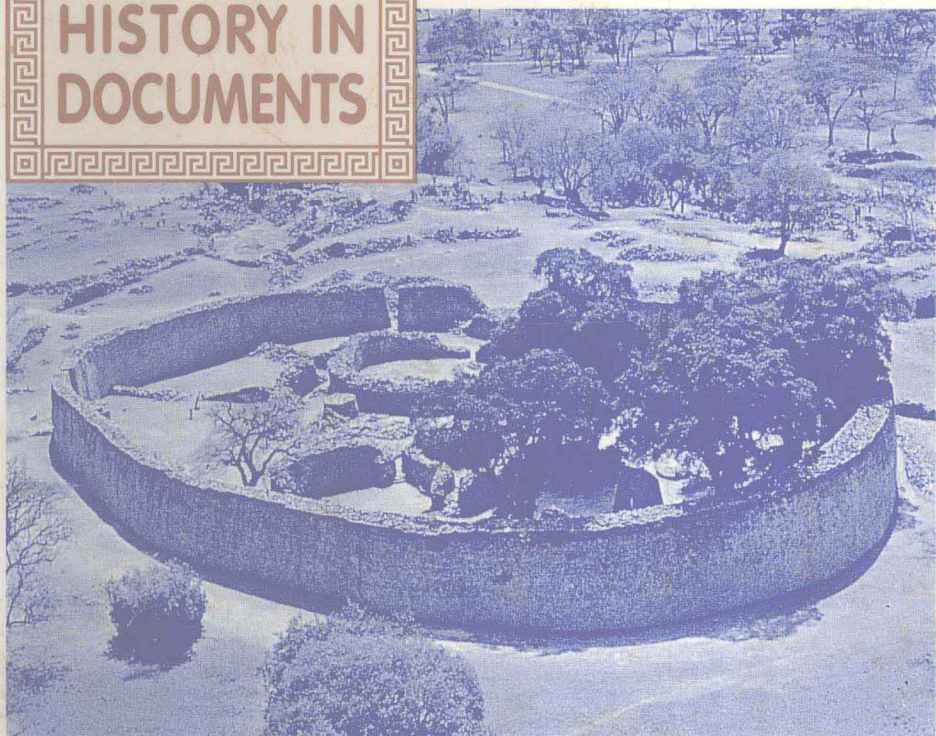


AFRICAN  
HISTORY IN  
DOCUMENTS



CENTRAL AND  
SOUTH AFRICAN  
HISTORY

Robert O. Collins

Topics in World History—Edited by Patricia W. Romero

# African History in Documents

## **CENTRAL AND SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY**

Vol. III of African History: Text and Readings

by

**Robert O. Collins**

University of California, Santa Barbara



Markus Wiener Publishers  
Princeton

Second Printing 1996

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For information write to:  
Markus Wiener Publishers  
114 Jefferson Road, Princeton, NJ 08540

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Collins, Robert O.

Central and South African history/by Robert O. Collins.

(African history; v. 3) (Topics of world history)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 1-55876-017-2

1. Africa, South—History—Sources.

2. Africa, Central—History—Sources.

I. Title. II. Series III. Series: Collins, Robert O.; African history: v. 3.

DT1.C55 1990 vol. 3

89-70617

[DT1009]

CIP

968—dc20

Cover design by Cheryl Mirkin

Printed in The United States of America.

**CENTRAL AND SOUTH  
AFRICAN HISTORY**

# **PREFACE**

## PREFACE

African history has come into its own. As we enter the 1990s, the old myths about the African past—that Africa had no history, or that no written records of that history existed—have been dispelled. The valuable discoveries about the continent that arose out of the study of archaeological remains and of the invaluable oral traditions have been extended and enriched through the analysis of documentary materials. The twenty years since I published the first edition of *African History* have seen a burgeoning of scholarly material on Africa, not only in monographs and journals, but also in textbooks. Research in African history has been established as a respected scholarly discipline. Surprisingly, however, there are relatively few anthologies that provide primary historical sources for the historian or student of Africa. This was the case twenty years ago, and it is still true. The present edition represents an updating of the 1970 volume, including text of documents dealing with the past thirty years in independent Africa. Its three-volume format reflects the fact that Africa is no longer regarded as an undifferentiated unity, and makes the materials for regional study more acceptable and affordable for teachers and students.

