

## **Mboshi and Teke Culture Contact: A Case Study of Making up Bantu Cultural Area**

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This paper is based on a comparative study of three ethnic groups by focusing on the elements of interpenetration between two different civilization groups in Congo-Brazzaville namely Ngala and Teke. By so doing, the article resorts to three peoples namely Mbosi and Moye for the Ngala group and Engugwél people for the Teke group to establish the existence of a cultural area uniting these two groups that share the same geographical space. This comparative study scrutinizes the elements of culture and history of every group that gets Ngala and Teke closer by their resemblance and reciprocal exchange beyond the gap between these two big entities.

*Key Words:* Ngala-Teke, Mbosi, Moye, Ngungwel, crossroads, culture, interpenetration, cultural space

### **Introduction**

The most immediate result of the migration of the human species is the setting in contact of peoples from different cultures. This contact, according to the teachings of the historians, always results in a crossing that necessarily causes reciprocal reactions. These reactions depend on the behaviours of peoples in presence, as well as of the conditions and reasons of their meeting.

When the contact between two human communities becomes recurrent, it happens that psychological factors come into play and influence their cohabitation relationship: there can be imitation, suggestion, conversion by constraint or by conviction. These have the tendency to bring closer the cultures and to harmonize them.

One often observes that, when conditions and reasons of contact generate unequal physical, military and intellectual puzzles, this closeness gives rise to the absorption of one of the "cultures" by the other one. But, when they encourage the respect of mutual interests by every people, interests that are favorable to the life and to the peace, the closeness keeps the peoples and their culture behind a boundary. It results, however, that the reciprocal interests provide an interpenetration of the cultures. Every culture in presence inherits what is in its culture respectively.

This last case is often the most attested fact in the history of the migrations and cultures of the Bantu peoples mainly. In fact, this crossing sometimes occurred through military confrontations between Bantu and the natives of the conquered earths.

A cultural area can result from this people contact which takes place peacefully or in trouble.

This Cultural area can associate some peoples (or tribes) of languages (or dialects) and of different culture. Defining this concept of a cultural area, Bakajika (1985) using the geographical factor highlighted by Hersksvits, writes:

*Celui-ci est cependant subordonné aux ressemblances culturelles. Ces similitudes culturelles des deux peuples sont plus remarquables quand ces peuples sont plus rapprochés que lorsqu'ils sont éloignés les uns des autres. Autrement dit, l'emprunt de divers éléments culturels est plus facile entre groupes rapprochés; ils ont en effet plus de possibilités de contacts entre eux qu'avec des groupes fort éloignés.*

In other words, the loan of various cultural elements is easier between closer groups; they have indeed more possibilities of contacts between them than with groups which are very distant.

In the present article, we want to observe the results of this very old contact between Ngala and Teke peoples and to discover the effects of the contact of these cultures through their subgroups Mboshi and Moye (for the Ngala) and Ngungwel (for the Teke). It is necessary to mention that these peoples are Bantu and originated from the Nile Valley and got to their present location through separate ways. They share this land with other groups such as Kongo, Maka and Ubangi. This contribution does not pretend to fix the real time of settlement of these peoples but we rather confess that they found their present land not properly settled even though there were pygmies long time ago. The main objective of the present survey is to scrutinize Mboshi and Teke contact in order to point out the results of their contact.

## I. Identification of the two Bantu groups

### 1. Ngala group

The Ngala group is constituted of peoples that occupy the Congolese basin. Ngala derives from the term "mongala" that is geographical since it means "fairway", "arm of river" or "river of 20 to 50 meters long" in the dialects of the Group C20 languages. It is also used by the same group to designate the downstream in relation to the zone where the person is. The human geography uses this term therefore to designate the inhabitants of the country of the fairways or rivers which flow in a very big number the bottom of the Congolese basin. This term also specifies a Bantu language in which the individual designates himself by "nga, ngāi (me)". Here this individual is designated by the morpheme "moro, moto" with the plural in "baré, bato (people)".

In the Congo-Brazzaville, the big group Ngala is composed by the Mbosi subgroups, Moye (or Moï), Bobangi, Likouba, Likouala, Buéni, Bonga, Bomitaba, Enyelle and Bondongo.

On an administrative level, the Ngala occupy the geo-administrative space corresponding to the departments of the Congolese Basin, Likouala, Sangha and the Plateaux.

Of this whole, our article is interested in two subgroups that share borders with the Teke group the space in the department of the Plateau: Mboshi and Moye.

#### I.1.1. Mbosi group

Mbosi people (called Mbochi thanks to the colonization) live in the North-Congo and share boundaries with Teke, Sangha, Maka peoples Pygmy, Ubanguian. They occupy the administrative space corresponding to the departments of the Cuvette-Ouest (districts of Itoumbi, Mbomo), the Cuvette (districts of Ntokou, Makoua, Owando, Ngoko, Boundji, Oyo, Tchikapika, Mossaka) and of the Plateaux (districts of Allembé, Abala, Ollombo, Ongogni, Makotimpoko and Gamboma). It spreads therefore from the Bangangoulou space in the south, until the clinch the Mambili in the north. It is one of the biggest ethnic groups that populate the Republic of Congo.

Several studies (Obenga 1976, J. Itoua 2007, Ndinga-Mbo 2004) have been carried out for this people's identification and it is attested that it is divided into several subgroups namely Mboko, Ngaré, Akwa, Koyo and Mbosi. The mboshi subgroup includes Mbonzi, Obaa, Eboyi or Omboo, Tsambitso, Bognala, Ngaë, Nguilima and Olee.

#### I.1.2. Moye group (or Bobangi)

The Bobangi are Ngala people living in the two sides of the Congo River, precisely the region of the Congolese Basin. It is composed of the following subgroups:

- Bobangi, living downstream the mouth of the Alima river and upstream of the mouth of the Nkéni river;
- Nunu (or Nounou), living in the region of Bolobo, in the province of Bandoundou, a region of the big Congolese Basin, the center-west of the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Moye (Moï).

