Chapter 3

Everyday Life, Development and Biopolitics in the Photographs of a Catholic Mission Sankuru

"They throw facts at my head, statistics, mileages of roads, canals, and railroad tracks."[1]

In July 2008, I spent about an hour talking with Frère Jean Up<i>utute, a frail man in his eighties with declining eyesight.[2] We were in Tshumbe, a town in Sankuru's savanna area, filled with priests, *abbés*, nuns, and various other religious and lay people. Tshumbe is the seat of the Passionist Catholic Diocese in Sankuru Province. Together with the Protestant village of Wembo Nyama, it is one of the province's main intellectual centers. Beginning in 1910 it was known as Tshumbe Sainte-Marie, the center of Catholicism in Sankuru. Frère Jean, Papa Rudolphe, and I sat on plastic chairs outside a priests' residence built more than half a century ago. Frère Jean paged through the photographic albums I had brought with me from Belgium right before it got dark.[3] He thought he recognized himself as a child among a group of kids. He noted the children went barefoot and added, "shoes were not just for anyone." He chuckled when he saw a photograph of two smiling boys, one of whom is shown holding his chin (Figure 60). His laughter seemed to echo theirs. Was this a fond memory of being young, of swimming and being free? Or was this a more ambiguous memory communicated by nervous laughter? It is interesting to think about what remains in

[1] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (Monthly Review Press, 2000), 43.

memory after so many years and so many changes: emotions of course; and shoes, who had them and who did not. Frère Jean's remark connected a photographic image with a specific memory, and through the observation of a small detail, recalled a whole social order. Frère Jean rambled a bit as the sun declined in the sky, while Papa Rudolphe gave me looks to wrap it up, out of deference to this man's years, and so that we did not tire him out too much.

Figure 60: *Ecole d'Apprentissage Pédagogique at Katako Kombe*, **b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.**

Frère Jean was born in 1923 in the savanna village of Lotolo, at the border of the Lubefu and Katako-Kombe territories. "Back then, we were called the *Ewango* people," he

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[2] Jean Upupute, "Looking at Colonial Era Photographs," interview by Isabelle de Rezende, Digital Recording, July 27, 2008.
[3] These photographs were copies of originals.

said.[4] By 1932, Frère Jean was studying at the *Paroisse* (the mission station) of Katako-Kombe. When the Passionist missionaries took over from their Scheutist predecessors in the mid-1930s, Frère Jean said, they "found us in school."[5] In 1936 there were over 2000 boys and 409 girls studying at the four main mission posts of Tshumbe, Lodja, Katako Kombe and Lubefu. The number of boys studying in outlying villages was similar (about 2000), but in strong contrast to the situation in mission posts, only 90 girls were being educated in the more far flung areas.[6] Frère Jean's education continued in Luluabourg (today Kananga), followed by a move to Tshumbe in 1938, when he was 15, which is where he remained. In 1944 Jean Uputute was one of the first three Sankurois to have been ordained a "brother," not a priest like many who came after him.[7] The Belgian Fathers are still in his heart, he said, as "good civilizers" who taught him and made him into a proper Christian. If they punished people, he said, they were right and it was just. Then, prompted by me a little, he talked about cases where the punishment was perhaps excessive, unjust, or too quickly applied. "Whipping," he said, this was what they did. We talked a little about Patrice Lumumba. Though he did not know him personally, in Frère Jean's eyes Lumumba was a hero who died before he could accomplish what he was meant to do. When the Belgian missionaries spoke against Lumumba, Frère Jean felt he was against them.[8]

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[4] The *Ewango*, who are mostly located in the savanna part of Katako-Kombe territory, were also Patrice Lumumba's people.

[5] Uputute, "Looking at Colonial Era Photographs." The Passionist order came to Sankuru in the mid-1930s. The first missionary order to begin evangelical activities among the Batetela was Belgium's large and powerful order of Scheut.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.; Dimandja Luhaka, "Les missions catholiques chez les Tetela des origines à 1945 (suite Et Fin)," *Cahiers des Religions Africaines* (1985): 275.

[8] Jean Tshonda Omasombo and Benoît Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba: acteur politique: de la prison aux portes du pouvoir, juillet 1956-février 1960* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005), 20; 160. Lumumba antagonized Catholics missionaries by taking position against their views in the educational debates of 1950s Belgium. Liberal Party *Ministre du Congo,* Auguste Buisseret, had turned the secularization of education into his warhorse. Lumumba, out of conviction and as a shrewd politician took the

A Photographic Archive

This chapter considers a selection of photographs among many taken by the Passionist

missionaries and Franciscan nuns who worked alongside them in Sankuru's Tetela

communities from the middle of the 1930s. The "Labaere archive" upon which it draws is

made up of nine albums of photographs taken in Congo, another four albums containing

photographs of individual missionaries' families in Belgium, and twelve boxes of color

slides. The black and white photographs, followed by color photographs and slides, start

from the late 1930s and go through the 1970s, when the majority of the remaining Belgian

priests and nuns either returned to Europe or passed away.[9]

A few of these black and white photographs were printed in the Passionist publication

Kruis en Liefde.[10] It is important to note, however, that photographs used as illustrations in

the textually dense *Kruis en Liefde* were few indeed. What remains is an archive

extraordinary for its sheer number of photographs and subject matter; it holds a large number

of photographs that priests and nuns used in personal and informal ways, within village and

family networks, in Belgium and in Congo. Missionaries showed these photographs, printed

in professional shops, to their close assistants among the Congolese.[11] Many of the images

have captions written in a vernacular Flemish; few are dated.

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latter's side. The first government-run secular schools in the colony, the *Athénées*, were opened in 1958.

[9] Many who had remained after independence left in the aftermath of Mobutu's 1974 "recourse to authenticity" proclamation.

[10] Congregatio Clericorum Excalceatorum Sanctissimae Crucis et Passionis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi and Paters Passionisten, *Kruis En Liefde* (Wezembeek-Oppem, Belgium: Passionisten, 1946-1964).

[11] When I brought copies of these images with me to Sankuru in 2008, they elicited great delight on the part of the Bishop of Tshumbe and his collaborators. They were quite keen on obtaining copies for themselves, which I was able to drop off at the Passionist headquarters on my subsequent trip to Kinshasa.

Father Raphael Labaere, also known as Father Hubert or Pater Hubertus, was a Passionist who lived at the Tshumbe-Sainte Marie mission from 1940 to 1946 and again from 1952 to 1959. He passed away in Belgium in 2003. Father Labaere is known for his Otetela linguistic and cultural research. He and Monsignor Hagendorens, the Passionist Bishop of Sankuru in the 1940s and 1950s, compiled and edited lexicons, grammars, and French-Otetela dictionaries. Father Labaere also published collections of proverbs and fables in Otetela, with French translations.[12] After he retired from Congo and moved to the Passionist residence at Wezembeek-Oppem outside Brussels, Father Labaere collected the photographs taken in the Congo by his fellow religious men and women over several decades and often placed them in albums. He used them as educational tools and in presentations about the Tetela among whom he had lived for about eleven years.[13] Surviving missionaries from the same era told me that Father Labaere made collecting photographs a special interest.[14] He numbered each photograph and wrote a corresponding caption or description on a master list. It is not clear who wrote all the captions, or when these were written. Some arrived in Father Labaere's possession with the photographs; he likely wrote other captions to express what

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[12] "Raphael Hubert Labaere. Notice bio-bliographique," *Annales Aequatoria* 22 (2001): 442–447. Cited by Atshikadi-Mbukutaka in a communication to the Sankuru Forum internet-based listserv. The Hagendorens dictionary went through several more editions, including one in 1985. Also see, Labaere, Hubert, "Pastoralia Passionisten", n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven. Passionist missionaries, moreover, were instrumental in preserving the Otetela language against more hegemonic Tshiluba, Kingwana (Swahili), and even Lingala. See, Dimandja Luhaka, "Les missions catholiques chez les Tetela des origines à 1945," *Cahiers des religions africaines* (1985): 91–124; Luhaka, "Les missions catholiques chez Les Tetela." In our interview, Father Maes told me: "It is thanks to the Passionists that Otetela was able to resist to the invasion of the "great" (important) languages like Lingala, Tshiluba, or Swahili. Even to this day Otetela is the language of liturgy and of daily life; everywhere it's Otetela." Luhaka, "Les missions catholiques chez les Tetela des origines à 1945"; Luhaka, "Les missions catholiques chez Les Tetela."
[13] Labaere, Hubert, "Pastoralia Passionisten."
[14] Ibid. He was joined by a colleague who confirmed this.

was remembered many years on. Father Labaere sometimes corresponded with fellow missionaries seeking descriptions and captions from them.[15]

If in the twenty-first century Christian religious sentiment is on the decline in Belgium, in the 1950s and 1960s photographs such as the ones Father Labaere collected remained important to Belgians who took an interest in the Congo mission.[16] The albums had an intimate quality of "family albums," ready to be shown in private homes or at special church events when a priest or nun was on furlough in Belgium. These Congo photographs were also there to document. Sometimes they were shown in church meetings, in presentations about mission works, and to raise money and awareness for the cause of Catholicism far and wide. The missionary vocation was an integral part of the fabric of sociability in Flanders in the first half of the twentieth century. In her book *Back to the Congo,* the Flemish writer Lieve Joris writes about her early childhood in the late 1950s:

> At the time every Flemish family had a Reverend uncle in the missions. The suffering caused by his absence was amply compensated by the new world into which the family entered. Missionaries on leave brought back stories of the bush and came to lunch on Sundays, leaving patches of deep red wine on the tablecloth and thick cigar smoke permeating the entire house.[17]

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[15] Father Maes, "Catholic Missions Among the Batetela," interview by de Rezende, Isabelle, Digital Recording, March 12, 2008. This letter was a response to a request for photographs and information that Father Labaere made to his colleague Father Leopold. ""I will try my best to accomplish this task so that you may have your information as soon as possible. I hope you will be happy with it. Regarding numbers 1916 up to 1938 [Labaere's classification system] I have written the relevant explanation on the envelope itself." The letter goes on to discuss the dates, places, and names within other photographs.

[16] Veerle Beel, "7 procent nog wekelijks naar de mis - Het Nieuwsblad," *Nieuwsblad.be*, n.d., http://www.nieuwsblad.be/article/detail.aspx?articleid=GU71U2MRQ. These trends are known throughout Western Europe. According to statistics compiled by the KU Leuven (Catholic University of Leuven) and cited by a Flemish daily, "Church attendance in our country continues to decline. Only 7 percent of Belgians go to Mass every week, compared with 11 percent in 1998." This low percentage was not based on a "Catholic" sample, and many Belgians are not Catholic. Yet, many do self-define as Catholic, and trends points toward an ongoing decline in Catholic religiosity.

[17] Lieve Joris, *Back to the Congo* (Macmillan, 1992), 1.

The albums compiled by Father Labaere are filled with images representing the daily lives of priests, nuns, and their Congolese parishioners. They constitute a visual world produced and shared by mostly Flemish Belgian Catholic missionaries and the Congolese men, women and children among whom they lived, and who became the first generation of educated elites in the postcolony.[18]

The documentary and affective qualities of these photographs cannot be separated from one another. Like photographs produced by the apparatuses of development and humanitarianism today, they exist within an affective constellation that aligns "objective reality" with sentiments of responsibility and perhaps even love, for those to be helped or "uplifted," as well as with a desire to be the *author* of intervention. The photographs were implicated in a complex economy of proprietorship: colonial "paternalism" expressed in the thoughts and practices of individuals, on one side; colonized appropriation, self-fashioning, and resistance on the other. All had stakes in controlling photographic images.

As in all colonial situations, there were hierarchies among local members of the colonial establishment: missionaries, administrators, and occasional ethnographers.[19] There were also complex hierarchies among the colonized: chiefs, elites, Christians, those favored by their white employers, and school-children who themselves became a specific category of colonized persons in the missionary universe. In Sankuru, there were Portuguese shopkeepers and garage owners, there were Greek cotton growers, and perhaps others who fell outside of

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[18] In the Belgian Congo, the highest level of education available to colonized men until the late 1950s was the seminary program. Colonized women had no formal opportunities for higher education.

[19] Luc de Heusch, "Interview I," interview by de Rezende, Isabelle, Tape recorded, May 27, 2006. De Heusch related a number of anecdotes about life in late colonial Congo. In his memoirs, *Mémoire mon beau navire. Les vacances d'un ethnologue* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1998), Luc de Heusch published some of his letters home from his time among the Tetela in 1952-54, and gives a glimpse of the social relations among whites in the colony. I discuss Luc de Heusch and his Tetela ethnographies in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

either group. Some were mixed Portuguese-Congolese families.[20] In addition to all of these

relationships and microcosms, there was the inescapable overdetermined "colonial

situation."[21]

The richness of the photographs from the Labaere archive lies in how they express,

suggest, and also leave out, much about the subjective complexities of a small, somewhat

peripheral area in late-colonial Congo. The captions are revealing and at the same time have

little to say. The pictured missionaries are named, but not so the Tetela subjects. The captions

at times express late colonial wishes: the successes of priests and nuns in bringing

"civilization" and Christianity to Sankuru's Tetela populations. This included a presentation

of "moral" work narratives: building, planting, harvesting, working "together" toward

common goals, all of which communicated the missionaries' belief that they shared in larger

colonial development efforts to improve the material and spiritual lives of persons in Africa

in significant ways. Yet, many times the captions encompass less, are less ambitious, and

present themselves as uncomplicated statements of daily life; they provide an explanation

for, or narrate, a particular activity that one may or may not "understand" from the image

itself.

