

# From Mozambique to New York: The Cosmopolitan Pathways of Kamba Simango, African Disciple of Franz Boas

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Despite the vast literature on Franz Boas, his ethnographic writings about Mozambique remain practically unknown today. The history of anthropology, as told in the consecrated manuals, often takes the form of a saga with heroes, villains, conquests, and a host of more or less prominent supporting characters and authors. The mythical narrative that revolves around the figure of Franz Boas is no exception. One widely accepted version presents him as the founding father of North American anthropology; the promoter of a pluralistic, holistic, relativistic concept of culture. His vast body of work spans from its roots in physical anthropology, passing through linguistic anthropology and before ending in what would later be called cultural anthropology.

There are certain themes that must be viewed as central to Boas's anthropological contributions: his criticism of scientific racism, his attacks on evolutionist thinking, his ethnographic work on the Inuit of Baffin Island, the Kwakwaka'wakw (formerly called Kwakiutl) people, the Tsimshian mythologies – future raw material for some of the works of Lévi-Strauss – and, of course, his work on the potlatch, the ritual that Marcel Mauss would describe, years later, as a "performance of the totally agonistic type". However, this saga does not explain Boas's incipient Africanist sensibility or, more specifically, his writings about the central region of present-day Mozambique, populated by the Ndau (Mandau or Vandau in the plural) whose language, Chindau or Xindau, is a variant of Shona (a language also spoken

in present-day Zimbabwe). Boas wrote five articles about this group, one of which was co-authored with Kamba Simango [1] (1890–1966), a Ndaou who studied at Columbia University between 1919 and 1923. In the following pages I will look at this missing piece of anthropology's history, and therefore at the details and vicissitudes of this ethnographic dialogue between Boas and Simango.

My examination of the relationship between Franz Boas and Kamba Simango is based on an exchange of unpublished letters. During my post-doctoral research in the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University, I conducted a documentary survey and visited the places where Simango lived during his time in New York. His correspondence comprises 28 letters exchanged between 1917 and 1927. Of these, 11 correspond to the dialogue maintained between Boas and Simango. The other letters, also related to this collaborative relationship, were exchanged between Boas and two other figures who had contributed to making this ethnographic connection possible: the musicologist Natalie Curtis (1875–1921) and the banker and philanthropist George Foster Peabody (1852–1938).

I was already familiar with the pioneering article by the Angolan nationalist Mário Pinto de Andrade (1989), in which he analyses Simango's trajectory as one of "protonationalism." However, Andrade's article provides little information about the relationship between Simango and Boas. At Columbia, I also had access to the unpublished doctoral thesis of John Keith Rennie, defended in 1973 at Northwestern University, entitled *Christianity, Colonialism, and the Origins of Nationalism among the Ndaou of Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1935*.

At the time, it was no small detail that Rennie had analysed the historical-political dynamics of a possible Ndaou ethnic nationalism – a possibility that was certainly an inconvenience to nationalists on both sides (Southern Rhodesia [Zimbabwe] and Mozambique). In fact, for the respective independentist leaders, the ethnicist – or "tribalist," as they would say – project should have been neutralized and domesticated in the name of national unity and the struggle against colonialism. Perhaps for this reason, Rennie's thesis was never published. From 1975 on, especially in the former Portuguese colonies, it was politically infeasible to construct objects of analysis involving "ethnic nationalism" or similar phenomena.

Leon P. Spencer's book (2013) also offers detailed information on the relationship between Simango and the North American missionaries. In this article, though, I focus my analysis on the letters that I researched at Columbia, [2] which reference the ethnographic collaboration that took place between Boas and Simango.

## "A Full-Blood Native of the Vandau Tribe"

Kamba Simango was born in 1890, in Machanga District, on the coast of present-day Mozambique (Sofala Province). In general terms, Simango's trajectory is similar to that of so many young Africans educated in the Protestant missions established on the African continent from the nineteenth century. In 1905, he moved to Beira and began to attend the school of the missionary Fred Bunker (1859–1946), a member of the American Board of

Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Morier-Genoud, 2011). The territories of this region, Manica and Sofala, were under the administration of the privately owned Companhia de Moçambique, to which the Portuguese government had granted privileges for the exploitation of minerals, agriculture, and livestock. The missionary school was soon prohibited from continuing its activities due to conflicts with the local authorities, and Fred Bunker sent his students, including Simango, to the mission school in Mount Selinda, Southern Rhodesia, close to the border with Mozambique.

In 1913, at the age of 23, Simango was sent to study at institutions that the American Board maintained in South Africa. He spent one year at Lovedale and a period at Adams College, in Natal, where the president of the African National Congress, Albert Luthuli, would also later study. Due to his good academic performance, Simango received the support of the missionaries to continue his studies and transferred to the Hampton Institute in Virginia, the United States, where he stayed until 1919. This was an institution where African American and African students learned “arts and crafts”, in addition to studying theoretical subjects. Simango specialized in carpentry. At the Hampton Institute he met musicologist and folklorist Natalie Curtis (Wick Patterson, 2010). It was through this connection that Kamba Simango first began to develop an interest in ethnography. Later, with Simango's collaboration, Curtis designed a project to record and transcribe Ndaou music (Curtis, 2002 [1920]). She was already aware of the work of Franz Boas at this point.

