

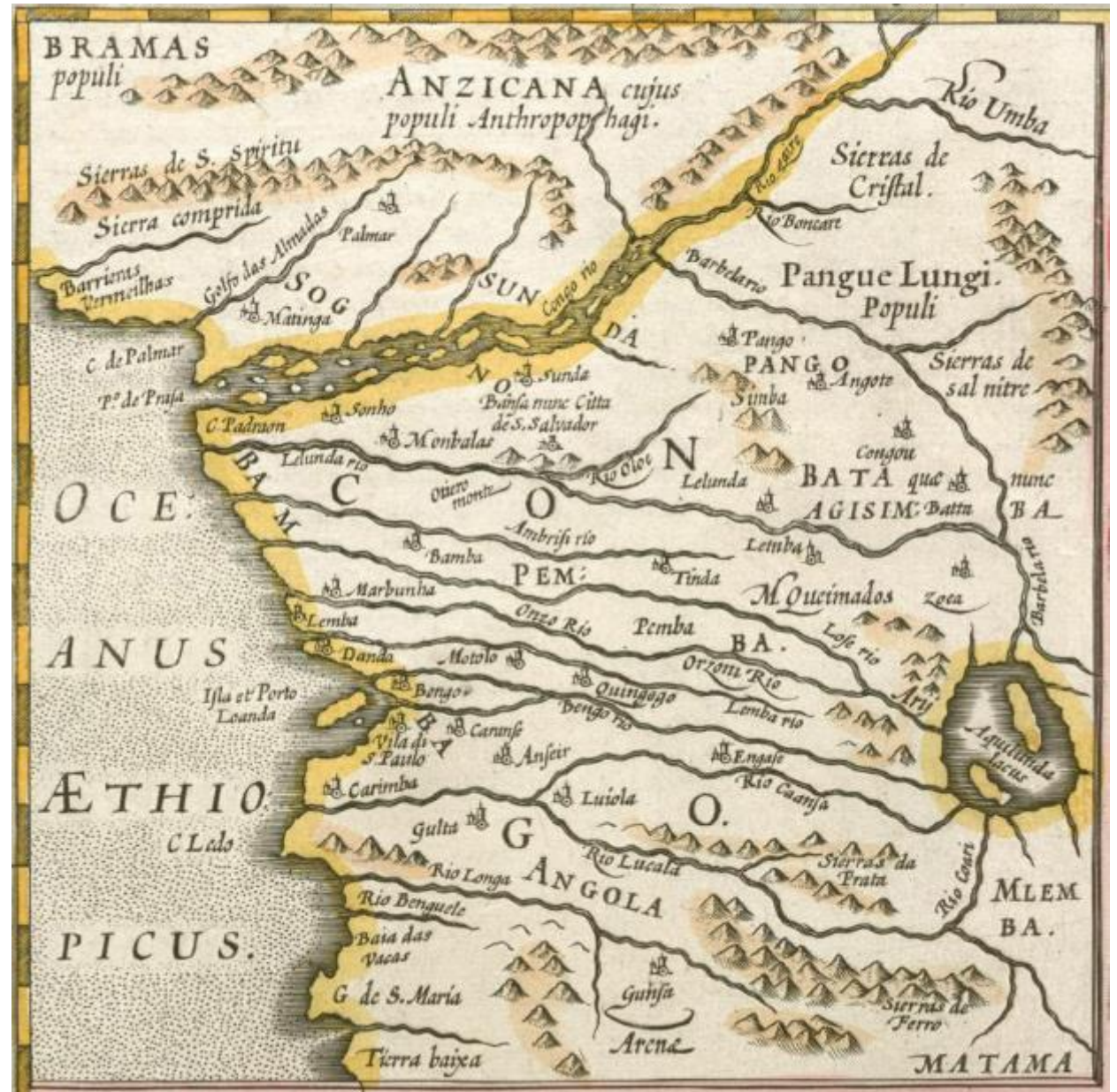


# KUBA SOCIETY IN THE WAKE OF EMPIRES

With Dr. Edwin Johnson

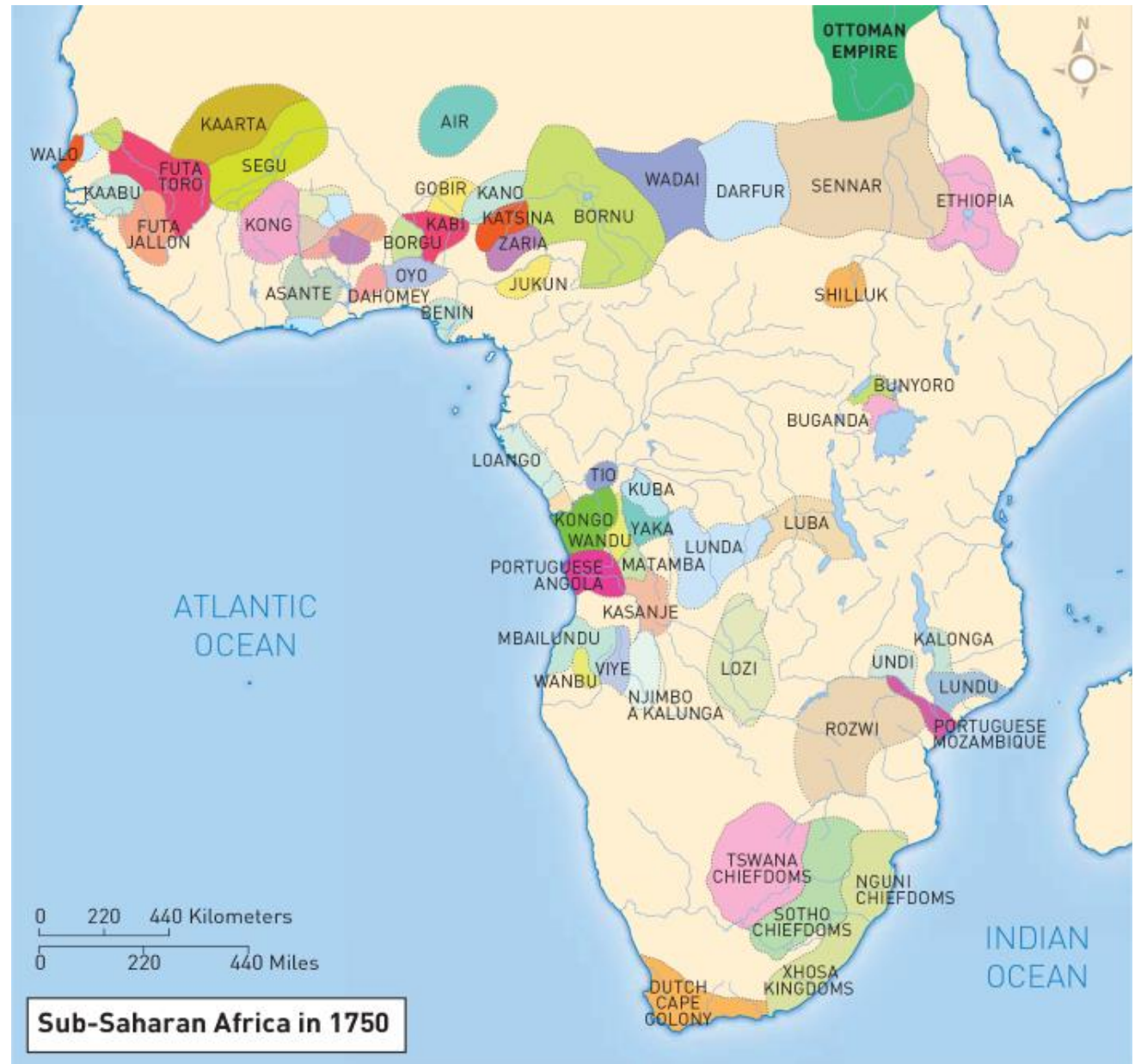
The Congo is  
the cradle  
and grave of  
empires

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Historically there were a great number of power centers in Central Africa

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The founding of  
the Kuba Kingdom  
in c. 1625 by King  
Shyaam aMbul  
aNgoong a.k.a.  
Shyaam the Great





The *ndop* figure carries with it the power of the king serving as a “soul double” of the king.





Abstract, geometric forms in  
Kuba art



Beautiful  
forms that  
represent  
order and  
orderliness.



Kuba cloths are seen as status symbols worn by members of the ruling elite.



Woven by  
men and  
decorated by  
women

At the center  
of the  
kingdom is  
the royal  
court.





The king is adorned with regalia bedecked with abstract, geometric forms due to his role as the embodiment of law and order.



The king's regalia is named *bwaantshy*, which is made up of raffia cloth, animal skins, feathers, beads and cowrie shells.

