



CARTER MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH
HEFLIN, LOUISIANA



AFRICAN MEETING HOUSE
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



MOTHER BETHEL A.M.E. CHURCH
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA



TINDLEY TEMPLE U.M.C.
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA



MT. OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



The BLACK CHURCH IS BEAUTIFUL

OUR HISTORY | OUR FAITH | OUR WITNESS | OUR FUTURE

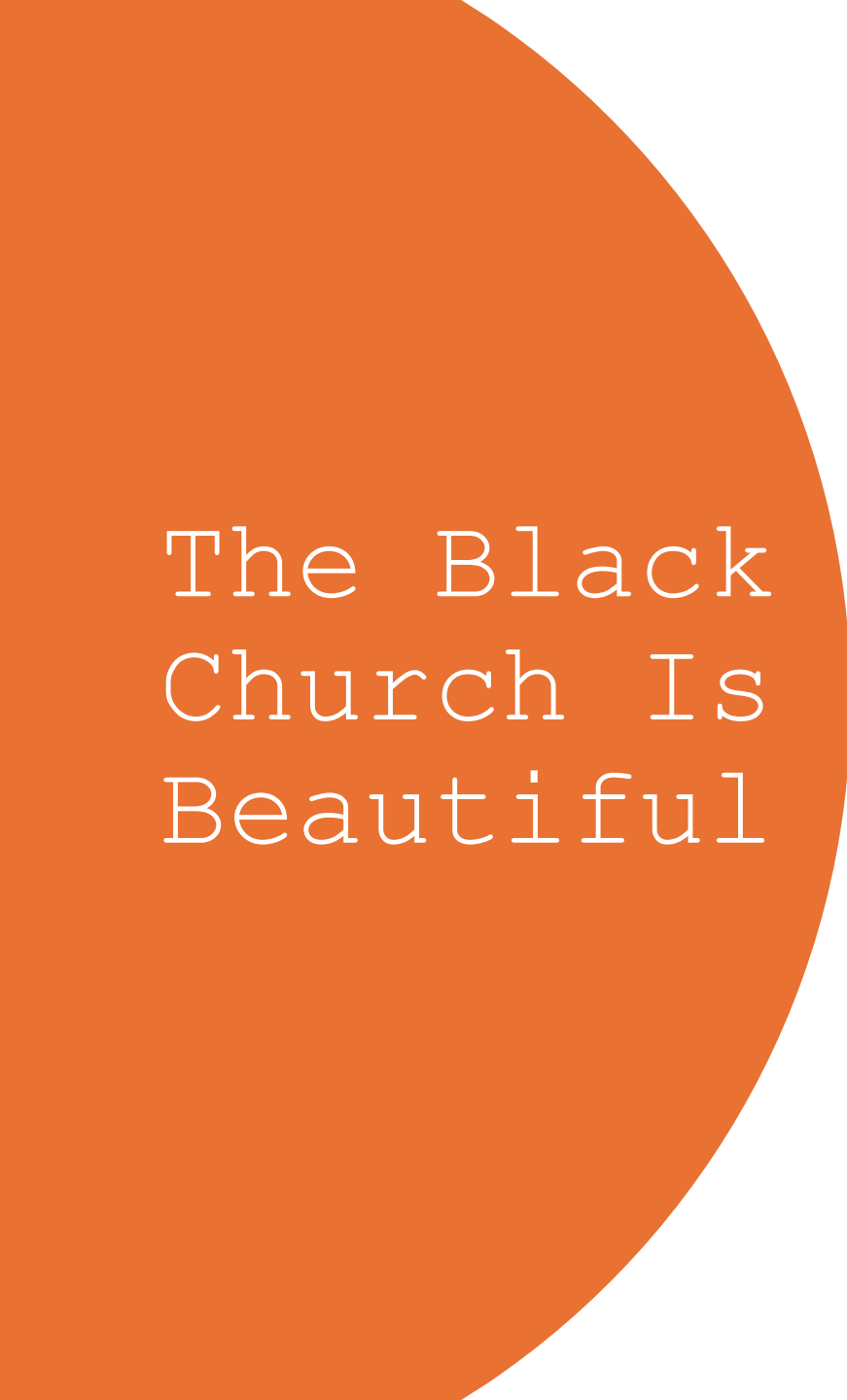


UNION BAPTIST CHURCH OF HARLEM
NEW YORK, NEW YORK



Union Baptist Church of Harlem

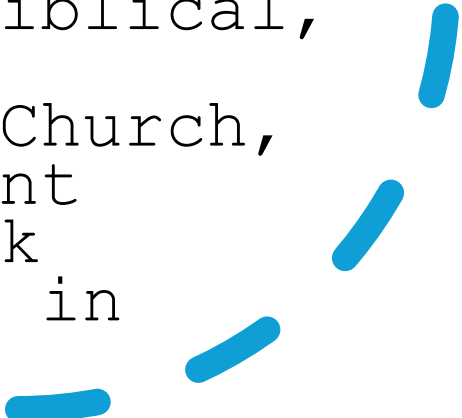
Rev. Dr. Brian D. Scott, Pastor & Instructor



The Black Church Is Beautiful

The Black Church is more than a religious institution. It is a **sanctuary, school, conservatory** (a place where sacred music and artistic expression are cultivated and preserved), **refuge** (a place of protection, belonging, and hope in the face of dehumanization), **advocate, incubator** (a place where leaders are born and nurtured), and a **community anchor**.

In this four-week course, we will explore the historical, biblical, theological, and cultural foundations of the Black Church, from Christianity's ancient African roots to the Black Church's enduring witness in America.



Our Four-Week Journey: What We Will Study

Week 1- Our Story Begins Before the Ship:

Christianity was in Africa before the transatlantic slave trade.

Week 2- Faith In A Land Of Bondage

How enslaved African encountered, interpreted, and practiced Christianity amid oppression.

Week 3- Faith Built Institutions

How the Black Church built schools, communities, social service centers, and freedom movements.

Week 4- The Beauty of Her Legacy and Witness

The Black Church's continuing contributions, mission, and challenges.

How We Will Study

Our curriculum will approach each lesson through five recurring lenses:

Reading the Bible In Color- Recovering the African presence In Scripture and reading the Biblical text with historical and cultural awareness.

Singing In A Strange Land- Exploring how the music of the black church expresses faith , suffering, hope, and what we believe about God (theological conviction). Each week we will incorporate a spiritual, hymn, or gospel song from an African American.

The Ministry of Memory- Remembering the people, places, and experiences that shaped our spiritual inheritance.



How We Will Study

Scholar's Corner-

Engaging historical evidence, primary sources, and credible scholarship, especially by African and African American scholars.

From the Sanctuary to the Streets-

Connecting what we've learned to the contemporary mission of the church and the lives of the learner.

Course Objectives

1. **Recognize** African's significant place in biblical and early Christian history.
2. **Understand** how the Black Church emerged and developed through distinct historical experiences.
3. **Appreciate** the theological, educational, musical, social, and cultural contributions of the Black Church.
4. **Examine** the Black Church's history critically, acknowledging both its accomplishments and challenges.
5. **Embrace** our responsibility to preserve its legacy and extend its witness to future generations.



Our Story Does Not Begin With A Ship

Our story does not begin with ships or slavery. **Our story begins with God.**

- Genesis 1:26-27

Why is this important?

On far too many occasions, the story of African American people is told from the point of slavery. God did not create slaves. Man created slaves. God created man. Man created racial hierarchies, systems of slavery, discrimination, imperialism, and colonialism.

Our humanity was established by God before it was denied by others.

- Three-Fifths Clause
- Dred Scott vs. Sandford

What is the doctrine of Imago Dei?