The photographs are remarkable for their numbers and the diversity of their subject

matter and style. My analysis of these images is also informed by conversations with Tetela

in 2007, 2008 and 2009 (in and out of Sankuru), and by the inescapable perspective of a

postcolonial present of ruination.[22] My conversations with dozens of Tetela in Brussels and

in several locations in Congo reinforced the impression that those who were the burgeoning,

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[20] Some of these shop owners remain. In Lubefu, I was shown their "neighborhood" (*quartier*).
[21] Georges Balandier, *La Situation coloniale. Une approche théorique* (Paris: Cahiers internationaux de sociologie, 1951).
[22] Stoler, "Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination."

educated middle classes in the 1950s and early 1960s (and whose children are perhaps slightly better off than the great majority of contemporary Congolese), came from the mission posts. They or their parents and grandparents lived in close physical proximity to the missionary centers of Lubefu, Lodja, Katako Kombe, but especially Wembo Nyama and Tshumbe. In 2008, friends and interlocutors in Sankuru did much parsing of the colonial and missionary era as days when things "functioned," when people and goods moved in vehicles and on roads, when children went to school, when money was earned and spent, when families could have their photographs taken by professional photographers. In short, they remembered a time when the promise of modernity seemed to have been realized. Yet, the missionary dimension of this era was also remembered as sometimes oppressive, violent, and de-humanizing.

The photographs in the Labaere depict boys and girls, pupils of missionary schools and seminarians of various ages, Congolese teachers, catechists, nurses, servants, married couples and families. There are a number of ethnographic images that reproduce a more specifically Tetela colonial visuality. In a few cases from the 1930s, the images are in keeping with a genre of pseudo-scientific ethnographic photographs.[23] But more often, these appear to be ethnographic recreations of Tetela visual attributes, made by missionaries together with chiefs, who are donning traditional regalia, and sometimes flanked by their sons and by the priests with photographic cameras.

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[23] A genre and technique of colonial representation about which much has been written. See for instance, Sekula, "The Body and the Archive"; Edwards, *Raw Histories*.

Figure 61: *Children Carrying Another in the Manner of a Tetela "Customary" Chief*, **b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.**

These kinds of photographs were Tetela photographs. By the 1950s, they showed the "modern" as part of a discourse about "tradition" as something to be valued as the picturesque: to be appreciated as quaint.[24]

Colonial Catholicism in Sankuru.

In Sankuru, Catholicism established itself firmly in 1910 on chief Minga Otete's land – it became a *Chefferie* – known as Tshumbe. The Scheutists,[25] were the first Belgian order to send missionary priests to Congo during the Free State era. They founded a large mission at Mikalai near Luluabourg in Western Kasai in about 1891 and played an important political and social role, building churches, schools, missions and orphanages, as well as recruiting labor and followers (the "*gens de la mission*").[26] These persons were many times known as "orphans" but were very often refugees or redeemed slaves.[27]

In 1907 the "Apostolic Prefecture of Upper Kasai" decided to move its Lusambo St. Antoine mission to the right bank of the Sankuru, placing it in Tetela territory.[28] In 1909,

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[24] Geary, however, shows that the photographic construction of "tradition" as something "put on" (through dress) was already at work in the early twentieth century. Christraud M. Geary, *In and Out of Focus: Images from Central Africa, 1885-1960* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, National Museum of African Art, 2003), 26.

[25] Officially called the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

[26] Vellut, "Emeri Cambier (1865-1943), fondateur de la mission Kasai. La production d'un missionnaire de légende," 43.

[27] See, Ibid., 50. Letters exchanged between Congo Free State military administrators and Free state administration reveal profound tensions between early Scheutists and Congo Free State on the subject of the disposition of "prisoners of war." See, for instance, Wahis, Gouverneur Général, "A Monsieur le Commissaire de District." "I hope that following the admonitions of their Superior General, these missionaries will no longer interfere in state affairs]" Also, Vellut, "Emeri Cambier (1865-1943), fondateur de la mission Kasai. La production d'un missionnaire de légende."

[28] Before 1910, Lusambo was state post and administrative center of Lualaba district, although the Catholic mission was under the authority of the Kasai Prefecture (Scheutists). 1912 saw the creation of Sankuru district. See, Saint-Moulin, "Histoire de l'organisation administrative au Zaire." Luhaka, "Les missions catholiques chez les Tetela des origines à 1945," 92. Before the early 1900s, the region that would become the colonial district of Sankuru was still somewhat unsettled due especially to

Jules Renkin, Minister of the Colonies, visited Lusambo and met with several Tetela chiefs.[29]

Rival chiefs Otete Minga and Wembo Nyama, both allies of the Free State, were keen to

receive missionaries.[30] Father De Munster, an itinerant priest who had been scouting Sankuru

for a favorable mission location, chose Otete Minga's village.[31] Wembo Nyama "retaliated"

by inviting Walter Lambuth's Methodist missionaries to settle at his village in 1914.[32]

Father Maes, an old Passionist priest who lived in Sankuru for many years, told me a

different story when I met him in Belgium:

> During the time of the Free State, a few Batetela soldiers from Katako Kombe
> territory did their military service at Mbandaka in Equateur province. There, Trappist
> missionaries – very austere missionaries – had turned them into Christians. These
> Batetela took advantage of their seven years of military service to receive baptism
> and learn their catechism. And they became Catholics. And when their seven year
> term ended, they went back to their home regions, in about 1905. It was these
> catechists who, themselves, began to evangelize without missionaries. In the large
> villages they organized morning and evening prayer. They gave deathbed baptisms to
> the elderly or to children. They really prepared the terrain for the missionaries.[33]

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anti-colonial rebellions, such as that of the Batetela soldiers, or anti-colonial resistance by forest
Basongo-Meno.

[29] Luhaka, "Les missions catholiques chez les Tetela des origines à 1945," 93.

[30] Both chiefs were *chefs médaillés* (recipients of special medals in recognition of their service to the
colonial state), but Wembo Nyama had been one of Ngongo Leteta's lieutenants in his slave and ivory
raiding activities. Ibid., 93.

[31] Ibid., 95.

[32] Luhaka, "Les missions catholiques chez les Tetela des origines à 1945"; Father Maes, "Catholic
Missions Among the Batetela." A history of the Southern Methodist Conference's implantation
among the Batetela has been abundantly narrated by American and Congolese Methodists. The story
of the "cannibal chief" Wembo Nyama's welcoming of Reverends Walter Lambuth and the African-
American John Wesley Gilbert, to his village works as a foundational and as a redemption narrative
reminiscent of Old Testament narratives as well as Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This
World to That Which Is to Come* (Mass. Sabbath School Society, 1834). Also see, Isabel Hofmeyr,
The Portable Bunyan : a Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress (Princeton N.J.: Princeton
University Press, 2004).Okenge Owandji Kasongo, *The Southern Methodists and the Atetela: The
History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the Central Congo, 1912-1960* (Lexington, Ky.:
[s.n.], 1982); William Washington Pinson, *Walter Russell Lambuth, Prophet and Pioneer,* (Nashville,
Tenn., Cokesbury press, 1924); Thomas Ellis Reeve, *In Wembo-Nyama's Land, a Story of the
Thrilling Experiences in Establishing the Methodist Mission Among the Atetela,* (Nashville, Tenn.,
Dallas, Tex. [etc.] Pub. House of the M.E. Church, South, 1921).

[33] Father Maes, "Catholic Missions Among the Batetela."

In his narrative, he resituates the "military modernity"[34] assumed by the Batetela based on their association with Zanzibari and Belgians, into the Christian arena. The Batetela soldiers not only received sacraments from the Catholic church, but turned themselves into catechists, using their modernity and leadership to "organize" and evangelize other Congolese and prepare the way for the missionaries. Thus, in this story, whether fictional or true, the Batetela continued in their roles as middles, as the trusted auxiliaries of the white man. This story, moreover, has all the elements of a Tetela self-fashioning narrative, as it repositions agency on the Tetela "people."

In January 1936, when they took formal possession of Sankuru, the Passionists (officially the "Congregation of Discalced Clerks of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ,") were late-comers in the field of Congolese missions. In the early 1930s the Catholic hierarchy in Belgium had decided to give them Sankuru.[35] The transition took place over the first half of the 1930s and was not especially smooth; the Scheutists had grown quite attached to their Tetela congregations and even called each other "Batetela."[36] Rome had to intervene in the end, and the Scheutists finally yielded to their Passionist colleagues.

The following pages consider a number of photographs taken by Passionist priests, and Franciscan nuns. First, I address the visuality of late colonial state-generated development discourses as they met and became linked with intimacies in peripheral mission spaces. Visual production of late colonial Tetela subjects, taking place between Passionist priests and their students and parishioners, is significant. Visually inscribed "practices of everyday

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[34] See Chapter 2 of this dissertation.
[35] Luhaka, "Les missions catholiques chez les Tetela des origines à 1945," 124.
[36] Ibid.; Father Maes, "Catholic Missions Among the Batetela."

life"[37] were points that attached development and "modernity" to everyday incorporations and performances; and these acts in turn worked to constitute possible "selves."

Secondly, through a series of photographs taken by the Franciscan nuns, I consider how these nuns visually inscribed late colonial biopolitics into images narrating their medical and social interventions into women's and children's health. Through striking juxtapositions of late and early modern visual registers, these nuns created a visual and emotional universe of action and performance. This second section demonstrates the ways that late colonial photographic worlds were spaces of theater and performance for Congolese subjects and for female Catholic missionaries.

Imaginary Spaces

Colonial situations were contexts infused with and defined by power relations. Feelings and emotions could only be spoken or given verbal reality with circumspection and difficulty. Subaltern strategies of accommodation and resistance could emerge through images, in visuality. Photographs represent "ideal" spaces; they are partly real, partly imagined, partly manipulated, and partly indexical. They are spaces where meanings, emotions, and subjectivities can be coproduced or can suggest themselves to the eyes and minds of different viewers.

The first set of Passionist missionary images considered here open a window onto a fragment of a social world, long since disappeared.[38] Many photographs depict a world of "older" and "younger," "men" and "boys," "black and white," "men" and "women." These

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[37] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.
[38] Colonialism is gone; the white missionaries are gone; and the *paroisses* across Sankuru have fallen into significant disrepair. Yet, as Pedro Monaville shows in his dissertation on postcolonial

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photographs are all at once artifacts, filters, and points of view through which this world was and is seen, then and now; they are clear and opaque, as only photographs can be. They are uniquely able to show perhaps what was not easily spoken between colonizer and colonized in privileged mission environments.

When I showed these photographs, older people who lived as children and teenagers with Sankuru missionaries, expressed great pleasure at seeing them, and many recognized themselves, their friends, relatives, or acquaintances. Or they thought they did. Whether their memories served them right or not, they recognized and related something important about their past and their history. In addition to expressing some nostalgia, many older Tetela remember the draconian discipline, the differentiation between "good" and "bad" children, and really, the beginnings of a Congolese and Tetela class system, based on distance or proximity to the mission, and on the likes and dislikes of the missionary fathers and nuns.

Rudolphe Lonyembo's father was a teacher. As the child of an *évolué*, he grew up privileged in the 1950s around the Lubefu mission. *Evolué* in French means literally "evolved." This was a colonial category of persons who demonstrated proper Europeans manners and dress, and a general "socialization."[39] Often teachers or civil servants, they were members of an elite. Congolese *évolués* could be respected and admired, but were also much mocked, reviled, used, and ultimately discarded. They were tragic figures. Being an *évolué* was undoubtedly a stressful situation. Colonial administrators and other Europeans

Congolese students movements (forthcoming in 2013), the physical and emotional structures of Congolese Catholicism persist, mapping memories, real, and psychic spaces.

[39] Congolese of some means and education who wished to pursue this status could choose to be inscribed in a special "registry of civilized natives," or could receive a card attesting to this higher status. The term, however, had a wider application. It came to include the emergent Congolese bourgeoisie of the 1950s. For an in-depth account of late colonial Congolese évolués and their politics, see Mutamba Makombo, *Du Congo belge au Congo indépendant, 1940-1960: Emergence*

sometimes referred to Congolese who pursued status and respectability as "*évoluants*" – that

is, trapped in a process of evolution, whose horizon, predictably, was ever receding. When I

brought up the term "*évolué*," it was as if the gates of memory had opened for Papa

Rudolphe. He was eager to tell me about this aspect of his childhood:

> *Evolués* had to eat together at the table as a family – mother, father, children. The white
> man came to check. The child of *évolués* was like a little prince around here. He could
> not be found wearing torn clothing. A great honor was to be invited to eat at a table with
> an *évolué*, or even a white man. At noon the bell would ring; blacks were not allowed to
> call on whites. Between noon and 2 pm, the white man rested. One could be imprisoned
> if one disobeyed. At 9 pm, the bugle sounded. Again, silence was to be maintained. The
> white man slept. The black man could not to drum. During the colonial era the parish
> grounds were a "sacred" place. We could not *see* "backstage" or behind the scenes.
> Everything had to be authorized by whites. Children could not even pick up fruit that had
> fallen to the ground from a tree in the mission! If they did, they would be called thieves.
> They would be prevented from studying. Their lives would be ruined[40]

Papa Rudolphe's memories express the many burdens, uncertainties and anxieties of

being a colonial middle, someone with aspirations. They also express perhaps the scopic

anxiety of perceiving that something not quite known is happening "behind the scenes." The

photographs are similarly tantalizing: they are "screens;" they are, in many ways, the "front"

of the scene.