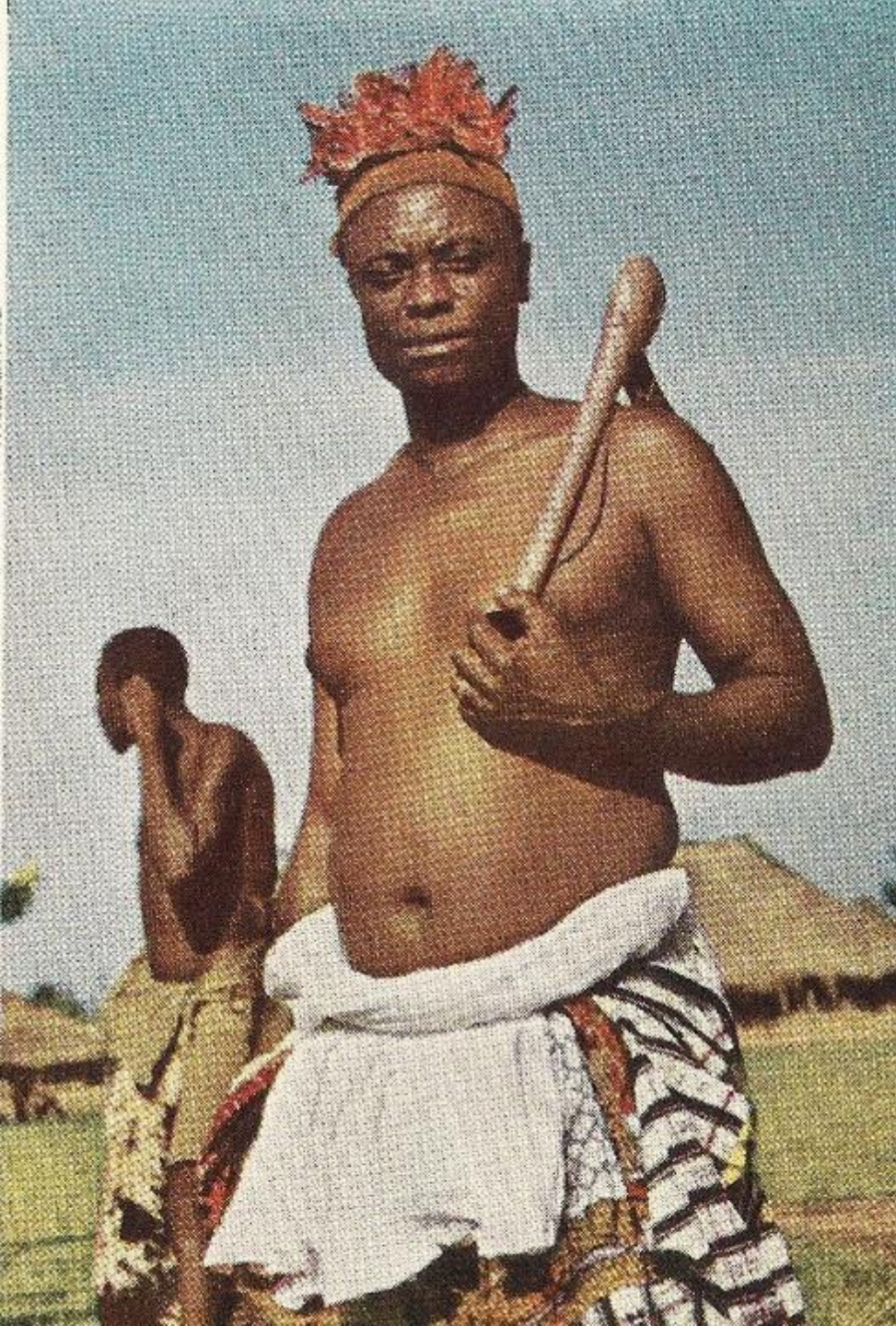
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The king is the  
only person  
who inherits  
his title.

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All other title-holders have their titles given to them by the king.

Title-holders gain  
the privilege of  
having a play put  
on during their  
funerals.

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ROYAL KUBA MASQUERADES,  
NSHENG, KASAL, CONGO. 1909



The personification of the king is called *Mwashambo*.

His is stately,  
majestic and the  
embodiment of  
calm.

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His costume is adorned with beads and cowrie shells, reflecting the prestigious garments worn by the king.

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He is accompanied by his queen, *Ngady a mwash* who always wants to be the center of attention.

The angriest  
is *Bwoom*, the  
king's older  
brother.

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*Bwoom* is the very unruly opposite to the majestic king.