On several occasions, Curtis relied on her acquaintance with Boas to dispel doubts or clarify questions concerning her first project on African music, but she made no written reference to Simango. In a letter dated March 20, 1917, on the eve of the publication of *Negro Folk Song*, she wrote about the book to Boas. She mentioned the challenges she had encountered in preparing it and referred to Boas as “an authority on African issues”. [3]

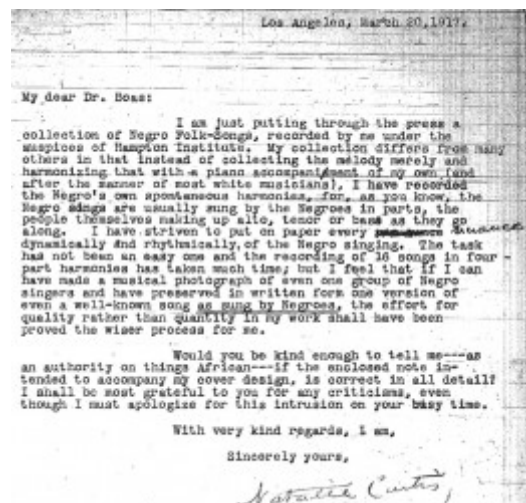


Fig. 1

Letter from Natalie Curtis to Franz Boas, explaining the details of her project on “Negro Folk-Songs” in which Kamba Simango participated.

At this time, another character appears in the letters: George Foster Peabody. Born in the

state of Georgia, Peabody's trajectory typified the paradigmatic figure of a banker and philanthropist of the era. During his life, he supported schools and universities from which many African Americans and Africans graduated: the Hampton Institute, where Simango himself studied; Tuskegee University; Ft. Valley Industrial School; and the University of Georgia, among others. Peabody served on the boards of numerous schools and philanthropic organizations.

In 1919, after his time at the Hampton Institute, Simango was sent to the Columbia University Teachers College where, just before coming into contact with Boas, he began his studies under the supervision of Mabel Carney, an expert in "rural education" who had just been named a "full-time" professor. It is curious that during the four years that Simango remained under the supervision of Carney there was hardly any dialogue between her and Boas (Weiler, 2005; Glotzer, 2005).

On November 24, 1919, Natalie Curtis finally sent a letter in which she presented Simango to Boas. She mentioned Simango's deep interest in *The Mind of Primitive Man*, which Boas had published in 1911. [4] She spared no words in praise of Kamba, a "full-blood native of the Vandau tribe":

My dear Dr. Boas,

May I introduce to you Kamba Simango, from Portuguese East Africa, a full-blood [sic] native of the Vandau tribe, who speaks Zulu as well as his own tongue and came to this country direct from Africa. He was sent by missionaries to take the industrial and Academic training at Hampton Institute, where he promoted last year. Simango is now studying at Columbia and is most anxious to meet you because of his great interest in your book "The Mind of Primitive Man". If you have time to see Simango I should be most glad. He is extremely intelligent and has a fine, well-praised and capital mind. He was my principal informant in my study of the native African songs and songs-poems and is well versed in the love of his people as he comes originally from a pagan kraal and is the nephew of a diviner (or "witch doctor" as they are called by the whites)... [5]

This would not be the first time that Curtis would insist on Simango's supposed cultural "purity". The musicologist had expressed the same type of primordialist concern in relation to North American Indians, among whom she had also conducted musical surveys. Later, Curtis's racist focus would clash with Boas's anthropological arguments. It is necessary, therefore, to place her considerations in context, as specific derivations of broader concerns linked to the future of the nation of the United States. These anxieties stem from circumstances involving the expansion of the frontier and the increasing violence used against the Native Americans.

After Curtis's letter of introduction, Simango and Boas met to discuss their respective plans. Between March and April of 1920, Simango began to develop some work with Boas, concentrating primarily on the study of the grammar of the Chindau language. However, more systematic work would begin a few months later, with the support of George Foster

Peabody. On May 5, 1920, Boas wrote to Peabody in order to secure funding to develop a project about Ndaou culture, with the collaboration of Simango. The anthropologist sought to ascertain details for the research with Kamba Simango in New York. During this collaboration, Kamba maintained his institutional affiliation with the Teachers College.

Boas's plan consisted, literally, of "being able to capture and systematize everything that Simango knew [about Africa] and then to write it up and ultimately send it back in the form of a more refined anthropological analysis". [6] Simango could then return to Africa with the results of this material and once there in the field, would be able to investigate any unclear or uncertain aspects of the work already completed. In his letter to Peabody, Boas praises Simango, describing him as "very intelligent" and "deeply interested". Boas's objective was clear: to retain Simango for one academic year at Columbia University and thus continue their barely-initiated ethnographic dialogue. The agreement and the details of the plan continued to be addressed, this time in the presence of Simango, in an anthropological meeting that took place at Boas's house.

By the end of April 1920, Peabody and Simango had already discussed, in person, the issues mentioned by Boas in his letter. The response – positive – to Boas's proposal was immediate. It was then necessary to ascertain the exact date when Boas would want to begin the work with Kamba and thus continue the research. The details concerning the budget for his living expenses in New York also had to be defined. Although he was unable to go to Boas's house to discuss the project personally, Peabody's support was already confirmed. [7]

Following the meeting with Simango, Boas wrote to Peabody immediately, presenting details about the material conditions for the development of the project. In this letter, Boas also demonstrates his negotiation skills. He had to be able to convey to Peabody the idea that while Simango could come up with a little money on his own for his future stay in New York, it would not be sufficient to cover his expenses in the city, and so Peabody's support was critical. [8] On September 20, 1920, Boas and Simango began working on this new project.

