 1845, dominated mainly by British


and American merchants. The Portuguese plan was to renew long neglected relations with the Kongo Kingdom, to apply pressure, and then to control events on the coast from the interior of Kongo.

The Portuguese policy toward the Kongo Kingdom in the early nineteenth century had been characterized by indifference and neglect, but the new incentives reversed the trend. While a letter of 1814 from the King of Kongo to Luanda had met no response and elicited no aid, similar plaintive letters in the 1840's met a new response from the Portuguese. In Lisbon Portuguese writers took a new interest in the Kongo Kingdom; between 1844 and 1846 Joaquim Lopes de Lima, a colonialista and writer, advocated expansion of Portuguese control in that kingdom. He noted in one newspaper article on the Kongo Kingdom that this subject was particularly timely as "Prince Nicholau of Congo" was then visiting Lisbon.

Nicolas' exact birth date remains uncertain. Contemporary engravings of Nicolas during his visit in Lisbon in 1845 suggest that he was then perhaps fifteen to twenty years of age. In any event, he was the son of King Henry II of Kongo, who ruled from 1842 to 1857. In early 1845 King Henry, from his capital at Sào Salvador, sent letters to the Governor of Angola expressing the desire to send Infante Dom Alvaro d'Agua Rosada e Sardonia, apparently the heir to the throne at that time, to Portugal to get an education. He was to be accompanied by an African priest, Dom Antônio Francisco das Necessidades. The Governor complied and sent Captain Antonio Joaquim de Castro to Kongo to accompany these men back to Luanda and thence to Portugal. The party was to be presented to the Queen of Portugal, Maria II (1843-1853). Instead of Dom

5. Lopes de Lima was the author of Ensaio sobre a estatistica d'Angola e Benguella e suas dependencias (Lisbon, 1845).
Alvaro, however, Prince Dom Nicolau d'Agua Rosada de Sardonia came back with Castro and the African priest; there was no explanation for this change in the correspondence.\textsuperscript{10}

Nicolas left Luanda on the frigate Diana either in late August or early September 1845 and arrived at Lisbon on or about October 31st. Little is known about Nicolas' activities in Lisbon; how long he stayed or what he studied. It is clear, however, that he had an official reception with Queen Maria II, as there is an engraving, done by a contemporary Lisbon artist, of Nicolas in ceremonial robes worn at the royal reception. As of May 1846 Nicolas was reported to be in good health in Lisbon; several of the Prince's letters from Lisbon were received by his father at São Salvador in late August,\textsuperscript{11} Nicolas did not remain long in Portugal. Sometime between late 1846 and early 1848 he returned to Angola; the King of Kongo reported to the Governor-General in a letter of February 1848 that his son had returned safely to his capital.\textsuperscript{12}

The prince of Kongo was evidently anxious to continue his studies and to leave Kongo. He wrote letters to the Governor at Luanda expressing his desire to study in that city, to which the Governor replied in letters to Nicolas and to his father that the young man should remain in Kongo until the arrival of the Bishop of Angola at Luanda; until the new Bishop came with some "good teachers," he added, Nicolas would be wasting his time in Luanda.\textsuperscript{13} Sometime between the time of this letter and late 1849 Nicolas did travel to Luanda and renewed his studies. In early 1850 he made a written appeal to the Governor for employment or for a small pension for subsistence to enable him to study Latin to become a Beneefcio Ecclesiastico (assistant to a priest). The government in Lisbon

10. Gov. Gen. to King of Kongo, 31 May 1845, Códice C-8-3 (Angola), Luanda; Gov. Gen. to King of Kongo, 2 Aug. 1845, Códice C-8-3, Arquivo Histórico de Angola [A.H.A.]. The title of the dynasty, "Agua Rosada de Sardonia," means, literally, "Rose Water of Sardonia." Its origins remain unclear, but it is known that Italian Capuchin priests officiated in 1701 at the coronation of one Kongo chief as "Dom Pedro de Agua Rosada," the first in the line of Agua Rosada kings. Faria Leal, "Memorias"; Visconde de Paiva Manso, História do Congo. Documentos (Lisbon, 1877). Alfredo de Sarmento in his Os Sertões D'Africa (Lisbon, 1880) provides one of the few existing "king lists" for Kongo and lists a "D. Pedro V" as an earlier king and calls the king crowned in 1859 "D. Pedro VI" (59-60).


recommended that Prince Nicolas be granted a small monthly pension by the Treasury Board until he could qualify as Beneficio.\textsuperscript{14}

Nicolas probably changed his mind about a career in the Church, for in 1850 he became a civil servant in the Portuguese government service in Luanda and remained in this position until 1857. By then Nicolas had lived over ten years in European society and had assimilated some European culture along with his ability to read, speak, and write Portuguese as well as some French. In short, Nicolas had what British Consul Gabriel described in 1859 as "a very liberal education."\textsuperscript{15}

