



# **International Boundary Study**

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**Republic of the Congo (*Congo*) – Democratic Republic of the Congo (*Zaire*)**

**Boundary**

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**The Geographer  
Office of the Geographer  
Bureau of Intelligence and Research**

**INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY**

**No. 127**

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (KINSHASA) –  
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE)  
[FORMERLY CONGO – ZAIRE] BOUNDARY**

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**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (KINSHASA) –  
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE)  
[FORMERLY CONGO – ZAIRE] BOUNDARY**

**I. BOUNDARY BRIEF**

The Congo - Zaire boundary is approximately 1,010 miles long. From the Angola tripoint to the Congo river, it follows the Shiloango, the Congo - Niari drainage divide, straight-line segments, and various other rivers for a distance of about 220 miles. The remainder of the boundary consists of the Congo river for 500 miles and the Ubangi for 290 miles to the Central African Republic tripoint. Except in Stanley Pool, the exact alignment of the boundary in the Congo river sector is indefinite.

**II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Initially France established claims in the Congo basin through penetration of the territory from bases in Gabon and by treaties with local rulers. In a series of expeditions between 1875 and 1882, Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza, an officer of the French navy, explored much of the territory between the Ogooue and Congo rivers including the Niari valley. In 1880 de Brazza negotiated a treaty with the ruler of the Teke kingdom, which secured part of the north bank of the Congo for France, but because of quiet anchorage, he constructed a station on Kintamo island near the south bank.

During this period with an expedition from East Africa, the explorer Henry M. Stanley descended the Congo river to its mouth in 1877. King Leopold II of Belgium later retained his services to establish stations and to make treaties with the people of the Congo basin. In 1881 de Brazza met Stanley who was advancing eastward through the cataract area of the lower Congo river. Stanley arrived in the vicinity of Stanley Pool (Pool Malebo) on July 27 of the same year and founded Leopoldville on the south bank of the Congo at the site of present-day Kinshasa. Shortly thereafter, the French post on Kintamo island was moved to the north bank of the Congo, where it became known as Brazzaville.

In 1882 the French parliament ratified de Brazza's treaty with the Teke kingdom, and provisions were made for a government in French Congo. De Brazza was appointed commissioner on June 29, 1886, giving him authority over the colonies of French Congo and Gabon. A decree of December 11, 1888, united French Congo and Gabon into a single administrative entity which was known as the French Congo from 1891 to 1903.

On December 29, 1903, a decree placed all French possessions in central Africa under the authority of a commissioner whose status was raised to that of a governor in 1908. A decree of January 15, 1910, established the federation of French Equatorial Africa which included French Congo.

In the meantime King Leopold had shown great interest in the development of Africa. He invited explorers, geographers, and philanthropists of various states to a conference on central Africa at Brussels on September 12, 1876. An African International Association was organized at the conference with headquarters at Brussels. It was agreed that branches of the association in various states would be known as national committees, and King Leopold headed the Belgian National Committee.

Following the historic trip of Stanley down the Congo in 1877, King Leopold shifted his primary interests in tropical Africa from the east to the west coast. Therefore, in 1878 another committee was organized under the title of the Committee for Upper Congo Studies which later was known as the International Association of the Congo. The association was in effect a development company with King Leopold being the principal stockholder, and Stanley was commissioned by the King for service under the International Association of the Congo. Between 1879 and 1882, Stanley established stations and made treaties with numerous African chiefs, many of which were in the upper part of the Congo basin.

Early in 1884 several states recognized the Association as a governing power on the Congo river. In an exchange of notes between France and the Association of the Congo, April - May 1884, France was accorded the right of preemption or preferential right to the region of the Congo and in the valley of Niadi-Quillou (Niari-Kouilou) should the Association of the Congo dispose of its territorial possessions.

The Berlin Conference of 1884 - 5 recognized King Leopold as the sovereign head of state for the International Association of the Congo. On July 1, 1885, the name of the entity was changed to the Congo Free State which was retained until it became a Belgian colony in 1908. A treaty for the cession of the Congo Free State to Belgium was signed at Brussels on January 9, 1895, and submitted to the Belgian Chamber of Deputies for approval shortly thereafter; however, it was withdrawn without any formal action being taken. An arrangement made between Belgium and France relative to the French right of preemption of a Belgium colony of the Congo was signed at Paris on February 5, 1895, but it was not ratified in consequence of the withdrawal of the treaty of cession.