An almost ubiquitous type of colonial photograph is Figure 62 which shows the

unfolding of colonial photography, as a metaphorical "behind the scenes" operation. The

conventions of this particular genre are that a figure who could be glossed as "the colonizer"

is behind the camera with his head or upper body often covered by a blanket; and that a

colonized assistant is present helping with the equipment, or looking on, ready to assist (in

some unspecified manner). These types of photographs are particularly interesting in that

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des "évolués" et gènese du nationalisme (Kinshasa: Institut de formation et d'études politiques,
1998). I come back to the *évolué* in greater detail in chapter 5.
[40] Rudolphe Lonyembo, "Life as a child of an Evolué," interview by Isabelle de Rezende, Digital
Recording, August 4, 2008.

they operate on a number of visual levels: they are photographs of photography, and as such their constitutive elements – the photograph and the practice, the technology and the art of photography itself – operate as endlessly reflecting mirrors. They remind us that a particular economy of gazes was at work in the production of colonial photography, and among different kinds of colonized and colonizers; they reveal hierarchies of gazes among all those present in the colonial visual field.

Figure 62: *(no caption)*, **b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.**

The picture above (Figure 62) provides its viewer with an idea of the "making of" the other photographs from the Katako Kombe's Ecole d'Apprentissage Pédagogique series (Figure 63, Figure 64, Figure 65, and Figure 66).[41] Of course, this "behind the scenes" scene has been staged, or at least has been transformed into an occasion for performance and documentation, since it too was photographed by someone (who remains anonymous). A photographer has been photographed in the process of setting up the shot. Meanwhile, the ostensible subjects, two boys from the school, are sitting down, relaxing, and waiting. These kinds of photographs, where the photographer has been photographed in the process of taking a picture, suggest photography itself as a colonial preoccupation, and specifically as a preoccupation of those involved in colonial relationships. This preoccupation with photography in turn problematizes seeing, representation, and desire for the different actors in colonial contexts.[42]

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[41] A series of photographs of young students is labeled "Ecole d'Apprentissage Pédagogique at Katako Kombe."

[42] Rachael Langford, in her analysis of the Belgian graphic novelist Hergé's well-known work, *Tintin au Congo*, discusses technology, and especially visual technology, as a site of colonial anxiety. Rachael Langford, "Photography, Belgian colonialism and Herge's *Tintin au Congo*," *The Journal of Romance Studies* 8, no. 1 (2008): 77-89. Brian Larkin similarly discusses the role of technologies of representation and communication with regard to the public operations of colonialism in British Nigeria. Larkin, *Signal and Noise*.

Figure 63: *Ecole d'Apprentissage Pédagogique at Katako Kombe.* **b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven**

The numerous photographs taken by missionaries of their pupils in various parts of Sankuru in the 1950s, such as Figure 63 (above), invite and involve the viewer into a world of affect. Figure 63 shows a little girl and two boys. It was clearly staged, as if in an outdoor studio, with a light-colored sheet used as a backdrop. The children look healthy and well-cared for. The boys seem to have the confidence of adolescents who are especially favored, and the older, taller one, communicates a kind of softness and flirtatious confidence. What was the place of western gender norms, one may ask, in that late colonial world of missions and teacher-priests? In his article, "La sexualité des Tetela et la moralité chrétienne," Abbé

Nyeme, a well-respected Tetela man of learning and of the cloth, and, importantly a product

of 1950s missionary education in Sankuru, attempts to combine "tradition" and the cultural

and psychological discourses of postwar Euro-America.

> The adults did not ignore the games and behaviors of children. They observed them with a critical eye to see if the boys demonstrated sufficient manliness and determination, and if young girls, for their part, showed enough femininity and generosity. If, by chance, *something worrisome* came to the attention of adults, they took action and attempted to correct the child in question. The adolescent must come to consider himself, naturally, as a future husband and father; similarly a young woman must come to see herself as a future wife and mother.[43]

Nyeme adds that "to stray from [this vision] would be to join the ranks of deviants and

abnormal people, even perhaps of the mentally ill."[44] Nyeme combines ideas from the type of

western psychiatry popular in the 1950s (although he published his article in the late 1970s),

with notions about bourgeois domesticity and gender norms, with his own cultural

understanding of Tetela customs or tradition in matters of marriage and sexuality. He reifies

marriage, reproduction, and sexuality into one conceptual sphere, where "manliness and

determination" and "femininity and generosity" are rhetorically connected with being a

husband and a father, and being a wife and mother, respectively. If children transgressed

these gender and sex-based social roles, even in games, it became "something worrisome."

Through Abbé Nyeme's article, one gets a direct sense of, not only the teachings children

received from missionary teachers. In Nyeme's academic, Tetela, and Catholic discourse

disparate knowledge registers come together to form a new, internally coherent, whole.

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[43] Nyeme Tese, "La sexualité des Tetela et la moralité chrétienne," *Telema* (1977): 51. "Les adultes, loin de rester indifférents aux jeux et comportements des enfants, les observant d'un oeil critique pour voir *si le garçon dénote assez de virilité et de détermination* et si la *jeune fille, pour sa part, fait preuve d'assez de féminité* et de générosité. Si, par hasard, quelque chose *d'inquiétant* retient l'attention des adultes, ils en font cas et cherchent à corriger l'enfant en question. L'adolescent doit arriver à se considérer tout naturellement comme un futur époux et père ; de même la jeune fille comme une future épouse et mère." Emphasis added.
[44] Ibid.

Similarly, a number of cultural universes participated simultaneously in the production of Figure 63: that of the Belgian Catholic missionaries, that of the Congolese Tetela youth, and that of their fathers and mothers. In addition, these cultural universes produced one another. Indeed, one could not exist in this photograph without the other. The Belgian priests, like other Europeans of the 1950s, were products of cultures that generated and understood Figure 63 as an ambiguous kind of photograph, one that might be termed "queer" by contemporary academic discourse. Discursively queer, but also conveying coded, not quite normative scripts, where meanings could either be understood or disregarded, depending on viewers' particular understandings and motivations. In other words, these images are now and were then "queer" in certain eyes. Their very ambiguity is also the feature that permits a certain chosen "ignorance" in the 1940s and 1950s, among Catholic clergymen – Belgian and increasingly Congolese – where sexuality was not readily discussed in public forums.

Guessing at the motivations behind the particular theater of the "grooming" photographs (Figure 64, Figure 65, and Figure 66) raises troubling questions. The accompanying text, "At the Hairdresser's with a Mirror" strikes as a terse, racist and mocking caption. It achieves "humor" at the expense of both gender and race. For the first, the joke turns on the assumed incongruity of 12-year school old boys (an approximation) going to a "hairdresser," which, unlike a "barbershop" in the 1950s, was a place that women frequented. Figure 67, which shows one father shaving and trimming another's hair and beard functions as a contrast. In Figure 67 two adult white men demonstrate and perform their unquestionable normativity. In terms of race, a further incongruity (the acceptance of which is assumed, once again) is the idea of a "hairdresser" in the middle of tropical Africa. This rhetorical set-up places Europe and hairdressers on one side, that of civilization, and

Africa and the confused, adolescent and "queer" imitation of hairdressing on the other. These series also function as visual representations of the paternalist "*évoluant*" paradigm. These captions, moreover, when considered "next" to the photographs, function as disavowal. Their mocking tone seeks to hide what the images themselves reveal.
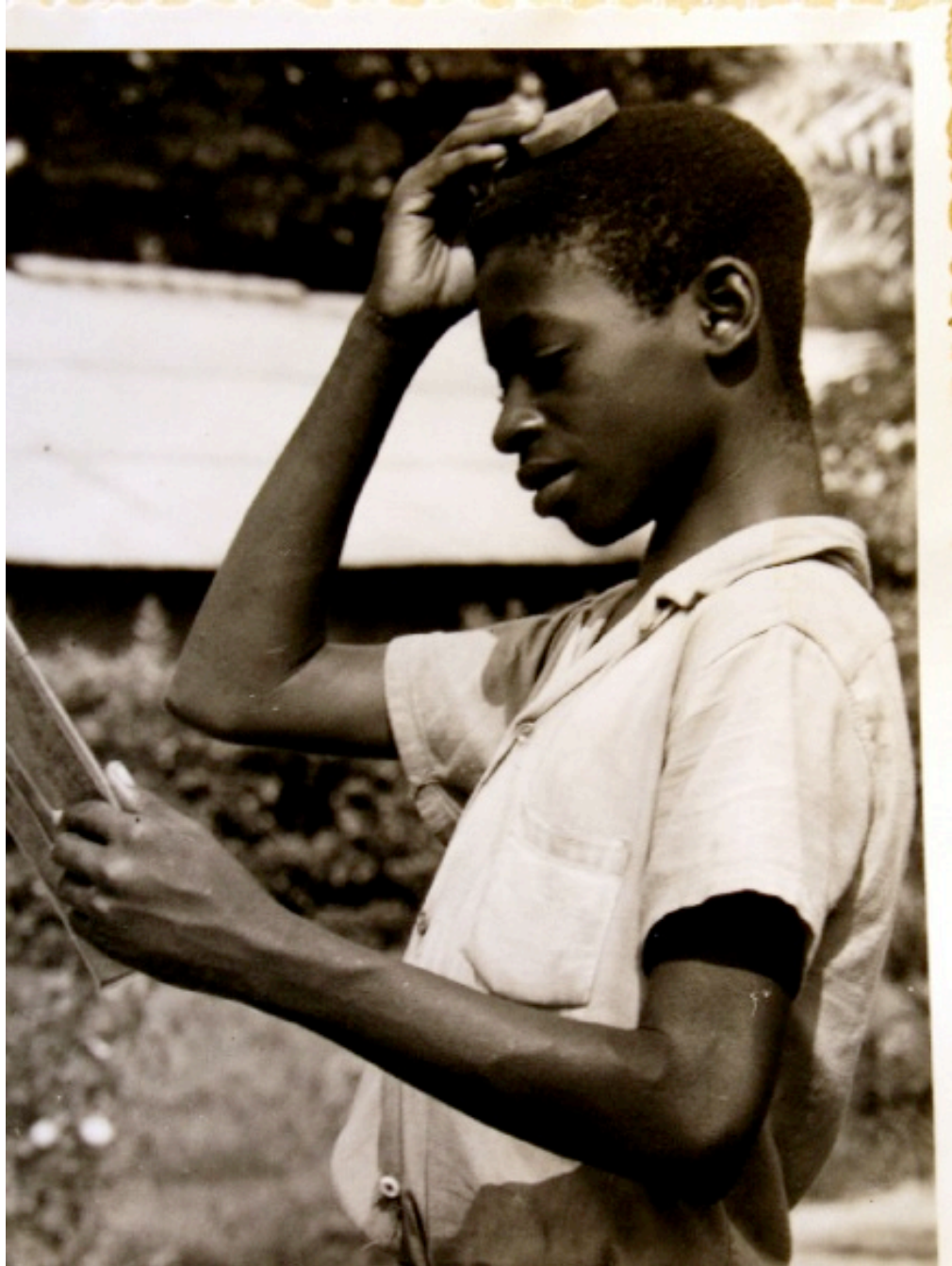
Figure 64: *At the Hairdresser's with a Mirror*, **b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven**

Figure 65: *At the Hairdresser's with a Mirror*, b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven

Figure 66: *At the Hairdresser's with a Mirror*, b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven

Figure 67: *(no caption).*

Were these photographs, as a "series," taken for their exotic valence, or as

performances of the missionaries' intimacies with "others" and "otherness?" Or to

demonstrate (to whom?) the success of western "civilizing" practices as "technologies of the

self,"[45] and to show how well-groomed, attractive and clean the young boys were? Reading this series of photographs (Figure 64, Figure 65, and Figure 66) through Roland Barthes' notion of *studium* and *punctum*,[46] suggests that there is a special affection, evident in the priests' photographs, toward adolescent boys, and a focus on their bodies and white uniforms. The images, when considered apart from their captions have rather forceful *punctums*. In Figure 64 knees, elbow and hands confront the gaze in the visual foreground. In Figure 65 it is the forearm and its veins. Taken together, the photographs convey movement and grace. All of this prompts a further question: would the Fathers have taken similar photographs at a European boarding school for boys? Very likely not, and such a thing would probably have been scandalous in the 1950s. They would probably not have taken a photograph of "white" boys combing one another's hair, much less shown it to friends and family. These photographs perhaps reveal hidden desires, channeled through an exoticizing gaze that also produces "interesting" artifacts to show back home. Yet this desire may be barely contained by the disciplining practices of the "civilizer" and the photographs that document these same practices. Beyond the frame may lie chaos.