Alfredo de Sarmento, a contemporary Portuguese official and settler who knew him in Luanda suggests several reasons why Nicolas wished to leave the Kongo Kingdom: Nicolas was not eligible under the Kongo law to succeed to his father's throne; furthermore, "his experience with the Europeans did not permit him now to adapt himself to native customs [usos gentilicos]. He remained in Luanda, where he was employed in the accountant's office of the Public Treasury Department."\textsuperscript{16}

Sarmento provides the only known physical description of Prince Nicolas:

D. Nicolas Agua-Rosada was a tall black, with very dark color, kind features, a perfect racial type of muxiconga, which is distinguished especially by the prominence of cheeks, narrowness of the forehead, and by the thickness of the lips; he was modest, intelligent, not very talkative, but with affable and polite manners.

In short, he won general popularity, and as a public employee, he was exceedingly zealous in the fulfillment of his duties.

His good service and aptitude resulted in his promotion.\textsuperscript{17}

Why was Nicolas ineligible for the throne of Kongo? Sarmento claimed that it was because he was a direct son of Henry II rather than a son of the King's sister or brother.\textsuperscript{18} The Kingship of Kongo was elective, but elections were often followed by wars. According to Vansina, the six electors usually chose "one who was not a child of the deceased king."\textsuperscript{19} Nicolas was one of a host of infantes, that is, descendants of one of the sixteenth-century King

\textsuperscript{15} Consul Gabriel to Lord Russell, 28 Sept. 1859, F.O. 63/1114, P.R.O.
\textsuperscript{16} Alfredo de Sarmento, Sertões, 66-67.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 67. "Muxiconga" is a Portuguese version of "Ba-Kongo" in the case of Prince Nicolas.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{19} Vansina, Kingdoms of the Savanna, 192.
Joaquim wrote, "Portuguese, boundary involved mate Portugal on Menezes asserted strengthening territory Santarém of kingdom."

The question of succession to the Kongo throne became an important issue in Portugal and Angola in this period. In literature which appeared between 1845 and 1855 Portuguese writers debated as to whether Kongo was a "vassal kingdom" of Angola or merely a "friend and ally." Nicolas later became involved in this question when he protested official Portuguese activities with regard to the Kongo. Lopes de Lima argued that the Kongo was actually a district of Angola and that the king was a loyal "vassal" of the Portuguese crown. Santarém and Sá da Bandeira, two distinguished Portuguese statesmen, gathered historical documents to try and prove that the Kongo Kingdom had submitted to Portugal well before the nineteenth century as a "vassal" and not as a mere "ally." It is interesting to note, however, that Captain Castro, one of Nicolas' companions to Lisbon in 1845, believed that the Kongo Kingdom was outside Portuguese rule, for he placed the northern frontier of Portuguese territory at the River Lifume, which, in effect, might be interpreted as a southern boundary of Kongo Kingdom.

If the Portuguese were interested in renewing contacts in Kongo and strengthening their influence with its elite, there was not complete agreement on the achievements of the new policy. The policy of the official entertainment of Prince Nicolas came under attack by a former treasury official in Angola, Joaquim Antônio de Carvalho e Menezes. In a book written about 1846, but published in 1848 in Rio de Janeiro, Carvalho e Menezes stated that the money spent on Nicolas' visit was wasted. Prince Nicolas, he continued, was illegitimate and merely one of the offspring of concubines of the King of Kongo. He asserted that while Nicolas, an imposter barely able to speak a few words of Portuguese, was in Lisbon, the real descendant and legitimate heir to the throne of Kongo was in Luanda. Portugal's new interest in Kongo was misguided, he wrote, since that area had no political or commercial importance. Carvalho e Menezes criticized the Overseas Minister of Portugal for deliberate "conspicuous consumption" in the Prince Nicolas affair. Despite this official's

21. Visconde de Santarém, Demonstração dos Direitos Que Tem a Coroa de Portugal sobre os Territórios Situados na Costa Occidental D'Africa ... (Lisbon, 1855); Marquês de Sá da Bandeira, Factos e Considerações Relativos aos Direitos de Portugal ... (Lisbon, 1855).
attacks -- and his information on Nicolas' status is difficult to check -- the new policy toward Kongo went ahead and Prince Nicolas continued to receive certain considerations from the Portuguese government in Luanda.

II

Prince Nicolas became further involved in the question of the succession to the throne of Kongo and expanding Portuguese influence on the north coast and in Kongo when the Portuguese officially annexed the port of Ambriz in May 1855. This annexation was opposed by British authorities as well as by local African authorities. The British Foreign Office had, since 1846, officially opposed expansion of Portuguese sovereignty north of eight degrees south latitude (a little south of Ambriz) in the interests of "unrestricted intercourse," or free trade; Portuguese annexation would be followed by customs house control of the local trade.\(^{24}\) Local African authorities resisted by armed violence but were defeated in a short skirmish. King Henry of Kongo, however, felt that the Portuguese annexation was favorable to his interests of getting support from Luanda. Therefore, he sent a message of congratulation to the Governor-General of Angola within a month of the annexation.\(^{25}\) Within a few years Nicolas was posted as a civil servant to the new administration set up at Ambriz.