Five articles resulted from the anthropological collaboration between Boas and Simango. One of them was published in the *Journal of American Folklore* and signed by them both: "Tales and Proverbs of the Vandau of Portuguese South Africa" (1922). The other four articles were signed by Boas. Three of them, published in German in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, deal with religion, kinship, and everyday life: "Der Seelenglaube der Vandau" (1920-21); "Das Verwandtschaftssystem der Vandau" (1922); and "Ethnographische Bemerkungen über die Vandau" (1923). The fourth, "The Avunculate among the Vandau" (1922), was published in *American Anthropologist*. Of the three articles published in German, two were republished in English in Boas' famous book *Race, Language, and Culture* (1940). However, this collaboration would have other consequences that proved decisive in the development of African studies in the United States.

At the beginning of 1923, when Melville Herskovits arrived at Columbia, Boas put him in touch with Simango. The dialogue between the two would culminate in Herskovits's doctoral

thesis, *The Cattle Complex in East Africa*, published in instalments in the *American Anthropologist* (1926a; 1926b; 1926c), and an article about the Vandau, also published in the *American Anthropologist*: “Some Property Concepts and Marriage Customs of the Vandau” (1923). Simango’s contribution to this initial phase of African anthropology was not limited to his dialogues with Boas and Herskovits. A few years later, Henri-Philippe Junod, son of the eminent ethnographer and missionary Henri-Alexandre Junod, obtained valuable information from Simango after the latter returned to Mozambique. Following this other ethnographic dialogue, about which we know very little, Junod wrote two essays: “Les cas de possession et l’exorcisme chez les Vandau” (1934) and “Coutumes diverses des Vandau de l’Afrique Orientale Portugaise. Mariage. Divination. Coutumes et tabous de chasse” (1937). Simango also collaborated with the missionary and ethnographer Dora Earchy (see Gaitskell, 1998) who, in 1931, published a short essay entitled “The VaNdau of Sofala” in the journal *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, as well as the articles “Sundry Notes of the Vandau of Sofala, Portuguese East Africa” (1930), “Notes on the ‘Totemism’ of the VaNdau” (1931) and “A VaNdau Ordeal of Olden Times” (1935).

*Tales and Proverbs of the Vandau of Portuguese S. Africa. 151*

TALES AND PROVERBS OF THE VANDAU OF  
PORTUGUESE SOUTH AFRICA.

BY FRANZ BOAS AND C. KAMBA SIMANGO.

THE following tales were written by Kamba Simango, a native of Portuguese South Africa. The written material was dictated to Franz Boas and rewritten by him. The revised copy was again corrected by Kamba Simango, whose mother tongue is the Chindau of the coast.

The alphabet used, so far as consistent with accuracy, is that used by the Mashona missionaries.

Vowels: a, e (open), i, o (open), u.

Long vowels (due to contraction) are indicated by a superior period following the vowel, as a'. These are always strongly accented. There is no significant pitch in Chindau, such as occurs in some of the neighboring dialects, as Sechuana. The only exception noted is the second person singular mû (low tone), while the third person mú has the high tone. Accented syllables, however, have a raised pitch.

Fig. 2

First page of the article “Tales and proverbs of the Vandau of Portuguese South Africa” authored by F. Boas and K. Simango (1922)

In the biography of Franz Boas written by Melville J. Herskovits (1953), the name of Kamba Simango, and the ethnography of the Ndau people that they worked on together, appears on at least two occasions (pp. 63, 68). George W. Stocking Jr. (1982) provides an extensive list of Boas’ intellectual production, which began in 1885 and culminated in 1966 with the posthumous publication of *Kwakiutl Ethnography*. Unfortunately, the works on the Mandau (or Vandau) of Mozambique are missing from this list. As is well known, many Indigenous thinkers or “Native” anthropologists influenced the work of Franz Boas. These include Ella Cara Deloria, born into a Yankton Dakota (Sioux) family; William Jones (of a white father, but educated by his mother of Meskwaki (Fox) origin); Archie Phinney from the “Nez Perce” or Nimiipuu nation, located in what is now the state of Idaho; Zora Neale Hurston, one of the first Black women to pursue graduate studies in anthropology at Columbia University. Ned



Blackhawk's and Isaiah Lorado Wilner's edited volume (2018) analyses the trajectories of these intellectuals and others. Nevertheless, Simango's name is not mentioned (see also the critical review by Lewis, 2018). In this paper, however, I will not speculate about the reasons for this gradual process of invisibilization. [9]

## Cosmopolitan Itineraries

On June 1, 1922, Kamba Simango and Kathleen Easmon (1891–1924) were married in the Wilton Connecticut Congregational Church. Born on the Gold Coast (Ghana), Kathleen was the daughter of physician John Farrell Easmon (1856–1900), a native of Sierra Leone and descended from an important Creole (Krio) family. John F. Easmon had left Freetown in 1880 and moved to Accra, where he worked as chief medical officer for the Gold Coast government. At the time, the Krio diaspora was passing through a period of intense flow of migrants between London, Freetown, and Accra. Kathleen Easmon had been deeply influenced, both academically and politically, by her aunt Adelaide Casely-Hayford (1868–1960), married to Gold Coast lawyer Joseph Ephraim Casely-Hayford (1866–1930). Her aunt was highly active in Sierra Leone, as president of the Freetown Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and, for a short spell, as president of the local chapter of the Women's League, a branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) founded by Marcus Garvey (1887–1940). Kathleen had studied at the Royal College of Arts in South Kensington, London, and had met Kamba at the Hampton Institute when she was traveling in the United States with her aunt to raise funds for educational activities in Africa.