These photographs taken by missionaries, some of whom spent their entire adult lives in the Congo, reveal much about their own deep colonial and gendered involvements with generations of Congolese. Yet, they also contain distancing mechanisms, not least of which were captions. They reveal tensions between intimacy and distance. Somewhere between text and image lies the tension.

Development as a "Practice of Daily Life"

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[45] Ibid. The "color" white, moreover, plays an important part in this black and white photographic archive. I return to this point below.

The rise of the scientific, biopolitical, welfarist late colonial state marked the post World War II era in the Belgian Congo. This was the era of a multifarious mass visual culture – of propaganda film and photography, visual entertainments like Westerns – that sometimes illicitly crossed the color line. It was an era when Congolese availed themselves to greater degrees than were possible before of the opportunities promised by photography. In the 1950s, there were many spaces for visual self-presentations. After World War Two, it is clear that development and science – heroic concepts connected with metanarratives of progress – became the new expressions of the old "civilizing mission." Colonial welfare efforts were extensions, or in a way reflections of European postwar reconstruction efforts, such as the Marshall Plan most famously. The idea was to revitalize moribund economies by rebuilding infrastructures and reviving capital, attend to the health and nutrition of ill and ill-nourished populations (and insure the smoothness of social and biological reproduction), educate and train youth for future technologies, and most importantly: create a dependable and large internal market for the products of industry. In other words, put some cash (not too much) into the pockets of colonized worker-subjects. These objectives fell under a rubric of "development."

In the following section I consider "development" in its largest sense. My premise is that "development" was also a personal matter and that development photographs sought to express much of this personal aspect. In so doing, they revealed late-colonial Congolese subjectivities, and ultimately played a key role in defining much of the last decade of Belgian colonialism in the Congo.[47] Development was a matter of new selves, but not only in the

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[46] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).
[47] There is a striking continuation of visual regimes of development after independence, in the 1960s. Yet postcolonial development visuality, though related to its colonial predecessor, employed its own unique visual, rhetorical, and discursive strategies. See, Pedro Monaville, "Affective Archives:

sense of what one did. The models of development that the colonial state proposed and sought to implement had everything to do with forging new Congolese subjects by rearranging the most minute and intimate details of their lives, and refashioning colonized bodies and psyches.[48]

The propaganda images of the colonial state did not spring fully formed after the Second World War. They were in many ways continuations of earlier colonial visual discourses. But in the late 1940s, these propaganda images were connected to the colonial state's creation of several scientific research, development, and welfare provision agencies.[49] The new photographic visuality of the postwar era presented visual colonial discourses that differed from those of the interwar era. This included a strict compartmentalization of the "ethnographic" from the "modern" – a resituation of the ethnographic to a tourism register, and the promotion of a much more fully formed ideology of a modern colonial state based on science and technology.[50] Glossy propaganda images were some of the main vehicles in the 1950s for communicating Belgian development efforts and a "civilizing mission" that was still mentioned as such in 1950s in colonial publications describing the state's new scientific development goals. Some of this propaganda was aimed at metropolitan and foreign

Postcolonial Catholic Photo-Albums, Fieldwork, and the Concept of Institution in the Dustbin-City" (presented at the Methods & Concepts in African Ethnographic Historical Studies, University of Michigan, 2012).

[48] Nancy Rose Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumbura's Foyer Social, 1946-1960," *Signs* 15, no. 3 (April 1, 1990): 447–474.

[49] I consider these in greater detail in this dissertation's next chapter (Chapter 4).

[50] Since the 1930s, in colonial administrative terms, the "ethnographic" was known as the "customary" – i.e. generally rural spaces where, to use colonial nomenclature, "natives" were ruled by "custom," which marked them both as "savage" and "authentic." As I show in this dissertation's next chapter, ideas about "natives" and their non-modern, "unspoiled" traditions were held in common by colonial administrators, progressive anthropologists, and other anti-colonial intellectuals in the 1950s.

audiences, and some was intended for Congolese. In the latter case, it aimed to produce modern Congolese subjects: some workers, some peasants, some clerks, and some clerics.

Catholic missionaries in particular had very important roles to play within the larger Belgian colonial apparatus. From the 1880s, they were key players in colonial efforts toward the so-called civilizing mission.[51] But they also, many times, had their own opinions about who exactly these modern colonial subjects would be, sometimes in opposition to the State. As the Labaere photographic archive reveals, Belgian Catholic missionaries too were active in producing photographic images of Congolese. In important ways, the missionaries' photographs participated alongside state propaganda images in communicating and enacting what "development" was supposed to be, and what it was supposed to mean for Congolese. But the priests' and nuns' images – and the visual regimes that characterized them – by far exceeded the smooth and stifling images of colonial propaganda.

The Passionist priests' and Franciscan nuns' photographs under consideration reiterated the visual discourses of state propaganda, but they brought the abstract, state-driven, concept of development into everyday life. They presented it *as* "everyday life." By setting up occasions for its demonstration (i.e. the performance of visuality), and by producing photographs (i.e. artifacts) that functioned *as* its demonstrations, these missionaries together with their close Congolese collaborators assembled "innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules." [52] These processes, Certeau adds, were not covert or "alternative" operations on the part of marginalized or minority groups. Rather, this *bricolage* was the "massive and pervasive […] cultural activity of the non-producers of

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[51] Dieu, *Dans la brousse congolaise (les origines des missions de Scheut au Congo)*.
[52] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xiv.

culture," of what Certeau calls "the silent majority."[53] Such were the possibilities afforded by easy to use 35mm photographic cameras in the 1950s.

What professional colonial photographers and propagandists understood was that too much visually expressed closeness between Belgians and Congolese risked upsetting the very bases and objectives of colonial propaganda, which relied on distance and impersonality. For instance, in the official propaganda photographs it is very rare to see subjects looking at the camera. The camera pretends not to be there; this is a simple device of de-authoring and presenting an image as a snapshot of life in the moment. Many of the images were also taken from a great distance, often from the air. Interestingly however, the Belgian propaganda agency, InforCongo utilized the notion of the "family," and the emotional closeness this evokes for bourgeois subjects, for its own purposes of propaganda.

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[53] Ibid., xvii.

Figure 68: boy scouts (untitled). In *Family Album* (Brussels: Office de l'information et des relations publiques pour le Congo belge et le Ruanda-Urundi, 1950).

The so-named *Family Album,* a photographic "album" published by the Belgian

Information Agency, InforCongo, as a small published book with a spiral binding, consisted

of 100 black and white photographs depicting "equivalent" scenes of daily life in the Congo

and in Belgium, printed on the front and back of each page.[54] It was quite a different

"familial" artifact from the missionaries' photographs. In comparison, this so-called *Family

Album* was a visual straight-jacket and contained none of the intimacies one expects from the

idea of "family." Here it is the impersonal "national/colonial" family.

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[54] *Family Album* (Brussels: Office de l'information et des relations publiques pour le Congo belge et
le Ruanda-Urundi, 1950).

Figure 69: school girls (untitled). In *Ibid.*

Page after page, the aggregation of over-disciplined photographic spaces in the *Family Album* communicated colonial development propaganda as the utopia of a "Belgian-Congolese Community" together with a more subtly rendered ideology of "separate but equal." Segregation of course was the reality of colonial life in the Belgian Congo.

Theaters of Devotion

A single album in Father Labaere's collection contains the photographs taken by the Franciscan nuns who worked with the missionary priests and brothers in Sankuru.[55] The first school for girls in Sankuru was opened at Tshumbe in 1928 by the Penitent Sisters of Saint Francis (from Opbraeckel, east of Brussels).[56] In 1933, the Franciscan mother house in Belgium began increasing the number of sisters it sent to Sankuru in order to help with teaching and medical activities.[57] In addition to the education of girls, nuns took on all

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[55] In 1938, there were 16 Franciscan Sisters from Opbraeckel in Sankuru. Luhaka, "les missions Catholiques chez les Tetela des origines à 1945," 273.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 271.

aspects of "nursing." They managed hospitals, handled maternity wards, trained Congolese

women in midwifery. They also, together with their male colleagues, took care of lepers and

managed their colonies. They trained girls to become primary school teachers, and taught

them (and this was a very important part of their work) how to cook and sew, and how to

raise children in the "correct" ways; in short, how to become respectable housewives on

something like a western model.[58] Returning to Abbé Nyeme, his views, expressed below,

are representative of the ways elite Tetela attempted to marry what they understood as their

own cultural practices with colonial missionary education. The result is a kind of "*évolué*"

creed of its own, where "assiduousness" in the performance of "domestic tasks" are

rhetorical signs pointing to postwar Euro-American traditionalism, according to which

women were only conceivable as vessels for social and sexual reproduction, as well as the

vehicles for men's social and class aspirations.

> Young women are educated by their mothers and by the women of the community to
> practice a discrete and appropriate generosity, and to perform domestic tasks assiduously.
> Indeed, it will be a true honor for her husband and parents to have an active, generous,
> and hospitable wife. Such a woman will merit the admiring name of "Nyangaanto"
> (Mother of Men).[59]

The Sankuru Catholic nuns' photographs, to which I turn below, demonstrate the

affective aspects of development-as-everyday-life. Their photographic worlds are for the

most part organized around colonized women and children. The nuns' series constitute an

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[58] Ibid. Also, Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa." Hunt discusses the Foyers Sociaux of the Belgian Congo as colonial sites for training Congolese women as housewives and mothers. While social workers replaced nuns in this work after the Second World War, nuns continued to exercise these educational functions in other cases. Also see Nyeme Tese, "La sexualité des Tetela et la moralité chrétienne."

[59] Nancy Rose Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumbura's Foyer Social, 1946-1960," *Signs* 15, no. 3 (April 1, 1990): 447–474.

example of an embodied politics of "development" joined to an equally embodied and visualized religiosity.

Jean-Luc Vellut observed that from its beginnings in the late 1880s Belgian missionary Catholicism in the Congo was not, like Catholicism in Europe or Latin America in the first half of the twentieth century, progressive, flexible, and open to different cultural contexts. It was, instead, backward-looking and insistently *ancien régime*. The colonial Church, accordingly, was closely connected to the crown and its imperial agenda in the Congo.[60] At the turn of the twentieth century, in church and convent architecture, colonial missionaries manifested their nostalgia for an imaginary "Middle Ages."[61] In the 1950s, strains of a conservative piousness and a nostalgia for an imagined deep European past ran through the visual worlds of the Franciscan nuns working in Sankuru. In the photographic images they composed, these nuns drew on a deep repository of Christian iconography, such as, for instance, the early modern prints of the Wierix brothers of Antwerp, or the many "Emblems," or sacred images designed to help the faithful in prayer and meditation. These included images of female saints or of the Virgin Mary herself. For Belgian Catholic women, the visual knowledge that such images provided was located at a very deep level of consciousness.

The nuns' photographs immediately demonstrate a love of performance, a strong and deliberate *mise-en-scène* of bodies, including their own as "authors" of the photography, and an intense concern with the spatial arrangements of bodies. What is striking about images like the Liebig collectible card entitled "Les Missions" (Figure 70), and the Wierix Brothers prints (Figure 71, Figure 72, and Figure 73) is not only the style of the religious garb – the

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[60] Ibid., 51.

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ample white robes which cover the entire body except for the face and hands – but also the

gestures, the facial expressions, and, generally, the corporeal attitudes of the subjects: the

shape of the hands, the bent heads, and the downcast eyes.

Figure 70: *Les Missions*, Illustration, n.d., Leibig Collection. History of the Colonial Era, Royal Museum for Central Africa.

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[61] Vellut, "Emeri Cambier (1865-1943), fondateur de la mission Kasai. La production d'un missionnaire de légende," 54.

Figure 71: From the "Salvator Mundi and the Virgin" series. Engraving. Print by Hieronymus Wierix, early seventeenth century. Courtesy of the British Library.

Figure 72: "St Gertrude, standing, holding an open book and an abbot's crook on which mice are seen climbing." Engraving. Print by Hieronymus Wierix, early seventeenth century. Courtesy of the British Library

Figure 73: "St Elizabeth of Hungary, three-quarter length, holding a book with a crown on top and giving alms to a boy, seen to right; a church seen behind." Engraving. Print by Hieronymus Wierix, early seventeenth century. Courtesy of the British Library

A number of the same features recur in, for instance, in Figure 74, Figure 75, and Figure 76. In Figure 74 the two sisters at the front of the images are holding themselves in stances reminiscent of the Wierix examples above. Although she is smiling (a twentieth-century bearing), the sister on the right has bent her head toward the child below her, while the sister on the left is kneeling. While Congolese women and children were the subjects of the sisters' medical and social attentions in postwar Sankuru, the nuns' actions were also structured by the ways in which these nuns translated their religious sensibility – a visual and corporeal habitus – into the symbolic. Colonial concerns with maintaining high birth rates in

the Congo were ongoing and widespread throughout the colony.[62] What the nuns brought to

these concerns through their visual work, was a rethreading of New Testament and "Lives of

Saints" narratives into the stories of colonial modernity. For instance, Congolese children are

cast as "the poor," "the sick," and also "the future of their race/humanity." In this way, they

are like Christ. Or rather, in the universe of Catholic piety, the Christ-like figure embodies,

and indeed incorporates, the attributes of humility and poverty, as well as humanity's future

and redemption.

