DESTINATION CONGO: SABENA AIRLINES AND THE VISUAL LEGACY OF CONGOLESE TOURISM

Evan Binkley

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Introduction

> Comfortable means of transport convey the traveler through regions where in settings of imposing grandeur may be seen modern industrial installations along with the picturesque surroundings of natural life where they were until recently 'The Mysterious Dark Continent'. *Nowhere can be found such a striking contrast between primitive existence and modern civilization.*[1]

This passage is taken from a booklet, published by the Belgian Office of Colonial Tourism, entitled *Visit the Belgian Congo*. The author clearly places the technological advances of Belgian imperialism in direct contrast to a narrative in which the Belgian Congo is forever locked in a "primitive" past. "Modern civilization" is defined strictly from the perspective of Belgium, which had exerted direct control in the Congo since 1885. Booklets like this one, along with travel posters, tourist pamphlets, and other publications, were designed to justify and promote Belgium's claim as an economic and civilizing presence in the Congo, the second largest landmass in Africa.

At the center of the invented identity for the Belgian Congo was Sabena (Société Anonyme Belge d'Exploitation de la Navigation Aérienne), Belgium's national airline established in 1923. Sabena developed an air travel network throughout Europe and the Belgian Congo.[2] The network was expansive, and it reflected Belgium's ambition to compete directly with airlines established by other European colonial powers, including France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands.[3] Posters produced by Sabena documented and promoted the year-to-year

[1] Office National du Tourisme de Belgique. *Visit the Belgian Congo*. Brussels, N.D. Italics mine.
[2] See Jacques Gorteman and Marc Vandermeir, *La SABENA et l'Aviation en Belgique et au Congo belge* (2018)
[3] Guy Vanthemsche, "The Birth of Commercial Air Transport in Belgium (1919-1923)." In *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* (2000), 940. According to Vanthemsche in 1938, Sabena transported "2.5 T/km [Ton/Kilometer] while KLM was at 7.5 million, Air France at 9 million, and Imperial Airways and Deutsche Lufthansa at 13 million."

expansion of the airline's fleet and routes.[4] African peoples, animals, and landscapes served as the most frequent subject matter in these posters, often accompanied by the presence of a plane flying overhead. Developments in aviation occurred in direct opposition to images of a Congolese "other," mired in a stationary and ahistorical past. The contrast between African peoples and landscapes, and Western technological innovations, was key to the promotion of Sabena as an airline of international stature. In this construct, continental Africa, its people, and animal life remained outside of the sphere of "progress."

Sabena's promotion of air travel to the Congo was able to progress as a result of an exploitative and extractive economy, established under the infamous rule of Leopold II (r. 1865-1909), King of Belgium. From 1885 until the onset of formal colonial rule in 1908, Leopold controlled the Congo as his private estate. He gained complete control of its natural resources and established an economic system based on forced labor and taxation. He also redrew the map of his colonial possessions, which he renamed—with no shortage of irony—the État Indépendant du Congo (Congo Free State). The historical dominance of economic institutions and imperialist ideologies established under Leopold remained an integral part of Sabena's promotional narrative over the course of Belgian colonial rule.

In 1960, the Congo finally achieved independence. Sabena and the colonial government of Belgium were forced to leave. What remained were the historical stereotypes that the colonial administration and its national airline had promoted.[5] My objective in this paper is to explore how the imagery produced by Sabena points not only to a contrast in technological

[4] Iskin, Ruth. *The Poster: Art, Advertising, Design, and Collecting, 1860s–1900s* (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2014). Iskin 6-8 cites Maurice Talmeyr's 1896 contribution "L'âge de l'affiche" among other works as evidence of attention to the rapid growth of the poster medium at the close of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. For additional information, see Michael Twyman's *A History of Chromolithography: Printed Colour for All* (London: British Library, 2013).

[5] See Félix Mutombo-Mukendi, *Du Mirage Nationaliste á l'Utopie-en-Action Du Messie Collectif: Le cas du Congo-Kinshasa* (France: L'Harmattan, 2005).

advancements between Europe and Africa, but also to the underlying motivations of the colonial project itself. The first section explores Belgium's efforts to expand colonial intervention in the Congo through the creation of Sabena. Marketing materials helped to validate the colonial process by defining the Congo as a land without a history, one which required continuous economic and humanitarian support. Seeking to approximate an "authentically" familiar yet distinctly "exotic" image for Belgian consumption, Sabena posters heavily promoted the cultivation of economic interest in the Congo. The second section provides an overview of the development of a tourism industry for the Congo following World War II. Pro-empire propaganda, aligned with materials produced by Sabena, highlighted an image of the Belgian Congo as open for further exploration and exploitation. During the same period, other airline companies such as Air France and British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) produced poster designs which similarly contrasted African and European development. The last section explores the traumatic legacies of Belgium's presence in the Congo, bracketed by economic and post-independence developments.

Throughout the history of Belgian colonialism in the Congo, the benefactors and target audience remained almost exclusively concentrated a continent away. Sabena posters served as one of the principal means to encourage participation in the development of the Congo as both a viable economic investment and compelling tourist destination.

One: The Colonial Project and Sabena Take Flight

At the turn of the twentieth century, the landscape of Belgian colonial encounter in the Congo underwent considerable transformation. The exploitative forced labor system developed in the Congo Free State under the private ownership of King Leopold II remained at the center of

global scrutiny.[6] Under the leadership of British journalist Edmund Dene Morel, Roger Casement, and the Congo Reform Association, investigations revealed the dramatic scale of the exploitation of Congolese resources and labor.[7] Outside of personally-owned areas designated as the *Domaine de La Couronne* (Domain of the Crown), Leopold held partial ownership stake in concessionary companies such as the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Congo, the Compagnie du Kasai (Kasai Company), and the Compagnie du Katanga (Katanga Company) (Fig. 1).[8] Each company exercised a monopoly on its designated region, enforcing exploitative ivory and rubber quotas through Leopold's military force (Fig. 2), the *Force Publique* (i.e., military police). A navigable river system and rail lines enabled the Congo Free State to become a major global exporter of ivory and rubber by the start of the twentieth century. This period of rapid growth occurred at the direct expense of the Congolese people. International outrage over the collaboration between private trading companies and colonial administrators intensified through publicized photographs documenting the Force Publique's corporal punishment strategies.[9] Led by the socialist politician Emile Vandervelde among others, the Belgian Parliament forced Leopold to open a Commission of Inquiry into the abuses of the Congo Free State.[10] By 1908,

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[6] Kevin C. Dunn, *Imagining the Congo: The International Relations of Identity.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 22

[7] A 1908 report from the Congo Reform Movement entitled *The Congo Situation Today* emphasizes that "the system of administration in the Congo was fundamentally at fault, being not a system of government but a system of commercial exploitation." Congo Reform Association, "The Congo Situation Today." (Boston. The Library of Congress, 1908).

[8] For additional information concerning documentation of the abuses of the Congo Free State, see E.D. Morel, *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (London: William Heinemann, 1904) and *Red Rubber: The Story of the Rubber Slave Trade Flourishing on the Congo in the Year of Grac*e (London: T.F. Unwin, 1907). Roger Casement's 1904 report, *Correspondence and Report from His Majesty's Consul at Boma respecting the Administration of the Independent State of Congo*, served as one of the major driving forces behind international outrage directed towards Leopold's regime.

[9] Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 259-263. Hochschild underscores the influence of American Congo Missionaries William Morrison and William Henry Sheppard in publicizing the abuses of the Congo Free State.

[10] Vandervelde served as one of the members within the Belgian Labor Party and corresponded with Morel concerning parliamentary debates about the Congo. Belgium Parliament House of Representatives. *Verbatim report of the five days' Congo debate in the Belgian House of Representatives* (1906).

sustained international pressure left the Belgian parliament no choice but to officially annex the Congo Free State as a colony.[11]

While the renamed Belgian Congo now served to benefit national interests rather than Leopold, the economic and infrastructural developments under the Congo Free State remained critical to the future of the colonial development.[12] Colonial trading and mining companies such as Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (Mining Union of Upper Katanga or UMHK), originally developed under Leopold, retained control of the Congolese economy. While fully aware of the atrocities committed under Leopold's regime, many Belgian elites remained devoted to the former leader of the Congo Free State and the oppressive institutions he had created.[13] For Leopold's successor, King Albert I (r. 1909-1934), innovations in aviation projected a new vision of exploration, discovery, and travel. Over the next decade, Albert heavily invested in exploring the viability of a national air service with support from the *Fonds Spécial*, originally organized under Leopold for colonial development projects.[14] Shortly thereafter, Sabena airlines emerged as the Belgian national airline in 1923. By 1927, Sabena had begun to establish air links in colonial centers throughout the Belgian Congo.[15]

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[11] For additional information, see Michel Halewyck, *La charte coloniale: commentaire de la loi du 18 octobre 1908 sur le gouvernement du Congo belge*. (Bruxelles: M. Weissenbruch, 1910),

[12] Nelson provides a translation of Colonial Minister Louis Franck "La politique indigène," (1921: 189): "What are we doing in the Congo? We are pursuing a double aim: the extension of civilization and the development of outlets for Belgium and of Belgium's economic activity. These two aims are inseparable." Samuel H. Nelson. *Colonialism in the Congo Basin: 1880-1940*. (Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1994), 115.

[13] Wigley discusses the cult-like following of Leopold by Belgian sociopolitical elites after his death. Wigley goes on to cite Guy Vanthemsche, *The Historiography of Belgian Colonialism in the Congo, Europe and the World, in European Historiography* (2006: 92): "[…] even if politicians, business leaders, clerics and other opinion leaders were perfectly aware of the 'dark' sides of his personality and actions" Andrew Wigley, *Marketing Cold War Tourism in the Belgian Congo: A Study in colonial propaganda 1945 - 1960*, (2014), 96

[14] According to Vanthemsche (2000: 917-918), through the Fonds Spécial, Albert funded the Comité d'Études pour la Navigation Aérienne au Congo (CENAC) which worked in agreement with "Syndicat National pour l'Etude des Transports Aériens" (SNETA). Both served as precursors in the formation of Sabena airlines. World War I additionally led to the creation of new technological developments in the field of aviation which assisted Sabena's formation.

[15] Correspondence with Professor Matthew Stanard underscored Belgian commemoration of the development of aviation links to the Congo. The first flight from Belgium to the Belgian Congo (Léopoldville) was completed in

Advertisement posters closely accompanied the rapid expansion of Sabena's route destinations throughout Europe and the Congo. For poster designers, the evolution of aviation technology itself was particularly emblematic of this period of growth. In a 1928 Sabena poster announcing new developments in trimotor aviation, an approaching plane quickly descends into view (Fig. 3). The outer tip of the plane's wings is cropped at the top right corner of the poster, emphasizing movement. White concentric circles convey the spinning of propellers as a cloud of exhaust smoke emerges from the plane's engines. Set against a plain blue background, the particular aircraft depicted is a British Handley Page Type W.8 airliner. Sabena used the Type W.8 in flights to the Congo throughout the 1920s (Fig. 4). Depicted below the plane are a ship and train, which both appear to be running at "full steam" towards their respective destinations. Here, one can identify the three forms of transportation that primarily contributed to the development of Sabena's "réseau aérien" (air network).

The network of colonial centers upon which Sabena later expanded was originally established during the Congo Free State. Under the direction of Leopold, concerted efforts were made to establish centralize administration in Léopoldville (Kinshasa), Stanleyville (Kisangani), and Elizabethville (Lubumbashi). According to art historian and geographer Alphonse-Jules Wauters, by the time of Sabena's establishment in 1923, the colonial administration had already constructed "17,000 kilometres of roads**,** and 3,319 kilometres of railway lines, and 15,000 kilometres of [navigable] waterways."[16] Central to this development were colonial transportation companies, including the Compagnie Maritime Belge du Congo (Belgian Maritime Company of

1925 by Edmond Thieffry. His efforts are commemorated in a monument in Etterbeek, the municipality outside of Brussels where he was born.

[16] According to Wauters, between 1887 and 1907, the annual value of goods exported from the Congo also increased from 1,980,000 to 59,000,000 Belgian francs. A. Wauters. "Belgian Policy in the Congo." (Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1930), 52

Congo or CMBC).[17] Paralleling Sabena's efforts in the air, the CMBC promoted the latest in modern transportation by sea (Fig. 5).[18] For the CMBC advertisements, a similar construct exists between modes of transportation and the specific region in which they exercised influence. In each example, the presence of a map confirms the expanded reach of modern technology.[19] While providing additional context through the identification of place, the CMBC steamship is oriented towards a destination out of sight. This suggested degree of unlimited freedom and access exemplifies the role of Sabena and other transportation companies as effective agents of colonial reach and development.