The death of King Henry II in late 1857 sparked a struggle for the throne among claimant infantes. This civil war was further complicated by the growing, general African resistance to expanding Portuguese authority north of Luanda.\(^{26}\) Portuguese forces suppressed African rebellions at Ambriz and Bembe in 1857 and initiated relations with the candidate who emerged as one "legitimate" heir to the throne, the Marquis of Catende, called Dom Pedro, a nephew of the deceased King.\(^{27}\) The Kongo custom that a European missionary had to crown the king was already well established by this date;\(^{28}\) in 1858 the Marquis was still uncrowned, for there were no Portuguese missionaries then resident in Kongo. That same year he visited Bembe, where the Portuguese had


\(^{25}\) Francisco Castelbranco, História de Angola (Luanda, 1932), 244.

\(^{26}\) Faria Leal, "Memórias," 324-330.

\(^{27}\) The Portuguese believed that Pedro V was simply a nephew (sobrinho) of King Henry II, but the Reverend R. H. Carson Graham, in Under Seven Congo Kings (London, 1930), 3, records that Pedro was in fact a younger nephew of the king's eldest sister.

\(^{28}\) Vansina, Kingdoms of the Savanna, 192.
begun copper mining operations, \(^{29}\) and the coronation ceremony seems to have been planned at that meeting. On August 7, 1859, at Banza a Puto in Kongo, the Marquis of Catende was crowned King Dom Pedro V; Portuguese officials, soldiers, and priests were in attendance. Dom Pedro was given the same royal title as that of the contemporary King of Portugal, Dom Pedro V of Bragança (1853-1861) and was crowned by Portuguese priests from Bembe and Ambriz.\(^{30}\)

Dom Pedro was clearly the favored Portuguese candidate. Opposition from several quarters, however, emerged both before and after his coronation. The first and most traditional opposition came from a rival claimant, the brave warrior, Dom Alvaro Kiambu Ndongo, called "Alvaro Dongo" by the Portuguese. As the candidate for the throne put up by the Kisuudi clan, Alvaro Kiambu temporarily occupied São Salvador and threatened Dom Pedro’s claim.\(^{31}\) Dom Pedro called for help from the Portuguese in Luanda. In mid-September the Governor-General dispatched a military expedition to relieve pressure on São Salvador and to support King Pedro in his fragile kingship. Major J. Baptista de Andrade, later a well known governor-general of Angola, led the expedition, which was supported by African auxiliaries, the guerra preta. They occupied São Salvador in late 1859.\(^{32}\)

In the meantime Prince Nicolas had taken a civil service position in Ambriz in 1857. Little is known of his life during this period, but it is very likely that he came into contact with other assimilados, as well as with resident

\(^{29}\) J. J. Monteiro, Angola and the River Congo (New York, 1876 ed.), 113-118.

\(^{30}\) The document recording the coronation is enclosed with an English translation in Gabriel to Lord Russell, no. 9, 28 Sept. 1859, F.O. 63/1114, P.R.O.

\(^{31}\) Gathering oral tradition from Dom Pedro V and his oldest advisor during the years 1886-1891, The Reverend Graham wrote that when King Henry II (or "Henrique Lunga") died, the eldest son of his eldest sister did not contest the succession to the throne of the candidate of the Kisuudi clan, Alvaro Kiambu Ndongo Nempanzwankanga, the nephew of the former chief. This man temporarily occupied the throne from 1858 to 1860, but was opposed by the Marquis of Catende, the deceased King’s younger nephew. Alvaro Kiambu was ousted by means of Portuguese aid but remained in the São Salvador region until he died in 1889. His rival died in 1891. Alvaro Kiambu was "infamous for having eaten a piece of the heart of one of the Portuguese killed in the war of succession, and it was said he . . . converted the skull into a drinking cup." Graham, Under Seven Congo Kings, 2-3, 239.

\(^{32}\) Jornal do Commercio (Lisbon), 19 Jan. 1860.
foreign consuls, including those of the United States, Brazil, and Great Britain, and became culturally more Westernized. New ideas from Europe and America influenced Nicolas and his contemporaries in coastal Angola, and certain groups were becoming dissatisfied with their personal status and the status of Angola under Portuguese rule. Recalling the period of the late 1850's and early 1860's, Nicolas' contemporary, Sarmento, wrote:

At that time in Luanda, some utopian ideas of independence fermented, so that some radical natives tried to liberate the mother country [italics in original], as they called it, from Portuguese rule. They talked of a republic, preferring Brazilian nationality, and there were even those who thought of making a present of the beloved country to the republic of the United States of America.33

The official policy of sending Portuguese political exiles to serve sentences in Angola encouraged the spread of anti-monarchical, pro-republican doctrines at this time. Coinciding with a certain amount of European discontent, and perhaps encouraged by it, was an African separatism among a handful of Africans and mestizos with European education.