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[62] Nancy Rose Hunt has discussed colonial anxieties about Congolese depopulation from the early
twentieth century to the second world war. Belgian colonial efforts to stem the possibility of negative
population growth focused on neonatal care, and on the "correct" ways of feeding babies to ensure
their survival. Nuns participated fully in all of these efforts. See, *Les Missions*, Illustration, n.d.,
Leibig Collection. History of the Colonial Era, Royal Museum for Central Africa. Also, Nancy Rose
Hunt, "Colonial Medical Anthropology and the Making of a Central African Infertility Belt," in
Ordering Africa. Anthropology, European Imperialism and the Politics of Knowledge (Manchester,
UK: Manchester University Press, 2007), 252–281; Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon*; Nancy Rose Hunt,
"'Le bébé en brousse.' European Women, African Birth Spacing, and Colonial Intervention in Breast
Feeding in the Belgian Congo," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed.
Stoler, Ann Laura and Frederick Cooper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Hunt,
"Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa."

Figure 74: *Sister Séraphine with Sister Rita in Front, and Sisters Marta and Verona in Back. Tshumbe*, **b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.**

Figure 75: *With Older Kid*, b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.

Figure 76: *With Her Favorite Twins*, **b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.**

The series of photographs where Catholic nuns pose with Congolese babies and children (Figure 76, Figure 77, Figure 78, Figure 79, and Figure 80) brings the above-mentioned connections together. In their staged stillness, the nuns' photographs appear as "tableaux" strongly reminiscent of Renaissance paintings or post-reformation era prints. Yet, of course, they were twentieth-century vehicles for colonial biopolitics. They were presentations that would demonstrate, through the photographic image, here conceived as

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theater, the quality of the material and spiritual work performed, in the Congo, "among natives" by Belgian Catholic missionary women. Figure 76 is the first in a series of "Madonna-like mise-en-scène" photographs.

Figure 77: ***Mother Herlinda, Sister Justine, Sister Praxedis with Their Orphans***, **b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.**

Figure 78: *Ibid.* (in its album)

Figure 79: *With sick baby.* n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.

Figure 80: *Ibid.*

Figure 77, "Mother Herlinda, Sister Justine, Sister Praxedis with their orphans*"*

appears as the most composed and posed among the nuns' photographs in the

collection. The nuns have arranged themselves at the edges of the frame, where they

hover and glow, enormous because of their robes, at once angelic and ghastly, while

their little "charges" are squeezed into the remaining spaces. The photograph reveals

the white-clad nuns as the metaphorical and emotional centers of the image, even when they are visually off-center, and as its literal spaces of whiteness; Congolese children are with them, carefully arranged and posing like the cast of a performance awaiting its applause, while vague, and once again literally, obscure crowds of Congolese women recede in the background to the left. Building and running orphanages were some of the missionaries' most compelling *raisons d'être* in colonized spaces. This intensely performative photograph could introduce a discussion, perhaps, of the ways that colonialism created a modern category of "orphan" in the Congo's Kasai and Sankuru regions. There, from the 1880s to about 1910, the devastating conditions of ivory and slave-hunting, warfare, forced labor, epidemics and the displacements of entire populations that I discuss in chapter 1 of this dissertation seemed to have been produced solely in order for this particular tableau to exist. In 2008, in the village of Wembo Nyama, I was told that "orphanages were organized very early in the colonial era – as early as the first decade of the twentieth century.[63] Many of the children became laborers and built all the houses, schools, hospitals, churches. Those who were close to the missionaries were evangelized and educated at the Mission Posts, the '*Centres*.'"[64]

The nuns, in the photographic *tableaux vivants* they have created, hold the babies in ways that Renaissance Madonnas are often depicted holding the baby Jesus: close to their breasts. Congolese women would generally carry their babies on their backs, with a cloth tied around the women's waists and upper torsos making a

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[63] It was earlier in Kasai than in Sankuru.
[64] Hunt, "Colonial Medical Anthropology and the Making of a Central African Infertility Belt"; Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon*; Hunt, "'Le Bébé En Brousse.' European Women, African Birth Spacing, and

carrying sack for the infant and toddler. From that place, behind her mother's shoulder, a child would begin life by seeing the world through the mother's point of view. By holding "their orphans" in figurative acts of breastfeeding, these Belgian nuns seemed to have been playing, visually, on the metaphorical registers of divine motherhood but also with Congolese children. However, not only are the nuns not breastfeeding Congolese infants (orphans, ill children, "problematic" ones), they are actually giving them bottles with baby formula, quite in keeping with the "modern" fashion of the mid-twentieth century.

Science in black and white

Represented visually in drawings and photographs, the object of the microscope figured among the most ubiquitous tropes of colonial development in the Belgian Congo. Others included the sewing machine, and the globe.[65] The microscope was a portable object capable of communicating the ideas of "science and technology." It was also itself an object of visuality. Like the telescope, it connected empiricism with seeing, and with science and truth. Unlike the telescope, it gave scopic access to the tiny invisible workings of the human body and was instrumental to modern medicine and public health. Like photography, the telescope made the invisible, visible. The microscope belonged to a visual language shared by missionary photographs and state propaganda. Figure 81, Figure 82, and Figure 83 are taken from propaganda and missionary images.

Colonial Intervention in Breast Feeding in the Belgian Congo"; Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa."

[65] Jacob Sabakinu in Carl De Keyzer and Johan Lagae, *Congo Belge en Images* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2009).

Figure 81: Printed in *Fonds du Bien-Etre Indigène publication.*[66]

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[66] Fonds du bien-être indigène, *Une oeuvre de coopération au développement: quinze années d'activité du Fonds du Bien-Être Indigène au Congo, au Rwanda et au Burundi, 1948-1963* (Brussels: FBI, 1964).

Figure 82: *(no caption)*, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.

Student nurses-midwives in Leopoldville

Figure 83: "Student nurse-midwives," printed in *Social Action in the Belgian Congo*.[67]

Within its visual context of colonial medical and biological science, the microscope

existed in a "black and white" environment. In pre-digital black and white photography,

achieving tone subtlety in difficult lighting conditions was challenging and required a

measure of technical skill. Color film and processing techniques had improved significantly

and were available to professionals since the middle of the 1930s. In 1941, Kodak introduced

Kodacolor, which made printing color photographs from Kodachrome slides possible.[68] But

in the 1940s, 1950s, and until the middle of the 1960s, black and white photography was less

costly and far easier to print than color. Yet this social and economic "fact" cannot, alone,

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[67] Centre d'information et de documentation du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, *Social Action in the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi.* (New York, N.Y.: Belgian Government Information Center, 1954).

explain the insistent visual economy of black and white that characterized colonial photography.[69] The "story" of young Congolese women looking into microscopes, is exactly the same in Figure 81, Figure 82, and Figure 83. In all three cases, the Congolese subjects are wearing the white uniforms of nurses, the head coverings of which also look like those worn by Catholic nuns. The images convey that they are meant to be trainees (in the case of Figure 83, the caption provides this information). What is striking, however, is that the drawing, a "low-tech" practice that allows its author complete control over representation, including the choice of using color, is a copy of a black and white photograph. As such, the drawing insists on and reiterates the metaphorical "black and white" aspect of colonial operations, here in their late-colonial guise, as they go about representing race and technology. The "white" technology is being transferred to "black" colonized subjects; they, in turn, are being visually contained by the distribution of "black" and "white" elements in the images. In the world of black and white photography, white clothes form a stark contrast with "black" bodies. In fact, the latter are visually created by the former. The drawing in particular makes this point clear: the "color" of colonialism in the tropics was white.[70] In the Belgian Congo, Catholic missionaries wore white (in contrast to the black frocks they wore in Europe); colonial officials wore white or khaki suits, as did military officers; and, of course, medical personnel wore white (the color of modern medicine is always white). In situations of high contrast (when it is very sunny, for instance, and parts of the environment are light in color), a camera's light meter will "read" the ambient light, as it comes off the lightest object in its scope. The shutter speed and aperture will then propose an adjustment in consequence of the

[68] De Keyzer and Lagae, *Congo Belge En Images*.
[69] The historical uses of black and white photography as metaphor for visualizing and literalizing "race," are immediately obvious to cultural and visual historians and have received a great deal of scholarly commentary.

amount of light the meter reads. This in turn will cause the photograph to be starkly divided

between areas of darkness and light. Visually, and specifically in terms of lighting, the

colonial situation of the mid-twentieth century was one of high contrast, and in such

conditions, most of what is really visible in colonial photographs is the black and the white.

All other colors become grays of various tones and are pushed aside in a monochromatic

world. And in fact, the eye will be drawn to lighter objects in an image field, to the "white"

rather than the "black." The photographic process itself in these conditions, at its simplest,

therefore, demands a choice: black or white? Which will be visible? To bring out the details

of less well-lit subjects, one usually must compensate by causing the better lit subjects'

"whiteness" to become overwhelming.[71] The viewer is blinded, distracted. Among the

hundreds of photographs in the Labaere archive, there is a diversity of technical know-how in

shooting and printing. Some photographs have been printed from technically good, well-lit

negatives; in such cases, faces, including those of Congolese subjects, come out in fine grain

and detail. Other photographs have high levels of contrast, where the only way to actually see

non-European faces is to over-expose the entire frame. The irony is, of course, that by over-

exposing a negative or print in order to better see the darker parts of the image, one "blows

out" the light areas. Through the alchemy of photography, whiteness transforms itself into a

metonym for the race rhetoric of tropical colonialism, becomes a "color," and overwhelms

photographs, meanings, and persons.

Roland Barthes writes that, according to structural linguistics, meaning results from the

choice of one term over another, that the spark of meaning itself is found in the friction

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[70] Michael Taussig, *What Color Is the Sacred?* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
[71] There are darkroom techniques to compensate for the effects of too much contrast, but these photographs, usually printed in professional laboratories, were not fussed over with a great deal of technical sophistication.

between two different terms or utterances, or between sounds.[72] The paradigm is the meaning

of a particular word *predicated* on the dominance of one term over another. For instance, on

the choice of the letter S versus the letter Z. "There are also" he writes "semantic

oppositions: white versus black."[73] The depiction of colonial situations through an economy

of black and white photography takes its fullest meaning in the opposition of the two terms:

black and white, where white wins out. This racialized visual world is "the paradigm."

Barthes goes on to offer an escape hatch:

> I define the neutral as that which outplays (*déjoue*) the paradigm, or rather I call the neutral everything that baffles the paradigm. For I am not trying to define a word. I am trying to name a thing: I gather under a name, which here is the Neutral."[74]

The neutral might be any element that destabilizes a visual economy of black and white

that produces the paradigm – the meaning – of race in the colony. But the neutral could also

be, in colonial situations, the "black." To guard against the neutral, the thing that would

topple the paradigm in this black and white visual world, "white" was deployed, visually, to

all aspects of the nuns' missionary life.

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[72] Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974); Roland Barthes, *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège De France (1977-1978)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
[73] Barthes, *The Neutral*, 7.
[74] Ibid.

Figure 84: *Mother Florimonda with the Normalistes. (girls Who Are Being Trained as Primary School Teachers)*, b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.

In Figure 84 (above) Mother Florimonda has positioned herself at the center of a crowd of young African girls. While she appears as "one of the girls" in this arrangement, she also stands out as the uniquely "white" element in a sea of brown faces and dark clothes. Black and white tones, however, are distributed between the nun, on one hand, and her students, on the other. Light bouncing off the girls' foreheads, light colored patterns on their checkered frocks, and on the other hand, the dark lining of the nun's helmet, her dark-rimmed glasses, the shadows playing on her face: in Figure 84 neither nun nor students can claim a total monopoly on the black or the white. The image possesses a kind of seamlessness, a visual

unity that depends on both opposition and continuity. In similar fashion, the far background is at first hard to discern. It appears, initially, to be a continuation, *ad infinitum*, of the crowd of school girls. In fact it is only bushes or small trees, but the photograph's composition with its heavy foreground, where Mother Florimonda serves as the visual anchor, and its shallow use of depth-of-field, seamlessly incorporate the background into the human element; these choices convey endlessness, infinity. The result is a heroic visual presentation of the teacher-nun.

The amateur missionary photographers, though they, like the State, wished to represent and document "development" were neither professional photographers nor professional propagandists. As a result, their visual spaces appear anarchical in comparison with State propaganda images. In the photographs of the Passionist and Franciscan missionaries, there was too much affect; there was too much self-investment, and there was too much looking at the camera. The missionaries often pictured themselves interacting, instructing, posing, engaging in some activity with a Congolese person. But, on the other hand, and very importantly, in many cases the photographs in the missionaries' albums show Tetela men and women, older and younger, in charge of their own photographic presentations. Tetela women and men often appear to have chosen the people with whom to be pictured, what clothes to wear, and what objects to display on the photographs. In many instances the "agent of visuality,"[75] the person in charge of the representation, was the Congolese subject, as evidenced by the fashionable and attractive clothing choices and the attention to dress, and to certain poses and attitudes of self-presentation. The work of Tetela self-fashioning, in short, took place in many of the missionary photographs. In the 1950s these circulated in the

mission among priests, nuns, and among the colonized who were favored and thus portrayed. The priests' images, more than those of the nuns, show Congolese as autonomous and in control of their images and self-presentations. Figure 85, Figure 86, Figure 87, Figure 88, and Figure 89 are examples of these presentations.