The original purpose of the volume prepared nearly twenty years ago was to demonstrate to the student the extent of the valuable documentary materials available for analysis and interpretation, while in no way minimizing the enormous importance of oral traditions. The aim of this volume on Central and South Africa has been to republish, revise, and

add text and documents. I also introduce the reader to the long and rich history of Central and South Africa from the beginnings of recorded time to the present with a brief essay, and some of the principal documents that serve as landmarks in the history of Central and South Africa.

If my purpose has been to expose the student to source materials in African history, my objectives have been guided by two principles—the same principles which inspired the two earlier volumes. First, I have sought to embrace the full span of documentary records pertaining to Central and South Africa. Second, I have sought to cover the vast geographical sweep of the southern African continent. To achieve these two very ambitious goals in a single and modest volume has required an eclectic, if not random, selection that betrays my own personal inclinations and interests. I am sure that anyone with a knowledge of the complex history of Central and South Africa might quarrel with the documents I have chosen, but I have endeavored to select those that describe Africans, and not just individuals who came to look or to rule. I have attempted to select passages from less well-known accounts and descriptions, as well as from the more standard authorities. I have also tried, where possible, to obtain passages of sufficient length to make them meaningful to the inquiring student. Finally, I have prepared a brief introduction to guide the beginner and to refresh the memory of the more experienced student. I have also made additions to the introduction in an attempt to overcome the twenty

years that have passed since the publication of the first edition, and I have added documents more pertinent to the age of African independence and nationalism. In order to make the selections more understandable to the beginner, explanatory material has frequently been inserted directly into the text, either in brackets or as a footnote. All of the other footnotes and bracketed material found in the various selections are the work of editors who have preceded me and whose efforts need not be duplicated or deleted.

I wish to express my appreciation to Professor Patricia Romero who has been instrumental in reviving the text, and to the publisher, Markus Wiener, who has accepted the challenge of providing a volume for an increasing number of students interested in Central and South Africa.

I am also grateful for the suggests of Nell Elizabeth Painter and Martin Legassick, whose assistance on the original volume provided many improvements. I am equally grateful to my colleagues and students at the University of California, Santa Barbara—to Damazo Dut Majak and Kenneth Okeny, and to former colleagues, Jack Bermingham and Robert Shell, who have been of great assistance in improving the sections on Zimbabwe and, most especially, South Africa. And, of course, there has always been Dorothy Johnson, who for so many years has seen my manuscripts to conclusion.

*Robert O. Collins*  
*Santa Barbara, California*  
*December, 1989*

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**SECTION I**

**CENTRAL  
AFRICA**

# CENTRAL AFRICA

BY ROBERT O. COLLINS

## THE KINGDOM OF CONGO

In the fourteenth century the son of a chief of Bungu, located near Boma on the north bank of the lower Congo, conquered the plateau of Congo south of the river, taking the title *mani Kongo* and establishing his capital at Mpemba, the present-day town of San Salvador in northern Angola. The kingdom of the *mani Kongo* was expanded steadily as a result of the conquest of the neighboring chiefdoms, and even territories beyond to the east, southeast, and south recognized the overlordship of Congo and would send tribute and presents to the king. North of Congo, however, the African states of T̄yo near Kinshasa and Loango in the Kwilu Nyari basin maintained their independence. The Kingdom of Congo was divided into districts composed of numerous villages. The districts were governed by officials who were both appointed and removed by the king. These district officers carried out administrative duties and acted as judges. All the districts were either integrated into one of the six provinces—Soyo, Mpemba, Mbamba, Mpanga, Mbata, and Nsundi—or were dependent directly on the king. The provinces were ruled by governors who were also removable at the king's pleasure. In addition, there were officials with more specialized functions—such as the *mani lumbu*, who was responsible for the king's quarters in the capital. These officials possessed titles and formed a powerful aristocracy. At the apex of the Congo's political organization was the king, chosen after