Even though the dialogue between Simango and Boas had begun to show good results, the missionaries had other plans for Kamba and Kathleen. The American Board was planning to launch a new missionary office in Mozambique. It should be noted that in 1907, the American Board had experienced some difficulty in continuing its mission due to conflicts with the local authorities. Tensions between the Protestant churches and the colonial administration were recurrent, largely due to the supposedly “denationalizing” threat posed by the Protestants. The presence of “nationals” like Simango could minimize this perceived risk and open a door for negotiations with the Portuguese administration. As Leon P. Spencer (2013) showed, the microconflicts between the administration and the American Board in Beira led to the “flight” to Mount Selinda (present-day Zimbabwe).

When Fred Bunker, who was in charge of the American Board, moved to Beira in 1905, the situation had seemed relatively straightforward. The governor of the Mozambique Company had granted Africans permission to attend night classes at the mission. The students responded with enthusiasm, but, a few months later, the new governor, Pinto Basto, took office and hostilities commenced. A series of rumours began to circulate, including the claim that Bunker was inciting anti-Portuguese sentiment among the Africans. The permits and passes allowing Africans to attend the American Board School were revoked, although students continued to take night classes clandestinely. There were persecutions and punishments. Finally, Bunker decided to close the school. He polled his students to find out

who among them would be willing to move to Mount Selinda, in Rhodesia, where the American Board had another office. Simango was among the group of eighteen young Africans who decided to leave Beira. Shortly afterwards, in 1910, the Republic of Portugal was established, bringing with it a series of new changes in relation to the presence of missionaries in the colonies. According to Malyn Newitt (1995: 435), the idea was to establish “secular” missions. This would prove to be a failure.

Around 1923, Simango, having now graduated, was supposed to return to Mozambique to inaugurate and supervise the new missionary office in Gogoi. But for this to be possible, the Portuguese administration required him to learn Portuguese. As someone who had left Mozambique while still young, studying first in South Africa and then in the United States, Kamba did not speak Portuguese fluently. The missionaries financed a brief trip to London, where both Kamba and Kathleen studied Portuguese grammar, followed by a period in Lisbon to perfect their language study. The trip was decisive for their pan-Africanist and political experiences.

On April 28, 1924, Kathleen Easmon Simango sent a detailed letter to the missionaries of the American Board recounting their arrival in London and their first activities in Lisbon. The Simangos had arrived in London on June 3, 1923. They took a summer course at King's College taught by the missionary council as part of their preparatory activities. Kamba had classes in Portuguese phonetics at University College. In London, they met many African students, participated in artistic events, and immersed themselves in the pan-Africanist environment of the diaspora. In November of that year, Simango participated in the Third Pan-Africanist Conference, organized in London, which was also attended by W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963). It was a pivotal moment in the history of pan-Africanism and the critique of Portuguese colonialism, given that one of the objectives of Du Bois, the mastermind of the event, was to raise awareness of the brutality of the forced labour imposed by Portugal in Angola and on the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe. It is worth remembering that one year later, in 1924, at the request of the League of Nations, Edward Alsworth Ross (1866–1951) would publish his report on forced labour in the Portuguese colonies.

Preparations for the meetings in Lisbon and London were difficult. There appeared to be some misunderstandings with the African representatives in Paris, who ended up not attending. Du Bois had originally hoped to hold a third session in Paris, but the French newspapers had begun to publicize the rumour that the event was associated with the polemical figure of Marcus Garvey. This false information had negative consequences. In fact, Du Bois's pan-Africanist thinking was diametrically opposed to Garvey's exclusivist and radical ideas.

The London event took place on November 7 and 8, 1923. Besides W. E. B. Du Bois himself, the delegates included the prominent British socialist Harold Laski (professor at the London School of Economics), Mrs Ida Gibbs Hunt, Bishop Vernon (African Methodist Episcopal Church), Dr John Alcindor (London), Chief Kofi Amoah III (Gold Coast Africa), and Sir Sidney Olivier (Governor of Jamaica), among others. Kamba Simango was also present, and despite



being from Mozambique, the lecture he gave was about the colonial situation in Angola. Perhaps this choice of subject for his conference led Simango to decide on his next destination; before Mozambique, he would sojourn briefly in Angola, where the missionaries of the American Board also had a mission.

The Lisbon session began on December 1. The main driving force behind the Portuguese session of the Pan-Africanist Congress was José de Magalhães (1867–1937), who convinced W. E. B. Du Bois of the need to hold the meeting in Portugal. Magalhães was born in Moçamedes (Angola) and had studied medicine in Lisbon in 1889. Despite having spent a short time in Paris from 1903 to 1904, studying at the Institute of Colonial Medicine, he was appointed professor at the Instituto de Medicina Tropical in Lisbon. Magalhães was close to some important figures of the republican period, including António de Brito Camacho. According to Hill (1995: 103), following the republican revolution in 1910, José de Magalhães would be called to head the committee for educational affairs. Identified with moderate socialism and reformism, he played a central role in the African League.