In crafting an image of the Congo which was accessible to a general Belgian audience, the colonial publication, *L'Illustration Congolaise*, served a particularly important role between 1924 and 1940. The magazine provided an outlet for the publication of thousands of photographs documenting Congolese landscapes, cultural practices, and colonial enterprises.[20] Each publication followed a similar format, in which allusions of Belgian improvements in the Congo accompanied depictions of a "timeless" Africa.[21] This contrast provided a filter through which one could potentially envision their own participation in the colonial project. In an effort to promote travel, numerous magazine issues include photographs of those embarking on a

[17] The Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo (Railroad Company of Congo or CCFC) served a significant role in the economic development of the Congo. Compagnie du Congo pour le commerce et l'industrie. *The Congo railway from Matadi to the Stanley Pool: Results of Survey, First Draft Conclusions*. (Brussels: P. Weissenbruch, 1889).
[18] See Charles Blanchart, *Le Rail au Congo Belge: 1890-1920* (Tome I) (Brussels: G. Blanchart & Cie, 1993). Mouvement Géographique, *La colonisation belge au Congo et l'initiative privée: suite de notices* (Bruxelles : M. Weissenbruch, 1912).
[19] Consult Émile Francqui and Louis Franck. "La Belgique Reprend Contact avec Le Congo: Discours prononcés, à l'occasion du retour à Anvers du steamer "Albertville" de la Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo." (1919)
[20] Geary discusses the influence of Casimir Zagourski, a pioneering photographer of Central Africa whose work often appeared within *L'Illustration Congolaise* throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Evinced within the title of his portfolio, *L'Afrique qui disparaît!*, Zagourski subscribed to the prevailing "belief that African cultures were on the verge of extinction and losing their authenticity due to the encroachment of the modern colonial world. Visual documentation became paramount in the effort to salvage their disappearing cultures, if not in reality at least through the image." Christraud M. Geary. *In And Out of Focus: Images From Central Africa, 1885-1960*. (London: Philip Wilson, 2003), 69-79
[21] *Ibid.,* 44-47

maritime journey to the Congo through the CMBC (Fig. 6), renamed the Compagnie Maritime Belge. By viewing the experiences of others, readers of *L'Illustration Congolaise* could conceive of detailed travel plans to Africa for themselves, right down to a particular ship and accompanying modes of transportation.

As Sabena contributed to service a growing colonial network, technological advancements increasingly circumscribed spheres of colonial encounter. In 1928, King Albert became the first Belgian sovereign to visit the Congo.[22] Arriving through a direct Sabena flight from Léopoldville (Kinshasa), Albert and his wife, Queen Elizabeth, visited to celebrate the inauguration of the Chemin de Fer du Bas-Congo au Katanga (Lower-Congo to Katanga or BCK Railway).[23] The BCK railway connected the south-eastern mining region of Katanga to the western Kasai province and the strategic river port of Port-Francqui (Ilebo), near the confluence of the Kasai and Sankuru Rivers.[24] Technological progress remained a central feature of the royal visit, as underscored in a contemporary account:

> The itinerary the King and Queen followed enabled them to visit the most interesting regions of our African colony. From Boma to Banana, the Sovereigns made the complete circuit of the Congo. Thanks to [*modern transport*], they were able, from Léopoldville, to reach Katanga directly, without having to make the long journey by river. From Elisabethville, where they arrived after a rapid journey by air and rail, the King and his entourage were able to retrace the route taken 20 years earlier by Prince Albert. It was a long...journey along the river, from Bukama to Banana, with many varied stops, with short trips by rail whenever the river ceased to be navigable, and a quick flight by air from Coquilhatville to Léopoldville and Boma.[25]

[22] Leopold II never visited the Congo during his lifetime. His successor Albert I visited the Congo in 1908 shortly before he assumed the throne in 1909. He founded the Virunga National Park, Africa's first national park, and visited the Congo again in 1932 shortly before his death.
[23] Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery. *Royals on Tour: Politics, Pageantry, and Colonialism*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018)
[24] The Katanga or Shaba region and neighboring Zambia is known as the Copperbelt because of its extensive mineral deposits which include copper and cobalt. See Charles Blanchart, *Le Rail au Congo Belge: 1820-1945* (Tome II) (Brussels: G. Blanchart & Cie, 1999).
[25] Jacques Crokaert, *Boula Matari ou le Congo Belge*, (Brussels: Dewit, 1929)

For Albert and Elizabeth, the most compelling regions of the Belgian Congo were colonial centers of Belgian influence. Photographs of the tour of Albert and Elizabeth showcase their inspection of technological installations in Léopoldville or in nearby polities (Fig. 7). *L'Illustration Congolaise* projected a similar image of colonial grandeur, accessible to tourists through air travel and other modes of transportation.[26] The magazine's careful documentation of the royal itinerary often included images of the King and Queen as they arrived or departed festivities in a motorcade, train, or airplane.[27] The presence of Albert and Elizabeth served in part to authenticate the extent of Belgian control over the Congo.[28] In this sense, technological advancements rearticulated a developing vision of the Congo which Belgians could experience themselves through travel with Sabena.[29]

Belgium, however, was by no means immune to the global economic crisis of the Depression in the 1930s.[30] Between Albert's return from the Congo and his sudden death in 1934, the unemployment rate in Belgium reached as high as 20% as the Belgian franc lost a significant amount of purchasing power.[31] The escalation of economic downturn throughout the

[26] Piet, Clement. "The visit of King Albert I to the Belgian Congo, 1928. Between propaganda and reality. Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine. Belgisch tijdschrift voor nieuwste geschiedenis." (Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine, 2007)
[27] Geary (2003: 47) discusses further the attention to which *L'Illustration Congolaise* publicized the tour of Albert I and Queen Elizabeth. Geary mentions that "in a *L'Illustration Congolaise* advertisement in January 1929 (volume 88), the publishers proudly announced that the book contained a color map with the Royal Highnesses' itinerary, 25 photographs taken by the queen and 150 images by correspondents and friends in Africa."
[28] Issues of *L'Illustration Congolaise* spanning its publication timeline often served to document the efforts of Sabena. For instance, several issues from 1925 publicize the first successful flight between Belgium and Congo, made by Edmond Thieffry in the same year.
[29] For instance the July 1929 issue *L'Illustration Congolaise* included several photographs of Albert and Elizabeth "at the moment of departure" towards a northern area of the Congo.
[30] Jewsiewicki, B. "The Great Depression and the Making of the Colonial Economic System in the Belgian Congo." (1977).
[31] Jean-Luc Vellut, *Congo: ambitions et désenchantements, 1880-1960 : carrefours du passé au centre de l'Afrique*. (Paris: Harmattan, 2001).

world during this period only further complicated Belgium's position in the Congo.[32] Unemployment was particularly severe in colonial centers of natural resource extraction, such as the southwestern Katanga mining region. Since annexation in 1908, popular opinion still reflected a fundamental lack of engaged national participation in Belgium's colonial endeavors. Although the Belgian Ministry of Colonies sought to project the Congo as an integral feature of national identity, the annual colonial and state budgets remained separate.[33] Nevertheless, Belgium continued to attempt to augment unified support of the sustained presence in the Congo, most notably in the context of the 1935 Brussels International Exposition (Exposition Universelle).[34] King Albert's successor, Leopold III (r. 1934-1951), presided over the planning of the Exposition, which was considerably smaller than the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition owing to the economic downturn.[35] The Congo pavilion, built on the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Congo Free State, played a central role in the Brussels Exposition. In keeping with the Exposition's themes of colonialism, transportation, and "peace between the races," the Congolese section heavily advertised the potential benefits to further Belgian investment.[36] According to Ghent University Professor Johan Lagae, slogans such as "achetez belge au Congo" (buy Belgian in the Congo) characterized the promotion of commercial enterprise in the Congo. To further this message of development, Belgian colonial authorities

[32] For additional information on the historical economic development of Belgium, see M. Goossens "The Belgian Labour Market during the Interwar Period," in *The Economic Development of Belgium since 1870*, (Elgar, Cheltenham, 1997), 417–429.
[33] Abbeloos further comments that relative to other colonial entities, Belgium's investment was small. Jan-Frederik Abbeloos, "Belgium's Expansionist History between 1870 and 1930: Imperialism and the Globalisation of Belgian Business,"(Pisa: Plus, 2008),117-118.
[34] Wauters (1930: 62) references the need for further African participation in support of the future of Belgium's colonial economy in the Congo.
[35] Before his sudden death in 1934, King Albert I had assisted in planning for the 1935 Exposition.
[36] According to Lagae, major components of display connected to the exposition, such as the exhibition pavilion and restaurant, were funded through private organization known as the Société Auxiliaire de Propagande Coloniale (Auxiliary Society of Colonial Propaganda or Soprocol). Johan Lagae. "Celebrating a Cinquantenaire." (Fabrications, 2007), 98-100

sought to advance a more unified national identity, one which more overtly featured the Congo.[37] Publications connected to the 1935 Exposition directly focused attention on Congolese people and constructed landscapes of "authentic" encounter (Fig. 8). In this model, the fluid peaceful gestures conveyed by women and children within a dance circle, for instance, serve as an invitation for the European traveler to join in the festivities. The seemingly uninhibited nature of the dancers might have evoked a sense of security for those viewing the poster to engage further. However, this degree of access only existed in the structured confines of the Brussels International Exposition and, by extension, in spheres of colonial intervention. Without Belgian mediation, the opportunity for visitors to engage with the Congo was significantly limited.

For Belgium, the construction of spaces for European exploration drew upon an established history of world's fairs and international expositions. The displays and marketing materials for 1935 recall those of the 1897 Brussels International Exposition as revealed in a widely-circulated publicity poster by Art Nouveau artist Henri Privat Livemont (Fig. 9). The outstretched hand of the poster's prominent female figure points towards an African figure, wearing a crocodile or leopard-tooth necklace and carrying a spear and shield. Representing the first major presentation of Belgium's international holdings, the 1897 Exposition sought to demonstrate Belgium's ability to compete with other major European economies, including their colonial possessions.[38] It also highlighted the industrial and artistic exports of the Free State, including the presentation of 276 Congolese people.[39] Contained within a fenced enclosure and subjected to oppressive conditions, Congolese involvement in this setting was constructed to

[37] Matthew G. Stanard, *Selling the Congo: A History of European Pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 61-62
[38] Australian Philatelic Society, "1897 Brussels International Exposition." (2015).
[39] Charles Liebrechts and Th. Masui, Guide de la section de l'Etat indépendant du Congo à l'Exposition de Bruxelles-Tervueren en 1897. (Bruxelles: Imprimerie Veuve Monnom, 1897), 9-10 & 471-472.

advance a stark juxtaposition between 'primitive' and 'modern' life.[40] The exhibition of human subjects in a village complex, commonly referred to as 'human zoos' or ethnographic displays, characterized the objectification of non-Western cultures throughout the history of European and American international displays.[41] In this context, visitors retained the imperialist vantage point with which to view Africa without having to confront the corresponding legacy of violence, oppression, and exploitation.[42] As a result, the Brussels Expositions of 1897 and 1935 both served as consequential settings for millions of visitors to espouse the projected virtues of the colonial project rather than to examine its vices.

Outside of International Expositions and World's Fairs, intergenerational audiences encountered valorized representations of colonial development through a variety of publications. In many instances, children comprised the primary audience for the dissemination of works which justified the ideological superiority of Europe. School textbooks portrayed Leopold's acquisition of the Congo as an important humanizing achievement in the eradication of barbarism.[43] Interspersed between articles promoting the success of colonial rule, advertisements for *L'Illustration Congolaise* often encouraged parents to purchase a subscription for their children.[44] During the 1930s in particular, paternalistic representations of a "primitive" Africa

[40] Over the course of the Exposition, many of the Congolese within the live display died from illness or disease. The history of International Expositions and World's Fairs is underscored by a fundamental lack of care or attention to the health and well-being of individuals within a'human zoo'. Maurits Wynants. *Des Ducs de Brabant aux villages congolais: Tervuren et l Exposition coloniale de 1897*. (Tervuren: Musée Royal de l'Afrique centrale (MRAC), 1997), 55-57.

[41] See Pascal Blanchard et. al., *Human zoos : the invention of the savage.* (Musée du Quai Branly. Arles: Actes Sud, 201), 130-206

[42] Robert W. Rydell. " 'Darkest Africa': African Shows at America's World's Fairs," (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 136-152

[43] Stanard (2011: 155-157) discusses the relative lack of emphasis on the Congo in Belgian textbooks. However, Stanard does convey the extent to which the Belgian state sought to promote the Congo through the establishment of the Commission Coloniale Scolaire (CCS) and the Commission de Propagande Coloniale Scolaire (School Board of Colonial Propaganda), which both worked to teach and promote books which discussed the colonial administration.

[44] *L'Illustration Congolaise* (December 1937) 6638: "Parents pour la Noël, offrez à vos enfants un abonnement à *L'Illustration Congolaise*" ("Parents, for Christmas, give your children a subscription to *L'Illustration Congolaise*")

increasingly appeared in children's books and comic strips as well. One of the most prominent publications which encapsulated the prevailing sentiments of the decade was *Tintin au Congo* (Tintin in the Congo), the second volume from the popular comic book series, *Les Aventures de Tintin* (The Adventures of Tintin).[45] Created by the Belgian cartoonist Georges Remi under the pen name Hergé, the series chronicles the journeys of Tintin, a fictional young Belgian reporter, and his dog Milou. Between 1930 and 1931, readers would learn of the exploits of the two in the Belgian Congo in *Le Petit Vingtième* (The Little Twentieth), the children's supplement for the Belgian newspaper *Le Vingtième Siècle* (The Twentieth Century).[46] Each weekly installment of the volume underscored Tintin's efforts to subdue wild animal life and reform "backwards" cultural practices (Fig. 10).[47] For younger readers of *Le Petit Vingtième*, Tintin's acceptance and heightened position of power might have further validated the progress of the colonial administration.[48] Largely as a consequence of technological innovation, the Congo in the eyes of Belgian officials had become increasingly responsive to the instruction of "modernizing influence."