A second treaty for the cession of the Congo Free State to Belgium was signed on November 28, 1907, and approved by a Belgian Law of October 18, 1908. The treaty of cession was followed by an arrangement between Belgium and France governing the French preferential right to the Belgian Congo on December 23, 1908.

The Belgian Congo became independent as the Republic of the Congo on June 30, 1960, and changed its name to the Democratic Republic on August 1, 1964. On October 27, 1971, the Democratic Republic of the Congo changed its name to the Republic of Zaire.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Government of Zaire announced the use of the name Zaire for the Congo river. This study utilizes the conventional name for the river of the Congo.

Following World War II, the colony of Middle Congo was made an overseas territory of France and a member of the French Union. Middle Congo became the Republic of the Congo and an autonomous member of the French community on November 28, 1958. The Republic of the Congo was proclaimed independent on August 15, 1960. On January 1, 1970, the Congo changed its long-form name to the People's Republic of the Congo.

### III. BOUNDARY TREATIES

On February 5, 1885, a convention between France and the International Association of the Congo established a boundary between their respective territories as follows:

Art. III--the Government of the French Republic and the Association adopt as frontiers between their Possessions:

The River Chiloango [Shiloango or Louango] from the ocean to its northernmost source;<sup>2</sup>

The water-parting of the waters of the Niadi-Quillou [Niari-Kouilou] and the Congo as far as beyond the meridian of Manyanga;

A line to be settled, which, following as far as possible some natural division of the land, shall end between the station de Manyanga and the cataract of the Ntobo Mataka [Rapides de Tombo], at a point situated on the navigable portion of the River;

The Congo up to Stanley Pool [Pool Malebo].

The centre of Stanley Pool;

The Congo up to a point to be settled above the River Licona-Nkundja [Likouala-Kandeko];

A line to be settled from that point to the 17th degree of longitude east of Greenwich, following as closely as possible the water-parting of the basin of the Licona-Nkundja, which is part of the French Possessions;

The 17th degree of longitude east of Greenwich.

A protocol of November 22, 1885, delimited in detail the cross-country sector northward from the vicinity of the Rapides de Tombo on the Congo to the confluence of the Louaya and Kiloumbou. On April 29, 1887, a second protocol extended the boundary along the Ubangi upstream from its confluence with the Congo to the 4th parallel which is north of the present Central African Republic tripoint. A declaration of February 5, 1895, determined the boundary in Stanley Pool, and a second declaration of December 23, 1908, renewed the terms with an addition relating to the neutrality of Ile Mbamou.

In 1903 a mixed commission and several subcommissions were appointed to determine the exact boundary and erect some pillars between the northernmost source of the Shiloango and the confluence of the Louaya and Kiloumbou. Proces-verbaux of August 30,

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<sup>2</sup> Nine days later, on February 14, 1885, Portugal and the International Association of the Congo delimited a boundary between Angola (Cabinda) and the territory of the International Association of the Congo north of the Congo river, which placed the lower course of the Shiloango within Portuguese territory.

1903, afford the alignment of the boundary from the confluence of the Louaya and Kiloumbou to the Kimpoa river and between the Kimpoa and Bombo peak.

The convention of 1885 did not make provision for the transition of the boundary from the northernmost source of the Shiloango to the drainage divide between the Niari and the Congo. A declaration of December 23, 1908, agreed to the northern most source of the Shiloango and extended a line eastward to Bombo peak.

#### **IV. ALIGNMENT**

The alignment of the Congo - Zaire boundary is determined by various treaties along different sectors of the line. The Angola tripoint at the confluence of the Shiloango (Louango) and Bidihimba was established by a Franco - Portuguese arrangement of January 23, 1901, which interpreted the alignment of the eastern sector of the Angola - Congo boundary as contained in the convention of May 12, 1886.

From the Angola tripoint the boundary follows the Shiloango to its northernmost source as determined by the Franco-International Association of the Congo Convention of February 5, 1885. A declaration of December 23, 1908, agreed that Pic Kiama<sup>3</sup> should be considered the northernmost source. The declaration of December 23, 1908, also agreed to adopt the drainage divide from Pic Kiama to Bombo peak as the boundary.