Either in Ambriz or in Luanda Prince Nicolas read in the government gazette, the Boletim Official,34 of the coronation of King Pedro V on August 7, 1859, and of the official oath of loyalty the King of Kongo took to the King of Portugal. Within nine days of the publication of this "Auto," Nicolas had written several letters of protest. Two of these letters were to individuals, one to Dom Pedro V of Portugal dated September 26, 1859, and one to Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil, with an unknown date.35 More important than these letters in terms of Nicolas' future, however, was a protest letter addressed to a Portuguese daily newspaper, the Jornal do Commercio (Lisbon), also dated September 26, 1859, and published in Lisbon on December 1, 1859.36 This document became the focus of a cause célèbre in Angola and indirectly resulted in the tragic end of the Prince of Kongo. (See Appendix for a translation of a portion of this document.)

33. Sarmento, Sertões, 67.
34. It was announced in the Boletim Official, published at Luanda, no. 728, of 17 Sept. 1859.
35. Gabriel to Lord Russell, 28 Sept. 1859, F.O. 63/1114, P.R.O.; see enclosure of letter from Prince Nicolas to D. Pedro V of Portugal (translation), 26 Sept. 1859.
36. Jornal do Commercio, 1 Dec. 1859, collection of Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon. I have been unable to locate a copy of the letter Nicolas wrote to D. Pedro of Brazil.
The major point of Nicolas' written protests was that Portugal had no right to claim that the Kongo Kingdom or king were now "vassals" of Portugal when in fact they were "ancient allies" or "a friend and faithful ally." Quoting documents to prove his point, Nicolas cited a letter from the Governor of Angola to the King of Kongo, Henry II, dated November 5, 1853, in which the Governor addressed that monarch as "an ancient ally."37 Nicolas thus protested the new oath taken by Dom Pedro V at the August 7th coronation and added that the military force sent to aid the King "against an illegitimate but powerful pretender" was dispatched to aid an ally, not to pressure a vassal. Indeed, Nicolas maintained, the King of Kongo was an independent agent. The King and his aides had signed the document of August 7, 1859, only because they could not read Portuguese. Nicolas appealed to the King of Portugal and asked him to support "the independence of that kingdom [Kongo]."38

Nicolas' letter to the Lisbon newspaper contained much the same protest but went further, claiming that he, Nicolas, was the only person of royal blood from the Kongo elite who had the education to understand the issue and to protect the Kingdom of Kongo against future dishonest acts. In this letter Nicolas does not actually claim the throne for himself, but the tone and content of the letter leave little to the imagination in terms of Nicolas' ambitions. The Kongo Kingdom was an independent state, Nicolas asserted, and the recent Portuguese oath taken by King Dom Pedro was an infringement of this well established sovereignty. The Portuguese had hoodwinked the ignorant aides of the King, who evidently knew no Portuguese himself, and had made them sign this document. The secretaries and clerks of Kongo "so poorly understood the Portuguese language that they mistook the phrase, swearing of obedience and homage for renewal of alliance and friendship."39

This interesting protest letter suggested that Nicolas was better fitted to exercise rule in the Kongo than were his relatives, stating that:

This act, moreover, by the swearing of loyalty and homage said to be done by the Marquis of Catendi, my first cousin, in the role as king of the Kongo, is an infraction of national independence, well recognized by history and by the very government of His Most Faithful Majesty and by all their representatives in this Province, in many documents . . . . And since the Kongo Kingdom possesses no other person with such

37. Boletim Official (Luanda), no. 423 (1853), 3-4.
38. The controversial "auto" and information on Nicolas' interpretation of it are also found in Huntley to Lord Howard, 17 Dec. 1859, and enclosures, F.O. 63/1114, P.R.O.
39. There is conflicting evidence about the ability of King Pedro of Kongo and his aides to read Portuguese (Sertôes, 43-65). Yet Monteiro, who met the King (then a marquis) at Bembe in 1858, wrote that he was ignorant of Portuguese and needed an interpreter. Monteiro, Angola, 117-120.
learning, it is therefore necessary to make a public and solemn declaration in this respect, as such, to protest, as I do protest, against the stated act, which subjugates the same kingdom to that of Portugal. 40