##### I.1.2.1. Identification of the Moye

The Moye occupy the right side of the Congo River and the interior marshes spreads between the Alima River and the village of Mpouya, in the same way to their brothers Nanny of the RDC.

We distinguish:

- in the north, the Moye from zamba, this means the Moye from the swampy forest, installed mainly in the villages of Kongo, Motoko, Kongo, Bounda, Mekala, Lelombe, Tanga-Lenga and Nkala. These Moye people are the neighbours of the Mbosi Olee in the district of Ollombo;
- in the south the Moye from esobe (Ntseke), this means the Moye from the swampy savanna populating Makotimpoko, Motokomba, Bodouango, Maboua, Mbantsé, Bobanda, Nkonda, Bobi, Kanga-Kanga, Mouamba and Mompongo.

The Moye live in the district of Makotimpoko and share with their brothers mbosi from the flooded space in the administrative region of the Plateaux. As a detachment bobangi, they have a civilization based on the river from which they derive the essential of their subsistence and their main activities. These are the Bobangi of the inside of the land (Ndinga-Mbo, op. cit., 116).

It is therefore by these Moye that the Ngala, share a border with the Angungwel people the East of this one, the land of Pomi.

##### I.1.2.2. The origin of the Moye

René Gatsako (2009:52-54) mentioning the oral sources and the archives of the Congo-Belgian (in Bolobo), declares that the Moye came from the Edouard lake in Uganda. He nearly reinforces our hypothesis about the basin of the Nile as the origin of the Mbosi, brothers and present neighbors of the Moye. This confirms the thesis defended by Cheikh Anta Diop (1981:234).

Departed from the Nile region, without individual identity, the Moye might had been for centuries in the mouth of the Congo River, with the Mongo and the Mbosi. They would have left this site with other Bobangi and stayed on the right side of the Ubangi river that would have provided the name to the whole group. They settle in their

present land on the left side of the Congo River as an individualized group with a name and a language: the Moye (or Moï) and the Bobangui.

## I.2. Identification of the Teke group

The Tio, often named Teke, are the Bantu people who are located between the west of the Democratic Republic of Congo (ex-Zaire), the center, the south and the north of Congo and the southeast of Gabon in minority.

According to their denomination, François Ewani (1979:56) states that "*the terms Teke and Tyos designate the same people speaking the Kiteke language or Etyo*".

In the Republic of Congo, the Téké live in the departments of the Plateaux where they are the major community and are neighbours of the Mbosi and the Moye, the Cuvette-ouest where they are neighbours of the Mbosi, the Pool where they are neighbours of the Kongo, the Niari and the Bouenza where they are neighbours of the Kongo, and the Lekoumou where they are neighbours of the Kongo.

Several subgroups form the big whole human Teke. One can mention: Boma, Nzikou, Nziziu, Kukuya, Angungwel, Fumu, Mfununga (Wumbu), Nzabi, Tsangui, Mbamba, Yaka, Teke-Tsayi, the Lale, Tegue (Teke-Alima), Mbeti (Mbere).

As regards the present work, we restrict our scrutiny on one group namely the subgroup ngungwel (Bangangoulou).

## The Angungwel

The Angungwel (Bangangoulou) are a subgroup of the Teke ethnic group. They are the neighbours of the Mbosi populations and Moï (Moye). They occupy the two sides of the Nkéni river.

The space occupied by the Angungwel (Bangangoulou) administratively corresponds to a portion of the Plateaux region, distributed between the districts of Gamboma, Abala and Makotimpoko. This population is often referred to two appellations (J. Itoua 1999:54)

1). ô-nzina (pl. A-Nzina) the old Ngangoulou: the ancestor would be called Un'zi Nzion. The prefix 'o' becomes 'a' in plural to give A-Nzinzion. It is under this appellation that the Mbosi meet them. This name is like the Anzikou name, another Teke subgroup that populates Djambala area. With the other Teke subgroups, the A-Nzinzion would have arrived on the territory before the Mbosi, their future neighbours. The Teke, coming from the region of the Benue in the Nigeria, should have reached the land that they occupy today after having bordered the Atlantic coastline and crossed the big equatorial forest. The period of their migration, as that of the other Bantu of Congo is difficult to trace back.

2). Ongungwel (pl. A'ngu-ngwele): it is presumably later that the A-Nzinzion had changed themselves by the term of Angungwel (that designates the people) and O'ngungwel that designates the man. This designation is reminiscent of a movement. Indeed, the term Angungwel means inhabitant on the other side (border, bank of a river?).

It is assumed from the oral tradition that at Mbosi arrival there was a migration within the A-Nzinzion people, then Teke subgroup. A part of this Teke subgroup had crossed the Nkéni river when the other would have resisted against Mbosi penetration pacifically. The portions designated themselves by the expression "Ba-li ku-ngwel, that is, those who are on the other side". It is under this reciprocal designation that the colonization finds them and that formulated it thus "Bangangulu". Their Bantu neighbours, Mbosi and Moye, simplified this term and called the Bangangulu (Bangangoulou): the Angungwel by the "A'ngongolo".

## Structures

This ethnic group is made of six subgroups (J. Itoua, op. cit. 55). The major element of this structuring seems to be the geographical location but not the differentiation of culture or language. One can, as in the other ethnic groups, to notice a variation of tone and sound in connection to the speaking. These geographical subgroups are:

1). Ampoupounou occupying the villages: Nguien, Etoro, Coated, Ibié, Ndamba, Etsiala, Ona, Ebou (Lebon), Ingouéné, Mban, Ekan (Ekama), Obala, Esia (Lessia), Tsou, Oban, Elouo, Pwayan, Obiamboma (Obiambom), Onsi, Onga, Akana, Tsampoko, Ondzala, Ambala, Idzien, Anki, Insoho, Ompwana, Intaa, Mpala, Intala (Etoro), Mbaya, Removed, Ampey, Massala, Abala, Ntsé, Mbwalé-alouo..

2). Andzandza living at the villages: Ossio, Akana and Ngombana.