Sabena's promotional activities followed a similar trajectory. Furthered by the global economic depression, considerable friction existed between Sabena and the Ministry of Colonies surrounding financial and contractual obligations.[49] Nevertheless, in response to events such as

[45] Dunn (2003: 69)
[46] In 1931, each weekly edition of *Tintin au Congo* was compiled into a book published by Les Editions du Petit Vingtième and Editions Casterman of Tournai.
[47] Leslie Lonsdale-Cooper and Michael Turner, "Foreword" to *Tintin in the Congo*
[48] Throughout *Tintin au Congo*, Congolese people often address Tintin as "master" or by the Congolese name, "Boula Matari," meaning "Breaker of Rocks." During the period of the Congo Free State, explorer Henry Morton Stanley was also given the nickname "Bula Matari" in the western town of Vivi by a local sub-chief named Nsakala. At the time, Stanley was breaking rocks for the foundation of a new road. Scholars often comment that while Stanley embraced this nickname as evidence of his heroism and perseverance, Nsakala most likely intended the name in jest.
[49] Vanthemsche provides an extensive overview of the financial health of Sabena throughout the 20th century. Guy Vanthemsche, *La Sabena: L'Aviation Commercial Belge 1923-2001: Des Origines au Crash*. (Brussels: De Boeck, 2002), 68.

the 1935 International Exposition, Belgian administrators turned towards promoting the Congo as a destination of cultural exoticism and exploration. In response, Sabena advertised its planes as critical implements to gain entry to daily life and culture in the Congo. For example, a Sabena poster produced in the 1930s features a Congolese woman and child who directly confront the gaze of the viewer, yet appear to remain unaware of the plane, more specifically a Savoia-Marchetti S.73 (S.M. 73), flying overhead (Fig. 11).[50] The inclusion of a monochrome blue background in place of a detailed background environment forces the viewer to further examine the relationship between the plane and the individuals below. The Savoia-Marchetti possesses greater freedom of movement and regional access than the mother and child, who together are the same width as the word "Sabena" itself. This assertion of Belgian autonomy relative to African containment remained a major validating feature of Sabena's expansionary practices. The Congo in this sense could be packaged to potential travelers as an experience which was only a plane ride away.

By promoting a fleet that routinely incorporated the most recent technological advancements in aviation, Sabena emphasized consistent improvements in speed and efficiency. This marketing strategy coincided with Sabena's first intercontinental flight to Léopoldville in 1935, followed soon thereafter with the establishment of the weekly nonstop destinations to Elizabethville and Stanleyville.[51] Accompanying the inauguration of regular service in what came to be known as the *La Ligne Belgique-Congo* (LBC), Sabena's acquisition of several S.M. 73 aircraft led to the reduction in flight duration to the Congo from five to four days.[52] The

[50] The Savoia-Marchetti S.73 was a three-engine Italian aircraft developed during the mid-1930s. Sabena used the S.73 in international flights until the mid-1940s.
[51] Vanthemsche (2002: 121-124)
[52] See Ligue aéronautique de France. "Un bel exemple: La Sabena." *Revue aéronautique de France: organe officiel de la Ligue aéronautique de Franc*e (1947), 6-7.

resulting increase in productivity became a central feature of Sabena advertisements during the 1930s. One example of this is a publicity poster (Fig. 12) entitled *Rapidité* (Speed), which appeared in a display of Congolese export holdings at the 1935 International Exposition. The outline of a trimotor plane, similar to that of an S.M. 73, speeds towards the upper right corner, leaving in its wake gilded contrails and a speed gauge reading 250 kilometers per hour. Concentric circles radiate from an indicator, which overlaps with the approaching figures of three abstracted birds. The poster presents an overhead view of the interlocking network of diagonal paths, distilling mechanical relationships into a comprehensible dynamic of movement. In this context, the association of Sabena and "speed" stand alone, without the implicit visual binary of Congolese underdevelopment. This association worked to the advantage of both Sabena airlines and its potential passengers, projecting an international vision of travel which was increasingly viable and accessible to a wider audience. Nevertheless, even with aspirations of expanded influence around the globe, the LBC remained as one of the top priorities for Sabena. Travelers responded positively to this emphasis as well. Travel via the LBC increased significantly in the years leading up to World War II.[53]

A characteristic pivotal to the global reach conveyed through Sabena advertisements was the capability of aviation technology to manipulate perceptions of space and time. In marketing an increasingly efficient flight network, Sabena stressed the role of its fleet as an agent of change, connecting Belgium to the world faster than previously imagined.[54] This assertion of constant evolution was consistent with the transitory nature of the commercial poster, designed

[53] Vanthemsche (2002: 79-8) discusses developments related to the expanded operations and financial health of Sabena in the years leading up to World War II. Between 1936 and 1939, the number of passenger kilometers (a measurement of the transport of a passenger for one kilometer) for the LBC increased from 1,726,650 to 3,602,970.
[54] De Vinck provides an introduction to developments in Belgian military aviation during the interwar period. Hervé de Vinck, *L'Aviation Militaire belge*. (Rennes: Ouest-France, 1980), 9-13. Iskin (2014: 5-7).

to quickly attract the glance of a passerby. To keep pace with rapid innovations, Sabena posters advertising travel to the Belgian Congo could also by extension represent travel to the continent of Africa as a whole. In a poster reproduced in a 1936 timetable, an S.M. 73 emerges from the outline of a map of Africa (Fig. 13). Only the title, *Belgique Congo Par Avion*, references a specific destination. However, the depiction of a robed man, arms outstretched towards the approaching plane, and his comparatively "outdated" mode of transport, a camel, precipitate in a visual and textual disjunction. One would expect to encounter such an expanse of rolling sand dunes across the Sahara Desert, a far cry from the Congo. From the perspective of Sabena administrators and graphic designers, the presence of a plane over *any* African landscape provided enough of a validating example to entice viewers. A plane *en route* also underscored the navigational reach of aviation, often depicted as a web of interconnected dots in Sabena timetables and advertisements (Fig. 14). Sabena's range was only as extensive as its network professed to be, and the airline still heavily depended on government subsidies to support operating costs.[55] This reality of expansionary business practices underscored the primacy of economic motivations for Sabena.[56]

Two: Reinvention and Tourism

The Second World War profoundly altered the trajectory which Sabena had undertaken during the previous decades. German occupation of Belgium between 1940 and 1944 forced many citizens to escape to the United Kingdom.[57] In response to the resulting sociopolitical destabilization, Sabena suspended all European services, and the Belgian government in exile convened in London. While the new government experienced significant obstacles to exercising

[55] Wigley (2014: 98)
[56] Vanthemsche (2002: 79-81) underscores the attention to economic development that characterized Sabena's approach to the Congo through the LBC, which represented 19% percent of the airline's total production in 1938.
[57] Gregory Frumkin. *Population Changes in Europe since 1939.* (London: Faber, 1951)

control, the established colonial system in the Congo occupied a heightened position of significance.[58] This shift occurred as a result of the import of Congolese natural resources, which served a central role in the provisioning of raw materials and supplies for the Allied war effort. At the expense of Congolese workers, colonial institutions intensified production to support the demands of wartime Anglo-American markets.[59] Despite the fact that the relentless demand for mineral extraction precipitated labor strikes and social unrest, Sabena similarly capitalized upon this moment of colonial and international conflict.[60] During World War II, the Congo remained the primary source of revenue for the airline through the transportation of munitions and supplies.[61] In 1941, for the first time in its existence, Sabena returned a profit. In the same year, air service began from Léopoldville to Lagos, Nigeria and Cape Town, South Africa.

In the aftermath of the Allied victory, the Congo retained its position as a vital destination for industry.[62] The relative success which the Congo had experienced during the war effort led to a surge in white immigration, totaling more than 50,000 by 1950.[63] This movement, strengthened through Sabena's consistent acquisition of updated aircraft models, resulted in the establishment of a colonial tourism industry in the Belgian Congo.[64] Directing these efforts was

[58] Jean-Philippe Peemans. "Imperial Hangovers: Belgium - The Economics of Decolonization." (Journal of Contemporary History, 1980), 264-266

[59] Renton et al. discuss the rise in employment from 25,000 to 49,000 between 1938 and 1944 for Union Minière du Haut Katanga (UMHK), a major Congolese mining company. Renton et al. *The Congo: Plunder and Resistance* (2007), 66.

[60] For additional information related to the experiences of workers in the Congo and social unrest, see John Higginson. *A Working Class in the Making: Belgian Colonial Labor Policy, Private Enterprise, and the African Mineworker, 1907–1951*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 188.

[61] Phyllis M. Martin "The Belgian Congo in World War II." Review of le Congo belge durant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale: Recueil d'Etudes. (The Journal of African History, 1985), 422–424. For additional information concerning the relationship between Belgium and Europe during World War II, consult Jonathan Helmreich, *Belgium and Europe: A Study in Small Power Diplomacy* (Mouton De Gruyter, 1976).

[62] Union Minière du Haut-Katanga. *Union minière du haut Katanga, 1906-1956 à l'occasion du cinquantième anniversaire de sa crèation* (Bruxelles: Editions L. Cuypers, 1956), 222-223

[63] Vanthemsche (2002: 101-122)

[64] *Ibid.*, 105. After purchasing two Lockheed L-18 Lodestars for flights to the Congo in 1941, Sabena consistently updated its fleet through the subsequent acquisition of Douglas DC-3s, 4s, and 6s in the following years.

the *Office du Tourisme Colonial* (Office of Colonial Tourism).[65] Established in 1945 under the Belgian Ministry of the Colonies, the Office functioned under the leadership of Alfred Moeller de Laddersous, who was also a member of Sabena's board of directors and President of the *Fonds Colonial de Propagande Economique et Sociale* (Colonial Fund for Economic and Social Propaganda) or FIDES.[66] The employment history and institutional connections of Moeller de Laddersous underscore the level of coordination which took place in promoting tourism in the Belgian Congo following the Second World War.[67] Under the direction of the Office du Tourisme Colonial and FIDES, the production of pamphlets, posters, and publications promoting tourism expanded.[68] However, in addition to promoting the Congo as an attractive destination, marketing materials also sought to justify colonialism and its successes.[69] By citing the legitimacy of Leopold's Congo Free State, colonial officials sought to emphasize the "civilizing" influence Belgium brought to "backwards" Congolese peoples.[70]

In keeping with several decades of infrastructural development in the form of hotels, railways, and steamer routes, advertisements began to increasingly portray the Belgian Congo as a tourist destination.[71] The growth of Sabena destinations around the world, including a route to

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[65] Wigley (2014: 12)

[66] For additional information on *Fonds Colonial de Propagande Économique et Sociale*, consult Lambin, Francis. *Congo Belge, publié sous les auspices du Ministère des Colonies et du Fonds Colonial de Propagande Économique et Sociale*. According to Wigley ("Marketing Cold War Tourism," 45-47), *Fonds Colonial* was later renamed the *Centre d'Information et de Documentation du Congo Belge et du Ruanda Urundi* (C.I.D.).

[67] Wigley (2014: 45). Stanard (2011: 184-185)

[68] Sandrine Colard. *Photography in the Colonial Congo (1885-1960)* (Columbia University, 2016). Colard and and Geary (2003: 50-51) highlight the importance of the colonial *Centre d'Information et de Documentation du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi* (the Center for Information and Documentation of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi) or C.I.D. Established in 1950, C.I.D. served as a point of dissemination for photographers and filmmakers. The Office was known as Congopresse in Léopoldville and Inforcongo in Brussels and produced, among other materials, extensive tourism guides for interested travel.

[69] Matthew G. Stanard "'Boom! Goes the Congo.' " (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 121-123

[70] Dunn (2003: 70). Geary (2003: 51)

[71] Office de L'Information, *Guide du Voyageur*

New York, exerted a central influence in this promotion.[72] As a result, the target audience of tourism advertisements had an increasingly international makeup. While disseminated in several forms, the underlying message of colonial marketing materials involved the juxtaposition of undisturbed Congolese natural landscapes with Belgian infrastructure projects.[73] Exemplified in a pamphlet entitled *Visitez le Congo belge: Un Voyage Inoubliable!!* (Visit the Belgian Congo: An Unbelievable Trip), headings such as "les races" (the races) "les montagnes" (the mountains), and "les lacs" (the lakes) function in direct dialogue with images of "les hotels" (the hotels), "la chasse" (the hunt), and "les avions les plus modernes" (the most modern planes) of Sabena (Fig. 15). For travelers considering the Congo as a future destination, pamphlets similar to this would have provided one of the first introductions. As a result, the concise dissemination of information most pertinent to the ease of travel, in this case a binary between natural and constructed, proved to be the most persuasive. Invariably replicated in similar formats throughout the 1950s, colonial pamphlets and posters shaped the construction of social types which a potential visitor might encounter in the Congo. Two of the groups most often represented were the Tutsi or Watutsi/Watusi people, primarily from the neighboring territory of Ruanda-Urundi, and Mangbetu women, identifiable by their characteristic elongated heads.[74] Following World War I, Belgium gained control of Ruanda-Urundi until its independence in 1962 as two separate countries, Rwanda and Burundi.[75] The Mangbetu occupied the neighboring Orientale Province