Although the publication of this article had little impact in Portugal, the bold protest, accompanied as it was by an elaborate set of arguments and documents, raised eyebrows in Angola. Sometime in early February 1860 the government-general of Angola received a copy of the paper which carried Nicolas' protest letter. On February 11 the government sent Nicolas a letter at Ambriz, where he was "interim clerk" to the treasury board. In this letter the Secretary-General of Angola acknowledged that Luanda knew of Nicolas' protest letter and that the government understood the conflict between Nicolas' position as "a public employee" of Angola and his recently published claim to be "a foreign prince of a free state." 41 At about the same time the government sent Nicolas an order to be transferred to a new post, out of harm's way, at the new village of Moçamedes. 42

It is unclear whether Nicolas received these letters, but if the one of February 11 was a measure to stall him, it would not have worked in any case; by then he had apparently made plans for leaving Angola. He had been contacted by foreign friends in Luanda and warned about the government's displeasure over his letter. 43 Furthermore, he must have known about the fate of his uncle, Dom Aleixo, or Alexus, Prince of Kongo, a brother of King Henry II, who in 1841 had incited the Dembos people north of Luanda to rebel and refuse to pay a Portuguese tax, had been arrested, and imprisoned in a Luanda fortress until 1856. Nicolas left Ambriz on February 13, 1860, with the aid of his friend Saturnino de Sousa e Oliveira, the Brazilian consul.

Had Sousa e Oliveira helped Nicolas to write his famous protest letters? If so, what were his motives? At present such questions cannot be answered since the relevant correspondence from this Brazilian consul has not yet been studied. What is known is contained in several letters of explanation from Sousa e Oliveira to the Governor-General, in letters from Huntley and Gabriel, the British representatives in Luanda, as well as in correspondence from the Governor-General. 44 From these letters it appears that, of the two foreign

41. Sec. Gen. to Nicolas, 11 Feb. 1860, Códice B-5-1, A.H.A.
42. Gov. Gen. to Overseas Minister, 17 April 1860, Pasta 26, A.H.U.
consuls involved in giving aid to Nicolas in his abortive attempt to leave Angola, the most compromised and guilty one was Sousa e Oliveira. Sousa e Oliveira was willing to help Nicolas leave Angola and went to Consul Gabriel to arrange for a British ship to pick up Nicolas north of Ambriz and take him to Brazil. Gabriel, who was shown two of the protest letters on or about February 9th, was reluctant to help Nicolas but finally consented to supply the Kongo Prince with a letter of introduction to the commander of any British vessel which might call at the ports north of Ambriz. This letter was sent to Nicolas in Ambriz with a warning that the government might be taking action against him for his letters of protest.

Some vague plan involving relations between Brazil and the "free state" of Kongo with Nicolas as king was apparently behind the Brazilian Consul's involvement with Nicolas. In a letter of February 28, 1860, the Brazilian Consul revealed the outlines of such a plan and explained, at least in part, his relations with Nicolas. Sousa e Oliveira stated that Prince Nicolas as a civil servant in a low position ("Escrivão Interino da Delegação da Junta da Fazenda") in Ambriz was now dissatisfied with his role and wanted to continue his education. Nicolas lacked the means to continue his studies but felt that as a government employee he was "without honors or distinctions." He had decided, therefore, to leave Angola and study at Rio de Janeiro under Brazilian sponsorship. In the future, Nicolas planned for a close "alliance" between Brazil and the Kongo Kingdom, the nature of which would be commercial: wax, ivory, gums, and oils to be traded for Brazilian rum, sugar, glass, and textiles.

Nicolas considered himself the most educated person of royal blood from the Kongo Kingdom, but it is not clear whether he conceived of himself as a king in a future alliance with Brazil. In any event, further education was part of the plan, and Nicolas badly needed money to finance his departure from Angola and his stay in Brazil. Sousa e Oliveira later explained to the Governor-General that Nicolas planned to meet a member of his family at Ambriz, obtain from him 200 to 400 African slaves, and, masquerading them as "indentured servants," sell them to a French agent on the coast. He would then have the necessary funds to travel to Brazil, where he would seek the patronage of the Brazilian Emperor.

From Ambriz, Nicolas' destination was the small port of Kissembo, a few miles to the north in territory as yet outside of Portuguese jurisdiction and customs house control. The village was the site of a number of trading factories owned by American, British, and Dutch traders. Nicolas left Ambriz at night, telling friends that he intended to visit a nearby relative. He was bearing the

45. Huntley to F.O., 20 April 1860, F.O. 84/1105, P.R.O.
46. Willis to Sec. of State, 23 May 1860, Despatches of U.S. Consuls . . ., Luanda, National Archives, Washington, D.C. [N.A.].
letter of introduction written by Consul Gabriel. When he reached Kissembo, he entered the house of a British merchant, Mr. Morgan. Morgan's house was soon surrounded by a large group of hostile Africans screaming for Nicolas. According to one account Morgan refused to surrender Nicolas, and when he raised a British flag to get help, the Africans broke in, dragged Nicolas out, and slaughtered him. Another account stated that Nicolas succeeded in getting out of the back of the house but was then shot dead. The American commercial agent, Willis, reported that Morgan gave Nicolas up after a while, and the crowd then shot and beheaded him.