3). Apfi Ngwel, that comes from Ngwel occupying some villages: Bouanga, Pounou, Epfou, Obaba, Akana, Engouélé, Ndzaba, Aséné, Etsiamva, Oli, Anlien, Etolo, Eboui, Anguéé, Engaha, Oboho, Tsenapou, Ankouo, Olouo a Youéné (Akana).

4). Akékélé (Akikila, Akélé) living at the villages: Yaba, Akana, Letouo, Okoua-mpi, Odzio, Inkouélé, Yala, Imporo, Mbombo, Indoo, Ekô (Embiam), Oboho, Olouo, Ngakielé, Angoulou, Impini, Inkantsiana, Mbe-Esso, Ngoui, Lessia, Etaba, Bouanga Moké (Ndandaba).

5). Impoh or Apfimpoh occupying the villages: Mboubé, Akou, Mpana, Viya, Akaba, Ossô, Odzourou, Angore, Kwi, Nkoué, Oban, Mouali,

6). Apfi Oboo (Unfi Oboo that comes from Oboo) living at the villages: Ossélé, Nkolo, Akala, Oyali, Otsamva, Okonga, Eko, Assina, Eyolo, Mbala-Ngamba, Essiki, Abala village, Aliémé, Keliémé.

## II. Installation of the two groups in Congo

The Ngala and the Teke, Bantu peoples, reached Congo after long migratory movements according to different ways.

### II.1. Installation of the Ngala

#### II.1.1. Penetration of the Mbosi

This question has been treated abundantly in J. Itoua (2007) we hereby recall some predominant insights.

As other Bantu, the Mbosi left from the valley of the Nile. They would certainly have chosen their outgoing way, already overcrowded, the Baar (south Nile), the itinerary bordering the equator.

To reach the Congolese basin, their current location in the Republic Congo, the Mbosi came from the left side of the Congo River and, especially, from the region that constitutes the present territory of Mongo. On this land, the emergence of mbosi should have taken place: they arrive in Congo as an ethnic group with an individualized language.

The overcrowding of this site of the buckle of the Congo River can explain this new migration. It is due to the invasion of the other Bantu coming from the region of the Chad Lake and the north of the Ubangi River. The Bantu coming from the Nile and installed in the region of the Chad Lake and on the territories located over the Ubangi River should have undergone a thrust on behalf of the Ngbandi, fleeing the Arabian raids coming from Darfur. This Bantu movement back southwards and the East should have provoked a pressure on the Ngala people that resulted in the migration of some groups amongst which Mbosi (Mombotsi). Other ngala groups should have resisted to this invasion, like the Mongos. There are several ancient migratory currents, such as the age of the Neolithic and before by proslavery backlashes.

The movement of the Mbosi toward the Congolese basin can be justified by the need to fill a gap which is the emptiness. Indeed, at the arrival of their forebears, the country that the Mbosi occupy was only lived by the Atswa (sing. Otswa), that means, the Pygmies. The latter did not resist and fled in the shallows and in the forests leaving their space to the Mbosi.

Emptiness seems to have been created in the big forest by the Teke peoples that, after having discovered the herbaceous hills, they abandoned the forest zones. These zones are going to be occupied by the Ngaré and the Mboko and by the other Ngala until the Atlantic coastline. One is going to find the Kota there (Bakota), the Benga and Boubi, the Ngala-Ndwala.

The Mbosi that constituted the big mass of this migration penetrated the present land by the Alima river, Likouala-Mossaka and the Kouyou rivers

before scattering themselves into smallest subgroup. They had therefore as the basis of their expansion the mouth of Alima River, on both sides of the big river. The whole internal movement started therefore from this sector.

While going upstream the Alima river, the Mbosi separated in several groups: some headed northwards, that means the left side of the Alima river; others, on their turn, southwards, that means the right side of the Alima. Each of the groups occupied its present habitat. These mbosi migratory movements should have occurred, certainly, without shock as the space to occupy was even empty.

On the other hand, the migratory waves that already reached the land occupied by the Teke, other Bantu people, arrived and installed shortly before the Mbosi and after the Pygmies, experienced some shocks. This Mbosi pressure on the north that occurs concomitantly with the Kongo pressure in the south balanced itself by the receding of the Teke toward the savannas and hills of the west and the center to leave the land to the Mbosi invaders and Kongo. These difficult contacts between Mbosi and Teke have been dealt (Gilles Sautter 1966, Pierre Vennetier 1963, Marcel Soret 1978, Jérôme Ollandet 1981, Louis Soussa 1981). Few supports of these epics that are often the anecdotes and tales only exist.

#### II.1.2. Penetration of the Moye

According to René Ngatsako (op. cit.:50-57) the Moye belonged to the Bantu group that had left the basin of the Nile while following the equatorial itinerary in West and that got settled in the buckle of Congo, present location of the Mongo in Democratic Republic of Congo (region of Ecuador, zone of Mbandaka). This Bantu group was in fact the Ngala that was not yet decomposed again into individualized ethnic groups. It is on this site that the emergence of the ethnic groups took place with individualized languages.

While life seemed to be definitive on this site, the movements of peoples coming from the northwest of Sudan jostle the Bantu fixed on the sides of the Chad Lake and those residents that populated the country of the present Central African Republic, pushing them toward the country of the Ngala. This tumult provoked an overcrowding of this site that was the reason of the migration of some subgroups such as Mbosi and Bobangi (Ngatsako, *ibid*).

When their brother mbosi crosses the river directly from East to West to get settled on the present territory of the " Congolese basin ", the Bobangi, after crossing the Congo River, reach the banks of the Ubangi. It is there that it is necessary to look for the origin of their names (op. cit.:50).

They passed a short time on this bobangui site. By successive waves, the group abandons the banks

of the Ubangi. A small wave, according to René Ngatsako (op. cit.:55-56), should have brought up the Sangha and should have founded Pikounda, the other followed the two sides of the Congo River while founding of the villages on the right and left sides.

Ngatsako (op. cit.:53-55) assumes that Moye and Bobangi migrations are related to the last step: the one that brings them from the Ubangi river sides to their present location in the two Congo. But the conflict for adultery that opposed the brother clans of Ngobila and Botoké can be kept like one of the reasons of the migration of the Ngobila clan; this cannot explain the migration of the Botoké clan.

