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COMMUNICATION BY UBANGIAN WATER AND WORD

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1. Introduction

The contact situation in which Pidgin Sango (PS) emerged and developed in the Ubangi basin consisted of a very limited number of kinds of interaction between the indigenous population and the foreigners coming into the territory. Most of them, if not all, can be comprehended under the rubric of what these people needed or wanted. The natives were happy to acquire the material goods which they had never seen before or those they had seen but had acquired with great difficulty. They were happy also to be associated with such impressive and powerful people (as long as their own neighbors did not have the same opportunity) and to have their "protection". Indeed, they were crafty enough to entertain ideas about exploiting the foreigners. (Actual events bear out the last supposition.)

The Whites coming up the Ubangi river had greater needs - desperate needs one can even say. They required transportation, guides, workers, property, and material for the construction of their buildings. They required also food, not so much for themselves initially (and for some time only in a small degree), but for the Black personnel they brought with them. The other needs of the Black expatriates we can imagine. One of these - not irrelevant to the use of language at that period - was attributed to these latter by a number of Whites. It was their opinion that sex was easily satisfied; of their own similar activities they are discreetly silent.

The means of satisfying these needs was, of course, by reciprocating favors (frequently based on ritual blood-brotherhood) and by trade. The use of force by Whites may not have occurred frequently in the initial contacts, but was resorted to more and more as they took possession of the territory. The expatriate Blacks, on the other hand, always exploited their relationship with the Whites at the disadvantage of the natives. But we cannot tarry with these topics, although the nature of the relationships between the natives and the foreigners bears directly on how language was used (see below).
This study is restricted to the topic of transportation. Native guides are treated in connection with the topic of interpreters (Samarin 1984b). Workers in general, including the relationship between native and foreign Blacks, are discussed in a comprehensive treatment of the topic elsewhere (Samarin, in preparation).

Transportation is critical to the linguistic aspect of the history of the Ubangi basin because it involved the largest number of natives coming in contact in a prolonged and intimate manner with the foreigners. When we add spatial and chronological factors to that of numbers and ethnic diversity, we have variables whose interaction we can evaluate with considerable ease of interpretation. Besides, there is more information about how transportation needs were met than about other topics: for example, that of acquiring rations for the exploratory forces. As one can see in Henry M. Stanley's account of the exploration of the Congo basin, this was a continual and major - at times desperate - problem.

With respect to the history of PS this study of transportation will support my thesis that the speakers of Vernacular Sango (VS) could not have played an important role in the creation of the first jargons during initial contacts, that is, in the Lower Ubangi and at the bend of the Ubangi (in the area where Bangui is located). This study does demonstrate, however, how it was that VS came to be the basis of an eastern jargon and then spread over the whole Ubangi basin.

Transportation here is restricted to that which took place on the Ubangi river itself. When goods and equipment were transported inland, away from the Ubangi, porters were usually necessary. These were usually, and in the greatest numbers, natives who agreed to move within their ethnic territory. In any case, they are discussed elsewhere. Some rivers were navigable, of course - at least during some periods of the year - and it would appear that Ubangian canoers were used to explore these rivers. We therefore do not need to set these explorations up in a
Furthermore, we concentrate on the use of canoes. They were the means by which foreigners came into direct contact with the greatest number of Ubangian people. Steamboats very soon came up to and then travelled beyond the rapids at Bangui (at that time called the Zongo rapids). But these must have had a role in Ubangian linguistic history entirely different from that of canoes. Their most important characteristic is that they were manned by downriver, therefore, for the most part, Bantu-speaking, personnel or by foreign Blacks who must certainly have been speaking a Bantu contact language. These would have reinforced the contributions made by the "resident" personnel in French and Belgian employ. The boats, having to stop nightly to take on firewood, would, of course, have brought many people in touch with each other. This would also have been done by taking on passengers all along the river, mixing up the various ethnic groups to a greater degree than was accomplished by canoe, whose passengers could much more easily be controlled by the ethnic owners or canoers. There is therefore some merit in looking at this steamboat transportation.

2. Colonial objectives

It would be useful, however, to first characterize the nature of the activities that the Whites were involved in. They are comprehended today by the single term "colonialism" and all of the Whites are therefore called "colonialists". But it is wrong to assume that all colonial activity, wherever it is said to have occurred in the world and at whatever stage of its pursuit, was alike. Besides, the term is useful only for a certain field of discussion, one where European politics and economics and their impingement on African societies is of primary concern. Here we are concerned with "field colonialism" - the nature of the day-to-day behavior and activities of foreigners - constrained by both immediate circumstances and distant bureaucratic factors. Although it is not my primary aim to achieve a thorough
characterization of this aspect of equatorial colonialism, this present study ought surely to contribute to a better understanding of it.

An enlightening discursive treatment of this aspect of colonialism is H.M. Stanley's *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State* (1885), notwithstanding its personal and even egocentric perspective. Not from that work alone but also from all that we read we deduce the following list of colonial objectives, but illustrated by statements made by Stanley.

1. Explore the land with the view to understanding its geography and both human and natural resources. And Stanley said:

"[Our primary interest was for] the human communities, the muscles of whose members have a more immediate and practical value to us. For without these, the flowers, the plants, the gums, the moss and the dye weeds of the tropical world must ever remain worthless to them and to ourselves. ... [Every] cordial-faced aborigine ... is a future recruit to the ranks of soldier-labourers" (Stanley 1885(2): 93f.).

2. Establish sovereignty over the land by striking treaties of protection with as many ethnic groups as possible. And Stanley said:

"What was required now was to turn our attention to obtaining the Protectorship of the districts intervening between station and station, so that we might become masters of one uninterrupted and consecutive territory from Vivi Station to the Falls" (Stanley 1885 (2):166).

3. Establish channels of trade directly with the indigenous populations, eliminating all competition, and, at the same time, carry on as much trading as possible for immediate profit.

4. Display superiority in power, material possessions, technical skills, etc.

The logistics of colonialism in quotidian terms is, of course, too trivial for us to consider. We only need to observe that the French and the Belgians tried to spread themselves out as much as their capabilities permitted. This meant setting up
posts, where a White or a responsible foreign Black (always, it appears, either a Zanzibari or a Senegalese soldier) was resident, with some kind of work or soldier complement. Of lesser pretention were the "gardes pavillon" ('guard stations'), sites declared to be under European "protection" by flying its flag - the French or that of the E.I.C. (Etat Indépendant du Congo) - under the surveillance of one or more soldiers in residence. At any one of these places, and eventually at other sites, traders set themselves up, also with military protection. All of these places, and possibly others just for this purpose, were used in the relay of messages between Whites. In the case of the French, there were in the period we are concerned with, commercial expeditions, non-military in nature, whose aim it was not only to gather information about the possibilities of trade and exploitation but also to engage in trade for the stockholders. Missionary activity, and only on the part of the French, was just beginning in this period. For the French side we know that there was a considerable amount of overlapping of activities, ambiguity about administration and the use of material, manpower, and transportation, and, of course, bickering amongst the Whites over all these matters.


Although we are concerned with the period that begins with Alphonse Van Gèle's going east of Bangui in 1887, we should note that the first steamboat was launched by H.M. Stanley on Stanley Pool in 1883 on the occasion of his first trip up the Congo river. All these first steamboats were very small vessels. The reader should not imagine anything like those plying the Mississippi river! Things changed, of course.

In 1886 the first stern-wheel boats of 35 to 40 tons were launched at Leopoldville (Dubreucq 1909:21). In 1887 there were only 14 steamers on the Upper Congo (that is, upriver of the
Pool) and in 1888 there were 20 (Froment 1889:183). It does not seem reasonable that France should have had one more than the E.I.C., given the wealth and earlier start that the latter had. This may be an error.

By 1893 there were 43 steamers on the Upper Congo, 3 of which could be found on the Ubangi (de Chavannes 1936:329). One of these may have been the *En Avant*, equipped with two lateral wheels, which in 1893 was travelling between Mokoange (Mokoangay, Mokwange, etc.) and Banzyville, having on board a White captain and mechanic and a crew of 14 Blacks (Masui 1894:113). It was one of the "flotilla" brought by Stanley on behalf of the Comité d'Etudes du Haut Congo on the exploration that started from the coast at Banana in August 1879. Stanley called it a paddle boat, 43 ft. (13 m) long and 7 ft. 11 in. (2.41 m) in beam with a draught of 11 in. (28 cm) (Stanley 1885(1):68; illustrated in 1885(2):95). On Stanley's expedition to the Equator in 1883 it carried a crew of 7 men, undoubtedly the minimum since there were two other steamers and two other vessels being towed (Stanley 1885(1):501f.). The *En Avant* might be compared in size to the *Archiduchesse Stéphanie* on the Congo, 90 ft. (27 m) long and 20 ft. (6 m) broad, which had a burden of 45 tons and carried a crew of 80 men of different tribes but mostly "Bangalas" (Vincent 1895:432).

In 1898 the French had only 3 ships on the Upper Congo (with an average of 5 tons each), whereas the E.I.C. had 21 ships, ranging from 5 to 150 tons, at an average of 25 tons (Lederer 1965:129f.). Three years later the picture was entirely different, with 103 ships on the Upper Congo and its affluents.
Table 1. The number of steamboats navigating from Stanley Pool up the Congo and Ubangi rivers.
Sources: Annales Apostoliques 2,8(1887):37; Vincent 1895:413; Geographical Journal 17(1901):449.

Canoes were needed on the Ubangi not only because there were not enough boats but also because rapids at different places restricted their use. This depended somewhat, of course, on the time of the year, high and low water affecting their use greatly (see Fig. 1 below). Colrat (1902:303), commenting on travel in 1900, said that boats could go up to Bangui only from the end of June to the end of December, but he must have been thinking only of the smaller vessels, because of Fivé's experience. The latter, when taking 500 loads ("charges" in French)\textsuperscript{3} to the Upper Ubangi in 1891, could not go beyond Maba on the Ville d'Anvers, one of those 35-40 ton stern-wheelers, and he had to recruit canoes and canoers (Fivé 1906:6; the vessel is illustrated in Stanley 1885(2):226). One assumes that he would have had to get others at Zongo, a matter about which more will be said below.
Therefore most of the first journeys up the Ubangi were by steamer, beginning with the one in April 1884 on the *En Avant* in an expedition commanded by Cpt. Edmond Hanssens. This is when the Ubangi was "discovered" (called "Mbumdju" by Hanssens) and a treaty was made with the chief at Bisongo on the left bank, a "few miles" - as Hanssens put it - above the mouth of the river (Hanssens 1892:46).

As with so many "discoveries", that of the Ubangi can be controversial. George Grenfell, the English missionary, is said to have rowed up the Mubangi river (an early name) about 20 February 1884 in a small whale boat that was towed by the *Peace* when he was on his first exploration of the Upper Congo (Johnston 1908(2):101, 102, 116 fn. 2). This discovery was hotly rejected by Van Gèle (also spelled Van Gele or Vangele), who was with Hanssens later that year (Lejeune 1930:39).

The next penetration, this time 130 miles (209 km) upriver, was in October 1884 on the Baptist mission steamer, the *Peace*. This was a zinc-coated steel boat, practically flatbottomed, 70 ft. (21 m) long and 10 ft. 6 in. (3.19 m) broad that travelled 9-12 miles (approx. 25-30 km) per hour and drew 18 in.
This exploratory trip has the appearance of a picnic trip on the Thames: Grenfell was accompanied by his wife, eldest child, and Dr. Aaron Sims, another English missionary, in addition to his small crew, 6 mission school boys, and a Mubangi native "from the banks of the Congo", acting, presumably, as guide and interpreter (Johnston 1908(1):117). Equally casual was Grenfell's next trip up the river in February and March of the next year (January according to Cuypers 1960), on which he reached the rapids at about 4° 4' N., even though this was in the height of the dry season. He even got a boat (presumably the whale boat that the Peace towed) beyond the Zongo rapids, where the easterly direction of the river was discovered, leading very soon after to the identification by A.J. Wauters of the Mubangi with Schweinfurth's Wele (Ouele) river - a momentous deduction and of the greatest consequence for central equatorial history (Johnston 1908(1): 101, 102, 127, 128). But Grenfell's description of this trip is typical of all his communications in its parsimony and modesty. His personnel was certainly unpretentious, described by him as consisting of "our usual crew" (which probably meant his 5 Kru boatmen) complemented by 6 school boys and 2 little girls; no mention is made of other Whites (Missionary Herald 1885:293).