The sector from Bombo to the Kimpoa was established by the convention of 1885 as the drainage divide between the Niari and the Congo to a point eastward of the meridian of the Station de Manyanga. A proces-verbal of August 30, 1903, signed by the members of a joint Congolese - French boundary commission, terminated this sector a short distance north of the source of the Kimpoa.

A second proces-verbal of August 30, 1903, delimited the boundary northward from Kaonga near the confluence of the Louaya (Loyaia) and Kiloumbou to the drainage divide between the Congo and Niari north of the Kimpoa as follows:

The line follows the Kiloumbou River from its junction with the Loyaia to its source, then turns northwest for about 80 meters, connecting the source of the Kiloumbou and that of the Maiombe, as marked on the site by an iron and masonry boundary-mark; it then follows the Maiombe River to its junction with the Mimvou, and the Mimvou from that west-bank junction to its junction with the Mampiri on its east bank, then along the Mampiri to its source. Here it turns north for about 250 meters, as marked by the boundary-mark, connecting the source of the Mampiri with that of the Mossengene, follows the Mossengene to its junction with the N'Gudi or Foulakari on its south bank, and the Foulakari from that junction to its junction with the Longou on

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<sup>3</sup> In 1903 a Congolese - French mission erected a boundary pillar on the drainage divide between the Shiloango and Mutandi rivers south of Pic Kiama.

its north bank, then along the Longou to its junction with the Kirikiri, along the Kirikiri to its junction with the Benga rivulet, along the Benga to its junction with the Pemba rivulet, and along the Pemba to its source. The line then runs northeast about 80 meters, as marked by a boundary-mark, connecting the source of the Pemba with the source of the Mu-Sesse, follows the Mu-Sesse to its junction with the Diassa, then along the Diassa from that point on its south bank to the junction with the Kimpoa on its north bank, then along the Kimpoa to its source. Here it turns north for a few meters and ends at the crest of the watershed between the Niari - Kouilou and the Congo Rivers at a point indicated by a boundary-mark.

The boundary line follows the thalweg of the above-mentioned rivulets or rivers.

The boundary sector from the Congo river northward to the confluence of the Louaya and Kiloumbou is delimited by the protocol signed by representatives of the Congo Free State and France at Manyanga on November 22, 1885.

The Boundary between the French Possessions and the Possessions of the Congo Free State, towards Manyanga, shall be fixed in conformity with the map annexed hereto, and is as follows:--

The bottom of the ravine whose communication with the Congo is situated at about 440 meters, and to the south 43 degrees east of the Flagstaff of the station to the Congo Free State at Manyanga;

The extension of this ravine until it meets the path leading from the station of Manyanga to the village of Nsonso [Sonso];

This path until it reaches the Loufou;

The Loufou, descending the current for a distance of about 400 meters;

A line drawn northwards leaving the villages of Nsonso to the west, and rejoining the path of Manyanga;

This path until it meets the first stream, an affluent of the River Ntimbo;

This stream until its confluence with the said Ntimbo;

This river as far as its westernmost source;

A curved line going northwards as far as the plateau of Konyanga, and then following the watershed until it meets the basin of the Louaia [Louaya] to the north, and to the west of the village of Koumbi;

A line drawn to the bend of the Louaia, near the village of Kilombou [Kiloumbou];

The River Louaia as far as the village of Kaonga.

The line thus determined leaves to the west, that is to say, on the Territory of the Congo Free State, the villages of Nsonso, Massangni [Masangi], Nsanga [Sanga Londe], Kinkendo [Kinkenda], and Kintombo, and to the east, that is to say, on French Territory, the cluster of habitations at Ntombo [Tombo], the village of Nsome, the market of Manyanga, the villages of Kinsonia, Bondo, Konyanga, the market of Konso, the villages of Mbango, Banza-Baka [Mbanza Baka], Kiloumbou, and Kaonga.

From east of the Station de Manyanga to Stanley Pool (Pool Malebo), the convention of February 5, 1885 established the boundary as the "The Congo [river] up to Stanley Pool." The boundary in Stanley Pool is delimited as indicated by the Belgo - French declaration of December 23, 1908, as follows:

The median line of Stanley Pool to the contact point of that line with Bamou [Ile Mbamou], the southern shore of that island to its eastern extremity, and then the median line of Stanley Pool.