**Created In
God's Image,
Not the Image
of Oppression
Slavery is a
human
institution.
Racism is a
human
invention. God
gave man
dominion over
creatures, not
over other
races. (Gen.
1:28)**

- 1. Our Origin-** We are created by God, not defined by the circumstances of our past, our parents, our ancestors, or our present condition.
- 2. Our Identity-** We bear God's image, not the identity that is imposed on us by oppressive systems.
- 3. Our Dignity-** Our worth is inherent, not determined by race, status, wealth, or human legislation.

Scriptures

- **II Corinthians 10:5**
- **Daniel 1:7**
- **Galatians 3:28**

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From Creation To Restoration

Genesis 1:26-27 Human Dignity

God created us and all of humanity in His image.

Exodus 3: 7-8 Divine Deliverance

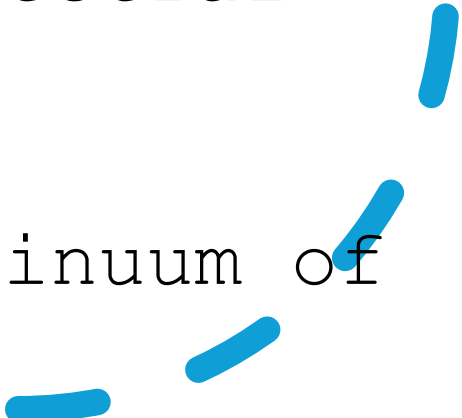
God heard the cries of an oppressed people and came down to deliver them.

Leviticus 25:10 Jubilee Restoration

God commanded Israel to proclaim freedom and restore ancestral inheritances.

Luke 4:18

Jesus comes in the continuum of the Jubilee tradition.

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Africa In The Biblical Story and Beyond

Summary

Genesis 10- Africa Among the Nations:
Cush, Egypt, Put

Matthew 2:13- Jesus flees to Egypt.