Not until more than a year later (29 October 1886) did Whites again arrive at Zongo, this time with an impressive force. Led by Van Gèle, accompanied by three other Whites, there was a contingent of 60 soldiers, both Zanzibaris and Hausas (as they were called), all on board the Henry Reed, which was "rented" (as Cuypers puts it) from the Baptist mission (Cuypers 1960:37, 38, 40).

It took one more year before the Belgians could push their competition with the French eastward on the Ubangi again under Van Gèle. It was on 21 November 1887 that he claimed the territory at Zongo for the E.I.C., having arrived on a steamer with three Whites, 12 Zanzibari soldiers, 5 Hausas, 2 boys (that is,
personal servants), and 22 canoers taken on at the Equator (Cuypers 1960:44). We can assume that canoes were towed by the boat, because we know that Van Gêle bypassed the Zongo rapids by taking canoes overland (Kalck 1970(2):343f.).

Thus began the penetration of Whites into the Upper Ubangi basin – with foreign canoes and foreign canoers. By the end of 1887 Van Gêle's expedition had arrived at the confluence of the Mbomu and Wele rivers and on 5 January 1888 there was a murderous combat with about 120 Gbodo (later identified as Yakoma) warriors under the leadership of chief Ndayo, who later became Van Gêle's ally. As will be seen below, it is the VS-speaking people of this area that must have figured first in the birth of PS.

What is curious about this expedition is that it was made at all, for the Ubangi was low. Cuypers (1960), our only source without consulting the original documents, does not discuss the problems Van Gêle must have experienced. It will be seen below that on the next trip to this area two years later he discontinued using the steamer during the latter part of the dry season. On another matter there also is silence. Nothing is said about Van Gêle's leaving any of his party to hold the posts until his return. If a White had been left, we would certainly have heard of it. But it is conceivable, although, given the time period, unlikely, that some trusted Zanzibaris were left in one of the places. Their residence on the Ubangi would certainly have begun the process that led to the creation of PS.

In the meantime, the French were establishing themselves on the right bank of the Congo and the Ubangi, first at Nkoundja and then at Liranga. (The source for most of this paragraph is Froment 1889.) From the latter Albert Dolisie went up the Ubangi by canoe, possibly in August or September of 1887, where he was attacked by natives at Modzaka, at a distance of 300 km (180 mi.) (Froment 1889) or 15 days travel from the Congo (Veistroffer 1333:34). Here again transportation was brought in: two large canoes and a force of about 8 Senegalese soldiers and 30 "Adouma"
(possibly Fang) canoers from Ogowe (Ogooué) area. But the steamboat *Alima* was in use at Liranga and was brought to Modzaka from Nkoundja in a punitive mission that destroyed the town. Still, when Froment went to Modzaka in June of 1888 to re-establish French presence there (Dolisie being ill), he had only two canoes and a complement of 40 newly recruited Ossyeba-Fang soldier-workers. But the *Alima* had made it to the 4° N., possibly in January of 1888, under Dolisie, according to Froment, and under Cpt. Dunod, according to Veistroffer (1933:34). Froment, apparently knowing nothing about Grenfell's trip, claimed that this was the first time the rapids had been passed by a White. The boat itself could not go further, this being the dry season and the boat's having a draught of only 1.50 m (59 in.).

For the year 1888 there is no information about further trips, but there must have been some as far as Modzaka anyway, because by June of that year there were two commercial houses ("factories") there, one French and one Dutch (Froment 1889:214).

The turning point in the history of the Upper Ubangi took place in the year 1889. This is when penetration into the area beyond the Zongo rapids was intensified on the part of both the Belgians and French. And, consequently, this is when local canoes and canoers began to be used.

The Whites literally raced upriver, confronting each other in the area of Liranga, apparently by steamboat. The larger expedition was led by Van Gèle, who was now Captain and State Inspector, First-Class District Commissioner, with 6 Whites, including two mechanics, and a force of 90 Africans (Zanzibari, Hausa, and Bangala) in addition to a few other Black workers. Eight names actually occur in the accounts: S-Lt. Georges Le Marinel, Lt. Léon Hanolet, Lt. Edouard de Rechter, S-Lt. Léon Busine, Cpt. Shagerström, Gustafson, Alexanderson, and Attard. The last was an interpreter. Although his linguistic competence is not given, one suspects that it was in Arabic. Le Marinel soon returned because of illness, and the ship's captain pos-
sibly returned downriver with the Stanley. Their boats consisted of the En Avant, the A.I.A. (standing for the Association Internationale Africaine), and the Stanley, the latter going only as far as Zongo. (This difference explains the discrepancy between de Chavannes' (1936:192) three and Cornevin's (1970:140) two.)

4. French expeditions

Albert Dolisie had arrived on the Oubangui with his brothers Michel and Uzac (de Chavannes 1936:192). The posts at Bangui and Zongo, French and Belgian respectively, were founded around June 23 of 1889 (dates varying between 20 and 25 according to authors) and apparently within a day of each other. Veistroffer (1933:35) claims that it was he who selected the site of Bangui in that month, having made the journey by canoe with 12 men, and that work did not begin until August under Michel Dolisie. No support is found for this assertion.

There soon occurred what may have been a stupendous event in Ubangian history. At Zongo the Belgians came across 6 canoes with slaves on their way to being exchanged for ivory, and they liberated them (Cuypers 1960:58). There were only two canoes - according to Janssens & Cateaux (1908:175), who describe the situation in the present tense - "that are exchanging ("qui échangent") ivory for slaves". It is not likely that they were simply set free but that, following Belgian practice, they were then impressed into service. Thus, Van Gèle would have acquired 50-60 Ubangians (whose number I am guessing at) to use as guides and workers; and he may have taken possession of the canoes as well.

On the basis of Cuypers' account we cannot make any guesses concerning the ethnic origins of these slaves; we are not even told the direction in which the canoes were headed.

Although it is hazardous to speculate about trade in slaves without an analysis of this topic alone, it is worth mentioning
Map 1: Colonization of the Ubangi-Congo basins
that Monier said of the time when he was Chef de Poste at Ft. Possel that he had frequently seen Gbanziri canoes loaded with manioc going to exchange it for slaves among the Ngbaka (Baca) (AN, 4(3)D9, 22 November 1902). One would have thought that the Gbanziri, being fishermen, would have been taking fish; on the other hand, they could have been trading their fish for the manioc from another group - at a profit to themselves, naturally. Such buying and selling of commodities was precisely what river trade consisted of. On the other hand, these may have been slaves brought from the Equator region by Bobangis, because, according to Janssens & Cateaux (1908:266), Hanolet soon put an end to this traffic in the vicinity of Zongo "par la force". There must have been something more than humanitarianism in this use of force, because Alis (1891:104), describing the situation around September 1890, said that the Belgians monopolized trade around Zongo and prevented people from going downstream. This should be remembered in developing the picture of Belgian power on the Ubangi. Moreover, it would have been consistent with the practice of E.I.C. officers of that time to have conscripted these people into the Belgian workforce.

Little information is available for 1890. For most of the year the French were not active in the Bangui area, especially because of the attack by Salangas on Musy's party 15 km (19 mi.) south of Bangui on 3 January 1890 in which all, including Musy, but one died. Not until Crampel's arrival in September was there the possibility of a punitive expedition (Legendre 1903:167). Since Legendre refers specifically to an ethnic group called the Buzerus, he may be referring to a separate incident, unless, of course, the Salangas and Buzerus are confused, a very likely possibility, given the ethnographic ignorance of that day. Indeed, Gauze (1958) says that it was against the Salangas that the expedition was made, by Nebout, a member of Crampel's mission. It took place around 15 November 1890. In the meantime, there may have been trips between the post at Modzaka and Bangui.

The only significant expedition, therefore, was that of Paul
Crampel, whose aim it was to travel northward from the Ubangi, at Bembe, to Algeria. Significant it was, indeed, because he used Gbanziri canoes in large numbers (Legendre 1903:168; according to Gauze (1958) the steamer Azîma was also used). The whole expedition was moved from Bangui to Bembe, itself a Gbanziri village, in December 1890. An idea of the size of this expedition is gained, not only from the number of Senegalese soldiers (30) and North African interpreters (2), and unmentioned porters, but also from the fact that when it was attacked at (or near) El-Kouti (or Cha) on 8 (or 9) April 1891, where Crampel was killed, the Muslim enemy (forces of Sultan Senoussi) captured, among everything else 300 rifles, 30,000 shells, and 300 kg of powder (Legendre 1903:171).

5. Belgian expeditions

The Belgians in the meantime were busy in the east, at the headwaters of the Ubangi. But there must have been travel up and down the river, weaving together Belgian control over the area like a cat's cradle. Mokoange - 91 km (56 mi.) from Bangui had been established on 23 July 1889, where a Zanzibari was put in charge with 7 Blacks under him and whose responsibility it was to maintain contact with Zongo, build shelters, and "exchange blood" with neighboring chiefs (Cuypers 1960:57). Kalck (1970(2):349) is probably wrong in saying that only one Zanzibari was posted there, unless this was the one in charge.

The local ethnic population was Ngbaka (Bouaca) according to Ponel (in a map discussed below). Around this time other posts were established: Banzyville, with Edouard de Rechter (or Busine) in charge; Yakoma, on the right bank (but sources differ as to its precise location), on 30 May 1890; Kouango (Quango), by Hanolet (Janssens & Cateaux 1908:226); and Mossabaka (Kalck 1970(2):349).10

Hanolet may have to be considered the first White to establish relations with the Gbanziri people, who were to become,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Zongo is rounded, Hanolet left in charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July</td>
<td>Mokoange is founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ubangi is explored as far as Banzyville, where a post is founded and Busine left in charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Van Gèle and de Rechter arrive at confluence of Mdomu-Wele and explore the lower Kotto river by steamer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Exploration is continued by steamer, going up the Wele, where the Gbodo-Yakomas are still hostile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Low waters prevent further use of steamers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Exploration is resumed on the Kotto, Wele, and Ubangi; treaties made with Yakomas and at Ganda; Kouango post established; Mossabaka (date uncertain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Yakoma post established, de Rechter in charge; treaty made with Ndayo, chief of Gbodo-Yakoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July</td>
<td>Further explorations up the Wele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Van Gèle goes to Bangassou and establishes a post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Van Gèle goes to Sultan Bangassou to get help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Van Gèle goes to Djabir</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Belgian exploration on the Upper Ubangi, 1889-1890.

As we shall see, so important for canoe transportation on the Ubangi. The posts at Kouango, Mossabaka and Ouada (Ouaddas, Ouaddahs, etc.) were all in Gbanziri territory, and from this region Hanolet made explorations inland toward the north and established relations with the "grands chefs" (Janssens & Cateaux 1908:265f.).

While relations were being established with the Gbanziri in the western part of the Upper Ubangi, Van Gèle, the chief of the expedition, was resuming contact with Gbodo-Yakomas in the eastern part. In July 1890 he arrived on the En Avant as far as 22° 4' E., that is, the riverine station of Abd Allah, and then the rapids at Banafia and Bogazo (or Mokwango, according to...
Junker, at about 23° E. and 3° 52' N.) (Janssens & Cateaux 1908:117; Junker 1892(3):228 and map). These places are important to the description of the native populations since we would like to know how much of the area was inhabited by VS-speaking peoples. There are maps, for example, that show the distribution of Abasango people in this area. Were they considered the same, by the Whites, as those around Banzyville and Mobaye? Is this why some of the earliest references to the Sango have this name in quotation marks? It should be noted that a is an animate-noun plural marker in some Ubangian languages and ba in some of the Bantu languages. It should also be noted that there seems to have been one chief, Prikissa, of Abira and Bogozo, and that Abira at any rate is identified with the Yakoma people. It is for this kind of reconstruction, here necessarily left incomplete, that the details of the explorations are so important.