Indeed, the two clans have both migrated, one following the other: there is another reason that motivated the migration of the group.

Besides, Ngatsako is not completely right to reject the hypothesis defended by the Archives of the Congo-Belgian because the fear of the slavery and the Arabian wars is indeed the main reason developed by a lot of studies to explain the migrations of the Ngala group along the Congo River (Obenga, op. cit.: 73-116). The date of 1720 that is proposed by the Belgian Archives to fix the end of the last migrations is among those in discussion between these studies.

If these colonial Belgian administrators should have mingled the Nkokos (patriarches, guides) of the Bantu migration of the basin of the Nile to those of the migration along the river, what appears to exaggerate the age of the last, one must know that Ndinga drove the old migration of the Mbosi until this people's settlement in the Congolese basin, Ngobila and Botoké guided the Moyi and the Bobangi on their last sites.

According to Ngatsako (ibid) the periods and the dates of arrival and installation of the Moye as peoples of the group "*are difficult to fix due to the lack of documentation and the absence of the writing in the civilization of the migrants*". (My translation).

Ngatsako supposes this Moye presence in the Congo previous to the XIIIe century of our era. However, Bruno Pinçon (op. cit.:124) claims that it is in the XIXe century that the last Moye waves arrived in Congo.

The occupation of the land by the Moye and the Bobangi strictly speaking explains the order of arrival of each group. Indeed, according to the oral traditions of these peoples it is under the reign of Botoké that the Bobangi arrived at the localities already occupied by the "Moyi mo Ngobila" (Moyi descendants of Ngobila), they push the first occupants (toward the Mbosi and the Ngangoulou) and take the control of the river. This tradition is proven by the Moye proverb which reads as:

*E sé na nkolo ebalé na nkolo Botoké* that is translated as: "*All territory has a chief; the Botoké*

*is the chief of the river*". This proverb translates the exclusive power of control of the river by the Bobangi of Botoké.

In fact, the Moye of the forest under the conduct of Longangué get settled in Bounda, and those of the swampy savanna under the command of Mountoula<sup>1</sup> occupied the locality of Boganda (one of the districts of the present Makotimpoko24), located at the confluences of the Nkéni river and the Congo river. It is this chieftain powers that took the control of the land following that of Mobanda during the last quarter of the XIXe century. Mobanda was hoisted by the French colonial administration to the rank of canton chief; what widens his authority on the set of the Bobangi and the Moye, without establishing a dynasty of the Mobanda ever in Moye country.

## II.2. Installation of the Teke

According to Abraham Constant Ndinga-Mbo (1984:49) Teke are the oldest stratum of the Bantu population in the Republic of Congo.

The historical analysis considers three ways of the first Bantu migration movements, leaving all of the basin of the Nile: the southern way, the equatorial way and the northern way. We have just seen that the equatorial way was the one consistent with the Mbosi to occupy their present location.

On the other hand, the Teke, other Bantu groups borrowed the Nordic way. Indeed, this itinerary is the one that would have been followed by the Bantu detachments that, after having crossed the south-Sudan, the present country of the Central African Republic, reached the region of the Chad lake. This lagoon region of Chad has, it seems, served as a temporary habitat to these Bantu groups before migrating again toward the basin of the Benue (Itoua, op.cit.: 51-52)

The Benue was not also a definitive habitat for all of them. From this position the Bantu groups took another migration southwards while borrowing three directions (Guthrie, 1985):

- The first wave had driven the Bantu from the zone between the Benue and the Cross-country while following the Atlantic coast, colonizing the region between the Sangha and the Ogoué;

- The second and the third allowed the Bantu to cross the big equatorial forest from the east to the west. The first group crossed the course of the high Ogoué to reach the Pool Malebo (Stanley Pool). The second group reached the Congo by the Sangha.

These directions seem to be those that would have been followed by the Teke peoples living in Gabon and Congo, and the Maka of the Sangha, after several centuries of stay in the region of the Bénoué that they would have reached before 2500 before J.C.

The first migrants, the Teke that occupy the high hills covered with savannas and shallows accommodating some forests galleries, arrived on these lands before 1400 of our era. They already knew to work with iron and to weave the raffia that they found in the galleries. They already practiced agriculture and hunt in savanna with tools made of iron, the breeding of goats and poultry. Their food régime, since the installation on their present land, is dominated by the tubers: cassava, yam and potatoes. The proteins and the lipids are essentially provided by the meat of hunt, the bugs (small grasshoppers) and the caterpillars of savanna. They should also have exploited and worked with the copper that they discovered in the zones of Mindouli and Boko-Songho and that they exported toward the Atlantic coast.

Dominique Ngoie Ngalla (1985) referring to the founding myths, reveals that the Teke would come down from Nguunu, this ancestor of most populations of the south-Congo. Successors of the Pygmies (Tswa, Baboongo and Babi) in the penetration in Congo, they occupied a vast territory that Gilles Sautter has delineated from the Mambili (to the north) to the buttresses of the Mayombe. On these vast sites, they founded a big kingdom, rival of the Kongo kingdom. Their king (Onkoo) is known in history under the appellation of Makoko. Under the thrust, nearly simultaneous of the Mbosi to the north and the Kongo to the south, the Teke abandoned vast extended of their territories to confine themselves in their present boundaries where there are in the center vast and arid hills and mountains. How was the contact between Mbosi groups and Teke ones and what results some?

### III. The contact between Mbosi-Teke groups

The contact between the Mbosi with the Teke herein concerns the subgroup Mbosi Olee (for the Mbosi) and the Angungwel (for the Teke group).

#### III.1. Mbosi-Bangangoulou contact and its consequences

This zone of contact occupies the line of borders of the two communities that spreads from the southwesterly extreme of the administrative region of the Plateaux until the Congo river. It doesn't seem to have generated armed confrontations. It resulted, however, that during the arrival of the Mbosi, the Teke abandoned the low zones and swampy areas of the Congolese basin, to move back on the high lands of the plateaux. The aggressive aspect, if it were, is constituted by the non-negotiated installation of the Mbosi on the spaces previously occupied by the Teke. This aggression had lead to the scattering of the Teke groups that didn't recognize the king's authority

anymore (Onko). The fact that testifies this society crisis is the dissidence of the Angungwel.