The African League, headquartered in Lisbon, was born out of the republican fervour, having arisen as the result of an internal split from the Junta da Defesa dos Direitos de África (JDDA), a federation of Portuguese-African Associations, founded in 1912. The faction that founded the African League adopted a more moderate, conciliatory tone towards Portuguese colonial interests. The League would include blacks, mestizos, and even whites among its leaders.

W. E. B. Du Bois arrived in Lisbon on November 30, 1923. He was received by the representatives of the African League with full honours. One of the most important biographers of Du Bois, David Levering Lewis (2001: 116), has described this arrival in Portugal in some detail. “The format at Lisbon,” said Lewis, “approximated London’s with two days of presentations covering the history of the pan-African movement; conditions in Portugal’s most advanced colony, São Tomé; the past and contemporary state of Africans in the United States; and the future of pan-Africanism.” Kathleen and Kamba Simango were still in London and unable to take part.

In London, in October 1923, Kathleen underwent surgery for appendicitis. After several weeks in recovery, the couple were ready to travel to Lisbon. Kamba travelled first, in January 1924, and Kathleen arrived a month later, accompanied by her mother. One week before traveling, Kathleen held a radio conference in London. She was the first person of African descent in England to have conducted this type of intervention: “...despite all my public interventions having been canceled, I could now face a broader audience in a way in which I had never before been able to achieve”. [10] In Lisbon, Kathleen and Kamba continued their language studies and lived in a house provided by the missionaries, together with other young American Board missionaries preparing to leave for Angola.

While Kathleen was teaching handicrafts to Portuguese youths on the premises of the YWCA, Kamba was immersed in his studies of Portuguese. Both were waiting for the authorization of the missionaries for them to relocate to Mozambique. But as Kathleen wrote, their

situation was still unresolved because they needed to obtain the agreement of the Portuguese authorities too. It was the eve of the *Estado Novo* (New State) and the new times, both in the metropolis and in the colonies, were not easy for the Protestant churches. In June 1924, Kathleen returned to London to attend to some outstanding commitments and participate in several conferences, planning to return to Lisbon in August. She developed an infection from peritonitis, however, a complication from her previous surgery, and died on July 20 without Kamba present.

Despite the plans that the American Board missionaries had for Kamba Simango, Franz Boas was still hopeful that his friend and disciple had a future as an anthropologist. When Boas learnt that Kamba would be spending time in Lisbon, he had no qualms writing a letter of recommendation to the most important Portuguese anthropologist at the time, José Leite de Vasconcelos (1858–1941). The letter, dated May 28, 1923, introduced Kamba Simango as a curious and competent student of the ethnology of “his people,” the Vandau:

My dear Sir:

Permit me to introduce my friend Mr. Kamba Simango, a native of Portuguese Southeast Africa, who is going back there as a teacher after taking the steps demanded by the Portuguese administration in order to qualify for such a position.

Mr. Simango is a capable and interested student of the ethnology of his people, the Vandau. He has worked here with me for several years, and I shall take the liberty of sending you some of the publications which he and I have prepared jointly. Mr Simango plans to use his time for advancing his study of the Vandau.

Any help that you may be able to render him will be greatly appreciated. [11]

It is unlikely that Simango ever contacted José Leite de Vasconcelos. His commitments to the missionaries, the death of Kathleen, and the uncertainties surrounding the agreement with the Portuguese authorities for the establishment of an affiliate of the mission in Mozambique, did not afford him sufficient peace to return to anthropology.

In October 1924, Simango sent a long letter to Boas from Lisbon, in which, besides telling him about Kathleen’s death, he expressed his concern over the future of their ethnographic collaboration, while committing himself to completing it: “I will still do the work that we planned”. The tone of the narrative is simultaneously one of friendship and of a professional academic relationship. At times, it seems to be a farewell letter. In other passages, Simango thanks Boas for having taught him “to love and value the traditions of my people”. At the end of the letter, he refers to some “pamphlets” that Boas had sent him to correct. We do not know whether these were pamphlets or flyers, as they are never again mentioned in their correspondence. It is likely, however, that these pamphlets or research forms were related to the ethnographic material Kamba was compiling. [12]

In this letter, we can see a close relationship and mutual recognition as the building blocks

for the ethnographic dialogue that developed between them. In March 1925, eight months after the death of Kathleen, Simango married again. Christine Mary Coussey, his new companion, was also from the Gold Coast (Ghana), a town called Axim. She was Kathleen's cousin. Before meeting Simango, she had studied at Wesleyan Girls' High School in Cape Coast and then moved to England with her sister and her aunt to pursue her studies at Brighton College. She had also studied "home economics" in Kent and then worked as a secretary in London. During this period, she returned to Accra to work as a secretary in the recently-formed Agricultural-Cultural Society of the Gold Coast. In 1923, she returned to London with her father and met up with her cousin Kathleen, then married to Kamba. After Kathleen's death, Kamba and Christine maintained a long-term correspondence that finally led to marriage. According to John Keith Rennie, Christine Coussey (who, like other members of the Krio elite of the West African Coast, had also visited Senegal and France) played an important role in strengthening Kamba's pan-Africanist convictions (Rennie, 1973: 390–391).