Why did these Africans kill Nicolas? One interpretation was that Nicolas was an assimilado and a traitor to Africans in that region; "because, they said, he had sold Ambriz to the Government and now wanted to sell the Congo." Indeed, his Portuguese friend at Abriz, Sarmento, had warned Nicolas just prior to his departure for Kissembo that he was taking a terrible risk, "because the black natives north of Ambriz despised him for leaving the Kongo and for living on intimate terms with the whites." Thus, Nicolas may have become a victim of popular Kongo justice, condemned as an agent of interests alien to the people north of Ambriz.

The exact identity of Nicolas' assassins remains unknown. The Brazilian consul later blamed the death of the Prince on "black coming from Ambriz," who had been informed about Nicolas by agents of the Governor-General in order to prevent him from achieving the "independence of the Congo." Out of later repercussions from the affair came the Governor-General's bitter accusation that Gabriel had "sacrificed" Nicolas' life. The assailants of the ill-fated Prince were undoubtedly caught up in the general unrest fomented by Portuguese expansion north of Luanda after 1855, but this factor would not by itself explain what appears to have been a planned attack.

48. Sarmento, Sertões, 68; see also Boletim Official (Luanda), no. 750, 18 Feb. 1860, 8-9.
49. Jornal do Commercio, 13 June 1860.
50. Willis to Sec. of State, 23 May 1860, N.A.
51. Jornal do Commercio, 13 June 1860.
52. Sarmento, Sertões, 68.
53. Castelbranco wrote, "It was never known where the Prince was heading," and, "The case remained shrouded in mystery." História de Angola, 213.
56. Monteiro, Angola, 49. African unrest, wrote Monteiro, was fomented by the "example of the occupation of Ambriz and Bembe mines."
The crucial question remains whether or not the African assassins knew that Nicolas had recently incurred the wrath of the Portuguese authorities in Luanda with his protest letters.

When the Governor-General learned of Nicolas' violent death, he decided to launch a military expedition to Kissembo, partly in order to avenge the Prince's death, but also to annex Kissembo for Portugal. The Governor confided to Lisbon that Nicolas had "betrayed" the Portuguese authorities but that the African assailants had to be punished. He blamed Consul Sousa e Oliveira more than Consul Gabriel, but he did accuse Gabriel of plotting to "seduce" Nicolas into "opposing our projects of subjugating the Congo."57 Sousa e Oliveira, he said, had encouraged "aspirations of independence which now are germinating around here in the excitable minds of the natives." Both men, he argued, should be removed from their positions for such "ridiculous thoughts."58

The expedition to Kissembo failed to complete its mission, meeting considerable opposition from Africans as well as from foreign naval units which opposed the expansion of Portuguese sovereignty. When Governor-General Amaral, who was leading the expedition himself, met armed crews from the U.S.S. Union and from the British vessel, Falcon, he stated that he wished only to rest his troops in the town; but the foreign commanders refused to permit even this much.59 The Portuguese expedition then burned parts of the town and withdrew toward Ambriz. In crossing the Loge River near Ambriz, the Portuguese were ambushed by Africans and took heavy casualties. Poorly supplied and badly led, they retreated south to Luanda and safety.

III

The Prince Nicolas affair ended with the Portuguese failure either to "avenge" the Prince's murder or to annex Kissembo to Angola. Nearly every individual touched by the events of February 1860 suffered in one way or another. Commissioner Huntley used the affair to try to discredit and dismiss Consul Gabriel;60 Huntley considered Nicolas' protest as "spurious" and contrived by

59. Willis to Sec. of State, 23 May 1860, N.A.
60. James Duffy, A Question of Slavery (Oxford, 1967), 26, n. 34. Duffy cites the file F.O. 84/1105 as the source of Huntley's and Gabriel's correspondence on this affair. Gabriel was not dismissed from his position; he died in Angola in late 1862.
the Portuguese to make claims in the Kongo area.61 Brazilian Consul, Sousa e Oliveira, was compromised, despite his explanations to the Governor-General that Gabriel was only a friend of Nicolas and that Britain and Brazil had no real interest in the Kongo Kingdom; he eventually left his position as consul, but remained in Luanda as a physician.62 The Governor-General attempted to use the affair to expand Portuguese authority on the coast, but met complete disaster in the Kissembo expedition; despite the fact that his term of office had been long and largely successful, Portuguese settlers clamored for his dismissal, and the government relieved him of his post in June. He was replaced by a new Governor-General in August 1860.63 Nor was Amaral’s reputation the last one to suffer. The general reputation of all Portuguese authority in coastal Angola was severely shaken by the Prince Nicolas affair and its repercussions; and an expedition of 800 European reinforcements sent from Portugal to attempt to restore this tarnished image, achieved little or nothing as well as suffering nearly fifty per cent mortality from malaria and yellow fever.64