[72] Vanthemsche (2002: 128) outlines the continued expansion of Sabena during this period with the establishment of a transatlantic route to New York in 1947.
[73] Vanthemsche (2000: 938). Between 1946 and 1960, the number of passengers transported per year by Sabena increased eightfold from 121,138 to 954,630. This in turn coincided with a greater transport capacity as Sabena incorporated several new airplane models into its fleet.
[74] Geary (2003: 45)
[75] Encyclopædia Britannica, "Ruanda-Urundi," (2008). Belgium gained control of Ruanda-Urundi as a result of a mandate under the League of Nations. In 1946, Ruanda-Urundi became categorized as a United Nations trust territory, signifying that Belgium would organize towards the path of independence. Following independence, tensions only intensified between the two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and Tutsi, leading to well-documented outbreaks of violence and genocide in subsequent decades.

of the Congo.[76] The Mangbetu and Tutsi resided in an area bordering the Kivu region of eastern Congo, which served as one of the primary tourist destinations.[77] As a result, both were often regarded by tourists as objects of curiosity, which resonated with the imperialist ideology projected by the Tourist Office.[78]

A similar degree of visual differentiation takes place in a poster entitled *Visitez le Congo Kivu* (Visit the Congo Kivu) from the Office du Tourisme Coloniale, since renamed the *Office du Tourisme du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi* (Tourist Bureau for the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi) (Fig. 16).[79] The poster promotes travel to Kivu and the bordering area of Uele Ituri in addition to Ruanda-Urundi.[80] Tourist attractions such as Albert National Park and Stanley Falls are surrounded by stylized depictions of animal life.[81] Interspersed among lions, giraffes, and alligators are two Mangbetu women, identifiable by their distinctive elongated heads and hair styles, and two Tutsi dancers, marked by their white feathered headdresses and long skirts.[82] While providing a geographical point of access through the map of the Kivu, the poster does not distinguish between habitats suitable for human occupation and those for animal life. The rendering of figures in vibrant hues over a black outline of the Kivu region further informs this

[76] Dunn (2003: 148-149) provides a brief summary of the evolution of ethnic divisions between the Tutsi and the Hutu (Wahutu), a major ethnic group counterpart. Dunn states that Belgian colonial rule further entrenched Tutsi-Hutu delineations which previously were more imprecise. For Dunn, "the distinction was formalized in 1933-34, when the colonial government issues 'ethnic' identity cards in Ruanda-Urundi. Though greatly outnumbered in both countries, the 'Tutsi' elite had maintained its power for centuries."
[77] Geary (2003: 49-50)
[78] While originally from Ruanda-Urundi, Tutsi subgroups occupied areas within the Kivu region of the Congo.
[79] From Wigley (2014: 12), the Office du Tourisme Coloniale was renamed the Office du Tourisme du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi in 1949. Wigley indicates that "it maintained its position as an independent department within the Ministry of the Colonies. From 1956 onwards while it retained the same name it underwent an important shift in its reporting structure."
[80] According to Geary (2003: 50), Albert National Park was originally instituted by Belgian King Albert in 1925.
[81] As indicated on the tourist map, Stanleyville Falls or Stanley Falls (now known as Boyoma Falls) were originally named after the 19th century British explorer, Henry Morton Stanley, whose initial exploration of the Congo served as a vital component to the institution of the Congo Free State under Leopold II. Described by the Los Angeles Times. "New Congo Railroad, a Belgium completed new rail line in 1915 connecting Stanley Falls to the areas along the more eastern Lake Tanganyika in present-day Tanzania."
[82] Henri Nicolaï. "Un guide colonial. Le Guide du Voyageur au Congo belge et au Ruanda- Urundi." (2012), 7-9

contrast. From the perspective of the Tourism Office, this aggregation projected not only a mystique of tourist exploration but also a depiction of African timelessness as contrasted to Belgian progress. In other words, Congolese animals *and* peoples lived together in a primordial landscape as objects for tourist consumption.[83] A similar amalgamation occurred on the covers of tourism pamphlets, in which the depiction of a Congolese person or animal is equally interchangeable (Fig. 17). One could effectively swap one out for the other and achieve the same intended impact.

Traveler's guides published by the Office expanded further on the scope of Belgium's presence in the Congo.[84] Following a discussion of his aspirations that "the Kivu [region] will one day become the playground of Africa," Office President Moeller de Laddersous underscored similar sentiments in the preface to a 1951 guide:

> However, it seemed to us that the time had come to reassemble, in a compact and convenient form, all information dealing with the whole Congo in its most modern aspects. Visitors who, thanks to the development of modern means of communication, can be transported from Brussels to Leopoldville, the capital of the Belgian Congo, *in less than 25 hours*, would find such a work extremely useful. The present guide is addressed to the cultured traveler who is not content to sate his eyes with pictures and his mind with memories, but who seeks knowledge, and wishes detailed information about the country he is visiting, its past, its institutions, its inhabitants, its physical aspects, its fauna and flora, its natural resources and how they are being developed. It is directed to the tourist desirous of bathing in the Fountain of Youth in the heart of nature and the primitive life...*At the time of writing, the Congo is not a land of history nor of art*. Nonetheless, the tourist will there find intellectual enjoyment provided that, in order to understand Nature and her secrets without thus stripping her of her sublimity and her beauty, he impose on himself the same restraints he would not fail to use were it a question of comprehending works of art or of reliving history.[85]

[83] Dunn (2003: 68-70)
[84] Colard (2016: 159-161)
[85] Alfred Moeller de Laddersous, "Preface" in *Traveler's Guide to the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi* (1951), 7-9. Italics mine.

Travel guides served not only to document the steady expansion of colonial infrastructure, but also to promote the Congo as a "living" remnant of the past. In this regard, Moeller de Laddersous emphasized the disparity between Congolese and Western development to provide tourists with the impression of nearly unfettered access.

Tourism presumably provided access to a more "authentic" experience of Congolese life, one that transcended spatial and temporal limitations. Yet the distinction drawn in promotional materials between a "primitive" Congo untouched by colonization and a "developed" Congo accessible to tourists surely mediated first-hand experience of the place. While neither version corresponded to an on-the-ground "truth," each one served a role in fashioning a captivating and marketable binary for the Tourism Office. The capacity for Sabena aircraft to rapidly reduce airtime between Belgium and the heart of colonial development in the Congo further bridged this invented spatial and temporal dichotomy.

Travel manuals typically provided an overview of Congolese history and culture, as well as the means through which one could access it. In marked contrast to Moeller de Laddersous's assertion that "the Congo is not a land of history nor of art," these manuals expounded upon Congolese cultural and artistic practices, and particularly their effect on European artists.[86] The history of the Congo in this context was part of the "intellectual" background which one needed to fully "immerse" themselves by visiting the Congo.[87] Page layouts bracketed by extensive documentary photographs of Congolese people rivaled those found in *L'Illustration Congolaise* (Fig. 18). Yet, underlying this discussion are hundreds of pages detailing various routes to and through the Congo by air, by land, and by sea. Underscored by an overview of national parks and

[86] Moeller de Laddersous (1951: 7-9)
[87] Tourist Bureau for the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. *Traveler's Guide to the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi* (1951), 86-87

other major tourists sites, travel manuals also included detailed information on hunting and fishing in the Congo.[88] In this sense, the animals depicted in colonial advertisements served as much more than objects of visual attraction.[89] The provision of information connected to the systematic extraction of Congolese natural resources heavily outweighed considerations for a sustainable or equitable future.[90]

Not surprisingly, travel manuals mirrored Sabena posters and colonial publications by defining the Congolese through the visual codification of "primitive life." Notable examples from the 1950s focused on male Tutsi *intore* dancers.[91] Identifiable through the use of a white headdress representing the mane of a lion, the *intore* dancer plays the part of a warrior in ceremonial displays of authority. In paging through colonial publications, a prospective traveler would have readily encountered *intore*, often in full-page illustrations (Fig. 19). The popularity of the Tutsi among European audiences even translated to television screens pictured in advertisements (Fig. 20) for the Belgian electrical engineering company, ACEC (Ateliers de Constructions Electriques de Charleroi).[92] Sabena followed suit with a poster, featuring an *intore*

[88] Travel guides for the Congo were subdivided into the following chapters: "Generalities," "Practical Information," "Transportation," "Internal Lines," "Description of the Country," "Hunting," "Fishing," and "Alphabetical List of the Principal Localities and their Characteristics."

[89] Travel guides provided extensive lists of major tourist sites throughout the Congo - emphasis on nature reserves and national parks such as Kivu Parc National Albert, volcanic area excursions within Virunga. Other parks of note include aspect du parc le long de la Rutshuru, aspect du parc au pied de l'escarpement de Kabosha, Parc National de la Kagera, Parc National de la Garamba, Le Parc National de l'Upemba (Katanga)

[90] Within the context of national parks throughout the Congo, the colonial government designated specific areas as hunting and fishing zones. These zones, in addition to other related areas were supervised by *La Commission permanente de la Chasse et de la Pêche du Ministère des Colonies et le Service de la Chasse* beginning in 1946. Authorization was needed by the Gouvernement Général for several types of guns and ammunition types to be used for hunting within the Congo.

[91] John Bale, *Imagined Olympians: Body Culture and Colonial Representation in Rwanda*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 45-46

[92] Michel Capron "Des ACEC à l'Union minière. L'éclatement d'une grande entreprise (1983-1992)." (Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP, 1447-1448, 1994), 3. Capron provides a concise history of ACEC, which existed from 1904 to 1989. The company was originally formed in 1881 under the name Compagnie générale d'Electricité by the engineer Julien Dulait. Due to operating losses in the 1980s among other issues, ACEC merged with the mining company Union Minière.

dancer, to promote transport lines to the Congo and South Africa (Fig. 21).[93] The traveler-to-be is left to use prior knowledge and reinforced preconceptions of the Congo to complete the landscape depicted. The setting, rendered in muted background colors, includes a faint impression of a village complex, just visible enough to signal "Africanness." Encroaching patches of white replicate the headdress worn by the Tutsi dancer, whose performance occurs at a considerable distance from the village. A plane appears overhead. Despite its apparent altitude and distance from the dancing figure below, the aircraft proportionally dominates the upper register of the poster. In comparing this edition to another version of the same design from 1956, the dancing figure and his immediate surroundings remain untouched (Fig. 22). However, an updated aircraft has taken the place of its predecessor. Improvements in aviation served as the axis along which a tourist could encounter a constructed vision of the Congo as fixed in time. Over the course of the 1950s, Sabena introduced new planes such as the Convair 240 "Metropolitan" twins and the Douglas DC-6Bs into its fleet to phase out older models.[94] As a result, the airline continued to align itself with the colonial administration's narrative by promoting the modernization of its fleet against a seemingly timeless background of exoticism in central Africa.

Outside of Belgium, the marketing materials of other airline companies similarly juxtaposed disparate visions of Africa and Europe. One could encounter a scene similar to that of the *intore* dancer in a poster (Fig. 23) produced by the British Overseas Airways Corporation

[93] As demonstrated within the June 1931 edition, ACEC advertisements also often appeared in issues of *L'Illustration Congolaise*. Kris Deschouwer. *The Politics of Belgium: Governing a Divided Society*. (United Kingdom: Red Globe Press, 2012), 32-33. According to Deschouwer, "Belgium became an important export of machines, and was, for instance, well known for the tramways that were built by ACEC (Ateliers de Constructions Electriques de Charleroi) in France, Egypt, Russia and China."
[94] Vanthemsche (2002: 135)

(BOAC) to promote flights to South Africa through South African Airways (SAA).[95] As a BOAC plane flies overhead, a group of South African drummers perform below. A vibrant network of converging hues conveys a sense of vitality, movement, and percussive sound evinced by the engaged posture of the three central drummers. In an Air France poster advertising travel to French West Africa (Fig. 24), a European aircraft once again oversees an African scene. As the plane exits out of frame to the upper left of the scene, it leaves in its wake a man and a younger child, traveling down a river with a dead leopard in a dugout canoe.[96] Passing a shoreline dotted with nearby villagers, the canoe pushes forward toward the viewers as the boy reaches out to inspect the leopard. For European audiences, a glimpse of the perceived vulnerabilities implicit in an African landscape, such as encounters with wild animals, might have evoked sentiments of exoticism and even risk in exploring the unexplored. However, it is important to note that while airlines often marketed Africa as a place of authentic cultural encounters, tourism more commonly offered an opportunity to explore fantasy rather than reality.[97] Colonial infrastructure existed, not only for organizing tourist itineraries, but also for reinforcing imperialist perceptions of an "uncivilized" Africa.

By redefining the spatial and social identity of the Congo, Sabena's posters sought increasingly to attract prospective tourists with representations the colonial subjects themselves. As a result, several advertisements depict the Congolese in direct contemplation of a Sabena aircraft. In a circa 1955 poster entitled *Belgium-Belgian Congo-South Africa*, a Congolese figure

[95] Flight International Directories. "World Airline Directory." (Flight International, 1993), 530. BOAC was established in 1939 through the merging of Imperial and British Airways. In addition to offering flights across the globe, BOAC also introduced the first commercial jet service from London to Johannesburg in 1952. BOAC merged with several other subsidiary companies in 1974 to form British Airways.
[96] French West Africa (*Afrique occidentale française* or AOF) refers to the administrative organization of French colonial territories from 1895 until independence in 1960. For additional information, see Jean Suret-Canale. *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, 1900–1945* (France: Pica Press, 1971).
[97] A.J. Hughes. "Myths of the tourist industry." (Africa Report 1979), 41-42

looks up to observe an approaching plane, possibly a Douglas DC-6B, as it passes overhead (Fig. 25). The fibrous ends of his headdress seem almost to touch the aircraft's wings, thus emphasizing the constructed dynamic the poster rehearses between the human and the mechanical. As he gazes up at a fuselage presumably filled by European tourists, the expression of the Congolese figure remains ambiguous. Without even the distant depiction of a nearby community, viewers of this poster could have interpreted the man as a valiant symbol of the persistence of an authentic "African" existence.