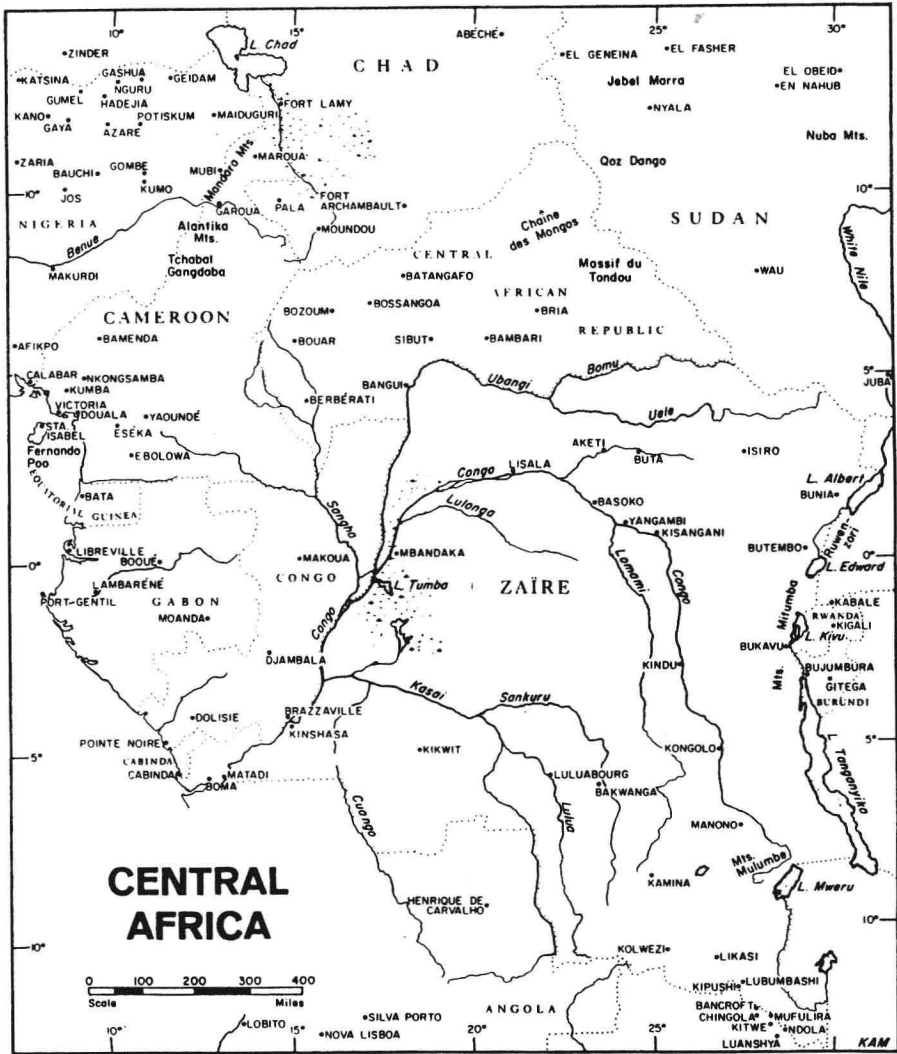
1540 from the descendants of Affonso I by an electoral college of a dozen members. The king himself was protected by a permanent bodyguard, but war was carried out by the army, which was recruited by means of the instruction given by every territorial official to the headmen of his villages to rendezvous with all able-bodied men. The army lived off the land and could not therefore remain in the field for long. Consequently, a war was usually decided by a single battle, characterized by a general *melée* rather than by use of tactics or strategy. The government derived its income from taxation paid in raffia cloth, ivory, hides, and slaves. There were also the royal fisheries of Luanda Island, which provided shells used as currency whose value could be controlled by royal officials. Clearly, the Kingdom of Congo possessed a degree of centralization that few African states could match. Nevertheless, the very source of centralization, the king, proved the state's greatest weakness, for an ineffectual ruler would reduce the power of the state. Moreover, the conflicts over succession led to constant factionalism, strife, and intrigue, and the failure to establish clear rules for succession sapped the strength of the Congo just as it weakened many other African states (Olfert Dapper, *The Kingdom of Congo*).