Bamou Island, and the water and islets from Bamou Island to the northern shore of Stanley Pool shall belong to France; the water and islands from Bamou Island to the southern shore of Stanley Pool shall belong to Belgium.

The territory of Bamou Island shall be permanently under a neutral regime. No military establishment may be set up there, and it is understood that the territory so neutralized shall also be under the regime specified in the final provision of Article XI of the General Act of Berlin.

The convention of 1885 indicated that northward from Stanley Pool the Congo river was the boundary to a point to be determined upstream from its junction with the Likouala. From the confluence of the Congo and Ubangi, the protocol of April 29, 1887, established the thalweg of the latter river as the boundary to the present Central African Republic tripoint at the junction of the Gouga. The protocol of 1887 did not mention the Congo from the point to be determined north of the Likouala to its confluence with the Ubangi. However, the neutrality declaration of the Congo Free State on December 28, 1894, indicated that the boundary follows the Congo northward to its confluence with the Ubangi.

Except in Stanley Pool, treaties do not indicate the exact boundary of the Congo river such as the thalweg, median line, or either bank. Likewise, Ile Mbamou and associated islets in Stanley Pool are the only islands for which specific ownership has been established, although the sovereignty of islands in the Ubangi might be implied from their location relative to the thalweg.



## APPENDIX

### Documents

1. Exchange of Note between the Congo Free State and France, respecting the right of Pre-emption of France over the Territory of the Congo Free State. April, May 1884 [Ratified August 15, 1885]. Edward Hertslet, The Map of Africa by treaty, 3 vols. 3rd ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909), Vol. 2, pp. 562 - 3.
2. Convention between the Government of the French Republic and the International Association of the Congo. Paris, February 5, 1885. Ibid., Vol. 2.
3. Circular of the Administrator-General of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Independent State of the Congo, declaring the Neutrality of that State, within its Limits as defined by treaties. Brussels, August 1, 1885. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 552 - 4.
4. Protocol defining the Boundaries between the Congo Free State and the French Possessions in the Region of Manyanga. Manyanga, November 22, 1885. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 566 - 7.
5. Protocol defining the Boundaries between the Congo Free State and the French Possessions in the Oubangi Region. Brussels, April 29, 1887. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 568 - 9.
6. Boundary Agreement between France and the Congo Free State, August 14, 1894. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 569 - 70.
7. Declaration of the Neutrality of the Congo Free State, Brussels, December 28, 1894. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 557 - 61.
8. Treaty for the Cession of the Congo Free State to Belgium. Brussels, January 9, 1895. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 546 - 8 [submitted to the Belgian Chamber of Deputies for approval on February 13, 1895, it was subsequently withdrawn].
9. Arrangement entered into between the Belgian Government and France, respecting the French right of pre-emption over the Territories of the Congo-State. Paris, February 5, 1895. Vol. 2, pp. 570 - 1 [not ratified because treaty of January 9, 1895, withdrawn].
10. Declaration exchanged between Belgium and France, relative to the Limits of their respective possessions in Stanley Pool. Paris, February 5, 1895. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 571 - 2 [not ratified because treaty of January 9, 1895, withdrawn].
11. Treaty for the Cession of the Independent State of the Congo to Belgium. Brussels, November 28, 1907. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 548 - 50 (French).

12. Agreements signed by Belgium and France in consequence of the Annexation of the Independent State of the Congo by Belgium. Paris and Brussels, December 23, 1908. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 1226.
13. Declaration between the Belgian and French Governments respecting the Delimitation of their Possessions in the Region of the Shiloango. Brussels, December 23, 1908 [Ratifications exchanged at Brussels, April 4, 1912]. British and Foreign State Papers (BFSP), Vol. 102 (1908 - 1909), pp. 356 - 7 (French).
14. Arrangements governing the Preferential Right of France to the Territories of the State of the Congo. Paris, December 23, 1908 [Ratification exchanged at Brussels on April 4, 1912]. BFSP., Vol. 102 (1908 - 1909), pp. 357 - 8 (French).
15. Declaration between Belgium and France for the Delimitation of their respective Possessions in Stanley Pool. Brussels, December 23, 1908 [Ratifications exchanged at Brussels, April 4, 1912]. BFSP., Vol. 102 (1908 - 1909), pp. 358 - 9 (French).

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