Three: Imag(in)ing the Congo

Spurred by both rapid economic growth and global aviation, the Congo experienced significant transformations over the course of the 1950s. The value of foreign exports totaled over 400 million dollars by 1953, due in large part to the exponential growth of industrial mining operations and agricultural markets. By the same year, more than 20 percent of the 12 million native Congolese had migrated to live in colonial centers.[98] The primary impetus for these fundamental shifts was the colonial government's implementation in 1951 of a Ten Year Plan. On its face, the Plan was designed to enhance the quality of life and restructure social organization. With close to one billion dollars in allocated funds, projects focused on upgrades in transportation, electrical power, public health, farming settlement, education, and government services.[99] These advancements, however, by no means reflected an effort on behalf of Belgian authorities to relinquish autonomy to the Congolese.[100] Rather, the pursuit of colonial "progress"

[98] J. Huge "Economic Planning and Development in the Belgian Congo." (1955), 62.
[99] *Ibid.*, 66. Huge, who served as Director of the Commissariat of the Ten Year Plan, breaks down the allocation of funds follows: "of the credits allotted through 1959, 43.9 per cent is devoted to transportation, of which 16.8 per cent is for river transport, 13 per cent for roads, 10.1 per cent for railroads, and 4 per cent for improvements in air transportation facilities. Electric power developments receive 6.4 per cent and the improvement of agriculture 5.5 per cent of the Plan's investment. Of the remaining funds, 25.8 per cent is devoted to social improvements and 18.4 per cent to improving the equipment of governmental services."
[100] *Ibid.*, 62-63. Leading up to 1950, government expenditures (152 million in 1953) were relatively low in comparison to gross national product (over 1 billion in the same year). The rapid growth of industry, which

served primarily to further entrench administrative power.[101] The underlying objective of the decade-long intervention was to expand State control of economic markets. Improvements in living conditions reflected an administrative desire to prevent social conflict and secure private investments, rather than benevolently assisting the native Congolese.[102] This contradiction of outcomes recalls the "humanizing" mission of Leopold, whom colonial officers cited as a source of inspiration in conceptualizing the Plan.[103] The Ten Year Plan aimed to strengthen what had originated under the Congo Free State through the consolidation of modernizing authority, strictly in Belgian terms.

In its representations of ongoing change in the Congo, the colonial administration foregrounded its presumed role in guiding a populace to adopt heightened standards of European life. Incremental improvements served to validate colonial rule through the invention of an entirely new, modern Congo. This constructed dichotomy was realized in a Belgian Government Information Center brochure entitled *Yesterday and Today* (Fig. 26). On the front cover, photographs cropped by the cartographic outlines of the Congo immediately contrast the aging solemnity of a "bygone" era with the youthful excitement of a developing colony. As mentioned in the introduction to the publication, this contrast signified a profound shift to life in "modern cities [where], miraculously emerging from the heart of the bush, hundreds of thousands of Africans live in a way that would have defied the imagination of their grandparents." [104] Page by

quadrupled in production between 1945 and 1953, further encouraged the expanded allocation of funds for the Ten Year Plan.

[101] Pierre Wigny. "A ten year plan for the economic and social development of the Belgian Congo." (New York: Belgian Government Information Center, 1951), 5-16

[102] Jean-Philippe Peemans. "Imperial Hangovers: Belgium - The Economics of Decolonization." (Journal of Contemporary History, 1980), 264-266

[103] Wigny (1951: 7-8). Pierre Wigny, who served as Minister of Colonies from 1947 to 1950, writes that a central purpose of the Ten Year Plan was to "attract into the economic periphery, into the current of progress, all the rural populations which continue to stagnate in their ancestral mode of living."

[104] Belgium Government Information Center, *Yesterday and Today*. Brussels: C.I.D (ca. 1950s).

page, photographs document advancements across major sectors of life as proscribed by the Ten Year Plan. Dirt paths and thatched-roof villages navigable by a colonial palanquin appear across from asphalt roads, punctuated by automobiles and contemporary architecture (Fig. 27).[105] From medical discoveries to maritime travel, the presentation of such transformations were designed to mediate the perceptions of European and American audiences, who could almost have imagined a Congo quite similar to their own communities. However, in this context of revision, the persistence of a Congo of "yesterday" occupied a heightened degree of importance. The perpetuation of "the rough country, the rapids, the heat, [and] the savagery of the natives" was not only alluring to tourists but also justified the continued existence of the colonial project.[106] The self-imposed preservation of an "uncivilized" past allowed Belgium to envisage the Congo as a fundamentally dependent nation, one which required continued instruction and economic development.

Steeped in paternalism, characterizations of the Congolese as incapable of self-sufficiency reflected a deep-seated opposition to independence. From the perspective of the colonial administration, the Congo was in desperate need of Europe to remain on the path towards "civilization."[107] Decolonization would undermine nearly 75 years of "humanitarian" development. The necessity of a colonial benefactor was underscored by Pierre Ryckmans, the then-former Governor-General of the Belgian Congo:

> We believe in the civilizing mission of the West. We think our Western Christian culture is superior to the native culture of Africa and that to have planted it there was good in itself and for it to disappear would be bad in itself. We believe that, if emancipation jeopardized the existence of Western

[105] Huge (1955: 66-67) explains the extent of proposed road construction under the Ten Year Plan: "the road program consists mainly of the creation of asphalt-covered high-ways. The first phase will be started with the east-west highway across the congo, the connection of the Kivu to the Congo River, and the construction of the most important feeder lines. The Plan provides for a thousand miles of these roads to be finished by 1959."
[106] Belgium Government Information Center, *Yesterday and Today*
[107] Peemans (1980: 274-275)

> civilization in Africa, that would not represent progress but the reverse. If we were not so convinced we should have no justification for being in Africa.[108]

For Ryckmans, the perseverance of colonial hegemony would best attend to the most pressing needs of the Congolese people, a viewpoint fittingly outlined in his 1948 publication, *Dominer pour servir* (Dominate to Serve).[109] Belgium *owned* the Congo, and therefore knew what was best for it.[110] This ideology of possession, conceived of as *Notre Congo* (Our Congo), had functioned as a central feature of Belgian colonialism ever since its formal acquisition of the Congo in 1908.[111] Ryckmans' words directly recall those of a widely-distributed 1909 publication (Fig. 28) called *Notre colonie: le Congo belge* (Our Colony: The Belgian Congo).[112] On the cover of the volume, a CMBC steamer charges below a flag of the Belgian Congo, surmounted by a black, yellow, and red chord signifying the Belgian national standard. Because possession of the Congo was a matter of national pride for the Belgian elite, ongoing technological progress imparted a pretense of intercontinental power that the colonial project could work to strengthen.[113] Needless to say, the contributions of the Congolese people themselves (who lacked voting rights altogether well into the 1950s) were hardly

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[108] Pierre Ryckmans, "Belgian 'Colonialism.' " (*Foreign Affairs*, 1955), 94

[109] Rosine Lewin. "Dominer pour servir? Pierre Ryckmans, la colonisation, l'anti-colonialisme." (2007), 98-99

[110] Dunn (2003: 68) emphasizes the instructional 'teaching' hierarchy of paternalist colonial discourse: "paternalism, with its overt emphasis on the white man as *father* and Africa as *child*, became the philosophical framework (and justification) of the Belgian occupation of the Congo."

[111] *Ibid*., 69. Dunn discusses *Notre Congo* as presented in the marketing materials for Belgians chocolatiers. In 1948, Jacques Chocolates published an album entitled *Notre Congo*, into which collectable cards found inside their chocolates could be glued. For this particular promotional cycle, Jacques featured scenes illustrating different Congolese peoples and wildlife. This presentation of typologies aligns with Sabena posters. Other Belgian companies such as Liebig's Extract of Meat Company and La Vache Qui Rit (The Laughing Cow) cheese company produced similar trading card sets.

[112] Pierre Ryckmans. *Dominer pour servir*. (Bruxelles: l'Édition Universelle, 1948), 7-15. Stanard (2011: 157) mentions that the CCS (Commission de Propagande Coloniale Scolaire) distributed copies both *Notre colonie* and *Dominer pour servir* to Belgian schools, due to the relative lack of information provided about the Congo in textbooks. The CCS also gave schools subscriptions to "numerous publications such as *La Revue Coloniale Belge*, *Revue Congolaise Illustrée*, and *Kongo-Overzee*, thereby making available hundreds of copies of colonial magazines across the country."

[113] Albert de Boeck. *Notre colonie: le Congo belge*. (Bruxelles, 1909), 103: "travail et progrès demeurera la devise que justifieront nos efforts" (work and progress will remain the motto that will justify our efforts).

acknowledged.[114] Without legislative protections, the native population largely functioned as a commodity of the colonial administration, which was in constant need of a cost-effective labor force.[115]

Deemed "the foremost of the companies serving the Colony," Sabena directly benefited from the Ten Year Plan and further propagated the inequalities which had persisted for close to eight decades.[116] To match annual improvements in aviation technology, the colonial government allocated substantial funds for the expansion of airfields at colonial centers.[117] Faster planes with greater seating capacities further accelerated the tourism industry, mirroring the colonial conviction that the Congo was open for business. Like the colonial administration, Sabena's publicity reinforced similarly paternalistic sentiments in their passengers. Beginning in 1950, the airline began to use the slogan "Avec la Sabena, vous êtes en bonnes mains" (With Sabena, you're in good hands). From luggage labels to timetables, marketing materials displayed the mantra in conjunction with a smiling infant, held in the arms of a Sabena stewardess (Fig. 29).[118] Happy passengers disembark from a Douglas DC-4 in the background as another Sabena employee carries their baggage. Travelers of means could easily insert themselves into such a scene, just moments after arrival at a destination of their choosing. Sabena correspondingly projected itself as a conduit for global experiences against all perceived obstacles. This

[114] David N. Gibbs. *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in Congo Crisis*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 52-57
[115] Huge (1955: 64)
[116] Wigny (1951:43)
[117] *Ibid.* (1951: 44). Wigny expands upon the responsibility to maintain major Congolese airfields: "Around the triangle of big airports, formed by Léopoldville, Elizabethville, and Stanleyville, and extended by the hop from Libenge at the entrance to the Congo towards Brussels, secondary and relief airports are appropriately distributed."
[118] Jacques Mercier and Karl Scheerlinck. *Made in Belgium: Un siècle d'affiches belges*. (Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 2002), 69

leadership hierarchy replicated Belgian colonial discourse, which largely regarded the Congolese as impressionable subjects of a more prudent, fatherly administration.[119]

Above all else, Sabena was a *société anonyme*, a limited liability company (LLC). Its promotional campaigns accordingly served its bottom line.[120] To this end, the transportation of commodities constituted a substantial source of revenue. As a result, for Sabena, tradable goods could themselves function as representative subjects of an ever-expanding air network.[121] Paternalism found its place in this construction as well. In a poster suitably titled *Export-Import*, Sabena holds Africa in the palm of its hand (Fig. 30). Crates from the United States, Middle East ("Moyen-Orient"), Belgian Congo, and Scandinavia ("Scandinavie") descend upon a projected map of the Eastern Hemisphere. The underlying shadow of each box provides the viewer with a modicum of geographical context, which otherwise disappears into negative space. Tilted on an axis similar to that of the Earth, the grasping hand of Sabena is propped up by the words "Export-Import." The small black silhouette of a Sabena plane flies across the page, set on a direct collision course with the suspended products. The position of the aircraft is far less prominent in comparison to posters from past decades. Details which had been previously identifiable through relative size are no longer discernible. Tethered to a streamlined contrail, the plane flies straight across the poster. In effect, the minimized attention granted to aviation technology in this scene signals a degree of consistency and reliability in Sabena's operations. Sabena had made its mark visible upon the world, to the point that it was no longer a priority to

[119] Dunn (2003: 68-69): "The Belgian colonial narrative also relied on a specific spatial interpretation that regarded Congolese space as an extension of Belgian domestic space, and such representation engendered important material practices."
[120] Vanthemsche (2000: 919-920)
[121] On the back cover of the *Belgian Congo-American Survey: 1956-57*, a publication produced by the Belgian Chamber of Commerce, Sabena advertised itself as flying the largest network in Africa. Flight options were divided between Royal Sabena (First Class) or Intercontinental (Tourist Class). Belgian Chamber of Commerce. *Belgian Congo-American Survey*. (New York: Belgian Chamber of Commerce, 1954).

foreground innovation at every turn. The efficient conveyance of goods served as a powerful substitute. Tourism represented just one dimension of an extensive list of commodities, transported to and from the Belgian Congo.[122]

In representing travel to the Congo, artistic objects similarly served as compelling representatives of the native population. Masquerade traditions, associated with the ceremonial rites of various Congolese peoples, were of particular interest for Western travelers. Sabena matched the popularity of Congolese masks by featuring one in a circa 1955 poster (Fig. 31). The depicted mask represents a work created by a Lulua woodcarver of the Kasai region of southwestern Congo. It was illustrated in the 1954 publication *Afrikanische Plastik* (African Sculpture) by the German art historian Eckart von Sydow (Fig. 32).[123] Set against a bright red background, the mask, a vibrant construction of interlocking geometric shapes, hangs in space. It is visually anchored by a bamboo rod and a looping configuration of wire-like lines. The silhouette of a Sabena plane, identical to the one in the *Export-Import* poster, appears following the phrase, "to the Belgian Congo and South Africa." For Western audiences, the plane and mask could have epitomized emblems of ascribed value in Europe and Africa respectively. Aviation retained its status as the direct manifestation of technological progress and economic expansion. The presentation of a mask removed from its original context of production might still have prompted a vision of Africa stuck in the past.[124] For Sabena, the faint projection of a Congolese

[122] According to Vanthemsche (2002: 132), between 1946 and 1960, the number of passengers transported per year by Sabena increased from 121,138 to 954,630. This in turn coincided with a greater transport capacity as Sabena incorporated several new airplane models into its fleet.