Luke 23:26; Mark 15:21- Simon of Cyrene

Acts 2:10- Egypt and Libya near Cyrene

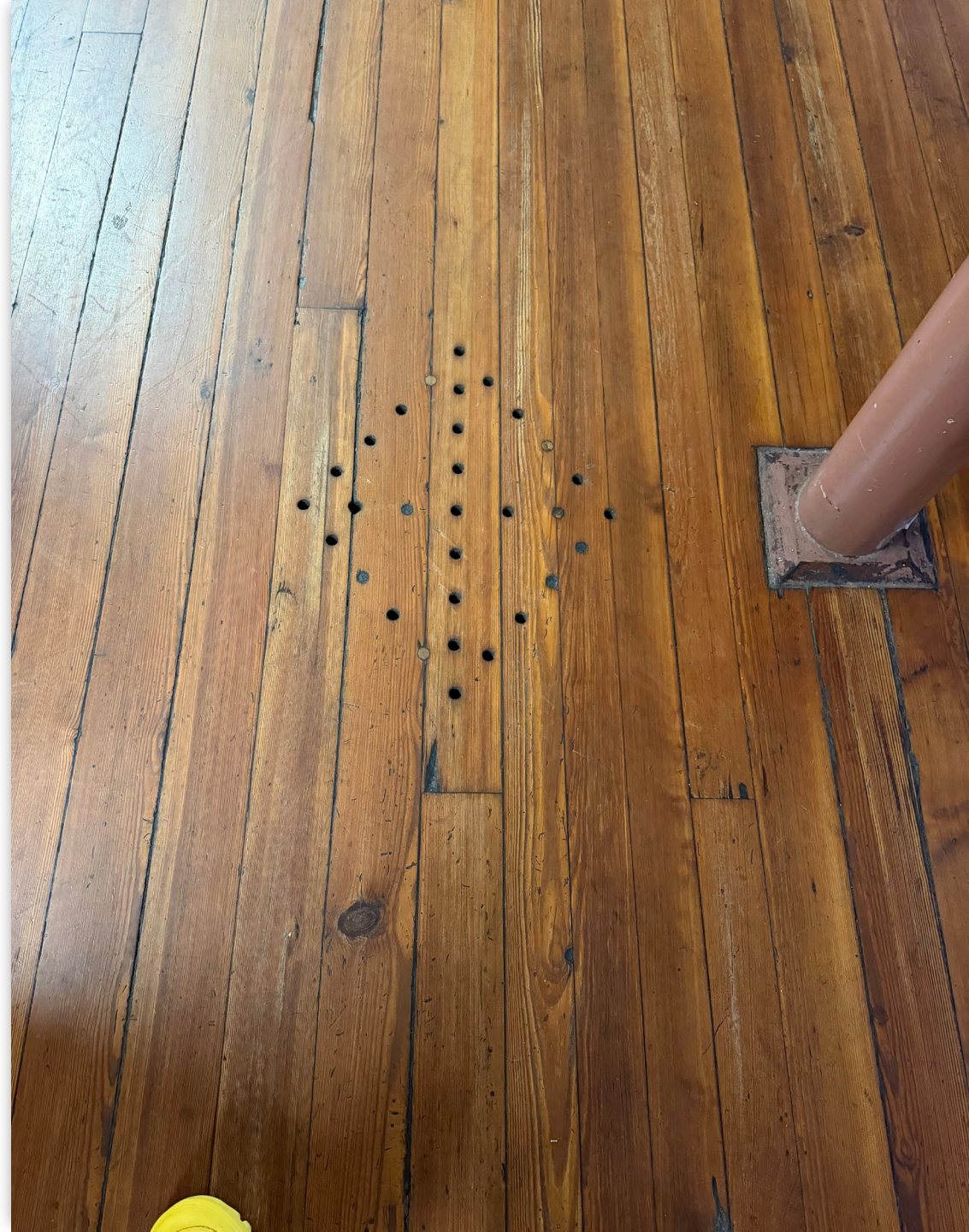
Acts 13:1

The Savior Came Before the Ships

Research affirms that Christianity was already in parts of Africa before 1619. The Bible clearly traces that Africa received Christianity before Europe. You will receive an article that establishes that many Africans entered the slave trade from communities that practiced Christianity. Our Story does not begin with a ship.

Homework Discussion

1. Was Christianity present in Africa before the arrival of enslaved Africans in English North America?
2. What does the correspondence from King Afonso I of Kongo reveal?



1619 and The Arrival of African Christianity

09-03-2019

By Rev. Dr. David Daniels, III

The 1619 Project invites Black Church Studies seemingly to join its intellectual revolution. In reframing the origins of the African American Christianity, the arrival of African Christians in August of 1619 to Colonial Virginia and later to Colonial Maryland, New York (Dutch New Netherlands), and the Carolinas might become the new inaugural moment of the Black Church. African Christianity rather than the “slave religion” of the plantation might serve as a founding source of the Christianity of Black people in North America.

The historians John Thornton, Linda Heywood, and others have convinced me at least that among the “20-plus” Africans who were illegally transported to the Virginia Colony included Christians. The evidence includes a 1619 letter written by a local Roman Catholic bishop, Manuel Bautista Soares, in which he expressed his outrage that 4,000-plus African Christians from Ndongo in west-central Africa had been captured by “slave traders.” This letter shows, then, a significant presence of African Christians in one of the regions where Africans were captured by “slave traders.”

The Africans of 1619 came to North America, according to Thornton and other scholars, from one of the most Christianized regions in Africa: the Empire of the Kongo and its neighboring kingdoms of Loango and Ndongo located along or near the west-central African Atlantic coast. By 1619, the Kongolese Empire possessed its own cathedral, churches, lay Christian societies, and schools for girls and boys; Africans served as Catholic priests, catechists, church musicians, school principals, school teachers, court scribes, and Christian monarchs; in the prior century, there even existed a Catholic bishop of Kongolese descent. At the Catholic college in the nearby Portuguese colonial outpost at Luanda, Africans were enrolled as students and were among the graduates. In comparison to the Kongo of 1619, early colonial Virginia was an undeveloped Christian society.