Eighteen-ninety is the year and Ubangi-Wele is the area in which VS-speaking natives were recruited into Belgian service. And this is the context, I claim, in which VS began to be pidginized, going downriver to eventually become the dominant contact language of the Ubangi basin. By the end of 1890, 150 men had received military training and were at Yakoma (Cuypers 1960:64). But recruitment of men must have taken place much earlier, because in October of that year there were so-called "Sudanese" at Leopoldville. This is what Janssens & Cateaux (1910:11) call them. I suggest that they may have been VS-speakers. Fifty-eight of them were assigned to Hinck on a voyage to establish an antislavery camp in the Great Lakes region; there must surely have been others in the military camp at Leopoldville. Moreover, early in 1891 there were 200 men under instruction at Banzyville and 89 Yakomas at the new Belgian post at Kouango (Ponel, AN, 4(3)D1, Bangui, 30 March 1891).

The magnitude of Belgian power in 1890 and 1891 is difficult to assess with the data now available. But given the wealth of the E.I.C. by this time and the impetus to push into what is
Map 2: Ubangian riverine languages in the 19th century
now known as the Sudan, using both the Ubangí and the Aruwimi rivers, we can assume that it was much more impressive than that of the French. (For example, exportations between 1886 and 1891 of "general" and "special" commerce, according to Masoin (1913: 413), increased in value from 4,342,182 to 15,889,138 francs). A letter by Edouard Ponel to the Administrator in Brazzaville, while possibly typical of one from a civil servant or military officer petitioning more personnel and material, is explicit in describing the poverty of the French forces at both Bangui and Modzaka, where together he had only 23 men; he was the only White at Bangui and was without communication with headquarters. In short, he wrote:

"We are in a real condition of inferiority by comparison with our neighbors of the Indépendant State. Their substantial shipments of men and merchandise give them a prestige in the eyes of the natives that we don't have" (AN, 2D5, Bangui, 4 February 1891).

Besides, Janssens & Cateaux clearly say that the year 1891 was "consacrée à organiser l'occupation du territoire de l'Ubangi" ('devoted to organizing the occupation of the Ubangi territory') and that it was characterized by detailed operations and many voyages (1908:291f.).

6. Difficulties with the people around Bangui

Bangui and Zongo were like a fulcrum at what I am calling the "Ubangí bend" in the colonization of the Upper Ubangí. The rapids necessitated discharging loads that had been brought up by steamer and storing them until other means could be found for shipping them upriver. For the French, moreover, this was the headquarters of the Upper Ubangí region; for the Belgians we do not have adequate information. On both sides of the river there were serious needs of human and material resources, and the competition between the Whites must have been intense. They found themselves in a bottleneck, on top of a population they had to exploit, a population aroused to rebellion (which
is what the Whites literally took it to be) against the constant demands made on them. Their resistance to cooperation was as much a factor in Ubangian history as was the cooperation of the upriver peoples. In this section the situation is analysed, but in the absence of a more thorough ethnology of the area the characterization is necessarily incomplete.

6.1. Population around Bangui

The first factor that must be considered is a purely demographic one. If the indigenous population was sparse, the Whites would have had fewer people to exploit. They always chose populous sites, but in this instance their choice was determined by geological factors. They had to have a base here. And it would appear that the population, while not exactly sparse, was not dense, certainly by comparison with the area upriver, starting with that of the Gbanziri, about which many wrote. What the situation was exactly in the early 1890s is difficult to ascertain, but in 1904 when Mountmorres was there, the population between Zongo and Mokoange was indeed sparse on the left bank (Mountmorres 1906:19). For the opposite side, between the Ombela and Kandjia rivers, it is the hinterland, separated from the bank by a line of # marks (in the map cited in the next paragraph) that Ponel indicated as being a rich and populated region, visited by Arab traders. This information was most certainly not gained by personal investigation.

The map submitted to Brazzaville by Ponel, dated 1890-1891, reveals how extremely restricted was French contact with the Ubangi population. It lists all of the native villages "in direct and continual contact with the station at Bangui, and whose chiefs have received gifts and our flag" (AN, 4(3)D13). Grading them in terms of their willingness or ability to provide Bangui with "ressources" from 1 ("très bon") to 4 ("douteux ou mauvais") he reveals that among the worst are the villages closest to Bangui! The most distant village that provided food was Bwa-Palla ("of Mawouka") upriver of Bangui. From there to Ouada (about 200 km or 125 mi.) "the population has
not had contact with us except during our trips. They are inhospitable, suspicious and not to be trusted. This does not mean, of course, that the villagers refused to cooperate at all. Ponel himself reports that the villages that provided Bangui with bamboo were Yakoli (which got a grade of 3), Zongo, Bogani (with a grade of 2), Songobio, Rênguekou, and Kri-Ngoma (AN, 4(3)D1, Bangui, 30 March 1891). In any case, a few weeks earlier he had reported that they had taken possession of those lands where they were able to get canoers and provisions (AN, 2D5, Bangui, 4 February 1891). The point being made here is that the most dependable help was coming from people further upriver, starting with the Gbanziris.

6.2. Relations with indigenous population

The Belgians had trouble with the local population as well, seen in Masui's comments for July 1892. He said that the "farouches" ('wild') natives around Mokoange (Mokoanghay) were not quick to establish relations with Whites. Nonetheless, there was an abundance of foodstuffs at the post, and at a very reasonable price. But this was only because of the Gbanziris, who were almost alone in providing what was needed (Masui 1894:107, 108). Inexplicably Masui also says that the people in the villages somewhere downstream of Mokoange were marvelous canoers and one could find 10, 20, or even 50 canoes of all sizes (1894: 100, 104). One would suppose that these too were Gbanziris.

This inhospitable behavior on the part of the riverine population at the bend of the Ubangi demands explanation, especially since it was a significant factor in the events that took place at this time. It should be noted, to begin with, that, on the one hand, the behavior was more or less uniform for the area, and, on the other, the population was more or less homogeneous ethnically. While a critical reconstruction of the population has not yet been made, it would appear that most of the people, as far as Mokoange, as Ponel's map of 1890-1891 makes clear, were Ngbaka. And although they did not in any way constitute one "tribe", they would have been interrelated in
marriage and other alliances and would have communicated with each other in their own language. If it is too much to assert that they presented a "united front" to the Whites, it is still reasonable to suppose that they shared and reinforced each other's attitude.

The reasons for this situation must surely lie in the nature of the very first contacts themselves. The Whites, of course, saw it otherwise. As is typical of ethnic attitudes to this very day, the Ngbakas were explained in racist terms: that is, they were by nature ferocious and so forth. This belief was shared by most Whites and was passed on from one White to another as he came into the area. In this manner there was formed what I have called the Bondjo myth (Samarin 1984a).

Whites were unanimous in their denouncement of the Bondjos. There is no shortage of attestations of their attitude. They were "at the bottom rung of human evolution; they are the hyenas of humanity" (Augouard, CSE-Fr., 11 January 1894); "the most primitive beings one can imagine and, for this reason, possessing in the highest degree all the vices of humanity" (Bobichon 1932:2); "their passion for human flesh is pushed to the point where they fish out of the river cadavers in a full state of decomposition in order to eat them and dig up bodies buried a long time" (Huot 1902:302).

The Buzerus (Bouzerou, Bouzrou, Boudzirou), when they were distinguished at all from the Bondjos, were considered allied to the Ngbakas; and they were worse, if that were possible, than the Bondjos. Dybowski, who arrived at Bangui on 4 October 1891, wrote of them in the following way:

"Abâtardis, sans caractère propre, je ne puis mieux définir ces hommes qu'en disant que ce sont des Bondjos dégénérés, dont ils n'auraient conservé que la laideur, que les défauts, sans les compenser même par la force et l'aspect viril. Depuis de Loango, je n'avais rencontré de race aussi avilie. Cette population de Bouzerous ou Bouzrous est chétive, sale et laide" (Dybowski 1893:176).

"Bastardized, without real character, I can't do better in defining these people than say that they are degenerate Bondjos, of whose traits they seem to have preserved only ugliness and imperfections,
without even compensating with strength or a virile appearance. I have never encountered another tribe as debased as this all the way from Loango. This Buzeru population is sickly, dirty, and ugly.'

The Buzerus come up again and again in accounts of our period. Ponel, while in command of Bangui, felt that they ought to be chased from the area (AN, 4(3)D1, 11 February 1891). The next year (although the date is not certain) they are in a state of war with the station (Rémy n.d.:20), which might, in American English, which has its own tradition of colonial expansion, be called a fort, being surrounded as early as May of that year, if not earlier, by a "solid stockade" (Maistre 1895:26). Three years later, in 1895, there is still no improvement: one has to go about with a rifle at all times, even for a distance of 15 minutes walk from the Mission St. Paul (Goblet, R. n.d.). In 1897 Jacquot went up the Mpoko river and destroyed a Buzeru village, killing 40-50 men and taking 40 prisoners, and this was said to be just the beginning of French operations (Bruel, ASOM, B2-34, Mobaye, 30 August 1897). Around this time the post was besieged every night, and 21 of its personnel had been "assassinated" and eaten by the Bondjos, apparently by people from the village of Yakoli (Yacali, Yacouli etc.), the very one that Musy is supposed to have defended in 1889 (Bruel, ASOM, B2-30, Mobaye, 2 August 1897)! Ngbakas are specifically mentioned for this year as well (cited as Gbaggas), against whom de Béhagle, leader of a commercial expedition with presumably no military authority, led an expedition of repression (Gentil, AN, 2011, Paris, February 1899; Gribingui, 9 October 1899). And in spite of Bruel's confidence on Bobichon's appointment as commander at Bangui that

"Maintenant l'anarchie ne va plus régner, les convois et les pirogues monteront de Bangui rapidement et convenablement chargés. Il n'y aura plus de retards extravagants, des repartitions de vivres fantastiques etc." (ASOM, B2-41, Mobaye, 2 November 1897).

['Now anarchy will no longer reign, the convoys and canoes will go up from Bangui rapidly and appropriately loaded. There won't be any more extravagant delays, incredible distribution of provisions, etc.']

Father Moreau wrote even at Mission Ste. Famille the next
year that for a year and a half the neighboring tribes had been making war (CSE-P, Boîte 181-B, Chemise 3, 15 May 1898).

One could easily explain the very first acts of "inhospitality" at the Ubangi bend to surprise and fear. It is clear from all accounts of the earliest exploration in central equatorial Africa that almost randomly some villages would receive Whites, and others - sometimes quite nearby - would not. Grenfell, in this very area in 1885, was "attacked" (with arrows, sticks, and stones) on his way up to the rapids but was able to trade with the very same people on the way down (Johnston 1908(1): 132).

Perhaps Ngbaka (therefore "Bondjo" and Buzeru) distaste for the Whites began on the occasion of Van Gêle's "liberating" six canoeloads of "slaves" (discussed above). Even more likely is the cause to be found in the behaviour of Black companions of the Whites, who were commissioned, routinely, to acquire food from the natives. They did not refrain, of course, from taking advantage of their position. The attack on Musy's party, coming so soon after the food expedition mentioned above, must certainly have been retribution for what his men had committed. This stupidity, and that of Musy himself in leaving his post unattended by another White, seems to have been ignored by the French in the making of the Bondjo myth. Instead, Musy became a martyr of French colonialism. And the troubles of 1897 may have arisen after a Black sergeant at Bangui was killed by Bondjos for having stolen one of their women; during 1896 they had not caused too much trouble (Bruel, ASOM, B2-21, 28 May 1897).