### **THE COMING OF THE PORTUGUESE**

In 1482 the first Portuguese caravels were sighted off the mouth of the Congo

River, known to the Portuguese as Zaire, the name immortalized in the great Portuguese epic poem, the *Lusiad*, for the mighty river emptying into the Atlantic from the center of Africa. In 1485 the Portuguese under the leadership of Diogo Cão returned, leaving four missionaries at the court of the mani Kongo in exchange for four nobles who sailed back with Cão to Portugal. The Portuguese came back again in 1487, and at that time Nzinga Kuwu, King of the Congo, sent a Congolese ambassador with a number of younger men to Portugal to request missionaries and technicians. After four years, the Congo embassy returned accompanied by missionaries and artisans. A church was constructed at Mpemba, the capital was christened San Salvador, and the king was baptized João I. The royal family and most of the nobility accepted Christianity as well. Although the king reverted to paganism after 1494, the queen mother and a son, Affonso, remained Catholic. Indeed, the religious rivalry reflected the opposition between two political factions in the struggle for the royal succession.

In 1506 Nzinga Kuwu died, and the rivalry between the pagan and Catholic groups erupted into open warfare, in which Affonso defeated the pagan faction and was crowned king (Rui de Aguiar, *King Affonso I*). Affonso was not only devoutly Catholic, but was in favor of increasing European influence. Consequently, contacts between Portugal and Congo developed rapidly between 1506 and 1512, and annual expeditions



from Portugal carried priests, school-teachers, artisans, and technicians to the Congo. Young Congolese were sent to be educated in Portugal, and what seemed to be a mutually advantageous relationship was beginning. Unhappily, cooperation between Congo and Portugal was soon beset by numerous obstacles. First, the Portuguese traders at São Tomé hampered the exchange of goods and detained envoys between the Congo and Portugal in order to protect their trade monopoly. Second, some of the technicians proved undesirable and un-

manageable, compelling Affonso to request that an official be sent from Lisbon with special jurisdiction over the Portuguese in Congo. Third, in 1512 Simão de Silva arrived with instructions, or *regimento*, to carry out the Christianization and Lusitanization of the Congo. The regimento proved a failure. Affonso accepted many of the suggestions while refusing others, but in the long run the failure of the regimento must be attributed to the real difficulties blocking cultural change on such an ambitious scale and the immediate greed of local

Portuguese traders. For a fundamental paradox conditioned Portugal's relations with the Congo which was never resolved and, in the end, greatly contributed to the collapse of the Congo kingdom: namely, that although they were willing to help Congo, the Portuguese wanted to exploit the country, and although they recognized Congo as an equal, they sought to limit its sovereignty. All the Portuguese in the Congo were inexorably drawn into the struggle to control the rapidly expanding trade in slaves, which soon compromised the more altruistic motives of the King of Portugal, and although Affonso also tried to limit the slave trade, he became increasingly powerless to do so. By 1526 the king's power throughout the country was being undermined by slave traders working with provincial officials. When he sought to restrict the European traders to the capital, they continued their raiding and trading through agents known as *pombeiros*. By 1530, 4,000 to 5,000 slaves were being exported annually, thus draining the kingdom of its vitality.

Just as Portuguese traders were eroding the power of the mani Kongo, the Portuguese government determined to prevent Congo from communicating with other powers. In 1532 and 1539 two embassies sent by Affonso to the Vatican were blocked in Lisbon, and Portugal did all in its power to restrict Congolese relations with other European states. By the end of Affonso's reign the dream of collaboration between Congo and Portugal had vanished. The Portuguese traders acted independently, and the king was powerless to control them. In 1545 Affonso died, and with the support of the local Portuguese, Dom Diego I, grandson of Affonso, was placed on the throne (Filippo Pigafetta and Duarte López, *The Successors to Affonso I*). His succession, however, did little to change the pattern of Congo affairs conditioned

by the coming of the Portuguese and fixed in Affonso's reign. The slave trade, the Portuguese factions, and the fitful efforts to educate and convert the Congolese continued for another dismal century.