The non-negotiated occupation of the Teke lands that was without shock generated on behalf of the Mbosi an attitude and a behavior charged of condescension opposite the Teke. The Mbosi qualifies their neighbor "Teke, Boma, Onzina", to tell to him that he is bad, he does not know how to smile, do not share, he does not consider his neighbor with love.

The Angungwel having observed the stop of the massive occupation by the Mbosi, established the pacific cohabitation on one hand with the newcomers and on the other hand settled their dissidence of the king Teke authority. They wanted to constitute an individual group that according to its identification remains a subgroup of Teke. This truth is proven by the essential elements of the Teke civilization that the Angungwel keep: the language, the material adornment, the toponymy, the techniques of culture of the land and the shape of the habitat.

But the group adopted the system of auto-administration of the clans while imitating the neighbour mbosi. In some zones, the Angungwel accepted Otwere like supreme institution for the regulation of the clan powers.

It is therefore comfortable to observe that the Mbosi-Angungwel contact balanced itself by a pacific cohabitation that entailed an interpenetration of Ngala-Teke cultures without succeeding to an absorption of an ethnic group by a part.

In spite of the harmony of the relations in the sectors of the common life, every ethnic group succeeded in keeping the soul of its civilization: the language.

This phenomenon of resistance of the languages in the interpenetration of the cultures is very striking in the very near villages or even shared where one observes the involuntary refusal of the adults to speak the language of the neighbors whereas the children share the two languages in their common games. The colonization that implanted the common administrative centers in Mbosi country, or in Ngungulu country, did not attenuate this resistance of the languages that cohabits for centuries.

Some secular political, socioeconomic and cultural links existed, keep on existing, between the different peoples of Congo. It is in this context that we feel the need to take these luminous words of Dominique Ngoie Ngalla (1981: iv-v) "(...) *The different ethnic groups (of Congo), do not close themselves to the other. There is always a sustained trade, some multiform exchanges brewed men, ideas, sentiments.*"

This can be exactly verified from the consideration of the reports that wove themselves between these ethnic groups in the production of their goods. These reports are tackled below in the following domains:

### III.1.1. Mbosi-Bangangoulou cohabitation

The cohabitation of the Mbosi-Ngungwel civilizations, two Bantu ethnic groups, is a very deep phenomenon that should have raised the attention of the researchers on the analysis of the influence senses within the Bantu civilizations. When the density of the exchanges is strong from one civilization toward another, the conclusion of the research works might translate the reports between the communities governed by the exercise of the power of the civilization exporter on the importer. Gilles Sautter (op.cit.: 246) explains the thrust and the geographical extension of the Teke in Mbosi land by the existence of the former furnaces of copper abandoned by the former Teke in the savanna of Abala. The same author certainly confused the period of the pacific traditional relations between the Mbosi Olee and the Angungwel with the colonial period where the auxiliary Angungwel of the colonial administrators had to rage in the name of the masters their neighbour mbosi, when he writes: *“As for the Mbochi Olé, on the right side of the Alima River, they recognize having been under the control of Ngambaon of the Bangangoulou”* (Sautter, ibid).

We will evoke after the role played by this defector Mbosi in full land of the zone of Pomi in the Angungwel in the adherence of the Angungwel chieftain powers the system of Tsana O Bwa, before accomplishing the missions of the colonization on the Mbosi as Ngapourou of Etoro and Ebara Nkani of Yaba. The Mbosi-Angungwel cohabitation is characterized by a strong interpenetration of cultures, by rich loans, but non-aggressive.

#### III.1.1.1. on a political level

Otwere, supreme institution of political organization of the Ngala societies plays the same role and occupies the same position in the subgroups Teke that adjoins the Mbosi (Itoua 2010). This sharing of the biggest value of civilization is marked better between the Mbosi Olee and the Angungwel that cohabit on the territory between the Alima river (to the north) and Nkeni (to the south).

It is therefore obvious that after their dissidence opposite the power of the Teke king, the Angungwel turned toward the invaders whose demographic pressure already permitted the pacific cohabitation. They adopted the system of organization in chieftain powers of the Mbosi and adhered to their institution of regulation: Otwere. The high values of the Ngungwel civilization are exported from the neighbour Mbosi Olee. The pacific cohabitation of these values of the two communities entailed the affiliation of the Angungwel chieftain powers to systems of hierarchization of the Mara of Olee mbosi and

occupied an ordering there. The testimony of this affiliation is provided by the union of the chieftain powers of the Mpoumpounou zone (Pomi) in the Tsa O Bwa of Asoni by Ngambaon (Ngambomi) of Mbaya. This fetish man that had left the zone of Oleme, fief of Tsana O Bwa, got settled in Mbaya of the Angungwel. Consistent with the realizations in medicine and the demonstrations of his fetishist power, he founded a chieftain powers that he successfully placed over the hierarchy of the chieftain powers of the zone. He did not have any difficulties to place these chieftain powers under the suzerainty of Tsana O Bwa.

The last Tsana on the throne was recognized as Anga moa ‘the owner of the land’ by the Mbosi and Onkoulantsié by the Angungwel. This affiliation, weakened by the colonization, was broken completely by the descendants of Ngambaon who revived royalty in Ngungwel society.

Contrarily, if Mara, mbosi chieftain powers of Olee and Bangangoulou, has its origins in Ngala society, the fashion of representation and pomp of the chiefs, Abiali (sing. Obiali) for the Mbosi; Mpfon for the Angungwel is Teke. Indeed, having appreciated and admired the presentation and the clothing of Teke kings that Angungwel chiefs had kept, the Abiali (chiefs of Mara) adopted this fashion. From then on, the system of chieftain powers Mbosi Olee, the Mara, won an element of difference with the other systems of Mbosi chieftain powers: Ondinga and Okani.