It is to be expected, of course, that the French and Belgians should have blamed each other for the trouble. Thus, early in 1891 Ponel wrote that he expected "palavers" with the natives above the rapids (presumably at Bangui) and above the Kwango river, that were created "if not by the Whites [Belgians] openly, at least by their Zanzibari or agents that they place in most of the villages on both banks [of the Ubangi]" (AN, 4(3)
D1, Bangui, 11 February 1891). In October of that same year, de Chavannes writes (1936:261), agents of the E.I.C. burned the villages that harbored the French flag.

Kalck's explanation for the fact that the Bondjo chiefs made themselves the "avowed enemies" of the French is that the latter had established blood-brother treaties with the Ngbaka (M'Baka, that is, Ngbaka-Mandja), who had been trying to take control of the Bangui area from the Bondjos (the Bondjo-Bouaka, that is, Ngbaka-Ma'bo, ethnically distinct from the other Ngbaka). The French found themselves therefore in intertribal conflicts (Kalck 1970(1):257). This sounds like a plausible explanation, but I have found absolutely nothing in the records to suggest this picture of ethnic relations, and Kalck does not substantiate his analysis. (The identification, in fact, of Ngbaka-Mandja and Ngbaka-Ma'bo is my own.) Brunache's statement (1894:60) that the Bondjos and Buzerus from around Bangui would not consent to go upriver of the Belli rapids is no contradiction. It was the rule rather than the exception in all of equatorial Africa that people, except traders (with force), did not venture out of their ethnic territories.

My own explanation places most of the blame on the foreigners - on the Whites, who established policy and were responsible for the behavior of their personnel, and on the foreign Blacks, who were the ones who came into direct contact with the natives of the area. The latter, of course, must have been persistent in their thieving, but that is something White colonizers had had to deal with elsewhere, and it rarely was a cause for serious bloodshed.

I would suggest that it was the excessive demands made on the natives by the two groups of Whites, who were in deadly competition with each other, that led to resistance against the foreigners. When resources dwindled for meeting their needs, the Whites used other means. Having established blood-brother relations, for example, nothing prevented them from taking advantage of them. Very little is said by the Whites about this
aspect of blood-brotherhood, but we know from Stanley's experience that he acquired a good 60 ft. (28 m) canoe from Mpika of Irebu, who was blood-brother of Lt. Janssen (Stanley 1885(2): 27). On the other hand Dybowski (1893:164) disclaimed any benefits for the Whites from this relationship. Moreover, once the Whites could claim "protectorship" over an area (which was attributed to a "chief", although they recognized that in this area no individual had any real authority over others), they behaved like conquerors. Bruel, for example, complained that certain chiefs had not yet come to pay him a visit at Mobaye, for which oversight he would have to teach them a lesson.

To these factors we will have to add social and cultural ones. The people of the Bangui area, I believe, were simply not structured in a way that would make them sanguine to the kind of "cooperation" that was expected of them, whereas the fishing-and-trading peoples further upriver were. This should become clearer in subsequent pages.

Although the purpose of this section was to explain the drastic difference in relations between the colonizers and the natives in the Bangui area and further upriver, we can also see that these downriver relations would have been less conducive to the development of a contact jargon than in the other area. Indeed, it was to Bembe that two Senegalese were sent in 1891 to learn "the language" (Dybowski 1893:216). The next section explains why.

7. The Gbanziris and canoes

It will now be seen that the French relied very heavily at first on Gbanziri help but began to use Yakoma men, who had come into Belgian service as early as 1889 and were undoubtedly brought down to Zongo or even further downriver. The Belgians at Mokoange, as we have already seen, relied on them as well. Beyond that case and Ponel's letter of 11 February 1891 cited below we have at the present time no information. It is quite
likely that the VS-speaking populations further upriver were already so well "developed" that they provided as much as was needed.

First, we must discount the possibility that canoes were brought from the Lower Ubangi and even Congo in large enough numbers to be of any considerable importance for the exploration of the Upper Ubangi. There is just no evidence of their importation along with the importation of canoers to man them—except for the occasional one or two, most of which, in any case, went only as far as the bend. We must therefore consider as an exception the Brazzaville administrator's statement to Gaillard: to wit, "the Bobangi canoes can be inspected at Bangui" (AN, 4(3)D1, Brazzaville, 12 June 1891).

7.1. Description of canoes

It was not only the availability of canoes that distinguished the Gbanziris from the people around Bangui; it was also the canoes themselves. Of the Ngbakas (Bakas, Bouakas) it was said, for example, that their canoes were small and badly made (Dybowski 1893:201; Le Marine! 1893:21). Bruel (1907:9) explicitly distinguished them from the canoes of the Gbanziri, Sango, and Yakoma, saying that they were like those of the Mondjembo, being narrow, shallow in depth, trapezoidal in section, hence flat-bottomed. But he does not say that they are small, although the longest is only 12-15 m, taking about 12 canoers. It is curious that Le Marine! (1891:22f.) attributes flat-bottomed boats also to the area between Mokoange and Banzville, saying that they did not carry very much. Since this was Gbanziri territory, whose canoes others admired, the observation is difficult to explain.

Differences in material culture could very well have resulted in differences in canoe construction and even methods of propelling them in spite of the fact that all of these peoples lived on the banks of the Ubangi. Moreover, perhaps the people around Bangui did not have the same resources for making canoes like those found further upriver; they may have had a certain
number, obtained by trade or by capture or by theft. It is tangential to our present task to try to reconstruct the culture of these people. It has already been noted, however, that the White participants in colonization distinguished them from up-river peoples in a categorical manner. It is surprising therefore to find Kalck (1970(1):256) describing the Bondjo-Bouaka as "as skillful in handling the hoe as in maneuvering the canoes" and that M'Bakas as well as Bouakas had control of navigation at the Bangui bend before the Whites arrived (Kalck 1970(2):351).

As for the canoes of the Gbanziris, Burakas, Sangos, and Yakomas there is general agreement (except for d'Uzès, to be commented on shortly). The Gbanziris, for example, have "very beautiful sculpted canoes" (Colrat 1902:82), which are "[their] real homes" (Clozel 1893:295). They are described in detail by Dybowski (1893:196f.): they are from 10 to 18 m long (approximately 60 ft.) and from 50 to 90 cm wide (approximately 1 1/2 to 3 ft.). The canoes are propelled by a crew of 8 to 12 canoers in the stern using very small paddles and 3 or 4 punters at the prow, standing on a carved-out platform (the *tomba*) and wielding punts 6-8 m (19-26 ft.) in length (Clozel 1893:295).

When we find contradictory statements like that of d'Uzès, we have to attribute them to error. He said that the Gbanziri canoes were "very short and very light" (1894:185). He undoubtedly saw such canoes with his own eyes, but such a congregation of canoes might have been accidental, the larger ones being occupied elsewhere (or hidden). It is, after all, reasonable to assume that people whose lives depended on the river would have had both large and small canoes for different purposes. On the other hand, it is equally likely that his interviewing technique being (presumably) incomplete and uncritical, he would have got faulty statements. (The competence of Whites as ethnological observers, while relevant to the task to which we address ourselves, is a digression which we cannot indulge in now.)
7.2. Gbanziri canoes

But it was the Gbanziris themselves who were accessible to the Whites, and because of themselves their canoes as well. The testimony of the Whites is virtually unanimous in their praise, not merely by comparison with the "Bondjos" downriver but even with other populations all the way from the coast. The following is only a small sample of the abundant record. They were "friendly" (Clozel 1893:299), "gentle and accessible" (Augouard, CSE-F, 12 March 1893), having "a carefree character and very gay, always ready to laugh, to sing, and to amuse themselves" (Maistre 1895:30); "they remind one of the excellent and naive savage of certain 17th century philosophers" (Clozel 1893:296).

To whatever it was about the Gbanziris in personal appearance, personality, and behavior to which the Whites responded so positively, we should add something that we can only deduce from their occupation as fishers and traders. They must have been able to work together in at least family units. Fishing and trading requires cooperation and a certain amount of trust (some of it over a long term). A society structured in this way would be able to get things done. The Whites therefore could negotiate with a responsible member of a kin unit and see the realization of the transaction. The other ethnic groups whose life was not structured around these activities would be more difficult to come to terms with. There would be bickering and competition and mistrust even among closely related individuals. This is what I would at least expect from my own field experience with agrarian inland populations of this part of Africa. It should be noted in this regard - and in regard also to the VS-speakers dealt with in the next section - that there was supposed to have been in 1892 "an important senior chief" of the Sangos, Ouyon by name. Whatever his position was, and I doubt that he was a veritable chief, his kin began to engage in a power struggle in that year (Kalck 1970(2):375f.), based on de Poumayrac's notes in the Victor Liotard family archives).

The Gbanziris first came in contact with Whites, as might be
expected, on Van Gèle's first trip up the river in 1887. If Kalck is correct, a Belgian station was set up in one of their villages on the right bank - Mossabaka or Mossobaka (1970(2): 349). But Petit (1894:39) says that it was at the time of the Gaillard and de Poumayrac missions of 1891 that the French established a post there. By this time, of course, the Belgians might have abandoned their station. In any case, the name Banziri does not appear in French records until January of that year. Ponel recorded that he had established a garde-pavillon at Bembe-Djoumara, whose chief is Ban-Ziri, with three Senegalese soldiers posted there (AN, 4(3)D1, Bangui, January 1891). From this same source we learn that Bembé, M'Bato, Bogani, Garou, and M'Paka are some chiefs in the "region of the Ouaddas-Banziris" (4 February 1891), and that treaties had been signed with Ban-Ziri chiefs above the Kouango river (15 April 1891). The relationship between Ponel and the Gbanziris must have been a sanguine one; for example, Bogani, it will be remembered, was one of those villages that was graded "2" with respect to access to resources.

The main source of Gbanziri canoes and canoers seems to have been the Bembe area. This is where, as we have seen, Crampel got help in 1891. The availability of canoes is seen in de Poumayrac's statement to Ponel that one could find 30 canoes with a capacity of a ton each in 48 hours around Bembe (AN, 4(3)D1, 30 July 1891). Ponel must have suspected that human resources were rich even beyond Bembe, because he had proposed a post between Kandjia and Kouango where the "agent" "would recruit just like our neighbors [the Belgians]" (AN, 4(3)D1, Bangui, 11 February 1891).

In 1892 there was even greater use of Gbanziris. In a de Poumayrac convoy there were 160 (Lioutard, AN, 2D7, Bangui, 31 February 1892). And they provided most if not all of the transportation for d'Uzès (1894:167f., 185, 191), Maistre (1893b: 273; 1895:28, 30) and Dybowski (1893:190ff.; Brunache 1894: 61f.). Other ethnic groups were certainly used when the occasion
Figure 2. Distances on the Ubangi river calculated in kilometers (above) and in days canoeing upriver (below); downriver speed is halved.
Sources: Colrat 1902:311; Dye 1899b; Le Marinel 1891:24; Liotard (AN, 2D7, 31 January 1892); Masui 1894:116. Not to scale.

demanded and the opportunity afforded it. Thus Brunache, a member of the Dybowski expedition, in going up the Kemo had some Gobu canoers from the left bank of the Ubangi who, he said, were little accustomed to maneuvering rapids (Brunache 1894:128). They were a non-riverine population, called Ndris by the Gbanziris and Sangos (Dye 1899a:445; Guillemot 1900:67), found also near the mouth of the Kouango river, if Gobbons are the same (Baratier n.d.:20), of whom many eventually settled on the French side (AN, 4(3)D14-R/1908, Ombella 1908).

Gbanziri canoes and canoers were, as we have now seen, available to the Whites from almost the beginning of White penetration into the area. And they continued in the service of
Whites for a long time, being supplemented, as the needs for transportation became greater and greater, by the upriver VS-speaking riverine peoples. (The "Sangos", for example, are first mentioned by the French in 1891, as will be seen below.)