Fig. 3

Kamba Simango.

Natalie Curtis "From Kraal to College. The story of Kamba Simango" In: *The Outlook*, September, 129(2), 1921

## The Final Dialogue

Before moving to Mozambique, Kamba and Christine spent several months at the Chisamba Evangelical Mission in the central Angolan highlands. Finally, on September 11, 1926, they arrived in Beira, Mozambique. At first, the couple spent some time at the headquarters of the American Board in Mount Selinda, near the Rhodesian/Mozambican border. In 1927, with the approval of the Portuguese authorities, they moved to Gogoi (Gogoyo), which was the mission's only permanent support base in the Manica and Sofala territories. In Gogoi, Kamba, in collaboration with Christine and Bede Simango, directed a school attended by a hundred students, primarily dedicated to teaching Portuguese and the "industrial" arts. [13]

On May 10, 1927, Boas, who had not given up on his anthropological advances to Simango, sent a letter to the Gogoi headquarters. Boas wanted to know if Simango still wished to continue the ethnographic work they had begun at Columbia. At that time, the second edition of Henri-Alexandre Junod's great ethnography on the Tsonga of southern Mozambique had just been published, *The Life of a South African Tribe*. Boas wanted Simango to continue writing about "the customs of his people", just as Junod had written about the Tsonga:

My dear Mr. Simango,

It is a very long time since I have heard from you. You wrote to me from Lisbon and I wrote you a long letter in reply [...] I am wondering whether you are still interested in the work that we were doing together here and whether you would not care to continue to do some work of the same kind, writing down the customs of your country as Dr. Junod has done so successfully for the Tsonga. I think I should be able to get some money to repay you for your trouble if you would undertake to do such work. [14]

At this point, Simango was quite busy with the tasks demanded of him at the new mission in Gogoi. Authorization from the Portuguese administration for the functioning of the office had been issued in April 1927. Simango nevertheless still showed interest in continuing the collaboration and replied to Boas that the people living in areas surrounding the mission remained "primitive", untouched by the influence of any "Western civilization". For this reason, it was possible to collect interesting material about the "customs" and "folklore" of the region.

Dear Dr. Boas

Please forgive me for not replying to your letter dated May 10. It arrived just as I was about to leave for the Buzi land survey, I did not return till the early part of September and then had to go to Mt. Silinda for a special mission meeting. Needless to say I was delighted to hear from you and very interested in what you ask about and suggest that I might do.

Since we left Lisbon in December of 1925, we have done much travelling and been constantly on the move so that we are very thankful now that there is some possibility of our settling down.

In this particular place of Gogoyo and the surrounding district the people are very primitive and outside the mission influence have hardly been touched by any kind of Western civilization. With this background I hope to be able to gather some useful and interesting information about customs and folklore which I will send on to you to make use of. [15]

Boas answered immediately. He was not particularly interested in Simango's missionary activities, although he expressed his satisfaction that the Gogoi school was going well. Boas emphasized the idea that the survey of the "customs" and "tales" of the group should be conducted in the local language with "interleaved" translations. He asked whether Simango had received the volume of Henri-Alexandre Junod's ethnography he had sent several weeks

before. In that same year, Clement Martyn Doke's book about the Lamba of Northern Rhodesia had also appeared, and Boas was happy to send Simango a copy of this too. [16] Evoking Doke's name was no accident. Doke was a former Baptist missionary who, in the 1930s, became one of the most important linguists and ethnographers of Sub-Saharan Africa. Was Boas wishing the same future for Simango?

The anthropological hopes that Boas placed in Simango would remain unfulfilled. Despite the enthusiasm of both parties to proceed with the work, the circumstances of the period imposed considerable obstacles. The next few years would involve intense work for Simango and, at the same time, growing tensions and conflicts with his superiors at the American Board.

During his training in Portugal, Simango had received a full salary, equivalent to that of an actual missionary. When he returned to Mozambique in 1926, his salary was halved on the grounds that the American Board's policy was not to elevate their African employees far above their own countrymen. It was the beginning of an irreversible conflict. Later, Simango would accuse his superiors of not being consistent with Christian principles. Behind this wage discrimination there lurked racial discrimination:

From what we have received in the way of treatment from the Board, we can only deduce the following, that it is not that we do not have the qualifications to do the work here as most missionaries but simply because we are Africans and therefore considered a "problem" [...] Could it be possible that the American Board in this year of our Lord 1931 can still be swayed by a spirit of dividing people into nationals to such an extent that they make us feel that we must be very different from the rest of workers? (apud. Rennie, 1973: 398).

Simango's revolt and his boldness towards the directors of the American Board had evolved significantly. In the transition from 1934 to 1935, and after a series of quarrels and mutual accusations, the break between Simango and the missionaries was complete. At that time, the Negrophile Guild of Manica and Sofala (the word "Guild" was later replaced by "Nucleus") was founded in the city of Beira. The sources that discuss Simango's role in the founding of the guild are ambiguous. A consensus exists, however, that he had a major influence in the origins of this association. The context of political changes and interpersonal distrust led to the final breakdown of the dialogue between Simango and the directors of the American Board.