In Portugal, however, the Prince Nicolas affair indirectly prompted the King of Portugal to reassess Portuguese overseas policy and to reappraise its costs. When he had received a full report of the affair a few months after Nicolas’ death, King Pedro V wrote a minister in Lisbon:

Many of our misfortunes in Angola clearly originate in the policy of expansion, which the Overseas Council began, and which we today find ourselves obliged to continue . . . To follow this policy, it is necessary to accept all the consequences, and these are the weakening of the Metropolis in favor of the colonies . . . . We are moving to destroy the special civilization of the natives -- that is to say, their absolute liberty -- but we cannot substitute our civilization, since they cannot accept it, and because they do not know or understand it.65

61. Huntley to Commander Inman, 4 Aug. 1860, F.O. 84/1105, P.R.O. Huntley failed to discern the fact that the Portuguese authorities really did believe that Nicolas had betrayed them and that the Kissembo attempt was merely an ad hoc move following the Prince’s death. The confidential correspondence of Governor Amaral proves that Huntley was mistaken.
64. "Relação Mortuária," 1 July 1862, Pasta 31, A.H.U.
Portuguese influence in the Kongo Kingdom declined again after the brief spurt of activity in 1859-1860. A rebel claimant to Dom Pedro's throne, Alvaro Ndongo, was kept at bay and was soon defeated. Yet the power of King Pedro V (or VI) was very limited and was confined to the environs of his wretched capital at São Salvador. The resident Portuguese garrison which maintained whatever power he enjoyed was withdrawn in 1870, and the Portuguese garrison at nearby Bembe was withdrawn two years later. When Amaral returned for a second term in 1869-1870, he admitted that the Kongo King was but a figurehead among a number of other petty chiefdoms and that the cost of earlier expeditions and occupation had been wasted. Although a Baptist missionary later referred to Dom Pedro as "the last independent King of Congo," it was obvious that the King was rather helpless and that, as Nicolas had pointed out in 1859, his ignorance of Portuguese would make him vulnerable to Portuguese ambitions. Indeed, in 1884 the king apparently signed a document acknowledging the suzerainty of Portugal, believing that he was only thanking the King of Portugal for some gifts.

A decade and a half later, when the Portuguese again sought to expand their influence in Angola, some officials reconsidered the policy of maintaining and educating the tiny Kongo elite. The Prince Nicolas affair and several others, including that of Prince Alexus, suggested that the education of the Agua Rosada dynasty tended to produce enemies rather than friends for Portugal. The statement of a governor-general in a letter of 1885 to Lisbon that such education thus far had created only "useless visionaries, detestable clerks," was referring, at least indirectly, to the case of Prince Nicolas as well as to later assimilados.

Despite the fact that the Prince Nicolas case remains mysterious, even to Angolan historians, several conclusions can be reached. Nicolas' roles in Angolan society were conflicting. He was at once an assimilado and an African traditional leader. As the personally ambitious assimilado he was prepared to use the slave trade to better his own condition. Vansina's hypothesis that the political leadership of the Kongo Kingdom by the early eighteenth century had become closely tied to the slave trade is complemented as well as modified in the case of Nicolas. If it is true that slaves remained "the real source of power" at the mid-nineteenth century, it is also true that the possession of European education had become more important as a factor of mobility and as

68. Graham, Under Seven Congo Kings, 1.
70. Vansina, Kingdoms of the Savanna, 194-197.
a qualification for eligibility in leadership among the Kongo elite. Nicolas' written protest that his royal relatives in Kongo were illiterate in Portuguese, whether or not it was true, suggested that he considered European education as a necessary prerequisite to leadership in a Kongo which had relations with Portuguese Angola.

Nicolas' protest stated that, as a member of a traditional African elite, he felt a responsibility for protecting the interests of the people of Kongo, although this attitude was in conflict with his official position as a civil servant in the Portuguese administration in Ambriz. He thus set himself up as a guardian of his people's interests. It is not known how much of a following Nicolas had in Kongo; Brazilian Consul Sousa e Oliveira wrote that, although Nicolas had "some Partisans" in Kongo Kingdom in 1860, he represented only one faction.\(^{72}\) If he sought to assert his role as prince of a "free foreign state," then he could not continue to hold his position as an assimilado civil servant with the government, as the Portuguese authorities had warned him shortly before his death.