It was only in 1891 that the tempo of French expeditions increased (see Table 3). The occupation of land, on the other hand, and only on the banks of the Ubangi in any case, was going on very slowly. This is manifested by the small list of posts upriver of Bangui, which are only "guard stations", that is, where a resident Black soldier established French presence: Bembe-Djoumara, Djoukoua, Ouada, Abiras (or Abira, the -s being the French plural). In January 1893 the post at Abiras was still under construction, according to d'Uzès (1894:256), and Gbanziris were serving as workers as well as canoers. By 1899 however, there were 5 principal posts and 30 small posts spread over 600 km (375 mi.) along the Ubangi and Mbomu rivers (Bobicchon 1899:10).

Having been the chief and most cooperative indigenous group of people up through 1892 for the French and presumably the Belgians, the Gbanziris would have interacted in such a way that their language might have served as the basis of some kind of jargon. We saw in the last section that the French recognized the advantage of their men learning the language at Bembe in 1891. In the following year d'Uzès himself was sufficiently impressed by these people that he took the trouble to note some words in their language (d'Uzès 1894:333f., possibly only a sample of his whole collection). What is interesting about this material is that it is not pure Gbanziri. It contains Bantu words, illustrating the influence (demonstrated in Samarin 1982a) of the Bantu pidgins already in use by the foreign Blacks, namely, Bangala and Kongo, in Ubangian speech. It is therefore quite possible, and indeed quite likely, that Gbanziri was being pidginized by its foreign users, as was happening, we must assume, in the east in the dialects of VS. This may have been the jargon that Brunache, a member of the Maistre expedition in 1892, said "our men" concocted, referring to it as "a sort of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891 March</td>
<td>Belgians establish post at the mouth of the Kouango on the right bank, commanded by Lt. Heymans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Trading &quot;factories&quot; established for the Belgians at Zongo, Banzyville, Yakoma, and Bangassou by Alexandre Delcommune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 July</td>
<td>Administrator Gaillard arrives at Bangui on the Ballay, with the mission of exploring the Ubangi's right bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 July</td>
<td>The first French commercial agents (of the Maison Daumas &amp; Cie) arrive at Bangui</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 July</td>
<td>Gaillard's expedition leaves for the east on the Ballay (which sinks at Mobaye)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Gaillard chooses the site for the French post at Abiras</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 August</td>
<td>Administrator Bobichon, assistant in the Dybowski mission, arrives at Bangui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Van Gâle leaves Yakoma to return to Europe, being replaced by Georges Le Marinel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 September</td>
<td>Dybowski arrives at Bangui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 September</td>
<td>Gaillard returns to Bangui from the east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>The Dybowski expedition starts out; Gaillard establishes post at Yakoma and de Poumayrac at Abiras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>The Liotard expedition leaves Brazzaville for the Ubangi</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 December</td>
<td>Dybowski returns to Bangui</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892 Early</td>
<td>Dutch commercial house places comptoir at Bangassou</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 January</td>
<td>The Maistre mission is about to leave France</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 March</td>
<td>Dybowski and Bobichon leave Bangui for Brazzaville</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 April</td>
<td>The &quot;avant-garde&quot; of the Maistre mission arrives in Bangui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 April</td>
<td>The d'Uzès expedition leaves Marseille for the Ubangi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 May</td>
<td>De Poumayrac and his men are killed by Bugbus near the mouth of the Kotto river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 June</td>
<td>The Maistre expedition leaves Bangui</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

patois" (Brunache 1894:206). Since in this context he is talking mostly about the Gbanziris, the supposition is a reasonable one. Remembering, moreover, that Gbanziris were "the great asset of commercial houses" in this ivory-rich area (Clozel 1893:295), we can understand why their language would be useful. (Since Belgian and Dutch commerce was more important than the French at this time, we have further inferred evidence for the significance of the Gbanziris to all the Whites.) Clozel's statement is supported by Bonnel, who was in charge of de Béhagle's commercial expedition of 1897. In that year the only trading posts between Bangui and Ouango were among the Wadas, Gbanziris ("principalement à Kouango"), Sangos, and Yakomas (Bonnel 1901).

8. Development of "Sango" peoples

We have already seen evidence for the Belgian use of VS-speaking peoples, even while they were being aided by Gbanziris. "Sangos" begin to be mentioned by the French in 1891, Ponel being the main source. Early in that year he notes that the area between Yamboko, at the mouth of the Mbomu river (which he calls the Bangasso, actually the name of Sultan Bangassou, and is so named in the map by Wauters 1890) and Bamâga, 200 km (125 mi.) downriver, was populated, rich, furnishing iron, ivory, and men (AN, 4(3)D1, Bangui, 15 April 1891). (Bamaga is found on one map (AN, 4(3)D13) on the left bank of the Ubangi, opposite the Kouango river, in Gbanziri territory.) It must have been this area that Ponel was referring to when he directed de Poumayrac, who was about to undertake an expedition, to study the "A-Zangos" who, he said, provided the E.I.C. with canoers and made up its convoys (AN, 4(3)D1, "Renseignement", Bangui, 11 June 1891).21

Like some other martyrs for the cause of colonization, de Poumayrac was not an innocent victim of native savagery. Liotard, who claimed that the Bubus had 5000-6000 men armed with rifles, said that de Poumayrac had gone to "make war" ("faire la guerre") against the Bubus (AN, 2D6, Abira, 24 May 1892)). The Bubus (Bougbou, Bougou, Ngbougou etc.) were not themselves a VS-speak-
ing but rather Banda-speaking population (related to, if not identified as, Langbas), found between the Kouango and Kotto (d’Uzès’ Bandou) rivers, inland from the riverine Sangos (as they were called by 1894), with whom they traded their agricultural products. They were under the power of Sultan Bangassou (Bonnel 1901:16; de Dampierre 1967:167, 180; d’Uzès 1894:180; Jacquier, AN, 4(3)D15, 12 January 1909).

It is curious that de Poumayrac located no other ethnic group on his map than the Nzakaras (his Sakaras), spread north and south along longitude 20° and coming down to just above the French and Belgian posts on the Ubangi. Perhaps he assumed that Yakoma had already been identified along the banks of the Ubangi, but he certainly found no Sangos here (see above for other possible locations). Julien did find some on his 218 km (135 mi.) trip up the Kota (that is, Kotto) river in 1894, which seems to have started in May (the census was incomplete said Julien because many canoes must have been hidden). The Patris have been identified as Kpatilis by de Dampierre (1967:176). But Julien did not recruit people from Abiras, his starting point inland, because the expedition had to be kept secret from the Belgians. He did have 12 Sangos to supplement his foreign workers and soldiers, but these were recruited at the post at Mobaye (Mobai) with difficulty, at the last minute, and only for one month (but kept for longer) (Julien 1894:4). They were canoers on the Etienne, an aluminium lighter (a barge-like vessel).

Julien, in giving the gist of a conversation that took place at Akboko, indicates that they were recognized as Sangos by a Yakoma from Dimassa who had been sold into slavery because of his father’s debt, but the language is called "the Yakoma idiom" (Julien 1898:36). (This must be the same place known today as Limassa (Gauze 1958:53), at the mouth of the Kotto river. Its location in those days, of course, might have been different.)

It was "A-Sangos" (as Ponel then spelled the name, a- being a VS prefix of plurality) who manned three canoes bringing the dying Jean Schaak who had been with the Belgian forces in
Under 5 m long 5 to more than 10 m. Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>58</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yakomas</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nzakaras</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alangbas</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bugbus</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yakpas</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patris</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangos</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Number of canoes by ethnic distribution on the lower Kotto river in 1894.
Source: Julien 1898:104.

the Ubangi basin since 1889, accompanied by S-Lt. Degeffe (Ponel, AN, 4(3)D1, Bangui, 4 July 1891). Since Schaak died on the Ville de Bruxelles on the 26th of July (Janssens & Cateaux 1910:532), we assume that the Sangos took their canoes all the way to the post of Bangala on the Congo, where they could get the steamer.

VS-speaking workers were therefore clearly being moved about over a large part of the Belgian territory. (We have already seen that there were some "Sudanese"—possibly Yakomas—in Leopoldville in 1890.) We deduce that some of the former were also on the Ville d'Anvers on which Gustave Fivé, Inspeteur d'Etat, was travelling to his study mission in the Upper Ubangi around January of 1892. He actually quotes a phrase in the language: la ço (that is, la so), which he translates "soleil là" ('sun there') (Fivé 1906:6f.; Janssens & Cateaux 1908:243-250). Indeed, the men from whom Fivé got this phrase may have been Sango members of the crew, because some time before 1900 they were already the E.I.C. sailors who "font le service" ('serve as crew') of the steamers (Vandrunen 1900:307f.; the author's trip from Algeria to the Congo started in 1893, but we do not know when he arrived there). This statement is supported by two men who toured the Congo in 1904-1905. The first is Mountmorres, who wrote:
"The Sango have a great reputation as boatmen and steamer hands among the whites of the Congo; the wheelmen on almost all the State steamers are Sango, whilst the rest of the crew is often composed of Bangala [undoubtedly meaning Bangala], another famous riverine race" (Mountmorres 1906:22).

The other is Dorman, who said that most of the steamer's crew seemed to be well known in a Yakoma village on the Wele and several actually lived there (Dorman 1905[1970]:131).

The Franco-Belgian Agreement of 14 August 1894 put an end to the competition between these two governments in their colonial enterprises north of the Ubangi and its eastern sources. The boundary between the French Haut Congo and the E.I.C. was established at pretty much what it is today between the Central African Republic and Zaire, and the Belgians withdrew, leaving all (or most) of the indigenous human resources to the French.

The first part of that year, not to speak of the two preceding years, had been characterized by intensive exploring by the Belgians, on the part of men like P. Le Marinel, G. Le Marinel, L. Lannoy, T. Nilis, and Charles de la Kéthulle de Ryhove.

By comparison, the French had been relatively inactive. Other than Julien's, the only expedition of note was that of C. Maistre, that started from Bangui in May 1894. Going inland into Mandja territory just north of the Ubangi bend, it did not seem to require canoers from the east (Maistre 1895, Brunache 1894). The only other important event was the installation of Catholic missions at Bangui (St. Paul, October) and at Ouada (Ste. Famille, November). The latter site had been visited earlier in the year by Mgr. Augouard, who was transported by Gbanziri canoers (CSE-Fr, Brazzaville, 18 March 1894).

8.1. The Marchand expedition

It was to take another political event to stir up the Ubangi basin, putting thousands of people in motion up and down the river and as far as the Nile. But that did not happen until 1897, when the French sought to cut off the English from going further
down the Nile and at the same time to extend their Sudanese empire to the sea. Such was the purpose of the expedition under Jean Baptiste Marchand (for which see Delebecque 1936, Mangin 1936, Michel 1972, Morphy 1892).

A special report on servicing the Upper Ubangi ("Rapport sur la Ravitaillement du Haut-Oubangui") gives a clear picture for 1895 (Furiet, AN, 4(3)D4, 1895, 31 August 1895). Furiet says that between Bangui and Ouango-Mbomou (presumably Ouango [village] on the Mbomu river) there is no problem where the native is merchant or fisherman and is accustomed to moving about. Gbanziris from Ouada and Kouango serve Bangui. Mobaye finds men (on the right bank presumably) among the Sangos and Yakomas who have been "subjected", but the latter are not presently useful because of the repressive action that had been taken against them. (Had they resisted becoming subject to the French?) This was also true of those in the Bangui area he called Bondjos. Therefore, as we might expect, Gbanziris and Sangos continue to appear occasionally in reports: for example, concerning Gentil's expedition up the Tomi river in 1896 (Gentil, AN, 2D11, 12 April and 5 July 1896).

These comments should not be allowed to lead to the supposition that canoers were always at hand for whatever the White wanted. They always had to be hired or pressed into service; the Whites did not own a fleet of such vessels. At least not until 1900 when, according to Colrat (1902:307), canoes belonging to the commercial societies and the government and manned by Yakomas assured transportation from Mobaye to the territory of Sultan Bangassou. On this subject Dybowski (1893:359) said that a Gbanziri never gave up one of his canoes "at any price". Whites were to some degree or other dependent on, if not at the mercy of, the indigenous owners. So there were times when there just were insufficient canoes for colonial needs. Thus, on his way to his assignment at Mobaye, Bruel wrote that he would have to wait 15-20 days at Bangui until canoes were available to take him upriver (ASOM, B1-44, Bruel, 17 May 1896).
This situation must be borne in mind for the whole period under consideration in spite of the cooperative spirit of the Gbanziris.