Faced with this new challenge and no longer able to rely on the protection of the missionaries, Simango had to seek new ways to ensure his family's survival. In March 1936, he left Mozambique for good and moved to Ghana with his wife and two children, Louis and David. Little is known about his time in Ghana, but he lived there until his death. [17] It is possible that his wife's familiarity with the country, as well as that of his old diaspora colleagues, made settling there less difficult.

## Final Comments: Africanizing Franz Boas?

In concluding, it should be noted that when he met Simango, Boas's ethnographic experience was already immense. His model for the ethnographic "informant" was the Kwakiutl (Kwakwaka'wakw) George Hunt – brought up in a Kwakiutl village but the son of an English father and a Tlingit mother – with whom Boas maintained a professional relationship and a friendship over decades. Without Hunt's collaboration (he was bilingual in English and Kwakiutl), Boas would never have been able to conduct his research among this people, let alone develop his linguistic contributions on the group. The collaboration, however, was reciprocal in that Boas had provided Hunt with grammatical and phonetical methods to better transcribe the Kwakiutl language. The dialogue between Boas and Simango was, then, permeated by these previous ethnographic experiences.

Meanwhile, by virtue of his contact with anthropology, and of his social ties to a series of eminent personalities, educators, and activists, mostly from West Africa, Kamba Simango developed a mixture of a moderated ethnic pride and a strong pan-Africanist sensibility. However, we need to set this pride within a much broader and more ambiguous context. Let us recall that the ideology of the missionaries entailed making the Africans develop within their own sociocultural environment. In the segregationist language of the subsequent years, this was condensed in the formula "separate but equal". This objective meant valuing African uniqueness without sacrificing the civilizatory imperatives, a dual requirement that reflected the particularist–universalist tension at the same time. Kamba Simango was not exempt from this apparent dilemma.

It should be remembered, incidentally, that the years Simango spent in New York coincided with the beginning of the so-called Harlem Renaissance, a time when the burgeoning voices of pan-Africanism began to be heard among a host of black writers, poets, painters, sculptors, and musicians. In Simango's case, this environment of Afrocentric cultural effervescence was incorporated into his dialogue with Boas. The energizing of the urban environment by the Harlem Renaissance fed the aspirations of a wide array of Africans and African Americans in the New York of the era. In April 1921, for example, Simango produced a musical and theatrical performance together with Kathleen Easmon and Madikane Cele at the New York Town Hall to raise funds for the Washington Conservatory of Music, a centre where many African Americans studied. In April 1922, he participated as a dancer in the play *Taboo*, presented at the Sam H. Harris Theater in Harlem. The main role in *Taboo* was performed by the famous black actor Paul Robeson (1898–1976), who was a close friend of Simango. Both Simango and his second wife, Christine, were also friends of the singer Roland Hayes (1887–1977), one of the first African American tenors to achieve international success (Brooks & Sims, 2015). These public rituals of "recognition", as well as Simango's ethnomusicological experiences with Natalie Curtis and the interest that Franz Boas invested in him through their ethnographic discussions, contributed to his valorization of his own African and Ndaub background. Nonetheless – and this is the seeming paradox – this "return" to Africa was also the result of a markedly cosmopolitan and modern experience. In



**NEGRO MUSICAL BENEFIT.**

A performance was given in the Town Hall last evening for the benefit of the Washington Conservatory of Music, intended to be a centre of American negro music and dramatic art. It was by negro musicians and actors, including native Africans now in this country. Miss Kathleen Easmon, Kamba Simango and Madikane Qanderane Cele. The last two are the ones who furnished the material for Mrs. Natalie Curtis Burlin's book on the songs and tales of Africa, recently published.

The entertainment comprised three divisions: Scenes of natives Africans at home in costume; ante-bellum times in America, and modern numbers. The African scenes included songs and chants in several African languages, among which were the "Eulogy of the King" and the "Elephant Hunt" by Kumba Elmango, and a short interlude of the kind of African legend "The Land of Shadows," by Miles Casson, to music by R. Overidge-Taylor.

Brief news on the participation of Kamba Simango in a theatrical performance at Town Hall.

The fate that awaited the Vandau ethnography was diametrically opposite to the popularity enjoyed today by Junod's ethnography of the Tsonga of southern Mozambique, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, first published in English in 1912 (Harries, 2007). Junod's work was translated into Portuguese for the first time in 1946. It was later republished in 1974 and 1996. In Mozambique today, Junod's ethnography is debated by a diverse range of authors, including missionaries, filmmakers, writers, intellectuals of Tsonga origin, anthropologists, artists, and philosophers. To take one example, the work of the famous Mozambican visual artist Malangatana (of Tsonga origin) cannot be comprehended without this legacy.

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absorbed into the narrative corpus on the construction of Mozambiqueness and its dilemmas? Can we consider the transcriptions – musical scores and lyrics – of Vandau songs made by Natalie Curtis with Simango's assistance part of this ethnography too? Beyond the historical questions, the present article has sought to encompass the contemporary debate on the ethical and political reach of ethnographic authority (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). As I mentioned earlier, Boas's writings on the Vandau – published in English and German – are dispersed among journals and books. A single unified compilation of this ethnography was never published. This dispersal made access to these writings difficult. More worrying still though – from the ethical and scientific viewpoints – is the fact that, despite Kamba Simango being a central protagonist of the work, as research assistant and co-author, Mozambican readers have been unable to access the Vandau ethnography.