Figure 85: *(no caption)***, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.**

Figure 85, is a family portrait (as are a few of the following photographs). The husband sits at the front of the image, slightly closer to the camera than his wife. He is the only one in

[75] Ibid., 6. Mirzoeff uses the term in a different but related context. "[T]he contradictory source of the resonance of 'visuality' as a keyword for visual culture [is] as both a mode of representing imperial

the photograph wearing shoes. He is clearly proud of his family and many children. The oldest, who is a girl, stands next to her mother, shoulder to shoulder, looking serious and responsible, while her three brothers, who do not seem particularly impressed by the importance of the photographic occasion, look at something to the right, off-frame.

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culture and a means of resisting it by means of reverse appropriation."

Figure 86: *(no caption)***, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.**

Wearing shoes, suit, and tie, the young man in Figure 86 tries to look relaxed and

debonair, yet serious, as he turns 3/4 of his body toward the camera.

Figure 87: *(no caption)*, **n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven**

Figure 87, above, may reveal some measure of the awkwardness of posing for the Reverend Father's camera. While the subjects seem strongly engaged in their self-presentation, the folded arms across the knees of one of the young men and the hat held by the other, make one wonder. How constraining was this particular photographic space?

Figure 88: *(no caption)*, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.

Figure 89: "*Thsundakomo Pierre and André. Male Nurses from Dikungu*, b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.."

The two elegant white clad nurses in Figure 89 proudly display a bicycle, and with cigarettes dangling from their mouths, late colonial masculinities. These particular missionary images were the close relations of another genre of colonial photography in the Belgian Congo: the *Nos Images* photographs, where Congolese controlled much of the

production and circulation of their photographs.[76] The publication's front pages presented propagandistic aspects of "native" life in the colony, or sought to educate its readership about the colonial administration, or about Belgium and its monarchy. Another section, called "Our Chiefs" – already seemed an intermediary, somewhat ambiguous rubric, where chiefs were one's own people but also representatives of the state. But, two or three pages at the back of every issue were devoted to printing photographs sent in by readers and subscribers. These came from all over the colony and were portraits of, for the most part, older and middle-aged men, who were often members of an emerging postwar elite (the "*évolués*), sometimes together with their friends, or their families.

Un groupe de membres de l'Association
« Entente Mutuelle du Sankuru ».

Figure 90: "Members of the Sankuru Mutual Aid Society." Printed in *Nos Images*, 1950.

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[76] *Nos Images* was an illustrated magazine aimed at Congolese, which appeared twice a month from 1948 to 1959. It contained mostly photographs, which were often similar to the ones under consideration in this chapter.

Figure 91: "Wife of Mr. Yuke Alphonse, Lubefu Sector Chief." Printed in *Nos Images*, 1952.

In the course of a conversation in Kinshasa in 2008, Congolese historian Mutamba Makombo suggested to me that for late colonial Congolese, sending in photographs of themselves and their families was a form of communication. It was a way of introducing oneself, and connecting with others. It is evidence of the circulation of Congolese subjectivities beyond the constraints of village, township, colony, mission, and racial and social hierarchies.

"What today they call love"[77]

Family portraits within the Mission environment were another space of self-presentation for Congolese. Marriage in non-capitalist, non-bourgeois societies was not necessarily or primarily about romantic love. It was about wealth, or sometimes survival, social reproduction, kinship, and politics. For my Tetela interlocutors in 2008, these aspects of marriage continue to be culturally relevant and important; in the present they coexist (or somehow merge, or fuse) with notions of love and monogamy.

In the 1950s, many Christian and educated Congolese who formed a nascent elite in the colony, had become fully engaged in manifesting the lifestyle, culture, and class aspirations proposed by the missionaries and the colonial state. Photographs in the 1950s, whether they circulated in international "propaganda" networks, or in more limited personal, community, and family circles (Belgian or Congolese), were unique sites for engagements between aspiring colonized subjects and a colonial State-Church apparatus that sought to regulate the bodily practices of its colonized subjects, just as, Michel Foucault has amply demonstrated, the bourgeois state endeavored to do with its citizens in metropolitan contexts.[78] 1950s colonial photographs were occasions for, all at once, the regulation (as well as self-regulation), promotion, and contestation of *visible* bodily practices. These 1950s photographs taken by missionary priests of their Tetela parishioners demonstrate, on the part of Congolese

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[77] "Nowadays the choice of a spouse is strictly a young man's own business. He may be influenced in his choice by his parents or his paternal uncles. Sometimes his choice is determined by what today they call love." Words of an unnamed 1950s Congolese cited in Betty Eggermont, "Se marier chrétiennement au Congo belge. Les stratégies appliquées par les Missionnaires de Scheut (CICM) au Kasai, 1919-1935," *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome* 64 (1994): 113.

[78] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Michel Foucault et al., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1982-1983* (New York: Picador/Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

subjects, an active engagement, an embrace of the *image* of the bourgeois monogamous marriage. What is key here is image, that is, surface.

The photograph, "A teacher from the second year…" (Figure 92) shows a "Christian" family of "*évolués*," who enjoyed the privilege of comfort and education afforded by life near the mission station. This particular group looks pleased, and the photograph has a strong quality of an image commemorating a very special occasion in a family album.

Figure 92: *A Teacher from the Second Year on Her Wedding Day*, b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere photographic archive, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.

Catholic priests and nuns, Anglo-American Protestant missionaries, and the colonial state fought very strongly against polygamy in the Congo (as elsewhere in Africa). Early Catholic evangelizing efforts in Sankuru may have been hampered because of the Tetela's alleged attachment to polygamy.[79] In the village of Wembo-Nyama Reverend Okombo shared with me a few memories about life with the American Protestants, while also "reminiscing" about an idealized Tetela past:

> Life for our parents was good. There was loyalty and solidarity. Family meant something larger than it does today. Polygamy had its place. A man could have a lot of goods and possessions. Polygamy was a sign of wealth. [Then he added] The missionaries asked Congolese send all extra wives away. *But more often than not the latter kept additional wives in secret.*[80]

In Sankuru, the missionaries are said to never have completely succeeded in changing people's ways on the question of polygamy.[81] And an important part of Tetela identity as it is spoken of by Congolese in and out of that region, is that Tetela men remain staunchly polygamist.[82] How were these photographs used by Congolese? A paradox appears at first. On one hand, as Nancy Rose Hunt argues, the colonial policy of levying additional taxes (per "extra" wife) on polygamous men in order to discourage them from marrying multiple women, had the contrary effect of further increasing the prestige of having more than one wife.[83] On the other, to present or manifest "monogamy" as a front, an ostensible lifestyle, a picture, and ultimately a *fact,* true because it has been materialized in a photograph, was to

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[79] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*; Foucault et al., *The Foucault Effect*; Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*.

[80] Okombo Djamba, "Colonial Missions and Life with the Missionaries."

[81] This association of Tetela to a particularly "excessive" polygamy goes back to the Zanzibari era in the late nineteenth century. See chapter one of this dissertation.

[82] This construction is at a certain level symbolic. Because of the intense economic and emotional pressures such arrangements generate in the contemporary era, polygamy, in most cases, does not permit families to live middle-class, "bourgeois" lifestyles. Christian elites, including the Tetela women among them, reject polygamy as an actual practice in their lives.

present oneself as elite; it was to carry on the visual discourse of being "civilized." Christiani

Congolese strongly fixed presentations of monogamy as bourgeois respectability in

photographic visuality.[84] Those who wanted to be known, with their families, as middle class

and educated produced similar images and inscribed this mode of presentation in the many

photographs Congolese sent to publications like *Nos Images* in the 1940a and 1950s. In the

1950s, Patrice Lumumba emerged, in a public and visual sense, from this world.[85] Perhaps

the photographs functioned as calling cards, but also as screens, or else as costumes like

suits; in short, as performance. And in addition to publicly performed and circulated

photographs, there was the unseen yet spoken and known; the hidden wives, for instance.

As a family photograph, Figure 85 finds its equivalent in many other (monogamous)

family portraits from the late colonial era. Yet, it is not clear what these photographs "show"

and what they "hide." Photography played its part in the dynamic of moral/social camouflage

described by Hunt. Her proposition that "colonial camouflage" was a way of enacting a

"defiant play of masquerade in the face of the rigidities and indignities of colonial moral,

marital and tax categories,"[86] brings a visual and perceptual framework to these complicated

tasks of signification, where "camouflage" is a way of simultaneously hiding, preserving, and

communicating actions or belief systems, which are either non-normative or in conflict with

a hegemonic political or social order, to those "in the know." This idea extends, therefore,

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[83]Reverend Daniel Okombo Djamba, "Colonial Missions and Life with the Missionaries", August 6, 2008.

[84] The nineteenth-century bourgeois family photograph is ultimately and largely about this performance of monogamy and its subsidiary category, the nuclear family: bourgeois respectability *as* sexual restraint, and *as* performed in a photograph.

[85] Chapter 5 of this dissertation takes up Lumumba's image in its many guises, including that of the late-colonial *évolué*.

[86] Nancy Rose Hunt, "Noise over Camouflaged Polygamy, Colonial Morality Taxation, and a Woman-Naming Crisis in Belgian Africa," *The Journal of African History* 32, no. 3 (January 1, 1991): 472.

into the realm of colonial missionary photography, itself a camouflage operation of sorts at many levels.

Conclusion

When Papa Rudolphe and I spoke with Ngongo Raphael at Okudi (see Chapter 1, part I), he said, in response to my questions about photographic cameras in colonial times: "during colonialism we were photographed" and "when we were little, Whites were always photographing us." Photography was a key aspect of empire, and of colonial life; it was a means by which colonizers represented colonized at the time of conquest, and also later. Photographic occasions were also spaces and moments of exchange: dialogue in some cases, in others violence and resistance. In the post World War II era, photography was a means by which the state expressed its interest in the lives of colonized subjects, who in turn were aware of its ubiquity, and of being watched, seen, represented. The missionaries' photographs by their sheer numbers and diversity of subject matter, are evidence of this constant photographic interaction between Congolese and the Belgian Catholic missionaries who trained, guided, taught, monitored, sanctioned, exploited, judged, evaluated, and in a general sense, lived with them.

This chapter has attempted to locate the interplay of subjectivities between Belgian missionaries and Tetela in photographic spaces. This colonial mission visuality was plural, yet a certain number of elements place it within specific visual and discursive economies: registers of "black and white," both rhetorical and more purely visual (or less subject to language);[87] registers of affect and emotion; and registers of development as habitus[88] or

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[87] Julia Adeney Thomas has written suggestively about photographs straddling discursive and pre-discursive registers.Ibid.

practice of everyday life.[89] There was a visual and rhetorical mode that went with the use of

black and white photography in a colonial African setting, a "black and white visuality" at

work, which found its apotheosis in the worlds of Christian missionaries. There existed,

necessarily, a dialectic between image and seeing; this mutual production process involved,

at the heart of any photographic image, light and darkness, a binary both metaphorical and

literal that also mapped onto to rhetorical Scriptural meta-concepts like "ignorance,"

"knowledge," "damnation," and "salvation." In the case of the nuns' photographs, they acted

as showcases for biopolitical interventions upon African bodies. But the biopolitics at work

were resifted and given new meanings through performances, for the photographic camera,

of early modern religious painting as theater.

The priests' and nuns' photographs convey slightly different meanings and accomplish

different tasks. They both show and hide things. The photographs of the male Passionists

collected by Father Labaere are far more diverse in their subject matter than those of the

nuns. The latter not only imposed greater degrees of control on the visual presentations of

"life" and "work" in the colony, they also inserted themselves into almost every frame. The

priests' images often show Tetela as autonomous and in control of their self-fashioning, who

appear to have produced their visual and aesthetic subjectivities through the photographic

apparatus. The nuns seem more concerned with inscribing themselves in the photographic

images, spaces, and the situations they created, thereby evincing a far greater and perhaps

more self-conscious performative quality.

Both sets of photographs appear to have been primarily aimed at "home" audiences,

that is the friends, neighbors, and family members who awaited the Missionaries' return

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[88] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990).
[89] Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

every two or so years. This is perhaps one reason many Congolese adults and children are rarely named by captions. Instead, they are called "teachers," "students," "seminarians," "mothers," or simply "boys" and "girls." "Boy" had the additional meaning of "personal servant" in the Belgian Congo. These captioning practices indicate the "real" or perhaps only ostensible audiences for these images. Yet, the photographic visual worlds suggest and reveal much more than the captions might allow one to think. I believe that many of the priests' photographs are traces: hard to identify, yet acting as highly speculative records of perhaps a truth of the experiences of many.