The Marchand expedition seems to have required between 2,000 and 3,000 canoers, an estimate based on Legendre's statement that 175 canoes had arrived at Mission Ste. Famille at Ouada (or at Abiras, it is not clear) in May 1897 (Legendre 1903:202) and Dyé's that from the end of 1896 to early 1897, a period covering about 6 months, 6,000 charges (at 40 charges per canoe), with 20 canoers per canoe, had been transported to the Mbomu river (Dyé 1899b:307f.). (Dyé was officially in charge of the "flotilla"). However, the usual figure, based on a number of different statements from this year, is 12-13 canoers (actually 12.5) per canoe. A total of 2,500 canoers and 200 canoes is therefore a reasonable figure and is supported by a number of different sources: Bruel's statement that a single convoy had recently arrived consisting of 38 canoes, 557 canoers, and 940 charges (ASOM, B2-1, Mobaye, 12 January 1897); the report that in February Bobichon had arrived at Mission St. Paul with 55 canoes and 700 canoers (CSE-P, 23 February 1897); Bruel's report that Bobichon had gone in March with 900 canoers and 71 canoes and that with other contributions, including those by Comte and himself, there were 1,500 canoers "en route" (ASOM, B2-14, Mobaye, 12 April 1897); according to Baratier (n.d.:16), Bobichon had at that time 66 canoes and 1,100 canoers, and according to Castellani (1902:213) 100 and 1,000 respectively. (See also Baratier 1941:7; Bobichon 1937:48f.; Emily 1913:4.)

The Marchand expedition was intense while it lasted and used a large number of Ubangians for transportation, but it was short-lived. By the end of April 1897 Bruel at Mobaye could write to his mother: "Voilà donc la Mission passée" (ASOM, B2-17, 28 April 1897). 23 It is not likely that steamers were used at this time of the year (see Fig. 1 for the water level), although we know that in 1897 there were three French steamers on the Ubangi: the Païchérbe went from Bangui to the Mbomu and both
the Alima and the Ballay (having been repaired since the accident mentioned above) went from Ouada to Mobaye (Dyè 1900:25).

The canoers for the Marchand expedition came from villages all the way from Bangui to Ouango. Emily, a medical doctor on the expedition, names them as Bondjo, Gbanziri, Nzakara, Yakoma, Dendi, and Patri (that is, Kpatili) (Emily 1913:4). Castellani (n.d.:213) mentions only Bondjos and Sangos. Since Bobichon, administrator at Kouango, is given credit for success in recruitment by his contemporaries, due to his amiable rapport with his "subjects", his record should be relied on. He wrote that he used Gbanziri and Buraka (Bouraka) canoers for the first stage - Bangui to Mobaye - and for the second stage Sangos from Mobaye and Yakomas from Guélorget, originally known as Cetema (Bobichon 1937:48f.; Baratier n.d.:24f.).

It is interesting that Bobichon should name Burakas and Gbanziris for the first stage even though the area below Kouango was not theirs by virtue of occupation. This is why Colrat (1902:307), writing of the year 1900, said that Gbanziris, Burakas, and Sangos assured navigation from Kouengo (presumably meaning Kouango) to Mobaye and that although one could recruit Bagbas, Buzerus, and Boboyas further downriver, one could not count on them. In any case, Bobichon's statement is confirmed by Baratier (n.d.:16), who adds that Gbanziris and Burakas did not (we read "would not") go beyond Mobaye. Colrat actually describes Mobaye as a relay post and implies that the relay system was a well-established one:

"Chacune de ces peuplades, arrivée à la limite de son parcours, passera ses embarcations à la suivante et rentrera, dans sa contrée et sa famille, cultiver ses terres" (Colrat 1902:307)

['Each of these people, having arrived at the limit of its territory transferred its loads to the next one and returned to its country and kin to cultivate its land.]

What we see, therefore, is a rather large expedition, certainly the largest the French had ever launched in this area, depending on native canoers limited for the most part to their own ethnic areas. They must have feared and mistrusted each
other. Only the visible power of the Whites and foreign Blacks was able, we assume, to induce them to travel into foreign territory on the condition that they constitute a large ethnic block, for there was strength in numbers. And recruiting sufficient numbers must have always depended on local factors, frequently of an accidental and ephemeral nature.

8.2. Factors in recruitment

The first factor, which applies to the whole period that we are studying but which we have not yet mentioned, is the nature and extent of the contact made on the part of the foreigners with the natives. This varied between (a) contact of the confrontational kind; (b) repeated trade; (c) relations based on blood-brotherhood, treaties, and subjugation. Although the Whites wrote as if they personally were always the agents of the contacts, using the pronouns "I" or "we", we must realize that much of this was mediated through their foreign Black personnel (see Samarin 1984b). For example, Bruel, who, as we have seen, was responsible for recruiting for the Marchand expedition in 1897, wrote on 28 August of that year to his sister:

"Mobaye est occupé depuis 6 ans et l'on ne connaissait pas les environs, dans un rayon de 10 kilomètres, moi-même n'ai pas [visité?] la terre à plus de 8 kil. du poste" (ASOM, B2-33, Mobaye)

['Mobaye has been occupied for 6 years, and we haven't become acquainted with the area 10 kilometers around ...'],

adding that people think that "we are in control of the country; we don't even know it". And in the next month he wrote to his mother that he had become acquainted with all the chiefs, but for only 10 kilometers (6 mi. away (ASOM, B2-37, 16 September 1897). In January of this year he already had the names of 50 villages and their chiefs (ASOM, B2-8, 29 January 1897) - useful indeed for recruitment. It should also be noted that he was the only White in residence and that he had assumed charge of the Mobaye post at the end of July 1896.

A second factor is the means and methods of recruitment. Although there is no explicit statement about the method of
the French for the early period, we know that by 1900 it was the following: a soldier took to each chief a bundle of sticks which represented the number of canoers he was to provide. Having stopped at each village in this way, he would collect the prescribed canoers and the appropriate number of canoes on his way back (Colrat 1902:71). Help was therefore "recruited" for nothing.

For the Belgians we have even earlier information. The following description, useful for its explicitness and interesting for its detail, is taken from a piece entitled 'Recrutement de pagayeurs' that appeared in La Belgique Coloniale (2:469). Although published in 1896, it seems to apply to 1892, being the testimony - I deduce from internal evidence - of Theodore Masui, who had been at its writing head of the station of Banzyville for only one month. He was young (29 years old) and relatively inexperienced (only six months in colonial service) (Masui 1894:116; Janssens & Cateaux 1910:605ff.).

"... Aussi, lorsque, pour la première fois, je réclamai des chefs une corvée de pagayeurs, ils me firent de solennelles promesses, mais personne ne se montra au moment du départ que je fus forcé de remettre. Le même jour, vexé, mais patient, je fis une nouvelle demande, plus énergiquement formulée; ils me fut répondu par les mêmes promesses qui furent suivies d'une même défection.

A tout prix, le transport devait partir, et, bien à contre-coeur, je dus me fâcher contre mes gais, mais peu serviables voisins et réclamer d'eux, sous menace d'employer la force, un concours indispensable.

La plupart s'exécutèrent enfin; ceux dont les villages étaient tout contre B[anzyville]; d'autres, se fiant à la distance, ne donnerent pas signe de vie.

Un exemple était nécessaire; toute indulgence, en ce moment, eût semblé un signe de faiblesse; comme débutant surtout je ne pouvais tolérer ce manque d'obéissance et, sans plus tarder, je réunis quelques hommes pour me rendre chez le principal rebelle.

Héroïque départ, sarabande folle qu'improvisèrent les indigènes voisins, devenus spontanément nos alliés, et qui venaient m'offrir un concours plus tapageur que nécessaire.

En réalité, mon expédition était toute pacifique; j'avais recommandé qu'on n'en vint pas aux armes, ne cherchant qu'à avoir des otages, et je connaissais déjà assez les choses d'Afrique pour savoir que mes alliés entendaient profiter de ma querelle pour piller leurs congénères. Aussi, je les remerciai poliment et j'eus le plaisir de les voir s'en
retourner chez eux dans leur fantastique accoutrement, exubérants et fiers comme s'ils rentraient victorieux! Pour ces jouettes imprévaines et mobiles, la manifestation était suffisante, elle avait servi de prétexte à une danse de guerre, devenue rare dans la région.

Cependant, je m'étais mis en route; la 'palabre' ne fut pas longue, le village rebelle étant abandonné, et je me contentai d'y installer un poste, dont la mission était d'empêcher les indigènes de réintégrer leur domicile aussi longtemps qu'ils n'auraient pas fait leur soumission.

Cela dura quatre jours. Au bout de ce temps, ennuyés de vivre dans les bois à la belle étoile, privés surtout de leurs plantations et de la pêche, ils m'envoyèrent une députation que, piteusement, m'offrit une chèvre étique en demandant la paix.

Un 'grand chef' comme moi ne pouvait se contenter d'un si maigre cadeau; la chèvre fut remplacée par un bouc, puis par deux, puis par trois; bref, après deux journées d'allées et venues, la réconciliation était faite et j'obtins qu'une vingtaine de jeunes gens vinrent compléter mon premier contingent.

Un mois après, lorsque j'eus encore à organiser un transport, les mêmes difficultés se renouvelèrent, nouvelles palabres, nouveaux retards, nouvelle paix; autant de tribulations qui me causaient beaucoup d'ennuis et absorbant un temps précieux. Tant que je ne réclamais pas de travail, rémunéré pourtant, je restais grand ami de mes voisins; dès qu'un voyage se préparait, le vide se faisait à la station et l'on s'en allait danser ailleurs au clair de la lune.

['... Thus, when for the first time I demanded a detail of canoers from the chiefs, they made solemn promises; but no one showed up at the time of departure, which I was forced to postpone. The same day, annoyed but patient, I made another requisition and in stronger terms; the chiefs answered me with the same promises, which were followed by the same failure.

The goods had to get going at whatever price; very reluctantly I was obliged to get angry with my merry but rather unhelpful neighbors and to demand of them - threatening the use of force - the absolutely necessary assistance.

Most of the chiefs complied - those whose villages were right next to B[anzyville]; others, finding protection in distance, gave no sign of life.

A lesson had to be given. Any indulgence at this moment would have seemed a sign of weakness. As a newcomer especially I couldn't tolerate this disobedience. Without further delay I gathered a few men to go to the leading recalcitrant.

A heroic departure and crazy saraband were improvised by the neighboring natives, who had all of a sudden become our allies and who came to offer help that was more rowdy than necessary.

As a matter of fact, my expedition was entirely peaceful. I had suggested that people not come with arms, wanting only to take a few hostages. I was already sufficiently acquainted with things in Africa to know that my allies were expecting to profit from my quarrel by filch-
ing from their co-ethnics. So I thanked them politely. I had the pleasure to see them return in their weird get-up, exuberant and proud as if they were going back victorious! For these improvident and fun-loving people the show was enough; it was an excuse for a war-dance, which had become rare in the region.

Nonetheless, I set off. The 'palaver' didn't last long, the rebellious village being abandoned. I limited myself to setting up a guard there, whose task it was to prevent the natives from coming back to their homes as long as they hadn't yielded.

That lasted four days. At the end of this time, tired of living in the forest under the stars - deprived especially of farms and fishing - they sent me a delegation that offered me in a pitiable manner an emaciated goat, asking for peace.

A 'big chief' like myself couldn't be satisfied with such a small gift. The goat was replaced by a buck, then by two, then by three. In a word, after two days of coming and going reconciliation was established and I got about twenty young men to come and make up my first contingent.

A month later, when I had to make another convoy, the same difficulties were repeated - more palavers, more delays, another peace; so many difficulties, which gave me a lot of trouble and took up a lot of precious time. As long as I didn't demand work - even though remunerated - I remained a great friend of my neighbors. As soon as a voyage was being prepared, the station became empty and people went elsewhere to dance in the moonlight.'