Whatever Nicolas' place in the pantheon of early Angolan protest and dissent, his life represented a peculiar mixture of the traditional and early modern. From the time of the publication of his protest letter the Portuguese have considered him what they call "a rebel." If he was a rebel, his rebellion had ambiguities. Although he employed traditional means from the Kongo past -- slave trade profits and letters of petition to European authorities -- to achieve what he wanted, he also used a new method -- publishing a letter in a newspaper. Nicolas' published protest letter represents perhaps the first written opposition to a stated Portuguese policy since the letters from kings of Kongo to Lisbon and the Vatican in the sixteenth century.\(^{73}\) Since it was published, it went beyond the traditional disputations of earlier private Portuguese-Kongo correspondence. When Nicolas wrote that the "national independence" of Kongo Kingdom was "well recognized by history and by the very Government of His Most Faithful Majesty,"\(^{74}\) he used historical arguments to establish an independent status for his kingdom, although "national independence" was a non-traditional phrase. Yet his protests failed to make the Portuguese renounce their policy or to replace Pedro V. The repercussions from Nicolas' death, however, did far more to undermine the Portuguese position than did his letters.

73. *Jornal do Commercio* (Lisbon), 1 Dec. 1859.
74. Officials in Luanda doubted that Nicolas wrote the celebrated protest letter published in Lisbon. See *Boletim Official*, no. 750, 18 Feb. 1860.
The tragic Prince Nicolas affair illustrates two levels of consciousness in the area north of Luanda: among the Kongo Kingdom elite there endured a consciousness of special privilege and sovereignty, originally articulated in the sixteenth-century experiment, and thereafter doggedly preserved by succeeding generations; among the African peoples north of Luanda was a consciousness of independence which would lead them to oppose Portuguese expansion and authority and to condemn and punish any leader they considered to be inimical to their interests. Nicolas, like a number of deposed Kongo kings and princes before and since his time, apparently was a victim of this process.

In 1860 Angola none of the parties involved, including the Portuguese, was certain of the durability of Portuguese presence. Whether or not he was encouraged by Brazilian and British pressures, Nicolas, by his protest, revealed both Portuguese weakness and the expanding consciousness of the educated and rootless assimilado elite. This Kongo elite was a living reminder to its Portuguese patrons that a little education could be dangerous, especially in men with leadership qualities. Indeed, it was feared by some Portuguese officials that with proper leadership the Kongo Kingdom could become more than just a puppet state of Angola. Prince Nicolas' "very liberal education,"75 and his protest, however fleeting, became new factors in the status of Kongo and in the Kongo elite's quest for power and prestige.

75. See footnote 15.
Appendix

Translation of Prince Nicolas’ Letter published in the Lisbon daily, Jornal do Commercio, 1 December 185976

[ The first section of the letter, deleted here, is merely a copying of the "Auto De Acclamação E Coroação" of King Dom Pedro V, previously published in the Boletim Official (Luanda), no. 728, of 17 September 1859.]

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This act [Auto], moreover, by the swearing of loyalty and homage said to be done by the Marquis of Catendi, my first cousin [meu primo co-irmão], in the role of King of the Kongo, is an infraction of national independence, well recognized by history and by the very government of His Most Faithful Majesty and by all their representatives in this Province [Angola], in many documents, some of which have been published in this same official bulletin, as for example, the letter of the ex-governor-general, Viscount Pinheiro, in no. 423 of the 5th of November 1853, to the deceased king D. Henry II, my father;

And since the Kingdom of the Kongo does not possess any person with as much education as is necessary in order to make a public and solemn declaration in this respect, except for me, one of its princes;

It is my duty as such to protest, as I do protest, against the above act [Auto], which subjugates the same kingdom to that of Portugal.

1. Because His Majesty the Catholic King of Kongo is a friend and loyal ally, but not a vassal, of His Faithful Majesty the King of Portugal, so that he owes him allegiance, and it was in that capacity that my cousin asked the government general of this province for the aid of military force, which is now there [in Kongo], in order to ascend the throne which was or still is disputed with a competitor not descended from the royal family;

2. Because the King of Kongo, D. Pedro VI, and not V as was stated in the act, as well as the duke of Bamba, the Prince of Banza a Putu and the brother of the queen widow, who in the act are all said to be able to read and to write, are in fact completely ignorant not only of both these skills, but also of the Portuguese language, it being, therefore, a false statement that they understood that same act.

76. Copy of Jornal do Commercio, 1 December 1859, held in the collection of the Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon. The translation from the Portuguese is my own.
3. Because the secretaries and the so-called scribe of the State so poorly understood the Portuguese language that they mistook the phrase swearing of obedience and homage for renewal of alliance and friendship [italics in original]; indeed, the first two men are the only ones who can write their names, and at that, very poorly (and the latter, although he has been classified as a scribe of the State, does not know how to write), [and they] signed such an act, if that is what they really signed, by means of marking a cross as did the sobas[chiefs] of Secueda, of Quinpeci, of Quintunu and of Sambu.

In conclusion, I protest from this time forth against all and any acts that were done or will be done in the future in the Kongo Kingdom, according to what I have written above, which take advantage of the lack of education of the respective king and of the people.

S. Paul of the Assumption of Luanda, 26 September of 1859.

D. Nicolas of Agua Rosada
Prince of Kongo

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