The reign of Dom Diego was characterized by his unsuccessful attempts to control the white traders on the one hand and his more successful efforts to maintain his rule over his own people on the other. Supported by Portuguese traders at San Salvador, Diego was persuaded to go to war against the São Tomé traders, who were now dealing directly with the king's vassals and subjects. Diego's forces, however, were utterly routed, leading ultimately to the establishment of the colony of Angola. Although beaten by the São Tomé faction, Diego was able to enforce the ban on Portuguese traders going inland, but the *pombeiros* continued to carry out the wishes of the Portuguese traders. Diego was more successful at defeating internal rebellion, and in the spring of 1550 a plot by his principal rival was crushed. Nevertheless, his efforts to maintain internal security were always compromised by his failure to bring the white traders under close supervision and control (Monsignor Confalonneri, *São Tomé and the Slave Trade*).

### THE JAGA INVASION

Diego died in 1561, and the Portuguese intervened to place Affonso on the throne. Affonso, however, was killed and was succeeded by numerous weak kings until 1568, when mauraders, known as the *Jaga*, fell on the kingdom. (See introduction to Andrew Battell, *The Jaga* for the scholarly controversy involving the *Jaga*). Erupting from the Kwango region to the south and east, the *Jaga* destroyed the Congolese Army and drove the king into exile on an island in the river Zaïre. Appealing for Portuguese assistance, the Governor of São Tomé, Francesco de

Gouvea, rallied the Congolese and with his harquebuses drove the Jaga from the kingdom in 1571. Although Gouvea virtually occupied the country until 1576, the centralized Congo state continued to be racked by revolts, foreign invasion, and internal discontent, resulting in near anarchy. The Jaga meanwhile established states to the east and south and from them continued to raid the Congo.

### THE LAST OF THE CONGO KINGDOM

After the expulsion of the Jaga and the retirement of Gouvea, the King of Congo sought to reestablish his authority and to disengage himself from the Portuguese. Alvare I and his successor, Alvare II, were not entirely successful in maintaining their independence against attempts by Portugal, and later Spain, to restrict their freedom. Internally they were never able to re-create the centralized Congo of Affonso I and were continually hindered by internal revolts and intrigue. (Alvare II and Alvare III, *Relations Between the Kingdom of Congo and the Papacy*). Throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, the Congolese kings were unable to reassert their authority, having lost the support of the people and their chiefs while squabbling among themselves in endless disputes over succession. In 1641, however, Garcia II came to the throne. He was to rule for twenty years, during which he succeeded in checking the disintegration of authority but was unable to establish internal peace. The slave trade (now amounting to about 15,000 slaves a year), as well as a series of natural calamities, complicated Garcia's attempts to extend his authority. The reigns of Garcia and his successor, Antonio I, were the last stand of the Congolese kings. Upon the death of Antonio in 1665 the kingdom dissolved forever into anarchy, with faction against faction, province against province, and village against village.

When the kingdom was actually reunited in 1710, the king had lost all power, possessing only an empty title as a derisory memento of past greatness.