A great number of the photographs taken and collected by the missionary fathers, in particular, have the quality of family albums, with well-dressed, well-cared for young men and women posing for special occasions. Taken as a whole with the many other photographs in the Labaere archive, it all looks part of a greater context of parishes and the people who lived in them, in close contact with the missionaries. There are also photographs of Christian families with grandparents, small children, young families, etc. Looking at these pictures, one clearly gets a sense of closeness and affection, among the Congolese photographed subjects, but also between children and missionaries, and on the latter's part for the men and women who appear willing to follow and participate in the missionaries' vision of what a colonial Christian social world should be. Affect may well have guided the priests and nuns who took these photographs, and then, with great care, put together the albums that contained them. The pictures reveal a world of affect, but many times this visual world of feeling is contradicted by the distant, impersonal, commentary of the caption, like "Father Daniel with freshly baptized people," or "Father Y . . . with his boys on the little path from the beach to

the mission,"[90] where Congolese are not mentioned by name or not mentioned at all. It is also

contradicted by frequency of the corporal punishments meted out to children. While

European schoolchildren in this era where similarly subjected to corporal punishments, they

reached, in time, the freedom and emancipation offered by late adolescence and adulthood.

Not so colonized subjects, who continued to suffer abuses at the hands of colonial

administrators, agronomists, and, in Sankuru particularly, the "monitors" working for the

cotton concerns. So it may be the case here, with the children and teenagers, unlike what was

true of some of the adult *évolué* photographs discussed above that operated as places of

performance of certain modern late-colonial selves, that this photographic world of mission

youth does something slightly different: it gives access to an unspoken universe, this time

showing rather than obfuscating, that which may be easier left unsaid in the world of the

colony, and also suggesting what was perhaps unsettling.

Congolese philosopher and novelist Valentin Yves Mudimbe described missionary

colonizing processes, sometimes based on his own experience as former seminarian and a

privileged pupil of Belgian missionaries, as a certain kind of modernizing process.[91] One site

for locating late-colonial Congolese modernities was the mission, and this chapter has

considered colonial missionary photography in this light. Photographs as particular types of

performances mediate between hidden and shown, visible and invisible. They may operate

discursively at times but also point directly to the possibility of "counter-discourse."

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[90] *Father Daniel with Freshly Baptized People.*, b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere Photographic
Archive. KFH 1402/1, Kadoc Documentation and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society.
Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven; *Father Y... with His Boys on the Little Path from the Beach to the
Mission*, b&w photograph, n.d., Labaere Photographic Archive. KFH 1402/1, Kadoc Documentation
and Research centre for Religion, Culture and Society. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.
[91] In particular, see V. Y. Mudimbe, *Les corps glorieux des mots et des êtres: esquisse d'un jardin
africain à la bénédictine* (Montréal: Humanitas, 1994).; V. Y. Mudimbe, *Parables and Fables:
Exegesis, Textuality, and Politics in Central Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

Photography for my Congolese Tetela interlocutors was connected first and foremost to memory, and thus to presence.

This chapter has also considered how the photographs produced by the missionaries, within an overdetermined colonial situation "regimented" Tetela. It has sought to consider the ways Tetela navigated the photographic and colonizing practices of white missionaries, and how they not only freed themselves from colonially imposed visual strictures, but also appropriated the medium. The Reverend Fathers and Mothers used these photographs in Belgium for purposes of religious propaganda, in churches, in towns and villages, and in homes. They also used them to show, teach, remember and connect. Yet these material facts do not constitute the photographs' entire story. The photographs are evidence in some sense, that someone was "there," indeed that many people once lived, learned, worked and saw, "there." From the point of view of the Belgian missionaries, the photographs were records of lives lived. They reveal emotional investments, judgments, cultural assumptions, uncertainties and desires – in short, "structures of feeling."[92] Yet Tetela, as did other Congolese, also intervened in the production of this visual record. Sometimes they appeared as unmistakable agents of their own visualities and in charge of their representations. At other times, Congolese interacted with photographic productions in more subtle ways, through looks, poses, smiles and scowls, all present in the performative spaces of photographs.

What photographs might signify to different viewers, the work they might do, emerges in the unspecifiable space between photographer and photographed, indeed in the shuttling of gazes, where both photographer and photographed are subjects and objects, and agents of seeing. In these colonial photographs, visual agency was shared and negotiated in the

photograph and in the enactment of photography as process and technique. The subjectivities

of those who then viewed the photographs in "other" times and places, away from their

contexts of production have reevaluated and recast them as images and objects. As my

experience showing these mission photographs in Thsumbe showed me, contemporary Tetela

in 2008 and 2009, through their seeing, remembered, upheld, contradicted and restructured

historical knowledge communicated by these late colonial photographs; they also used,

appropriated and sometimes completely changed their meanings and even their visualities.

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[92] Williams, "Structures of Feeling," 132.

Chapter 4

"Colonialism's Farewell Party c. 1954: Luc de Heusch's Fête chez les Hamba*"*

In 1954, a francophone Belgian anthropologist who had been a student of the

French anthropologists Marcel Griaule and, most famously, Claude Lévi-Strauss, was

gathering data in a Tetela-Hamba village for his doctorate in the "colonial sciences" at

the Université Libre de Bruxelles.[1] In the course of his research, Luc de Heusch identified

the "Nkumi" or "masters of the forest" institution as a fraternity of wealthy elders who

shared decision-making power with lineage heads. The Nkumi, whose organization was

particular to the forest, he argued, was a relatively new institution, dating back only to the

nineteenth century.[2] In the competitive environment of the central African forest,

according to de Heusch, gift-giving was how the Nkumi masters acquired and maintained

authority.[3] Gift-giving entailed a constant redistribution of women and wealth in the

forest, in his eyes, and it became central to his early understanding and characterization

of the Tetela-Hamba. He also noted that the Nkumi elders had managed to hide

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[1] The Tetela, as a contemporary and historical community in the Congo, are not easy to characterize. "Tetela" serves as both a marker of a cultural and ethnic identity, and as an umbrella term that unites a diverse set of sub-groups and communities. The Tetela-Hamba are one such group.

[2] de Heusch, *Du pouvoir*; de Heusch, "Nkumi et Nkumu." Also see, Georges Brausch, "Political Changes in the Upper Lukenyi Area of the Congo," *African Studies* III, no. 2 (June 1944): 65–74. Brausch makes the same observations regarding the Nkumi.

themselves from the Belgians by putting forward "false village chiefs" as colonial collaborators.[4] This was a common phenomenon in areas of the Belgian Congo where leadership was shared among lineages, and also highly contested among them. For colonized subjects, it was a way of resisting colonial authority and preserving some social and political autonomy without entering into open conflict with the colonial regime. The authorities, nonetheless, felt defied in their attempts to rule and govern "correctly" by what they took to be political dissembling. A Belgian administrator in the territory of Katako Kombe reported that he had been obliged to "inform the local notables" that they could not legitimately elect a certain Okita Kula to the position of customary chief, as this man was a "*junior* scion of a *junior* branch" of the lineage of the Luwila "chefferie" ("chiefship").[5] Such interactions also point to ongoing processes of "invention of tradition"[6] through colonialism in Africa, or the elaboration of a "customary" register. I return to the latter below.

In a wry letter to his father-in-law, the renowned Belgian filmmaker Henri Storck, de Heusch characterized the "noble" Nkumi institution as "an association of senile and ill-tempered patriarchs, of which I have become a most eminent member."[7] De Heusch was aware of the strangeness of his situation as a "nearly colonial" social scientist soliciting and observing the kinds of cultural theater that were staged not only for him

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[3]Luc de Heusch, "Autorité et prestige dans la société Tetela," *Zaïre* 10 (1954): 1011–1027; Luc de Heusch, "Eléments de potlatch chez les Hamba," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 24, no. 4 (1954): 337–348.

[4] de Heusch, "Interview I."

[5] Following new colonial legislation in 1933, the state began implementing administrative and political "customary" arrangements, where the "legitimate" chief of a community or village was to be found and promoted to "customary chief." Ibid. [emphasis added].

[6] Ranger, T. O, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa."

[7] Luc de Heusch, "Lettres de Luc de Heusch," in *Cobra en Afrique*, vol. 3–4, Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles (Brussels, Belgium, 1991), 25.

and colonial administrator-anthropologists, but also within Hamba society.[8] His letters

from field sites in Congo to his father-in-law and other interlocutors in Belgium suggest

his awareness of these ironies.[9] So, too, does his analysis of segmented lineage societies.

Their coherence and functioning, he argued, were only maintained through the constant

performance of prestige, authority, and gift-giving. De Heusch credited his structuralism

to his teacher Lévi-Strauss, but while Lévi-Strauss build his theoretical framework on the

structural analysis of myth and myth-making, de Heusch anchored the "mythical

thinking" of these "Bantu" Tetela-Hamba in ritual, itself also a performance.[10]

De Heusch also used his irreverent sense of humor to comment on colonial social

relations in the Belgian Congo. In letters to friends and family, he described different

characters he met. Certain low-level civil servants elicited a degree of sympathy from

him. He cast the Belgian colonial doctor in Katako Kombe as a "little doctor," singularly

passionate about collecting butterflies, yet an innocent.[11] But de Heusch laid the utter

uselessness and parasitism of the "dying colonialism" (to borrow from Fanon)[12] around

him upon these colonial administrators' wives. In 1953, he wrote to his friends Pierre and

Micky Alechinsky from Katako Kombe these poetic words redolent with sarcasm: "At

party at the accountant's house, there were three or four ladies, all dried out like a stack

of administrative documents. The doctor's wife, attractive, plump, and extravagant,

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[8] de Heusch, "Interview I." Regarding, his "somewhat" or "nearly" colonial situation as an anthropologist, de Heusch observed that, in retrospect, he and his colleagues may have been more forceful in demanding information and collaboration from informants than one would "today:" ["des gestes dominateurs qu'on aurait plus aujourd'hui."]

[9] Ibid.

[10] "Africa was poor in myths, contrary to what Marcel Griaule believed, but very rich in ritual. This means that symbolic thought [in Africa] expressed itself *elsewhere*." Ibid. Ritual is by definition performative.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, Evergreen (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

thundered about."[13] De Heusch was fervently anti-clerical, and he reserved much of his

mocking and biting vitriol for Belgian Catholic missionaries and priests. Neither did he

spare the Congolese *abbés* and *curés* (village priests), who were a relatively a new

presence in 1950s Congo. He called the Belgian missionaries "illiterate," and the

Congolese priests sanctimonious, narrow-minded imitations of their colonial sponsors.[14]

In interviews and memoirs, de Heusch often remembered himself as a kind of

"troublemaker" in the Belgian Congo. In a letter to friends at home, he reports having

considered attending a colonial "costume party" dressed as an "Nkumi." This would have

meant being naked, save for a rather small loincloth. His wife, de Heusch recalled,

dissuaded him from going through with the plan. The historian Jan Vansina, de Heusch's

contemporary and colleague in central Congo for a time, remembered him in his

autobiography as "…the most unconventional of us all: a convinced anarchist and an

inspired artist."[15]

In the course of my two 2006 interviews in Brussels, de Heusch told me that he was

almost expelled from the Tetela area where he was conducting research because he had

been collecting chiefly genealogies; territorial administrators, who normally conducted

these kinds of inquests, did not like the presence of this young social scientist; and liked

him even less because he had spoken out against colonial abuses.[16] "I was watched by the

Sûreté [the state's security services]," he told me. "I found this out through a colonial

administrator, a decent fellow, who told me, 'You know, I was instructed to watch you.'"

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[13] "Le docteur papillion" in Luc de Heusch, "Lettres adressées du Congo Belge à Pierre et Micky Alechinsky," in *Cobra en Afrique*, vol. 3–4, Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles (Brussels, Belgium, 1991), 73.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Jan. Vansina, *Living with Africa* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 29.
[16] de Heusch "Interview II," interview by Isabelle de Rezende, Tape recorded, June 6, 2006.

He continued to recall: "I wondered why and how!? I had been careless enough to say that the natives were not paid adequately . . . [or] something like that." "And," laughing at the absurdity of such a notion, he went on to say: "that was enough for me to be placed under surveillance as a communist agent!"[17]

The subject of this chapter is especially de Heusch's film *Fête chez les Hamba.* I consider it in three contexts: Congo's new postwar governmentality, its colonial visual environment in the 1950s, and the broader context of early Cold War culture.[18] An important question posed in this chapter is, what conceptual spaces does *Fête chez les Hamba* leave open for the inscription of alternative, unintended, or uncontrollable meanings in a late colonial situation?[19] To begin with, this film reveals an important fact: Belgium's new field of colonial anthropology was attempting to produce knowledge that was no longer quite-so-colonial in its politics, ethics, and aesthetics. Rather, *Fête*'s production and subsequent circulation suggest significant ruptures in the earlier homogeneity and smoothness of colonial visuality.

Fête chez les Hamba is a 50 minute, 16 mm black-and-white film. It is an artifact and, in semiotic terms, a text produced as an intersection of three elements: first, a late colonial moment in Belgian Congo; secondly, the consciousness and professional activity of an earnest anti-colonial ethnographer who was a Parisian-trained structuralist though with a specifically Belgian – or perhaps Bruxellois – surrealist background and

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[17] Ibid.

[18] For a new approach to post-World War II colonial governmentality, see Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude & Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2005). And for an interesting consideration of ethnography in the 1950s, see Edwin Wilmsen, "To See Ourselves as We Need to See Us: Ethnography's Primitive Turn in the Early Cold War Years," *Critical African Studies*, no. 1 (2009): 1–41.