[123] The Lulua or Bena Lulua comprise an ethnic group, primarily concentrated within the Kasai-Occidental province, who originally settled within the Lulua River valley. The same Lulua mask depicted also appears on the border of a map produced by L'Office du Tourisme du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi in 1954.

[124] David Binkley and Patricia Darish. " 'Enlightened but in Darkness': Interpretations of Kuba Art and Culture at the Turn of the Twentieth Century." (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 51-58. Binkley and Darish further discuss Western discussions of Kuba art primarily through the work of the African American-Protestant missionary William H. Sheppard and Hungarian ethnographer, Emil Torday. Both paradoxically valued Kuba

"other" (as distinct from Europe) was devised to represent travel to South Africa and, by extension, the entire African continent. This rote objectification of cultural practices reinforced the paradoxical nature of colonization. While supposedly working to eradicate "primitive" life, the Belgian administration ascribed economic and cultural value to those same social practices. Sabena remained at the confluence of these contradictions and accordingly negotiated both sides to increase its own revenue.

Particularly during the 1950s, Belgium reinforced its commitment to the Congo through the attribution of value to Congolese art. The *Musée du Congo Belge* (Museum of the Belgian Congo), located outside of Brussels in Tervuren, was central to the process.[125] Originally created from a Congo Free State display at the 1897 Brussels International Exhibition, the museum amassed one of the most extensive collections of Congolese artifacts in the world.[126] As a result, it served as one of the most popular settings for Belgians to interface with the material culture of the Congo.[127] It is hardly surprising that, particularly following World War II, the museum increasingly aligned itself with efforts of the Belgian administration to justify sustained colonial intervention. While rooted in economic development and the Ten Year Plan, the promotion of Congolese cultural practices certainly served to validate Belgium's colonial enterprises. During the 1950s, the *mise-en-valeur* of colonial resources included Congolese artifacts, which were

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artistic production as primitive in a number of characteristics yet considered it to be more advanced than many neighboring Congolese.

[125] The Museum of the Belgian Congo was later renamed the Royal Museum for Central Africa. It is colloquially known as the Africa Museum or Tervuren.

[126] Sarah Van Beurden. *Authentically African: Arts and the Transnational Politics of Congolese Culture*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015), 61-100. The collection of the Museum of the Belgian Congo which drew upon the collections of colonial institutions in the Congo such as the *Musée de la Vie Indigène* (Museum of Indigenous Life or MVI). Two major arts commissions, the *Commission pour la Protection des Arts et Métiers Indigènes* (Commission for the Protection of Indigenous Arts and Crafts or COPAMI) and *Amis de l'Art Indigène* (Friends of Indigenous Art or AAI).

[127] Sarah Van Beurden. "The Value of Culture: Congolese Art and the Promotion of Belgian Colonialism (1945–1959)." (2013), 481. The Museum of the Belgian Congo was one of the most popular destinations attracting at least 2% of the Belgian population each year during the 1950s.

seen by the Belgian populace as both exotic and edifying.[128] The reformulation of colonial value systems was the largely work of Frans Olbrechts, director of the Musée du Congo Belge from 1947 to 1958. While maintaining the designation of African objects as "primitive," Olbrechts advanced a context-based methodology which diverged from traditional considerations of Congolese art as detached from history altogether.[129] This mode of analysis elevated Congolese artifacts to the ascribed standing of "art," while placing them in direct dialogue with works from Europe and America.[130] Olbrechts expanded further on this model through the selection of masterpiece-quality works from the collection.[131] Primarily through their presentation at Tervuren, art objects gained a cultural currency which made them comparable to sources of economic pride such as colonial mining operations.[132]

Now valorized by the colonial project itself, art from the Congo maintained a heightened position of influence under Belgian guardianship. Sabena accordingly reproduced a Lulua mask from the Musée du Congo Belge in a poster called *Sabena to the Belgian Congo and South Africa*.[133] The airline's interest in Tervuren was centered around contributions by Olbrechts himself, who wrote for the Winter 1954 issue of Sabena's journal, *Sabena Revue*. His "Invitation au Voyage Congolais" ("Invitation to Congolese Travel") takes readers on a tour of Congolese

[128] *Ibid*., 473-487
[129] Frans Olbrechts and Lee Preedy (Translator). "The Integration of Art in the Culture of Primitive Peoples." Art in (2011), 367-273
[130] Van Beurden (2013: 474-476) discusses Olbrechts' educational background, marked in particular by his postdoctoral position in anthropology at Columbia University. Olbrechts worked at Columbia during the same period of time that Franz Boas, a founding figure of American anthropology, and his student Melville J. Herskovits, one of the first scholars in the discipline of African American and African studies in the United States.
[131] *Ibid*., 483-485 also mentions that Olbrechts' use of the term masterpiece culminated in 1952 publication entitled Some Masterpieces of Africa from the Collections of the Royal Museum of Belgian Congo, Tervuren.
[132] Prior to the 1950s, the term mise-en-valeur more exclusively underscored the value of economic and natural resources. For instance, a 1913 geographic study of the Congo by French civil engineer C. Ibañez de Ibero was entitled *La Mise en Valeur du Congo Belge*.
[133] Eckart von Sydow. *Afrikanische Plastik*. (New York: George Wittenborn, 1954), 165. Von Sydow identifies the reproduced Lulula mask as figure "73D" identified by Museum of Belgian Congo "Nr. 15 442 R II C b 89."

life through the presentation art objects, almost entirely from the collection in Tervuren.[134] By exploring a diversity of production methods and geographical areas, Olbrechts describes the distinct character of Congolese life in ways that casual readers of *Sabena Revue* might have found intriguing. At each stop along the guided excursion, captions translated in French, Flemish, and English referred to a broad selection Congolese artifacts as "fetishes." While describing a mask created by a Pende (Bapende) sculptor of southwestern Congo, for example, Olbrechts asks: "were it possible to give the sculptures of Tervuren Museum the power of speech, would this mask still keep the secret of Ba-Pende initiation rites?" (Fig. 33). Devoid of any images of actual people, "Invitation au Voyage Congolais" underscores the inherent value Belgium ascribed to the custody of Congolese art as an extension of its administration of colonial subjects. Material culture, which could not physically speak for itself, provided a medium for the more direct imposition of imperialist discourse.[135] Torn from its original cultural context, Congolese artwork functioned as a popular emblem of state control.

It is altogether fitting that Tervuren is located near the Parc Heysel, the site for the 1958 Brussels World's Fair. The first international showcase following World War II and the last of its kind held on Belgian soil, the Fair constituted a final effort to represent the fruits of colonialism to the world.[136] Correspondingly, it was the most comprehensive and best attended exposition in Belgium's colonial history, attracting over 40 million visitors.[137] Placed at center stage in 1958 were seven pavilions, each of which contributed to a panorama of modernity across the Belgian

[134] Frans Olbrechts, "Invitation au Voyage Congolais." In Sabena Revue. Brussels, 1954. The remaining works belonged to the private collection of Gilbert Périer, the then-President of Sabena.
[135] Van Beurden (2015: 21-24)
[136] Stanard (2011: 67) mentions that the "fair was such an attraction that hoteliers, restaurateurs, and café owners in the Congo spoke of a crisis that summer resulting from so many colonials leaving to visit Brussels, as the number of hotel clients in Léopoldville declined around 50-60 percent."
[137] Matthew Stanard. " 'Bilan du monde pour un monde plus déshumanisé': The 1958 Brussels World's Fair and Belgian Perceptions of the Congo." (2005), 267-272

Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. As was the case in 1897 and 1935, Belgium reimagined its violent colonial past and present as a praiseworthy and "civilizing" crusade, beginning under Leopold. The ethnographic display in 1958 of several hundred Congolese people, along with artworks from Tervuren, recycled a familiar narrative of primitive, pre-colonial life.[138] A before-and-after projection of colonial life was aligned with the conceptualization of a new Atomic Age, and envisioned a future predicated upon nuclear technology. The embodiment of this future at the fair was the Atomium, a structure which replicated the unit cell of an iron crystal (Fig. 34). In line with the exposition's theme, the "evaluation of the world for a more humane world," this vision of progress was fundamentally humanizing in scope.[139] Constructed in the immediate vicinity of the Congolese human zoo, the Atomium clearly marked African development as stagnant and in need of continued Belgian administration. This projected disparity of development, validated in the context of an Exposition concerned with humanity's future, served to reframe the history of colonization as an act of beneficence.

In an advertisement characterizing Brussels as the "heart of the common market," each Atomium molecule serves as a roundel dedicated to the union of industry and humankind (Fig. 35).[140] The "common market" in this case referenced the integration in 1957 of European markets into the European Economic Community (EEC), later incorporated as the present-day European Union.[141] Expanding upon this moment of integration, Sabena endeavored to create a union of airlines which included Air France, Alitalia, Dutch K.L.M., and the German

[138] Dunn (2003: 67) discusses that a centerpiece of the Congo section of the 1958 World's Fair was a multi-media display entitled *Congorama*, which constructed a valorized timeline of colonial efforts to "civilize" the Congo.
[139] Stanard (2005: 269) identifies the theme of the exposition in French as '*Bilan du monde pour un monde plus humain*'.
[140]Two Sabena Lockheed L-1049 Super Constellations aircraft were also displayed at the 1958 Expo.
[141] The initial countries included within the EEC were Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany.

Lufthansa.[142] Punctuated by a unique background color, scenes of industrial production form an interconnected web of progress within which abstracted human forms coexist. At the heart of the molecular structure, the familiar silhouette and linear contrail of a Sabena plane jets past Brussels Town Hall, superimposed over a heart. The central position of Belgium in the molecular structure reinforces its position of authority in promulgating shared ideals of humanity. When applied to colonialism, however, this same authority was predicated upon the assumption that the Congo fundamentally lacked humanity altogether. To a significant degree, this position aligned with the views of most Belgians in 1958, who deemed colonial intervention as beneficial to the Congolese.[143] In this sense, Sabena played a significant role in legitimizing the colonial project through the construction of a facade of humanitarianism.

While the Brussels World's Fair obscured any vision of the Congo that did not include Belgium, it had become increasingly clear that colonial rule was unsustainable. Outside of the Congolese pavilions, the 1958 Exposition also included sections dedicated to newly-independent African nations, such as Morocco and Tunisia. The wave of decolonization had begun, engendering sweeping changes to socio-economic and political institutions throughout the African continent.[144] Nevertheless, among all European colonial powers, Belgium in particular disregarded the prevailing sentiments of the independence movement.[145] Instead of formulating a restructuring plan, colonial officials were content to stay the course. But economic complications

[142] Vanthemsche (2002: 147-153)
[143] Stanard (2005: 287) writes that in "response to a poll in 1956, 80.5 percent of Belgians agreed that Belgium's presence in the Congo was legitimate...and more than 80 percent of Belgians believed their rule in African benefited the indigenous population."
[144] Stanard (2011: 66)
[145] Crawford Young. *Politics in the Congo*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 40. Contrary to British and French colonial governance which developed plans of restructuring, "until about 1957, the policy of subordinating political development and social advances had the appearance of success from the Belgian point of view." For Belgium, any consideration of colonial reconstruction was vague. Professor A. A. J. Van Bilsen proposed a 30-year independence plan, which many considered to be unrealistic.

and social tensions had become increasingly acute in the late 1950s. The onset of an economic recession further exacerbated mass unemployment, as well as the salary disparities between white immigrants and the native Congolese.[146] The resounding demands for independence were further mobilized through ABAKO or *Alliance des Bakongo* (Alliance of Bakongo), one of several vocal political associations.[147] Belgium could no longer ignore the consequences of its own actions when, in January of 1959, deadly riots erupted in Léopoldville following the colonial suppression of an ABAKO protest. More than 40 people lost their lives and hundreds more were injured.[148] In response, Belgian King Baudouin asserted that "We are today resolved to lead without fatal delays, but also without precipitate haste, the Congolese populations to independence in prosperity and peace."[149] The demands of nationalist Congolese leadership only grew stronger as unrest continued. Eighteen months after the riots, on June 30th, 1960, Belgium formally granted independence to the Congo. The event by no means brought the conflict to an end; instead, it generated an all-out civil crisis.[150]

The years following 1960 witnessed landmark transformations to the global air network which Sabena had helped to develop. At the same moment that the airline introduced trans-Atlantic flights to New York via the new Boeing 707 intercontinental jet, Sabena ceded its monopoly on colonial travel to a new national airline, Air Congo. While Sabena maintained a minority stake in Air Congo, a core destination of its air network for nearly forty years had, in

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[146] Martin Ewans. *European Atrocity, African Catastrophe: Leopold II, The Congo Free State and its Aftermath*. (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 242: "the average white salary in the Congo was thirty-three times greater than the African average."
[147] The full title of ABAKO is *L'Association des Bakongo pour l'Unification et la Conservation de la langue Kikongo* (The Association of Bakongo for the Unification and Conservations of the Kikongo Language). The association was founded by the Kongo of the lower Congo region.
[148] Young (1965: 36-40). Auguste Maurel. *Le Congo: de la colonisation belge à l'indépendance*. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992) 260.
[149] *Ibid*., 37
[150] David van Reybrouck. *Congo: The Epic History of a People.* (New York: Ecco, 2014), 281

effect, disintegrated. Combined with the massive inflation of Congolese currency, the forfeiture of the Congolese route resulted in tens of millions of dollars of asset losses.[151] Financial deficits of this proportion took decades of recovery for the airline and necessitated administrative restructuring.