This fashion of presentation and pomp common to the Mbosi Mara and to the Angungwel chieftain powers can be at the origin of the mistake in a survey that could make show the origin of Mara since the former Angungwel (Anzi-nzion). But something must have saved this mistake. It is the historic truth to count the ethnic group of the Angungwel as Teke subgroup, formerly division of kingdom of Makoko. Its political organization in chieftain powers is the consequence of its dissidence opposite the authority of the king and its partial withdrawal of the mother civilization (Teke). It can be assumed in history that the chieftain powers is the system of political organization of the Ngala whose Mbosi form the segment that meets the Teke.

#### III.1.1.2. on a cultural level

The total resemblance of the Ognié-gnié dances of the Angungwel and Olee of the Mbosi is a striking feature of the penetration of the Mbosi culture in the Ngungwel civilization. Ognié-gnié is recognized by the churchgoers and the observers like a geographical variant of Olee.

Ognié-gnié being the central element of Bangangoulou culture, its resemblance with Olee, central element of the culture Mbosi Olee, gives

one of the proofs of the denunciation of the Teke culture by the Angungwel.

In the opposite direction, the Mbosi Olee discover the names of Angungwel chiefs inherited from the Teke highlight the wealth and power of those that carry them, adopt them to designate their chiefs. These names and the fashion of presentation

of pomp of the Abiali carry the few features of difference between Mara and the other systems of chieftain powers of the set of the Mbosi societies. The names of throne Mara and titles of chiefs (Abiali) in Mbosi Olee society come from the toponymy of Teke by the Angungwel. The sample below is an illustration:

System Mbosi		System Angungwel	
Name of the throne	Name of title of chief	Name of the throne	Name of title of chief
Aleme	Nga-Aleme	A-lien	Nga-Alien
Akosso	Nga-Akosso	Ankouélé	Nga-Ankouélé
Ilémina	Nga-Ilémina	Ilien	Nga-Ilien
Aporo	Nga-Aporo	Ampourou	Nga-Ampourou
Ibili	Nga-Ibili	Ibele	Nga-Ibele

Inside of the Mara system, this imitation stops in the Mara and Abiali dubbed Ongwele, that is to say, chieftain powers and chiefs of clan. One notes that the five chiefs of the systems of the Asoni country keep the fashion of designation and presentation of the Ondinga systems and Okani. It is about the big following chiefs: Tsana O Bwa, Mwanzola O Pama, Okoulou Okombi O Bomba, Okoulou Ondey O Konga, Ngangale o Akongo.

Another aspect to note in the Ngala-Teke contact to mean the cultural proximity between the Mbosi Olee and the Angungwel is the fashion of clothing and the adornment, especially, the holding of pomp of the chiefs. Indeed, clothing and the decorum of the Mbosi Abiali was imported before the western penetration from the Teke country.

The present names of the Angungwel make reference to Mbosi names. The sense of this

spreading of names between these two civilizations is to search for while carrying up the origins of these names in the bases rear of every society. One will perceive that the names of the chiefs mbosi olee, as Nga-aporo, Nga - ambehe is not carried by the Kani; they do not exist therefore in the other mbosi subgroups. The fact that the mbosi olee chiefs (Mbosi of the Plateaux) are alone to carry them, provides the proof that these names come from the Teke by the Angungwel interposed.

On the other hand, one can prove that the current names of mbosi passed at the Angungwel with a distortion, especially at the level of the final syllable, while the main syllables remain stable and are sometimes preceded by an Angungwel prefix in some cases. The following chart deals with this aspect:

Mbosi Names	Angungwel Names
Ibara (Ibata in Akwa country, Koyo) Ebata	Ebata (Ebara)
Pami	Mpan
Elenga	Elion
Itoua	Étou
Ikama	Inkiama
Ngolo	Ngouélé
Ossefi	Ossibi (Onsebi)
Ngatsé	Ngatsio (Ngantsio)
Ngalessami	Ngalessan
Ondongo	Ondon
Ignianga	Ignion

The Mbosi and the Angungwel also meet in some elements that construct their respective cultural

identities: cases of the dances and associations. They almost name them in the same way.

Mbosi naming system	Ngungwel naming system
Olee	Ognié-gnié
Imbolo (the lions), association of the hunters of big animals	Angwe Imbouélé (the panthers, the lions), association of the hunters of big animals
Okiera (ritual of nativity or dance of the twins)	Onkiéré (ritual of nativity or dance of the twins)
Odzara (funeral dance rhythm performed by the women)	Odzoou (funeral dance rhythm performed by the women)
Ekiéra (therapeutic dance to take care of the women)	Inkiéré (therapeutic dance to take care of the women)

All these dances have the same music and the same rhythm for the two peoples. Ognié-gnié at the Angungwel is, we expressed it higher, a variant of Olee, which, sister of Ondzombo, descendant of Leso, former popular dance of the Mbosi of the two strands of the Alima.

Ognié-gnié doesn't look like no in Teke, prove that she is well one of the loans of Ngungwel culture in the Mbosi.

The Angungwel adhere to the associations of professions as well that associations of Mbosi age.

Ngala		Teke	
Mbosi	Moye	Ngangoulou	Koukouya
Koumou	Koumou	Ngambou	Ngambou
Pea	Pea	Ngampio	Ngampika
Pourou	Moyou	Mféfé	Mfihira

This cultural exchange and civilization is not the only domain of exchange between the Mbosi Olee and the Angungwel; as it is not the only link between the Mbosi of the other regions and their neighbour Teke of the border margins of the two groups.

#### III.1.1.3. on a matrimonial level

The marriage also exists at inter nationality level. If by pride feeling that often characterizes the winner in a war and/or the conqueror opposite the loser, the Mbosi Olee until 1900s, rarely took the Angungwel women; they have and always favored the marriage of their daughters with their neighbours (Angungwel) that should have known before them the culture of cassava and the yam on the common earths. This is what Gilles Sautter (op. cit.:249) declares: *“The marriages between groups contributed to the ethnic inter-communication. The Banga-Ngoulou married the Mbochi women, the Mbochi the Adjini women.”*

The exchange of big elements of the two cultures can also be the mixed marriages that can be taken in account to explain why the pursuit of the occupation of the Angungwel and Teke lands by the Mbosi did not generate any conflicts for a long time. The freedom of the lands to occupy, is not of course to separate the explanation of this process peacefully practiced, even nowadays.