The manner and extent of the exploitation of human resources must have been influenced, I have already said, by the financial resources of the French and the Belgians. Let us therefore compare them for the latter part of the decade under study, even though exactly comparable figures are not available. In 1898 the budget for the militia of French Congo was 342,920 fr. and for the equivalent Force Publique of the E.I.C. in 1899 it was 7,623,946 fr. (Mille 1899:204, 206). But the Belgians were receiving as much in taxes and other tribute as they were paying out (Mille 1899:103, 204, 206). An idea of what this amounted to in the field is gained from the following: In the Maistre expedition of 1892 the soldiers recruited on the west coast of Africa received 35 fr. per month. This is what the expedition was charged with in the official record (Comité de l'Afrique Française 1892), but elsewhere it is written that on that expedition a man's ration consisted of one coffee-spoonful of bayaka beads every five days - and these only cost 75 centimes
the kilogram! Nonetheless with this amount they were able to obtain (or so the Whites believed) provisions, the help of natives to carry their loads, and even "the favors of women" (Chapiseau 1900:192). Four years later - 100% inflation apparently having set in - canoers were paid two spoonsful of beads (or two copper bars of 60 grams [2 oz.]) every five days (ASOM, B1-59, Bruel, Mobaye, 10 October 1896). But for the year 1897, and in connection with the Marchand expedition already discussed, it is written that a canoer got for each day's work the value of 20 centimes in two coffee-spoonsful of beads: one for work and one for food (Dye 1899a:446). Or it was half that, if Baratier (n.d.:24) is correct in saying that Bobichon paid only one spoonful per day.24

A third factor was the quality of the relations between VS-speakers and the Whites. Although these relations seem to have been in general fairly good if not excellent most of the time and the Sangos and Yakomas held in as much esteem (as we shall see in the next section) as the Gbanziris, trouble did arise from time to time. Most of it, however, seems to have occurred toward the end of the decade. Bruel said that recruitment at Mobaye was difficult because of the "exorbitant demands" of the population (ASOM, B2-25, 28 June 1897). That was among the Sangos. In that year the Yakomas were also said to be unruly, and there was trouble with the Dendis of the village of Plassa (Baratier n.d.:25, 28).

9. Yakomas become whites

Our geographical movement up the Ubangi river and temporal movement toward the end of the last decade of the 19th century has brought us back to the heart of this northern equatorial region. On the banks of the Mbomu, Wele, and Ubangi the Belgians found their first allies and workers, and these set a pattern for the downriver populations, working themselves into enviable positions of service. Very soon they were to become the first indigenous 'Black whites' (mbunzu vuko, literally "White-person black" in PS). And from their language was made the new
language - the pidginized lingua franca that ushered in the new era.

The Yakomas have to be singled out from other VS-speaking populations because they figure most prominently in the records. But this is not to say that the records are explicit and unambiguous as ethnographic descriptions. One must interpret them before using them. A full ethnographic reconstruction being impossible in this study, the following remarks must stand only as a preliminary attempt at one.

In spite of inconsistencies in the use of the names Sango, Yakoma, and Dendi, they are generally attributed to the riverine population in an eastward direction upriver of the Gbanziris: the Sangos beginning at the mouth of the Banghi (Bangui, Banji or Banjika) river and going as far as Libanga (Julien 1899:31, 40; Julien 1901:111); the Yakomas beginning at Komba or Cettema (later known as Guëllorget) and going as far as the Usu rapids on the Wele (Baratier n.d.: 25; Donnay 1896:365; Hutereau n.d.: 133; Julien 1897:513); the Dendis up the Mbomu river, for example, at Plassa (Baratier n.d.: 28).

The Yakomas are salient in the literature both because of the number of citations and also because of what is said of them:

(1) Although the Sango villages were larger than Gbanziri villages (Moreau n.d.: 214), Yakoma villages at the mouth of the Kotto river were even larger (Dyé 1899a:444).

(2) Whereas Sangos were lazy and carefree, having no special industry but devoting themselves to fishing, Yakomas were industrious, hard-working, and active (Bobichon 1932:4; Huot 1902:305; Masui 1894:131).

(3) Whereas it was customary of Whites to advertise the Blacks' passion for and skill in trading - here characterizing the whole Ubangi basin from Bangui to Ouango (AN, 3(3)D4, Furié, 31 August 1895) - the Yakomas were singled out as being the most active and skillful (Girard 1901:83ff.).

(4) Iron and copper were for Yakomas the basis of a very im-
portant commercial enterprise, involving mining, forging, metal-working, and trading. With the Nzakaras, for example, they traded smoked fish, palm oil, knives, soft iron, and copper to acquire slaves, sesame, gourds, manioc, and peanuts (Girard 1901:85; Colrat 1902:195). And in this business, they were the brokers between the Bugbus (presumably the same as Bubus) and Nzakaras, who were "irreconcilable enemies" (Julien 1898:113). The iron mines were in the area of the Mbomu-Wele confluence (for example, Pwata), from where the ba (soft iron) was taken to Yakoma and even Banzyville to be worked (Vannini 1934:5f.). So widespread was this trade in metals that Ali Kobbo, the Arabs' representative in the Ubangi watershed, was not able to trade in copper with people on the Wele (Junker 1892(3):226).

(5) Because success in trade was achieved and protected by force, the Yakomas were recognized as a powerful population. Although within reach of Sultan Bangassou's thousands of soldiers many of whom were armed with rifles, they were never subjected; he only succeeded in pushing them to the Ubangi river (de Dampierre 1967:181, 400). Their unflinching courage in the face of guns was attested by Van Gèle (Cuypers 1960). And they continued to be independent and - as the Whites saw it - bellicose and rebellious (Colrat 1902:88; Huot 1902:305).

(6) Being strong, industrious, skillful, enterprising, and wealthy, it was inevitable that they came to be the pacesetters of the area, having the "monopoly of bon ton" and being imitated in deed and gesture (Julien 1898:113). Recognition of their quality was found even amongst the foreign Blacks. One of the contemporaries of that last decade wrote of the Yakomas:

"... ils se sont fait apprécier de tous, même des Sénégalais, qui, lorsqu'ils les connaissent, acceptent de servir sous leurs ordres, car ils comprennent que ce ne sont pas des 'sauvages'" (Bruel 1919:307).

[... they have made themselves appreciated by all, even the Senegalese, who, when they become familiar with them, accept serving under their command, because they understand that they are not "savages".]

Although Yakomas - along with other VS-speaking populations -
began to serve the Whites as canoers and further enhanced their wealth by trading with the foreigners - both Blacks and Whites - their socio-cultural evolution began with the acquisition of entirely new roles. They got the skills and the apparel of soldiers. Immediately they became even more superior to the slave-like bazinger soldiers of Sultan Bangassou, whom they had never truly feared in any case.\textsuperscript{27} As early as 1890-1891 we have already seen, the Belgians were training Yakomas. And it was not long, as we have also seen, that Sangos were decked out in colorful uniforms and serving on the steamboats. (Given the laxity in use of ethnic names in those days, these could easily have been Yakomas.) They did not enter French military service as quickly. First they served as porters in the Nile expedition that went ultimately to the Red Sea. Recruitment for the "garde nationale" from among Upper Congo natives began in 1901, starting among the Yakomas (Challaye 1909:67). In that same year 15 Yakoma "auxiliaries" were taken on the Bos expedition to leave at trading posts belonging to the newly founded Kotto commercial company (AN, 2D25, Expédition Bos, 1901). Two years later the annual report of the Mobaye Circle records that a "large contingent" of Yakomas had been recruited and sent to Bangui, possibly the same mentioned in a monthly report (of 11 January) by the Administrator at Bangui (AN, 4(3)D10). And Challaye, possibly referring to the year 1905, when he was on a special assignment, says that Yakomas provided most of the militia men in the French Haut Congo (Challaye 1909:60).

Serving the Whites in a military way must have been especially satisfying to the Yakomas, who would have seen this role as an opportunity to get revenge, symbolic if not real, on the Nzakaras. Just a year before (January 1889) they entered the Belgian cadres they had been pushed back by Sultan Bangassou's forces (de Dampierre 1967:102). Such strong motivation would have made Belgian and then French recruitment easy among them.

By the beginning of the new century the Yakomas, we have now seen, were well on their way to "going places" in the new eco-
onomy of things. The French and Belgian territories were begin-
ning to be administered in a more bureaucratic and less ad hoc 
way. More use of indigenous personnel was being made in a greater 
variety of tasks. So the Yakomas began to do what foreign Blacks 
had been doing and then to replace them. When they represented 
the Whites in carrying out their orders amongst their compatri-
ots, first fellow VS-speaking peoples and then all Ubangians, 
they were indeed mbunzu vuko.

I attribute the expression mbunzu vuko to this early period 
metaphorically. I have no evidence of its use then, and I do 
not know what its earliest attestation is. But it was a common 
expression in the decade of the 50s when I resided in Oubangui-
Chari (now the Central African Republic), not used metaphorical-
ly but denotatively of any Black whose employment by Whites re-
lied on literacy, such as clerks and secretaries. It was the 
name of a role as explicit as boy ('servant'), chauffeur, and 
turugu ('soldier').

It was a puzzle to me then why so many Yakomas and Sangos 
were mbunzu vuko, since education - both colonial and missionary 
- was not any better among them than among other ethnic groups. 
That puzzle is solved by this study. Yakomas and other VS-speak-
ing peoples had for more than fifty years sought social mobility 
in the new order. They had always been ambitious and astute. 
Right up to the end of the colonial era they held, and did not 
conceal, a strong view of their own superiority (de Dampierre 

10. The Yakoma language becomes less and more

In the process of hiring themselves out in the service of 
Whites, Yakomas and their co-ethnics gave their language to the 
foreigners. "Gave" may not be the best metaphor; it would be 
more correct to say that the foreigners "borrowed" VS words and 
created their own language. The way in which this was done is
outside the purpose of this present study, which was to demonstrate, among other things, why it was "Sango" and not, for example, Ngbaka or Gbanziri or Bangala that became the lingua franca of the Ubangi basin. The reason is the intercourse of Black needs and White needs.

It is a happy coincidence that at least in English intercourse denotes both communication and sexual activity. Here on the Ubangi river, where coursing on the river depended as heavily on VS-speaking peoples, was conceived and born a new language: Pidgin Sango. Being a vehicular language - a lingua franca - it was more than one of its "parents"; being a pidginized form of it, it was less. It was something truly new.

"Sango" it is called today, and "corrupted Sango" it was called as early as 1897 (ASOM, B2-17, Bruel, 16 April 1897), but in that same year Baratier said that it was the Dendi language that gave the name to Sango, the vojapük used among the canoers (Baratier n.d.:27), which is called Dendi, a "special sabir", by Girard (1901:85). If the Whites at first considered it the canoers' language, it was a few decades later known by Blacks as Sango ti turugu 'soldiers' Sango', consistent with what was said above about recruitment among the Yakomas (see also Maigret 1931:78). How "Sango" came to be its name - and why "Sango" should be the common name for all the VS-speaking populations (Hutereau n.d.:133) - is still a puzzle. It could just as easily, and perhaps more rightly, be called "Yakoma". The last few pages argue for this suggestion. And it should now be noted that one of the first interpreters used by the French was M'Ouando, a Yakoma, who had been in their service since the establishment of the post at Abiras (that is 1892). He did not speak French but communicated in some language (presumably the emerging pidgin) with a Senegalese, who translated into French (Julien 1897:136, writing of the year 1894).
FOOTNOTES

* This is a revision of a paper that was presented at and circulated amongst
the participants of the Seconde Table Ronde sur les Recherches en Sciences
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all my scholarly papers, will eventually be deposited in the Archives of the
John F. Robarts Research Library of the University of Toronto.