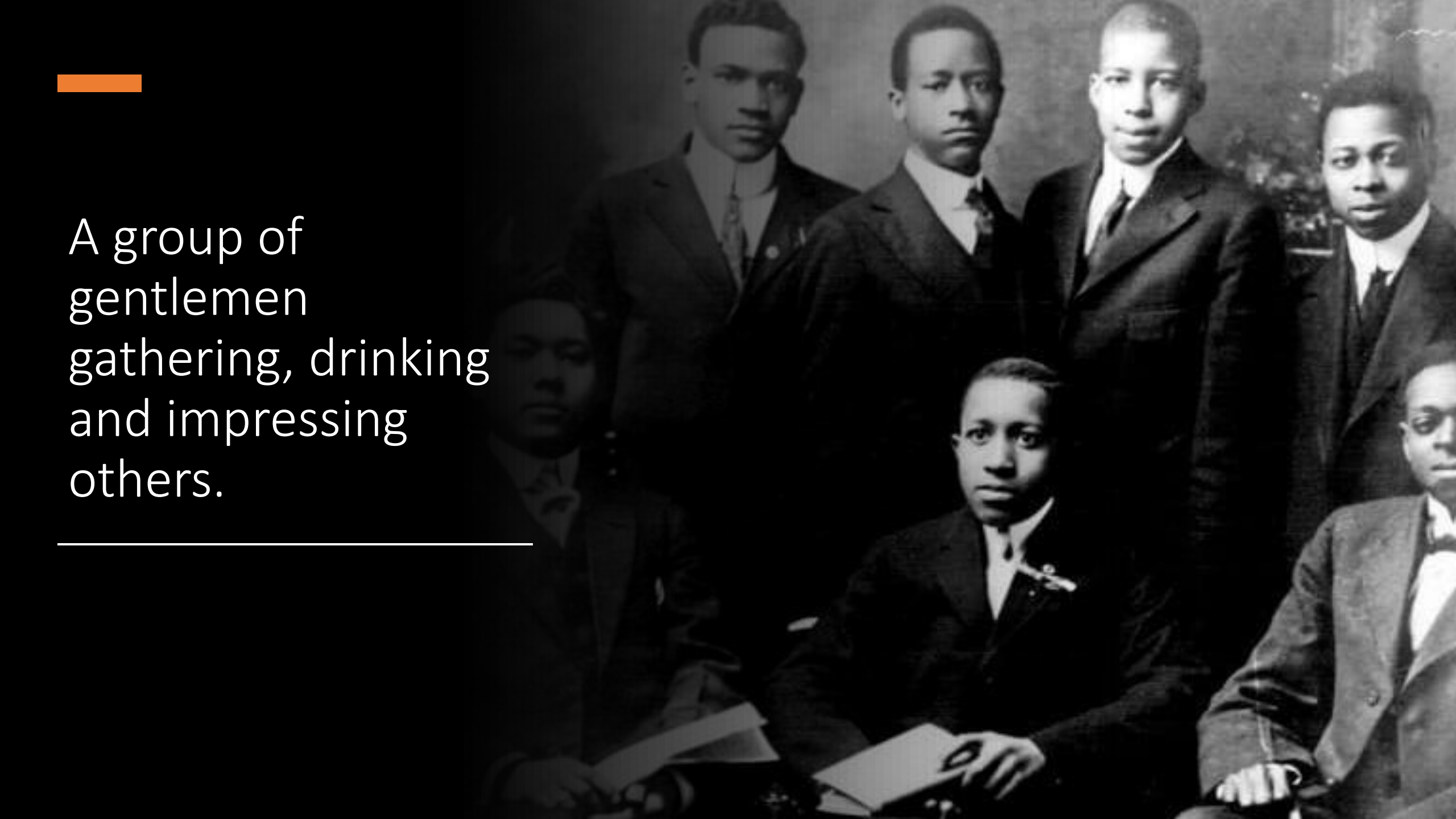


Title-holders are seen as competitive, powerful people.

They assert  
their status at  
social  
gatherings.

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A black and white photograph of seven young Black men, likely students or members of a group, dressed in formal suits and ties. They are arranged in two rows: three are standing in the back row, and four are seated at a table in the front row. The seated men have papers or books in front of them. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The overall tone is serious and formal.

A group of gentlemen gathering, drinking and impressing others.

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Beholding and waxing  
poetically over  
conversation pieces of  
artistic merit.

Ahhh...the  
civilized  
pleasantries of  
cultivated  
company and  
fine furnishings.

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Eloquent and poetic art criticism  
as a means of boosting your  
status and social standing.



Any questions?