### KING LEOPOLD'S CONGO

The disintegration of the Congo eliminated the last vestiges of Portugal's control, and although Portuguese slave traders continued to drain off the human resources of the Congo and the Portuguese crown continued to claim sovereignty over the region, Portuguese influence remained negligible. When Henry Morton Stanley arrived at the mouth of the Congo River in 1878, he found no trace of the Portuguese past in the Congo. Stanley's exploration of the Congo basin and his epic journey down the river excited the interest of King Leopold II of Belgium, who had taken an active interest in Africa since 1876 (Henry Morton Stanley, *The Great Rain-forest of the Congo*). Leopold was eager to open up the Congo and in 1879 sent Stanley back up the river to make treaties with the chiefs that would transfer their sovereignty to the *Comité d'Études du Haut Congo*, which was organized by Leopold. Between 1879 and 1884 Stanley founded twenty-two stations and concluded over 300 treaties, firmly establishing the rights of the *Comité d'Études du Haut Congo* to the south bank of the river, while the French explorer de Brazza was laying claim to the territories along the north bank for France (Paul du Chaillu, *Trade in Gabon*).

Leopold's principal problem was to secure international recognition for the treaties concluded by Stanley, and after much skillful diplomacy and luck the king managed to convince the great powers at the Berlin Conference of 1885 to recognize the International Association of the Congo (formerly the *Comité d'Études du Haut Congo*) as a sovereign power. Called *État Indépendant du Congo*, or more commonly, the Congo Free



State, Leopold's Congo embraced nearly one million square miles of territory, dwarfing the old Kingdom of Congo by comparison. Although it was created by an international conference, which could theoretically "uncreate" the *État Indépendant du Congo*, in reality the Congo Free State was an absolute monarchy under the sole control of Leopold II. Although he established three departments (Foreign Affairs and Justice, Finance, and Interior) and a resident governor general in the Congo, the king himself managed the affairs of his state until just before his death in 1909. The creation of the Congo Free State provided an outlet for Leopold's energies and abilities, but although the ownership of nearly one million square miles of African real estate was a sop to his megalomania, it taxed his private fortune. By 1889 Leopold had spent over 31 million francs of his own fortune to establish his rule throughout the Congo basin and administer its territory. This sum was, of course, quite insufficient to rule the Congo, and a series of loans and grants from the Belgian government followed in 1887 and 1890. Gradually, as Leopold and his agents desperately sought to make the Congo pay its way, the Free State exploited the ivory and rubber resources of the Congo. Farming out huge tracts of territory to private concessionaires, the king even formed his own company in 1896 to exploit 112,000 square miles of land called the *Domaine de la Couronne* [Crown Lands].

The king's determination to make the Congo pay soon produced profitable results. In fifteen years he is estimated to have extracted nearly \$15 million in profits on 11,345 tons of rubber, in addition to sums paid by concessionaires for the right to exploit other regions of the Congo. Ruthlessly driven to collect rubber at the expense of their fields and families, the Congolese, of course, were the ones who made these profits possible. Atrocities, hardships, and violence

accompanied the Congo administration's lust for rubber, creating a wide discrepancy between the humanitarian aims professed at the founding of the state and the later malpractices (Edgar Canisius, *Rubber Collecting in the Congo*). As early as 1893 critics began to question Leopold's rule in the Congo, and, led by E. D. Morel, a British journalist and humanitarian, the criticism became so acute that in 1903 the British demanded an international inquiry on the strength of reports by Roger Casement, their consul at Boma. Bowing to the demands of the great powers, Leopold appointed a commission in 1904 to investigate. Although evidence was suppressed, the report could not hide the fact that the lofty principles of the Berlin Act had been forgotten and that if Leopold's regime was not tyrannical, it was certainly most harsh indeed. The Report of the Commission of Inquiry did not still the clamor against Leopold's rule, however, and in November 1908 the Belgian Parliament took over the Congo, paying its king 50 million francs in addition to the 45 million francs that were paid for the beautification of Belgium and annuities for the royal family.

### THE BELGIAN CONGO

When Belgium took over the Congo Free State in 1908, she had no experience or tradition of colonial rule, and her colonial policy was shaped more to deal with the immediate problems of administration and development than the political future of the Congo. Practical considerations thus determined the main lines of Belgian policy, clearly reflected in the basic law of the colony, the *Carte Coloniale*, which made no reference to the political status of the Congo. Since Belgium had been forced to take over the Congo by the maladministration of Leopold, the Congo must therefore be administered to prevent such atrocities in the future. Moreover, Belgium had to