For both Belgium and Sabena, the realized vision of a Congo which served the desires of Europe had run its course. The gloss of so-called civilizing progress reinforced through posters and other marketing materials could no longer drown out the voices of the afflicted. Yet, even in the absence of the Belgian colonial administration and its national airline, the ideological underpinning which had validated the institutions of violent colonialism remained.

Conclusion

In a matter of days following independence, the renamed Republic of Congo descended into utter chaos. Congolese members of the *Force Publique* staged a violent mutiny against white officers in Léopoldville.[152] The mineral-rich provinces of Katanga and South Kasai quickly seceded from the Congo. At the same time that the Congolese faced full-scale civil war, the United States and the Soviet Union vied for strategic influence in the new nation. As Belgians fled from internal strife *en masse*, Sabena utilized its new Boeing 707 jet airliners to facilitate the evacuations. Close to 25,000 people returned to Belgium in July alone.[153]

In the five years following independence, the Congo endured social uprisings, political assassinations, and economic collapse.[154] With the assistance of the Belgian and American intelligence agencies, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu began to consolidate power in 1960. Mobutu's ascendancy materialized through the arranged deposition and execution of Patrice Lumumba, the

[151] Vanthemsche (2002: 146-152)
[152] Ewans (2002: 243)
[153] Vanthemsche (2002: 162-165)
[154] Van Reybrouck (2014: 281)

first democratically elected leader of the new Republic. Mobutu finally seized dictatorial power in 1965. Between 1971 and 1997, he ruled as a totalitarian autocrat over the Congo, which he renamed Zaire as part of a cultural authenticity campaign (*authenticité*).[155] Amidst corruption and human rights violations, he urged his populace to eschew Western clothing styles and reclaim a shared heritage.[156] Mobutu clung to power until 1997, when he was finally overthrown by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who gave the Congo its current name, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sixty years after gaining independence, the Congo continues to be plagued by the same legacy of exploitation and violence it experienced under colonial rule. Initiated under Leopold II, the Congo served as a primary target in which greed operated under the guise of humanitarianism. The perpetuation of Belgian colonialism depended on a manufactured binary between modernization and an uncivilized Africa. Promotional materials produced by Sabena Airlines and the Office of Colonial Tourism directly reinforced this contrast. By marketing travel, they served to mediate between the machinations of the colonial project and the reality of Congolese life. Their principal audience consisted almost exclusively of white Europeans and Americans.

Aviation had transformed the landscape of colonial encounter in the Congo, to the economic benefit of Europe and the devastation of the Congolese. Sabena filed for bankruptcy in 2001, but the practices of subjugation which it had supported for almost eighty years continue to persist.[157] From the Free State to Zaire to the Democratic Republic, the Congo has remained as a destination of global imagination.

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[155] Van Beurden (2015: 108)
[156] Ewans (2002: 244-245)
[157] Vanthemsche (2002: 302-303)

Plates

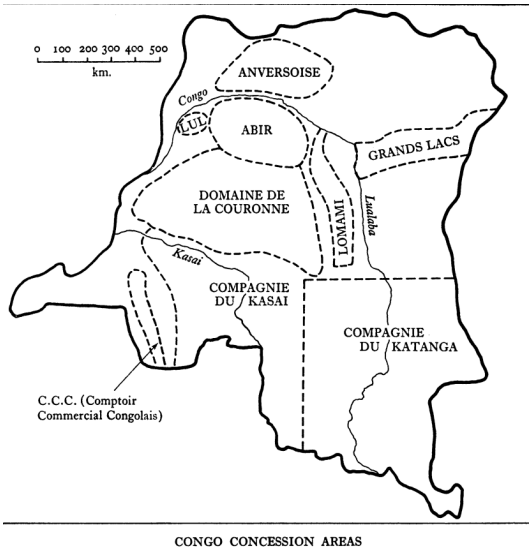

Figure 1. Map of Congo Concession Areas in Robert Harms, "The End of Red Rubber: A Reassessment." *The Journal of African History*, 1975

Figure 2. Postcard photograph of the Congo Free State's Force Publique, ca. 1890s

Figure 3. Jacques Ochs, *Sabena Réseau Aérien du Congo Belge Avions Trimoteurs*. Schaumans, Brussels, 1928

Figure 4. Postcard photograph of Sabena's fleet of Handley Page W.8 airplanes in Léopoldville, ca. 1925

Figure 5. Louis Royan, Publicity Poster for the Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo "Anvers-Congo: Compagnie Maritime Belge du Congo," ca. 1920s, 101 x 62 cm (s.d.). E. Stockmans et Compagnie, Anvers, Collection MRAC, Histoire, inv. no. 81.1.152

Figure 6. *L'Illustration Congolaise*, "Le Thysville, le 29 avril 1931," June 1931, p. 3533-36

Figure 7. King Albert I and Queen Elizabeth inspect the military camp of Léopoldville during their visit to the Belgian Congo, Archive of the Royal Palace, Brussels, 1928

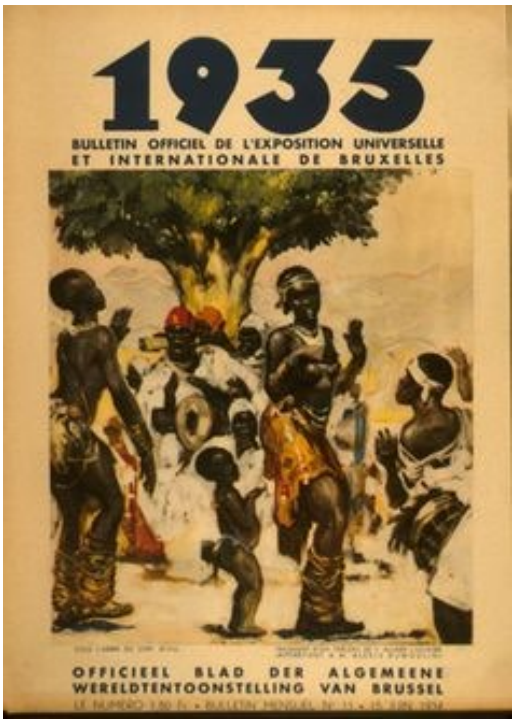

Figure 8. Official Bulletin from the 1935 Brussels International Exposition, 1935

Figure 9. Henri Privat-Livemont, *Exposition Internationale Bruxelles 1897*, 1896, 129.6 x 276.6 cm

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Figure 10. Hergé, Scenes from *Tintin in the Congo* (Translated edition of *Tintin Au Congo*), 1931

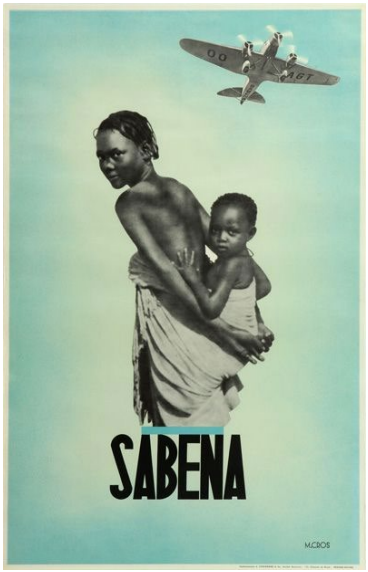

Figure 11. Marcel Cros, “Sabena,” ca. 1930

Figure 12. L. Keizer, *Rapidité*, ca. 1935. Photographed in *L'Illustration Congolaise* July 1935, p. 5478.

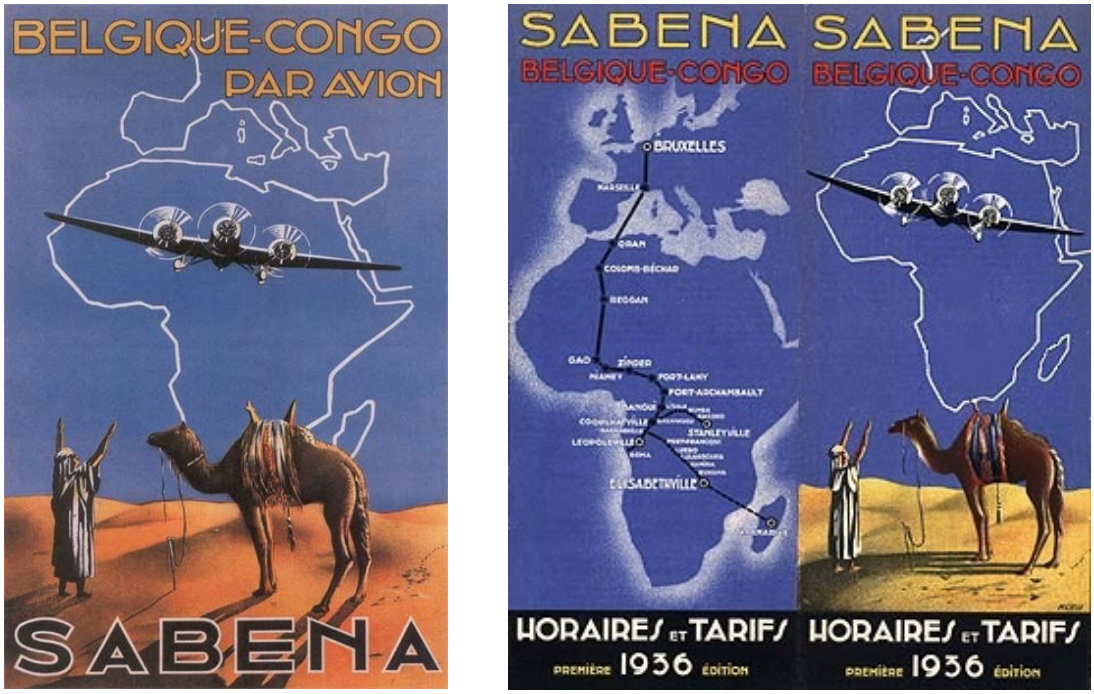

Figure 13. *Belgique-Congo Par Avion*, ca. 1930s. Reproduced in a 1936 Sabena timetable publication.

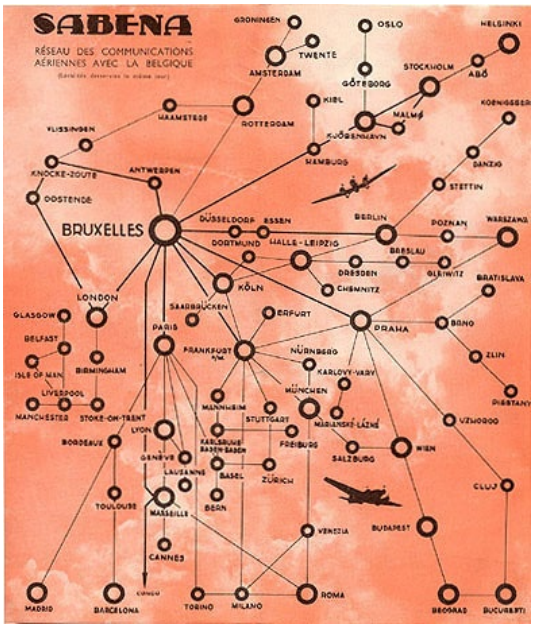

Figure 14. Marcel Cros, *Sabena 1937 horaires et tarifs du 5 Avril au 9 Octobre*, 1937

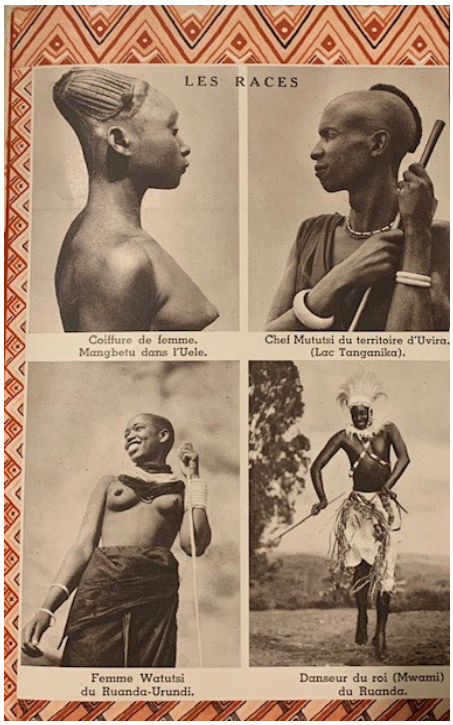

Figure 15. Page of "Les Races" in Office du Tourisme Coloniale, *Visite Le Congo belge: un voyage inoubliable!!*, ca. 1950s

Figure 16. Office du Tourisme du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, *Visitez le Congo Kivu*, ca. 1955

Figure 17. Office of Colonial Tourism, covers of *Visit the Belgian Congo: An Unforgettable Trip!!* and *Visite le Congo belge: un voyage inoubliable!!*, ca. 1950s