In the last twenty years, debates on repatriation have grown, especially in the field of studies concerning the relationship between archaeology and colonialism (Bray, 2001; Kolshus, 2011; Watkins, 2006). Can this discussion be extended to the field of ethnography? Is it possible to – paraphrasing here the well-known book by Schumaker (2001) on Max Gluckman and his disciples – “Africanize” Franz Boas? As we know, these kinds of ethnographic challenges are present mainly in the work of James Clifford, whose reflections deal with questions concerning authorship, as well as exploring the possibility of the “reinscription” of ethnographies by their own protagonists. Beyond historical interests, therefore, we should pay attention also to the possibility of a “second life” for the Vandau ethnography. Perhaps the best-known case of such an “open-ended” ethnographic experience is the James Walker collection of Lakota texts, written in the early twentieth century. These texts are now being used by present-day Lakotas as part of their contemporary indigenous identity and cultural demands (Clifford, 1988).

In contemporary Mozambique, the ethnonym Vandau is linked to tragic events in the country's recent history: the civil war that began in 1976 and lasted until 1992, whose political effects persist even today. Over sixteen years, the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) confronted the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), a key protagonist in the conquest of national independence in 1975. A more or less consecrated historiography links the Vandau to the RENAMO party, while FRELIMO is typically claimed to have been supported by ethnic groups from the south and north (Minter, 1994; Vines, 1996). Moving beyond the stigma derived from recent political conflicts, this article seeks to restore the place occupied by Kamba Simango and the Vandau in the history of anthropology. There is a fragment that has remained invisible in the discipline's history. In its own way, this work also seeks to interpellate the current dilemmas of Mozambique, its democratic and multicultural challenges.

In a sense, Kamba Simango's trajectory helps us to understand the colonial experience *par le bas*, and to understand the construction of subjectivities and historicities from a less state-centred perspective. His career challenges the commonplaces of national and colonial historiographies, and invites us to reflect on the collaborative dimensions of the construction

of anthropological knowledge.

## Archives

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[1] His full name was Columbus Kamba Simango. Apparently, he took his name from Rev. Columbus Fuller, a missionary at Mt. Silinda (Southern Rhodesia) where Simango studied. However, I will use "Kamba Simango", as he has been called in the majority of sources. See also the entry written by Eric Morier-Genoud (2011).

[2] The original letters of Franz Boas are deposited in the archives of the American Philosophical Society (APS), in the collection titled "Franz Boas Papers" (FBP) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In preparing this article, I consulted a collection microfilmed by Scholarly Resources Inc. (SR) found in the Columbia University archives. The collection is organized chronologically. Throughout the text, therefore, I will indicate the corresponding dates of the letters with the acronym APS-FBP-SR.

[3] Natalie Curtis to Franz Boas, 20 March 1917 (APS-FBP-SR).

[4] The second edition in English was published in 1938.

[5] Natalie Curtis to Franz Boas, 24 November 1919 (APS-FBP-SR).

[6] Franz Boas to George Foster Peabody, 5 May 1920 (APS-FBP-SR).

[7] George Foster Peabody to Franz Boas, 7 May 1920 (APS-FBP-SR).

[8] Franz Boas to George Foster Peabody, 14 May 1920 (APS-FBP-SR).

[9] In a certain way, anthropology was in its infancy when Franz Boas and Kamba Simango first met. There was not yet an extensive ethnographic corpus disseminated by internationalized institutions that we enjoy today. Margaret Mead, for example, arrived at Barnard College in New York towards 1920, a year after Kamba Simango arrived at Teachers College. Months later, Mead began to attend courses taught by Franz Boas. Some classes were also given by an anthropology assistant who would later become famous: Ruth Benedict. In August 1925 – while Simango was preparing to return to Mozambique – Margaret Mead left to conduct her fieldwork in Samoa. Remember that the great ethnography that marked the coming of age of anthropology – *The Argonauts of the Western Pacific* – was published by Malinowski in 1922. The year before, the results of the collaboration between Simango and Boas had already begun to be released.

[10] Letter from Kathleen Simango (but also signed by Kamba), sent from Lisbon and addressed to the missionaries of the American Board. It was published in *The Southern Workman*, titled “News from Mr. and Mrs. Simango” (v. LIII, n. 7:334, July 1924).

[11] Franz Boas to José Leite de Vasconcelos, 28 May 1923 (APS-FBP-SR).

[12] Kamba Simango to Boas, 21 October 1924, (APS-FBP-SR).

[13] Bede Simango was not a direct relative of Kamba (even though he appears in one of the official missionary sources in quotes as “his cousin”). He had received a solid missionary education, spending several years at the intermissionary school of the Swiss Mission in Lourenço Marques (Maputo) until, in 1927, he obtained authorization to run the Gogoi mission together with Kamba.

[14] Franz Boas to Kamba Simango, 10 May 1927 (APS-FBP-SR).

[15] Kamba Simango to Franz Boas, 8 October 1927, (APS-FBP-SR).

[16] Franz Boas to Kamba Simango, 21 November 1927, (APS-FBP-SR).

[17] Today, Eric Morier-Genoud, professor at Queen’s University Belfast, conducts research on Simango’s period in Ghana.