1 Geographical names are used in their nineteenth century form simply as a
device for maintaining a certain historical perspective. The spelling of
these names is another problem. Preference in most cases will be given to
modern French conventions, although Belgian practice from the very begin-
ning was influenced by English ones. Alternate forms will be given in paren-
theses. Ethnic names will occur in modern form, based on our understanding
of the phonetics of Ubangian languages, but here too the earlier forms will
be provided.

2 "Vernacular Sango" is used as a cover term for all the mutually intelligi-
ble dialects from which Pidgin Sango may have been derived. These seem to
constitute a "dialect cluster" in the technical sense and a single "language"
in the common sense. Among the varieties that eventually acquired names are
Sango, Yakoma, Ngbandi, and Dendi. No single source for PS has yet been de-
termined, and this study suggests why this may never be possible to achieve.

In this study the word "jargon" is used in a way similar to that by
Schuchardt (1979[1888]:69), who defined one as a "germinating creole". In
other words, it is speech that does not have behind it a community-shared
and stable grammar; some have called it a "pre-pidgin". When focussing on
use as opposed to structure, the term "contact language" is used. The re-
pertoire of linguistic means at the disposal of foreign Blacks and some
Whites during this period is considerable. We need to mention here only
pidginized Kongo (today Kituba), possibly already in a stable form, spoken
from Stanley Pool to the coast, and Bangala, which must have been nearing if
not already in that state (see Samarin 1982a).

3 A load, weighing by convention 30 kg (about 65 lbs.), was what one man
was supposed to be able to carry in a day.

4 Kalck (1970(2):322) dates this event as 13 October 1884, giving the dis-
tance in kilometers instead of miles, and placing it at about 10° 25' N.,
just above the confluence of the Ngiri river.

5 According to Kalck (1970(2):343f.) it was the steamboat for which Dr. Sims was responsible and was requisitioned by the Belgians. The Henry Reed was built at the Pool in 1883 for the Livingstone Inland Mission and could travel 10 miles (26 km) per hour (Guinness 1890:358). But Froment states that Van Gèle's voyage was done on the En Avant, going as far east on the Ubangi as 20° E., because its weak draught could manage the low water (Froment 1889:182).

The history of colonization on the Ubangi is understood better with a good appreciation of Van Gèle as a man of experience, energy, "spirit," and authority. Born in 1848, he went to the Congo in 1882, where he served with Stanley, being left at the northernmost station at the Equator with Coquilhat on 9 June 1883. This pioneering work, the pattern of which is clearly seen in Stanley's The Congo and the Founding of the Free State, gave him the model he was to follow in the Ubangi basin. In 1886 he was instructed, among other things, to inform himself of all that the French had or were planning to do in that area with prudence but "with great resolution" (Cuypers 1960:37; see also Janssens & Cateaux 1908:167-182).

6 Mazenot is certainly wrong in giving 29 July 1885 as the date for this event (1970:85, fn.).

7 This occasions a footnote to the earlier characterization of colonialism, illustrating both the strategy of Whites in the use of Blacks and their own attitudes to it. Froment said: "Je les affublai d'un uniforme d'opéra-comique - pantalon bouffant rouge, veste rayée et bonnet galonné" ('I rigged them out in a comic-opera uniform - red, baggy trousers, a striped jacket, and a braided cap') (Froment 1889:180). These raw recruits had only two months manual-arms training before leaving on the expedition. The article describes how they were used to impress the Ubangi natives.

8 A map by Ponel locates a place on the Upper Ubangi between Bangui and Belli as the "Place where according to the natives Mr. Dolisie stopped in 1888(?)" (AN, 4(3)D13, 1890-1891). Since longitude and latitude are not given, it is impossible to know exactly where this was. Villages Kero and Zingele (on the right bank) are, however, in the vicinity. Although Dolisie may very well have been the White to arrive there, it is not impossible that it was Grenfell instead. It all depends on what the natives told Ponel about the White.

9 Here and throughout this paper translations from the original French are my own.

10 In addition to the sources cited here for chronological data the following have been used: de Dampierre 1967; Kalck 1970(2):349; Janssens & Cateaux 1908 and 1911, in biographical sketches of Busine, de Rechter, Hanolet, G. Le Marinel, and Van Gèle.

11 They actually say "region of Wadday", confusing, because of their ignorance of Ubangian geography, Wada (or Ouada, as noted above) with Wadai (Ouadaï), Muslim territory in the desert area to the north-east.

12 "Nous sommes dans des conditions d'infériorité réelles vis à vis de nos
voisins de l'Etat Indépendant. Leurs envois considérables d'hommes, de marchandises leur donne un prestige aux yeux des indigènes que nous ne possédons pas."

13 In all of this study the French aspect of colonization receives more attention than the Belgian only because equivalent sources have not yet been identified.

14 "... en rapports directs et constants avec la Station de Bangui, et dont les chefs on reçu des cadeaux et notre pavillon."

15 "... la population n'a en de contact avec nous que lors de nos passages. Ils sont peu hospitaliers, méfiants et méchants."

16 We should not accept at face value de Chavannes' statement that when Albert Dolisie arrived at the Ubangi bend in November 1887 he saw an abundance of food at unheard-of low prices (quoted by Kalck 1970(2):346). After all, in October or November 1889 Musy had to send 26 men to Botambi (Bottambi) on a 2-3 days' trip southwest of Bangui to buy food (Musy 1891: 214). On the other hand, among people who live by a subsistence economy, it is to be expected that the amount of food in hand would be variable.

17 It is not likely that Ponel, who assumed charge of Bangui on 21 April 1890, had undertaken extensive explorations up to this time. Although Gauze (1958:86) says that Ponel explored the whole length of the Ubangi as far as Kouango, Castellani says that it was as far as Mobaye (1897:234). More important is the fact that he explored the Kemo, Tomi, Ombela, and Kouango rivers, where he would have found canoes and canoers. Ponel himself calls these trips - during the months of July, August, October, and November of 1890 - "reconnaissances". They were, moreover, very expensive, he says. In other words, he had paid, we must assume, a great deal in beads and other currency in establishing treaties and meeting his physical needs (letter of 4 February 1891, cited above).

18 Naturally, other explanations have been made. Gauze (1958:86) says that Musy was on an expedition against the Salangas who had been molesting the Yacoulis (actually the villagers of Yakoli on the right bank of the Ubangi) on the request of the latter.

19 In some of the earliest maps, especially relating to the E.I.C., quite a few villages have names that begin with the segment Mossa or Mosso. Because it does not appear in subsequent maps (e.g. Baka instead of Mossa-Baka), I suspect that they originated amongst the foreign Black personnel but have no evidence to support this speculation. The establishment of the post amidst the Gbanziris at Djoukhoua-Mossoua (Djoukoua) is attributed to Crampel, not Ponel (Petit 1894:39).

20 The list is chronological, from January to about August of 1891.

21 A map prepared by V. Liotard based on de Poumayrac's notebook (AN, 4(3) D13) shows that the latter went as far north as Pakourou, at about 5° 30' N., which is almost directly north of the mouth of the Mbomu river, and that he went west of 19° 30' E. among the Bubus, by whom he was killed in June. The map is dated for April-May 1892.
The Kotto is identified also as the Kota and Kouta, as on several maps, the mouth of which is about 45 km (28 mi.) downriver of the Mboomu. This being Yakoma territory, I suspect that the name came from the declaration in VS, ngu kota 'river (or water) (is) big'. This is the kind of utterance that one might get when asking for the name of a river in conditions of minimal communication: i.e. 'Yes, the river is big'. According to R. de Dampierre (personal communication) Kota is the Nzakara name of the river.

About other expeditions at this time we have very little information. There was the de Bêhagle commercial expedition of 1897 (Chapiseau 1900), and in 1898 the military expedition known as (a) Mission dans le Wada in under Cpts. Robillot and Lamothe and (b) Mission du Chari under Bretonnet (AN, 2D20 and 2D22 respectively); in that year the commercial expedition under Bonnel de Mézières (Colrat 1902) took place as well.

This calculation in beads may favor Gbanziris and other people preferred nginzza (kinja), iron currency in the shape of what the early Whites called a hoe, wrought by Yakomas at, for example, Abiras (Bruel 1918:255, 306). In 1892 one nginzza bought a chicken, 5 or 6 bought a goat, and 100 bought a healthy slave (d'Uzêes 1894:220; Baratier n.d.:25). The importance of this currency is seen in the fact that after the head tax was imposed in 1902, in one year 3,000 nginzzas were collected as tax in the Mobaye area (AN, 4(3)D11, 1 August 1904). The etymology of nginzsa has not yet been determined (not occurring, for example, in Lekens' monumental dictionary of Ngbandi), a curious fact in view of the importance of the currency itself among VS-speaking peoples.

Although Girard includes the Gbanziris along with the Bugus and Nzakaras as their clients, I am skeptical. Such trade would have had to pass through territory monopolized by Sangos. Of course, after the arrival of the Whites, Yakomas would have had more opportunity and freedom in trading.

An idea of this wealth can be gained from the fact that in 1904, when Yabou, a Yakoma chief (of the village going by this name), refused to pay taxes, 50 (not all) of his slaves were liberated (AN, 4(3)D12). At the 1892 price of slaves (100 nginzzas for a healthy one; see above), this would have equaled the total taxes rendered by all male residents of the Mobaye district in almost two years.

The etymology of bazinger never to my knowledge having been proposed, I speculate that it is the European spelling based on a local pronunciation of a Swahili word (e.g. basanji, etc.) used to designate pagans - that is, non-Muslims.
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Da der Ubangi nur zu bestimmten Jahreszeiten und auch dann nur streckenweise für Dampfer schiffbar war, waren die Europäer, die das Territorium besetzten, auf das Kanu als vorrangiges Transportmittel angewiesen. Der größte Teil dieser Kanus - einige wenige hatten die Europäer mitgebracht - wurde von den Einheimischen mehr oder weniger freiwillig zur Verfügung gestellt; entsprechendes gilt für die Besatzungen.


RESUME

Le développement du "Sango" en langue véhiculaire dominante dans le bassin de l'Oubangui, qui commençait à se répandre de l'est vers 1900 s'explique par la nature des contacts et des relations établis entre les peuples indigènes et des étrangers colonialistes. Ces contacts s'imposaient avec la "découverte" de l'Oubangui en 1884. Transport par cours d'eau en bateau à vapeur et surtout en pirogue est associé à une analyse chronologique de la colonisation belge et française, et, par conséquence, leur dépendance des indigènes ouбангuiennes marquée par des éléments culturelles et des phénomènes de contact.

L'Oubangui n'était navigable pour des vapeurs que pendant certaines saisons. Les européens qui occupaient le territoire étaient donc forcés à se servir primairement des pirogues, dont ils ne disposaient que d'un certain nombre assez restreint, pour assurer le transport. La plupart des pirogues, ainsi que les rameurs, étaient fournis, plus ou moins spontanément, par les gens du fleuve.

De cette manière, tous les peuples sur les rives de l'Oubangui étaient théoriquement dans la position de prendre leur part dans la transportation fluviale, mais ils ne participaient pas tous. Notamment la population des alentours de Bangui s'opposait au gouvernement colonial. Les Gbanziri et les Sango-Yakoma, eux, qui résidaient en amont de Bangui, étaient assez co-opératifs. Les Gbanziri étaient les premiers à seconder les Français, mais c'était le groupe Sango-Yakoma qui était déjà "intéressé" par les Belges antérieurement et plus massivement dans le métier. Ces gens parlaient tous des parlers Ngbandi (nommé Vernacular Sango dans cet article). Sous peu, c'était eux qui constituaient le potentiel le plus important de main-d'œuvre indigènes, pour les Belges ainsi que pour les Français. Les chiffres de l'expédition Marchand donnent une idée du nombre immense d'hommes qui ont servi de cette manière au cours de peu d'années.

La naissance du sango véhiculaire, pidginisé, s'explique donc partiellement par des éléments démographiques, à savoir par la mobilisation immédiate et intensive de la population Ngbandi. Ainsi, dès le début, les Ngbandi occupaient des positions privilégiées dans le cadre d'indigènes des services coloniales.