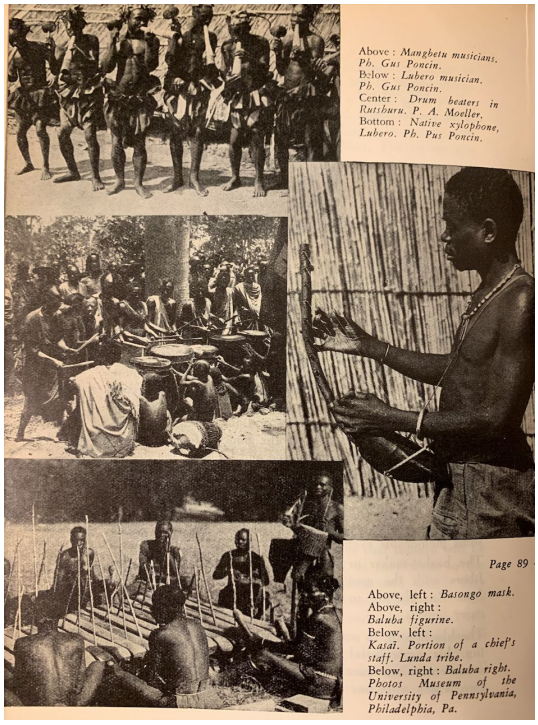

Figure 18. Office du tourisme du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, *Traveler's Guide to the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi*, 1951, p. 88

Figure 19. "Watusi Dancer" from Office du tourisme du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, *Traveler's Guide to the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi*, 1951

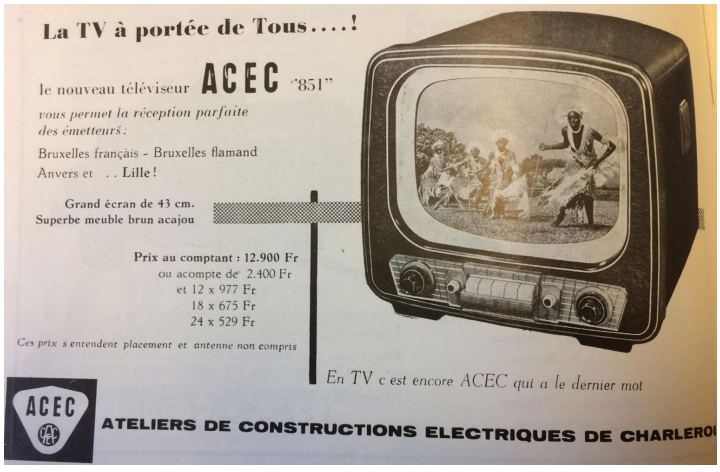

Figure 20. Advertisement for A.C.E.C. (Ateliers de Constructions Electriques de Charleroi) in *La Revue Coloniale Belge*, 1955

Figure 21. Marcel Cros, *Sabena België Kongo Zuid Afrika*, ca. 1950, 100 x 64 cm.

Figure 22. Marcel Cros, *Sabena Belgique Congo Afrique du Sud*, ca. 1956, 100 x 64 cm.

Figure 23. Frank Wootton, *Fly to South Africa by B.O.A.C. & S.A.A.*, 1951

Figure 24. Albert Victor Eugène Brenet, *Air France French West Africa*, ca. 1950s.

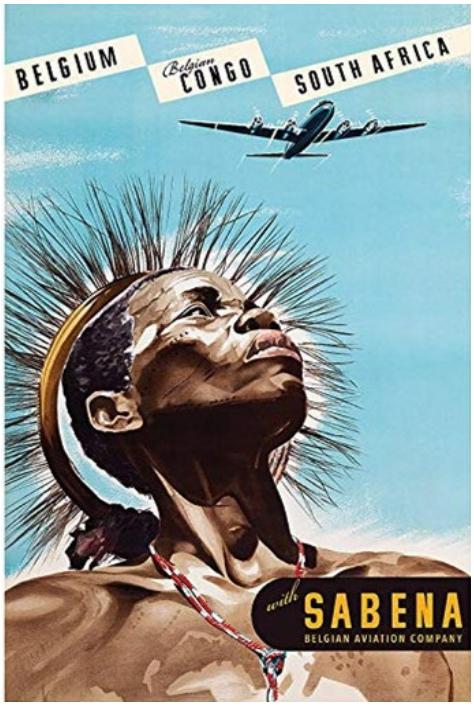

Figure 25. Sabena Airlines, *Belgium-Belgian Congo-South Africa*, ca. 1955, 99.5 x 65 cm

Figure 26. Belgium Government Information Center. *Yesterday and Today*. N.D. (ca. 1950s). Brussels: C.I.D (Centre d'Information et de Documentation du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi).

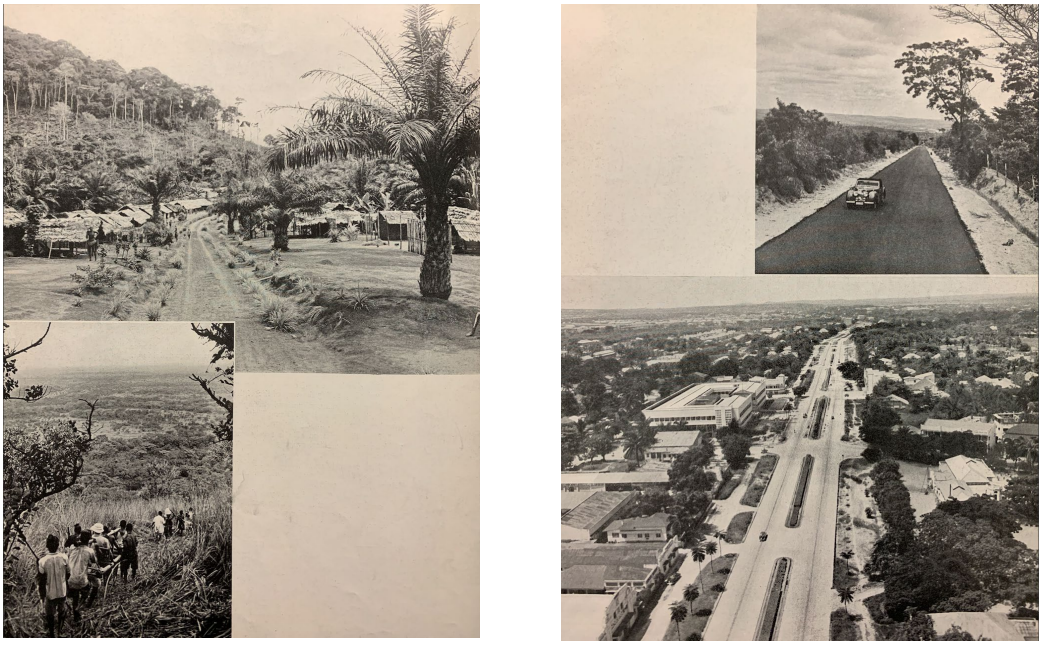

Figure 27. Opposing pages in Belgium Government Information Center. N.D. (ca. 1950s). *Yesterday and Today*. Brussels: C.I.D.

Figure 28. Cover of *Notre colonie: le Congo belge.* Brussels: Albert de Boeck, 1909

Figure 29. Sabena Airlines timetable, *Vous êtes en bonnes mains* (You're in Good Hands), ca. 1950.

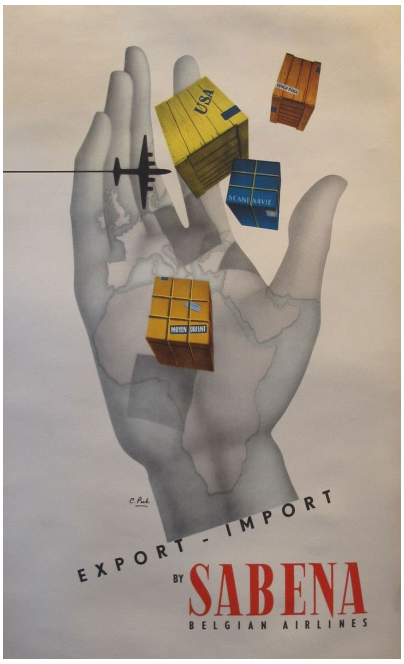

Figure 30. Sabena Airlines, *Export-Import*, ca. 1955

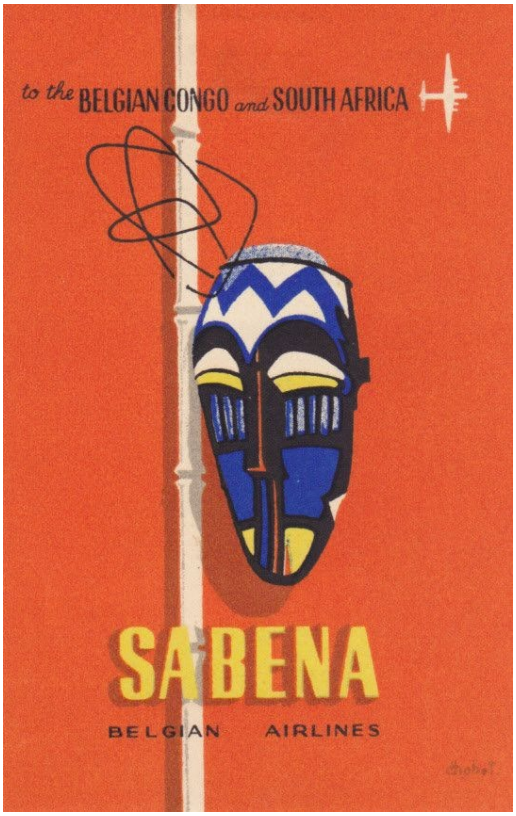

Figure 31. Claude Dohet, *Sabena to the Belgian Congo and South Africa*, ca.1955, printed at Litho Linsmo

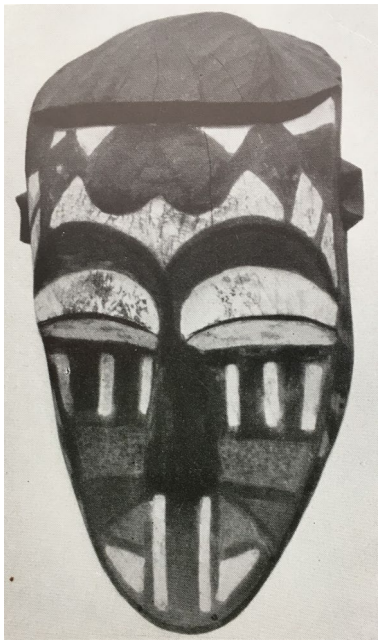

Figure 32. Lulua mask, Musée du Congo Belge, published in Eckart von Sydow's *Afrikanische Plastik* (African Sculpture), 1954.

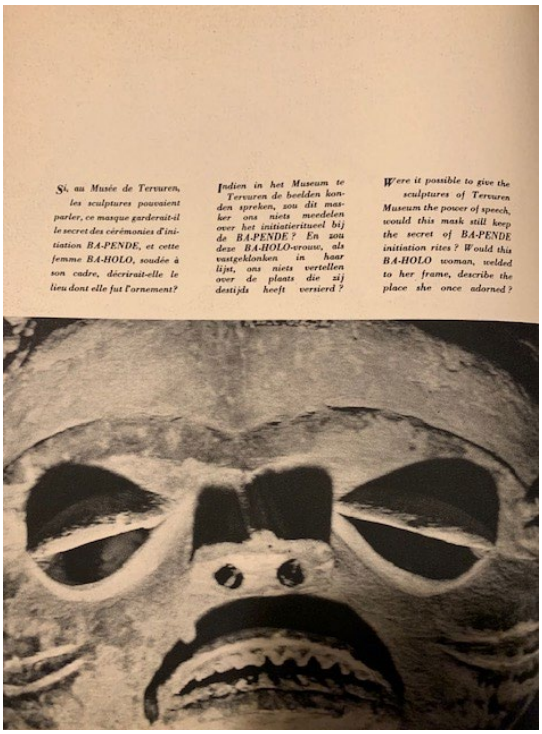

Figure 33. Pende mask, published in Frans Olbrechts' "Invitation au Voyage Congolais" in Sabena Revue, Winter 1954

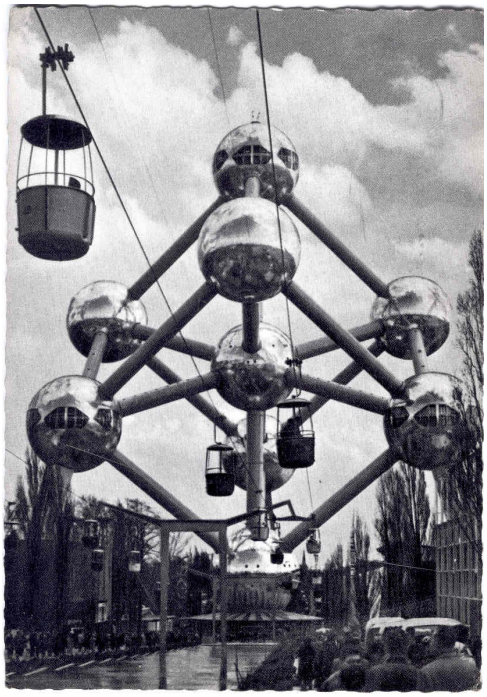

Figure 34. The Atomium, Brussels Expo, 1958, photograph.

Figure 35. Rali Brisart, *Bruxelles:Coeur du Marché Commun*, Bruxelles, 1958.

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