If Kongolese Christianity is a major factor in the development of the Black Church, then we will need to let the images of the movies *Roots* and *Django*, based on 19th-century slavery, stop serving as the historical backdrop for the Africans of 1619. A new historical context will need to be drawn and new images will need to be generated.

Maybe Black Church Studies can find these new images among the African Christians of the 1620s and 1630s who requested Christian marriage for themselves and baptism for their children. Maybe African Christians such as Paulo d'Angola, Elizabeth Key and others who mounted legal challenges against their enslavement

between 1644 and 1656 could be a source of these new images. Maybe the small number of African Christians who served as elected officials during the 1600s such as Matthias de Sousa, a member of the legislature of Colonial Maryland from 1641 to 1642, could offer a new set of images.

Along with new images, Black Church Studies could explore the Christian theology and practices that these African Christians introduced to North America during the 1600s. Since Kongolese theology had already deemed the enslavement of Christians as un-Christian during the 1500s, possibly this theological perspective on freedom could have framed the legal challenges to slavery mounted by the first generation of African Christians in British and Dutch North America. We also could develop further the studies of Yolanda Covington-Ward and other scholars who collectively have shown that the future core markers of “slave religion” were already present in the Kongolese Christianity of the 1600s: healing practices, the practice of prophecy, spirit possession, call-and-response singing, and the ring shout.

If the origins of African American Christianity might be found in Kongolese Christianity and not solely on the slave plantation, then new questions will need to be crafted: When did the practice of Kongolese Christianity turn into African American Christianity? If the “God of the oppressed” framed the theological discourse of the post-1776 era and later, what theological motif framed Kongolese Christianity in North America during the 1600s and early 1700s? How did the Kongolese theology of freedom critique the British philosophy of liberty? If all African Christians were not first introduced to Christianity by “slave masters” and their preachers, how do we reconstruct the role that Kongolese Christian theology played in the development of the Black Church and American Christianity? What role did African Christians shaped by Kongolese Christianity have in evangelizing Africans and non-Africans in North America? Since the British often distinguished between Christians and Negroes with the Christian as white and the Negro as heathen, how did these African Christians of the 1600s construct their own religious identity as well as the image of the British? These are the kind of questions promoted by shifting the origins of the Black Church to 1619.

If African Christians did carry African Christianity with them to North America in 1619 and subsequent decades, Black Church Studies could reasonably support The 1619 Project in reframing the narrative of the origins of the United States.

Image Credit: The Old Plantation, c. 1790. Enslaved Africans on a South Carolinian plantation. Image in the public domain, sourced from Wikipedia.

The Black Church Is Beautiful

Lesson 2: Faith In A Land of Bondage



Week 2

Objective

This lesson will explore how enslaved Africans encountered, interpreted, and practiced Christianity amid oppression. We will explore how they differentiated between the liberating message of Christ and the Westernized form of Christianity used to justify slavery.

Central Scripture: Exodus 3:7-10

Supporting passages: Genesis 1:26-27, Luke 4:18-19, Acts 8:26-39, Galatians 3:28

The Ministry of Memory

Affirmations From Week 1:

- Where did our story begin? (Origin)
- We are created in the image of God. (Identity)
- We were humanized by God before we were dehumanized by man. (Dignity)

Last week we established that our story does not begin with a ship. Our story begins with God. Before there was an Atlantic Ocean slave trade, there were African civilizations, African cultures, African intellectual traditions, and African Christians and expressions of African Christianity.

Primary Source Document from King Affonso of Congo on the Slave Trade (1526)

Sir, Your Highness should know how our Kingdom is being lost in so many ways that it is convenient to provide for the necessary remedy, since this is caused by the excessive freedom given by your agents and officials to the men and merchants who are allowed to come to this Kingdom to set up shops with goods and many things which have been prohibited by us, and which they spread throughout our Kingdoms and Domains in such an abundance that many of our vassals, whom we had in obedience, do not comply because they have the things in greater abundance than we ourselves; and it was with these things that we had them content and subjected under our vassalage and jurisdiction, so it is doing a great harm not only to the service of God, but the security and peace of our Kingdoms and State as well.