A contemporary fact deserves to be evoked. It is about the installation, in Mbaya, of Ngambomi (Ngamboon) that left his Mbosi lands. Thanks to his fetishes and his marriage with the Angungwel women, he succeeded in creating a chieftain powers that he ended up imposing to the Angungwel as superior chieftain powers that his descendants raised to the rank of kingdom of Ngamboon.

The dance sporty mbosi, the Mondo, is practiced in some zones of the Angungwel.

He/it is, however, difficult to situate the origin of each of the other dances of the picture above and of the association of the big hunters (Imbolo or Ngwe Imbolo). If the cultural interpenetration between the Mbosi and the Angungwel are proven between other, by the use in common of the names, a big ditch exists however between the Ngala and the Teke in the names to specific significance, as those that designate the twins:

#### III.1.1.4. on an economic level

Very early, the Mbosi and the Teke have established fruitful economic relations but without complex, by exchanges of the very commercial, agricultural and artisanal techniques.

The Mbosi Olee and the Angungwel seem not to have waited for a military war association to establish commercial exchanges between the two groups.

The Mbosi always imported the Angungwel and the Nzikou agricultural products (peanuts, yams, tobacco), the handicraft (cloth, raffia). In return, they export toward the neighbours fish and braids.

These exchanges have been done either by itinerant Angungwel and Boma, or in markets internationalities.

Until very recently, some of these markets were again in function. One mentions: Odoua of Angoulou in Kikila country (Ngungwel of the west north). Here, the Mbosi women of Asoni came to take agricultural products of Ondinga and Olembé. These agricultural products constituted the complement of the food mass that the women of Asoni sent toward the Mbosi of the flooded zones of Ilanga and the left side of the Alima river; Okondzo of Etatahan (Intaa); and Okondzo of Tsampourou.

These two markets had a vocation more inter-ethnic: Tsampourou, especially gathered the Moye, the Angungwel or the Ampoumpou and the Mbosi, even those from the zones moved away from Ondinga and Olembé.

The Moye placed the products of the pottery there: pot, canaries, plates in clay and river products.

The Mbosi of Ondinga exchanged against the pottery, the braids and the boards of ebony wood used to manufacture the dough of kaolin.

The Mbosi and the Angungwel (Teke subgroup) cultivate on them stumble. It is difficult to say without being mistaken what is the first of the two peoples to have discovered this practice to sow on stumble and elevated furrows. But one can advance, without insistence that the Angungwel that are the first on the shared lands, certainly have been the first to have practiced this technique in the culture of peanut and tubers (cassava, yam and potato). If the work of iron seems to have come with each of the peoples on the present site, if the texture of braids can be considered like party of the Mbosi (Ondinga) toward the Angungwel (Oboo), the technique of raffia texture seems to be imported by the Mbosi from the Teke (Boma especially). Raffia cloth is one of the goods that the Boma sent by the itinerant merchants on the Mbosi markets because the local production certainly was not sufficient.

One is mistaken very little while deducting economic relations, especially the company of the same markets by the two peoples, that the interpenetration of the cultures between the Mbosi Olee and the Angungwel are forged by the friendly and interesting meetings.

This interpenetration of the cultures by imitation and adoption of the elements of a culture by the other, is not innocent in the dissidence of Angungwel opposite the authority of Teke king.

Shortly before the colonial penetration in the zone, the history attests strong relations between Tsana O Boua, big chieftain powers Mbosi Olee and the chieftain powers of Mbaya that had just passed in the hands of Ngambomi (Ngaboon). However, what about the cohabitation between the Moye and the Angungwel?

### III.2. Moye-Angungwel cohabitation

The Teke ethnic group, always by the Angungwel group interposed, sharing of the borders with the big Ngala group, not only by the slant of the Mbosi, but also by the slant of the Moye of the sides of the Congo river on both sides of the mouth of the Nkéni river.

As with the Mbosi on the north and west fronts, the Angungwel forged on all points a pacific cohabitation with the Moye, another Ngala subgroup.

#### III.2.1. on a political level

No tale, no narration evokes a contradictory event, nor an intention of domination between the Moye and the Angungwel. However, as the Mbosi, the Moye, to have forced the Angungwel and the other Teke to move back toward the plateaux, had a condescending attitude opposite the neighbours.

This condescension had made that the Moye lordships whose title was, "Ngobila", accepted to assure the security of their Angungwel allies, when

these traveled by dugouts in the waters of the Congo river. However, with the arrival of the Mbosi Ngambomi (Ngambaon) in Mbé (Mbaya) and his recognition by the Angungwel as superior chief of Pomi (Mpoumpou), the Moye moved back and abandoned to the Angungwel the villages that they had founded inside the Angungwel and the epic balanced itself by the establishment of the authority of the Angungwel on the villages: Ntsampourou (Tsaporo), Molendé, Bouanga, Massali, Bouemba, etc.

With the arrival of the French colonists, the Angungwel used the advantage that has been offered by the implantation on their territory of the administrative and commercial centers to reverse the attitude of condescension towards the Moye (as towards the Mbosi Olee).

#### III.2.2. on a social level

The Moye disfavored by the nature because their territory is flooded, are not agriculturists. They are forced to encourage the mixed marriages for two main reasons:

- To obtain the products necessary to the fundamental needs: cassava yam, peanut, tobacco, etc;
- To assure reproduction and to increase their demography.

Let's add that the desire to increase their very weak population pushed the Moye to acquire a lot of slaves by their neighbour Teke (Ngungwel).

#### III.2.3. on a cultural level

Linguistically, the Moye dialects and Ngungwel are very different. However, it is worth mentioning that in several common villages, the populations are bilingual: they speak "Emoyi" and "Engungwèl" at the same time to the extent that it is difficult to classify them in an area or in another.