The Ministry of Memory

Tonight, we must confront another historical reality. A people created in God's image were reduced to property by systems of human invention. But the same God who created humanity in His image is the God who heard Israel crying in Egypt. This is the problem: **How could a nation professing Christianity simultaneously perpetuate the enslavement of human beings?**

Primary Source Documents

Letters Written From A King in the Congo Addressing the African Slave Trade

Excerpts from: King Affonso of Congo Letters on the Slave Trade (1526) Public Domain

[FIRST LETTER]

Sir, Your Highness should know how our Kingdom is being lost in so many ways that it is convenient to provide for the necessary remedy, since this is caused by the excessive freedom given by your agents and officials to the men and merchants who are allowed to come to this Kingdom to set up shops with goods and many things which have been prohibited by us, and which they spread throughout our Kingdoms and Domains in such an abundance that many of our vassals, whom we had in obedience, do not comply because they have the things in greater abundance than we ourselves; and it was with these things that we had them content and subjected under our vassalage and jurisdiction, so it is doing a great harm not only to the service of God, but the security and peace of our Kingdoms and State as well.

And we cannot reckon how great the damage is, since the mentioned merchants are taking every day our natives, sons of the land and the sons of our noblemen and vassals and our relatives, because the thieves and men of bad conscience grab them wishing to have the things and wares of this Kingdom which they are ambitious of; they grab them and get them to be sold; and so great, Sir, is the corruption and licentiousness that our country is being completely depopulated, and Your Highness should not agree with this nor accept it as in your service. And to avoid it we need from those (your) Kingdoms no more than some priests and a few people to reach in schools, and no other goods except wine and flour for the holy sacrament. That is why we beg of Your Highness to help and assist us in this matter, commanding your factors that they should not send here either merchants or wares, because it is our will that in these Kingdoms there should not be any trade of slaves nor outlet for them.

[SECOND LETTER]

Moreover, Sir, in our Kingdoms there is another great inconvenience which is of little service to God, and this is that many of our people, keenly desirous as they are of the wares and things of your Kingdoms, which are brought here by your people, and in order to satisfy their voracious appetite, seize many of our people, freed and exempt men, and very often it happens that they kidnap even noblemen and the sons of noblemen, and our relatives, and take them to be sold to the white men who are in our

Kingdoms; and for this purpose they have concealed them; and others are brought during the night so that they might not be recognized.

And as soon as they are taken by the white men they are immediately ironed and branded with fire, and when they are carried to be embarked, if they are caught by our guards' men the whites allege that they have bought them but they cannot say from whom, so that it is our duty to do justice and to restore to the freemen their freedom, but it cannot be done if your subjects feel offended, as they claim to be.

Letters written in 1526- Public Domain

Source: Excerpt from Historia de Congo by Visconde de Paiva-Manso, translated in The African Past by Basil Davidson (Grosset & Dunlap, 1964).

And to avoid such a great evil we passed a law so that any white man living in our Kingdoms and wanting to purchase goods in any way should first inform three of our noblemen and officials of our court whom we rely upon in this matter, and these are Dom Pedro Manipanza and Dom Manuel Manissaba, our chief usher, and Goncalo Pires our chief freighter, who should investigate if the mentioned goods are captives or free men, and if cleared by them there will be no further doubt nor embargo for them to be taken and embarked. But if the white men do not comply with it they will lose the aforementioned goods. And if we do them this favor and concession it is for the part Your Highness has in it, since we know that it is in your service too that these goods are taken from our Kingdom, otherwise we should not consent to this. . . .

Letters written in 1526- Public Domain

Source: Excerpt from Historia de Congo by Visconde de Paiva-Manso, translated in The African Past by Basil Davidson (Grosset & Dunlap, 1964).

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