René Ngatsako (op. cit.:39), going from the definition of the ethnic group developed by Dominique Ngoïe Ngalla, concludes that the Moye form the same ethnic group with the Mbosi and the "Ngangoulou"; he bases his assumption on the abundant exchange of the words found between these languages. It appears that Ngatsako seems to have abused the definition of Dominique Ngoïe Ngalla when drawing this conclusion. Dominique Ngoïe Ngalla underlines three or four elements to specify an ethnic group: the territory, the language, the belief and the custom. However, if the Mbosi (Mbosi Olee), the Moye and the Angungwel cohabiting on a same territory, exchanged some elements of their culture and their belief, as we underlined before, their languages remain unaltered, living and none of them has absorbed another. The Moye, the Mbosi and the Angungwel cannot constitute only one ethnic group; they constructed an area of culture however.

The Moyo and the Angungwel are both Bantu peoples. As the other Bantu of Congo, they have fetishism as their ancestral traditional religion.

As their Mbosi colleagues, when the Moyo féticheurs entered in Ngungwel country, they were more efficient than the natives. This fetishist psychological fact is observed inversely when the Ngungwel féticheurs entered in Moyo zone.

The Moyo, detachment of the Bobangi people, seem to have known the Catholicism before their neighbours; Bolobo in Nounou country is a Catholic center before Gamboma. But there is no source signaling the presence of a center of the teaching of the Catholicism on the Moyo lands. It is true that the evangelists circulated on the two sides of the Congo river to deliver the Christianity religion message.

### III.2.4. on an economic level

As Mbosi, Nounou, Moyo have established intense commercial relations very early with the Angungwel and the Boma. We mentioned more than two inter-ethnic markets that associated the Mbosi, the Moyo and the Angungwel.

The Moyo exchanged fish and the meat of buffalo, smoked boar, there the products of pottery, the plant salt, the clay for manufacture of beauty products (kaolin for example). If they received Mbosi and Angungwel tradesmen, besides the products that we have above stated and the oil of palm, they provided to the other the oil of fruit of a date palm tree (oil of kolo) very appreciated for the kitchen and medicine.

Besides the old local markets (Mbala, Ntsampourou, Entonton, Lessanga, Mbonzi) dedicated to the exchange of the basic products between the Moyo, Angungwel and Mbosi, the markets of a bigger size reinforced the pacific contact of the Moyo with the Teke all along the XX<sup>e</sup> century. Let's mention for example: Mongolo and Balemon for exchanges with the Bomas, Bouemba and Bouanga for the exchanges with Angungwel.

The Moyo are (and stay on this day in the region) the only experts of the work of the clay and the extraction in big quantity of salt. To this effect, Bruno Pinçon (op. cit.:124) writes:

*Far from living in autarky, the Moyo practice the fluvial trade, sometimes leaving their villages for several months, and getting in contact with their neighbours rural Ngangoulou and Mbochi during markets days that take place all the four days.*

This practice of the fluvial trade on Congo by the Moyo (Bobangui), especially the bill of the slaves, has been observed by Jan Vansina (1965:82) who writes:

*The Bobangui, that lived upstream, began to establish permanent camps of fishers all along the Pool and from there to take the Tyo and make them their slaves. Tyo Chiefs reacted regardless of the*

*others, and by 1880 the conflict was solved by an agreement according to which the Bobangi could always trade on the Pool but no they should not found villages. They had always to pay for rights of custom to Tyo chief of the river.*

In the old trade of slaves, Bolobo in Nounou country, was the main port of Mbosi and Angungwel slaves in direction to the Indian ocean, especially when the markets of the Atlantic were closed. On this forehead, the Moyo and the Nounou played the role of mediators and beaters of the faraway tradesmen? The last waves of the slaves that could not have passed the Moyo countries and Nounou integrated these societies.

With the Belgian colonization that made Bolobo an important shopping mall, this Nounou city in front of the Mbosi peoples, Angungwel, had become a point supplier of these peoples in printed cloths, in soap, salt, lamp rages, oil, etc. It is also a point of shelter of young Mbosi and Angungwel escaping the tax and works forced by the French colonization.

### Conclusion

The Bantu peoples, left from their common nilotique origin, are scattered themselves in Africa with which they constitute a bigger human and linguistic group. If the period of their departure from the basin of the Nile and especially the one of their arrival to the sites of their present locations is not known with enough precision, one is convinced however at the end of their migration, often while following different and opposite itineraries, two or three ethnic Bantu groups got contact on one the same territory that they continue to share until nowadays.

The prominent fact is that this contact has been achieved without shock nor armed violence. This is the case we wanted to prove in this article. It is about the contact of the Ngala peoples (the Mbosi and the Moyo) with the Teke people, which after long shaped migrations get contact in Congo.

On the territory of the administrative region of the plateaux, the Mbosi by the subgroup Mbosi Olee and the Moyo succeeded to have a pacific cohabitation and pacified contact with the Angungwel (Bangangoulou), Teke subgroup. This cohabitation balanced itself by interpenetration of cultures and even of "civilizations".

The result of this interpenetration, that we underlined, is the creation of a "culture" area on the territorial space between the Alima and the Nkéni rivers where one can observe many interferences between the Ngala and Teke civilizations. We especially observe that when putting together the main elements of each of culture, every people jealously refer to their origin, language, in the accent and phonology.

This social contract between the two Bantu civilizations, the Ngala and the Teke, is not without any consequence. It permits Ngungwel people to adopt the Mbosi system of political and administrative organization by Otweré, and the divorce (dissidence) of this Teke subgroup with the king's authority.

Nowadays, the institution of the royalty of Ngamboon of the Angungwel can be explained as the will of this people to give up the historic contract with the Mbosi and the return, non-achieved, toward the Teke ethnic identity: to recognize itself as Teke without submissiveness to the authority of the king of Mbé, the Onkoo (Makoko).

## Note

Moutola is the chieftain of Boganda clan whose authority ran till Motokomba village. He died at the time when European arrived in this territory, no one ran this territory after his death. Since then, Mobanda chieftain power came into force coming from Likuba area and settled in Makouanga.

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