[19] Balandier, *La Situation coloniale. Une approche théorique.*

sensibility; and thirdly, and not at all least, the subjectivities of "customary" subaltern late colonial subjects. These Tetela-Hamba used their connections to de Heusch and participation in his film to "act" and take action, which they did by moving through the open filmic space he created for them. In doing so, Tetela-Hamba historical actors created additional and unexpected layers of visual meaning in *Fête*. Thus, because of such internal tensions and ruptures, *Fête chez les Hamba* throws a number of significant fissures of late colonial Congo into relief. Luc de Heusch's position in the early 1950s lay on the periphery of a powerful colonial apparatus, which combined scientific research, social interventions, welfare provision, as well as textual and visual propaganda and media forms, some aimed at global and metropolitan audiences, and others at Congolese subjects. These knowledge and media forms resulted in a broader global circulation of meanings about the Belgian Congo, which became key contexts for *Fête chez les Hamba*. The film is itself in textual and visual dialogue with these media forms.

Elsewhere: Luc de Heusch between Henri Storck, CoBrA, Lévi-Strauss, and the Belgian Congo

Personal and historical circumstances, as well as a convergence of very particular artistic and intellectual sensibilities, led de Heusch to Africa and ethnography. The connections between Belgium's bourgeois artistic establishment and colonial aesthetics had been long-standing. *Art Nègre*, in particular had been "all the rage" in fashionable circles in the 1920s and 1930s. With Luc de Heusch – the rebellious, anti-colonial and anti-establishment intellectual – a new synthesis was possible between surrealism (as a sincere form of search for alterity), art that sought to express and retrieve the "primitive" within the bourgeois subject, and Lévi-Straussian

structuralism (itself no stranger to surrealism), as a new analytical framework placing myth (archaic and atemporal) at the center of anthropology's cultural analysis.

Born in 1927, de Heusch had lived through the traumas of the 1940s: four years of Nazi occupation in Belgium, followed in quick succession by the atomic bombings of Japan and the rise of two hyper-militarized and antagonistic ideological blocs. De Heusch recalled that he had been "disgusted" when he saw this "coming of World War Three," which made him desperate to escape and leave Europe behind.[20] In the late 1940s, de Heusch was connected to intellectual and artistic circles in Brussels and was a member of the avant-garde, surrealist, CoBrA collective (the acronym stood for "Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam"). It was a short-lived (1948-51) art collective founded by a group of northern European artists, poets, and intellectuals from Denmark, Holland, and Belgium. CoBrA, according to Luc de Heusch, emerged at the intersection of the preoccupations and interests of the Danish and Dutch postwar art scenes: respectively, the search for "primitive authenticity" in artistic expression, and the promotion of "childlike" spontaneity in art, in opposition to Mondrian's geometric regimentation. In Belgium, meanwhile, the arts were under the sway of Soviet-style Socialist Realism, which sought to dictate form and content to artists. CoBrA emerged as a way of refusing the strictures of late-Stalinism, or "the supposed social demands of the working class, as dictated by idiotic bureaucrats in Moscow, and relayed by their *Lettres Françaises* Parisian disciples."[21]

In the late 1940s, de Heusch also became acquainted with the renowned Belgian social documentarian, Henri Storck, who taught him filmmaking, and whose assistant he became. A regular dinner guest at the Storck house in the late 1940s, de Heusch fell in love with his mentor's young daughter Marie, and the two married in 1952, shortly before setting off together for the

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[20] de Heusch, "Interview I."

[21] de Heusch, "Le mythe fondateur de Cobra," in *Cobra: Copenhagen, Brüssel, Amsterdam*, ed. Troels Andersen (München: Hirmer Verlag, 1997), 19. *Lettres Françaises* was the literary supplement of the French Communist Party daily, *l'Humanité*.

Belgian Congo.[22] Henri Storck is still considered the progenitor of socially oriented, realist

Belgian cinema. One of his most famous documentaries was *Misère au Borinage*. Released in

1933, the film told the story of a strike the previous year and its repression. Storck's populism

turned suspect during the Nazi occupation of Belgium and there have been intimations that he

was a Nazi sympathizer. From 1942 to 1944, when many artists would or could not work in

occupied Europe, Storck made a series of short films known as *Symphonie Paysanne* (*Rural

Symphony*).[23] Storck had been commissioned in 1938 to direct a film about the Belgian Congo for

the Fonds Colonial de Propagande Economique et Sociale.[24] This project was never realized.

However, in 1956 he directed journalistic-style reports on the colony, and in 1959 was involved

as a producer (among many others) in the making of *Masters of the Congo Jungle*,[25] a film

figuring "among the most famous colonial works of art."[26] None of Storck's "colonial" films are

listed in the catalog from the "Fonds Henri Storck," which owns and distributes his films, as well

as those of Luc de Heusch.[27]

In 1949, a student in the faculty of Colonial Sciences at the Université Libre de

Bruxelles, de Heusch, having won an alumni association travel grant to the colony,

traveled to the Congo for the first time. There, he came across a number of statuettes by a

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[22] "L'amour fou était au rendez-vous," de Heusch, *Mémoire mon beau navire. Les vacances d'un ethnologue*, 40. Adolphe Nysenholc, ed., *Cobra en Afrique* (Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1991), 22.

[23] See Fabienne Bradfer, "Henri Storck a-t-il collaboré?," [Did Henri Storck collaborate?] *Le Soir* (Brussels, Belgium, August 7, 2006).

[24] "La propagande coloniale par le film. Interview de M. Bagage, secrétaire du Fonds Colonial de Propagande Economique et Sociale", 1938, G.G. 9488, Archives Africaines. Ministère des Affaires Etrangères. Brussels, Belgium.

[25] Henry Brandt and Heinz Sielmann, *Masters of the Congo Jungle*, Documentary, 1960.

[26] Guido Convents, *Images & démocratie: les Congolais face au cinéma et à l'audiovisuel: Une histoire politico-culturelle du Congo des belges jusqu'à la République Démocratique du Congo (1896-2006)* (Kessel Lo, Belgique: Afrika Filmfestival, 2006), 218.

[27] *Fonds Henri Storck. Catalogue* (Brussels, Belgium: Fonds Henri Storck. Communaute Francaise de Belgique, 1998).

people he calls Boyo.[28] Upon his return to Belgium, and under the pseudonym Luc

Zangrie, de Heusch contributed articles to the CoBrA collective's journal on the Boyo

statuettes he had found in the colony. "I had brought back a few photographs of my

discovery of the Boyo statues,"[29] de Heusch remembered in our interview. One such

photographs was accompanied by a text announcing de Heusch's intention to write about

"matriarchy" in Africa. Another 1949 text by de Heusch stages hunters, fathers, rituals,

ancestors, and sculptors. A reflection on the nature of art among the Boyo (or the

Basumba), it states:

> But the royal ancestors sleep; life is no longer their business. In the wood, their spirit
> has crafted for itself a silent and impressive slumber […] Art is dynastic, like power.
> It is in its service […] Art springs of cruelty. There is no popular art among the
> Basumba, nor, it seems, has there ever been.[30]

COBRA (the journal), Luc de Heusch remembered, sought to oppose "socialist

realism," which imposed dogma to artists. As a member of CoBrA (the collective), de

Heusch recalled, "I denounced popular art somewhat."[31] He also seems to have already

been opposing functionalism. The symbolic structures operating in African societies, with

which de Heusch concerned himself through most of his academic career, and which he

interpreted in relation to political power and authority in Africa, seem to have been

present in his mind early on. With these youthful remarks about art "among the

Basumba," and by linking art to myth, and both in turn to the sublime, Luc Zangrie

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[28]Adolphe Nysenholc, ed., *Cobra en Afrique* (Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1991).

[29] "J'avais ramené quelques photos de ma découverte des statues Boyo." Ibid.

[30] "Mais les ancêtres royaux dorment ; la vie n'est plus leur affaire. Leur esprit s'est taillé dans le bois un sommeil silencieux et impressionnant […] l'art est dynastique comme le pouvoir. Il est à son service […] l'Art est issu de la cruauté. Il n'y a pas d'art populaire chez les Basumba, il ne semble jamais y en avoir eu." *Cobra* 5 (1950), 16.*Cobra 1948-1951*, Collection Des Reimpressions Des Revues D'avant-garde (Paris, France: Jean-Michel Place, 1980).

[31] Luc de Heusch, "Interview II," interview by Isabelle de Rezende, Tape recorded, June 6, 2006.

appeared already to have foreshadowed the contributions of the structuralist anthropologist, Luc de Heusch.[32]

Upon returning from the Congo in 1949, de Heusch decided to become a professional anthropologist.[33] When we spoke in 2006, de Heusch dismissed the very idea of connections between "surrealism" and ethnography as "an Anglo-Saxon mania," one that would also consider Michel Leiris as representative of French ethnography rather than exceptional to it. As he explained to me, such an Anglo-Saxon view of French anthropology was "a way to distance Anglo-American from French anthropology," which was at the time, he admitted, was "a bit erratic."[34] De Heusch may well have been remembering Mary Douglas's essay "Reflections on the Pale Fox," where she argued that differences between British and French anthropology could be seen in terms of the latter's links to surrealism.[35] De Heusch pushed these considerations aside and recalled his structuralist mentor fondly: "I learned a lot more from Levi-Strauss than from Marcel Griaule."[36] In the structuralist method, de Heusch seemed to have found a way to separate *conceptually* "science" from "fantasy," which he has associated with surrealism and Marcel Griaule,[37] all the while maintaining myths, dreams, and the fantastic ("*le merveilleux*") at the center of his academic and scientific investigations.

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[32] In particular: Ibid. The former was translated in English as *The Drunken King, or The Origin of the State*, African Systems of Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).
[33] Nysenholc, *Cobra en Afrique*.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Mary Douglas, "Réflexions sur *Le Renard Pâle* et deux anthropologies. A propos du surréalisme et de l'anthropologie française," in *L'autre et le sacré: surréalisme, cinéma, ethnologie* (Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 1995). The essays collected in this volume stemmed from a conference held at Warwick University in the UK in 1992, and in which de Heusch took part.
[36] de Heusch, "Interview II." Marcel Griaule was a French anthropologist who led an expedition across French Africa in 1931, in which the surrealist-linked writer and intellectual Michel Leiris participated. In 1950 Griaule lectured at the Sorbonne.
[37] Ibid.

De Heusch recalled expecting to find, in his own fieldwork in equatorial Africa, the kinds of cosmological and symbolic thought Griaule recorded in West Africa. By his admission, de Heusch had gone to the Congo looking for his own Dogon.[38] De Heusch had hoped to write about myths and structures and their symbolic meanings; and in his scholarly writing, he did precisely that. But when living and working among the Tetela during his first colonial assignment, his work was to map lineages and theorize about the nature of authority in segmentary lineage societies. In a published interview, Luc de Heusch confessed that he had been bored.[39] He also told me in our interview that, in the early 1950s, he had completely failed to understand Tetela society, by which he meant that he had been looking for the institutions of divine kingship among the Tetela in vain.[40] In search of "the elsewhere," he had expected to be dazzled by the Other, to be excited by discovering places and lives that were different, magical and fresh. Instead, among the Tetela-Hamba, he often found social arrangements that seemed mundane enough to be familiar, and different enough to be trying.

Cultural Anthropology between Science and Welfare

From the 1890s until the Second World War, the Museum of the Belgian Congo at Tervuren obtained, organized, and circulated much of the images (some films; mainly photographs) that constituted official colonial visuality.[41] After World War II, the museum's role changed and it took a backseat to state and missionary-led propaganda

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[38] A people living in the Sahel region of West Africa, at the bend of the Niger river, whose elaborate cosmology fascinated French anthropologist Marcel Griaule in the 1930s. Griaule made the Dogon famous.

[39] de Heusch, "Interview II."

[40] de Heusch, *Mémoire mon beau navire. Les vacances d'un ethnologue*, 40.

and documentation efforts. Still the museum provided key logistical and financial

assistance to colonial documentation and research. The museum was *Fête chez les*

Hamba's main producer and was also connected with it in other ways. The director of the

museum, Frans Olbrechts was a member of the board of IRSAC, a new postwar

governmental organization that funded most if not all scientific research in the Belgian

Congo.

After the Second World War, the Belgian colonial state stepped up its development

efforts. Among several state-level organizations, it launched the Institute for Scientific

Research in Central Africa (IRSAC) in 1947. In keeping with a new Cold War age of

atomic bombs, penicillin, and the polio vaccine, "science" was the founding principle of

this new state organism; "découvrir ou périr"–"discover or perish" – was one of its

leading mottoes.[42] In the Belgian Congo, the 1950s were marked by the convergence of

science and policy. Louis van den Berghe, a professor at Belgium's Institute of Tropical

Medicine in Antwerp, and the Congo's Minister of Colonies, Edgar De Bruyne, were

among those who conceptualized and shaped the IRSAC initiative.[43] In post-war

propaganda and official communications, "science" became almost the new identity of

this "model colony" in the immediate aftermath of the creation of the United Nations and

its development agencies, and in the name of Belgium's ongoing greater "civilizing

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[41] See Chapter 2 in this dissertation for a fuller account of the Museum's history and role in the production of colonial visual knowledge about the Congo.
[42] Institut pour la recherche scientifique en Afrique centrale, I. R. S. A. C. Institut Pour La Recherche Scientifique En Afrique Centrale. Instituut Voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek in Centraal-Afrika. I. W. O. C. A. (Bukavu, Congo, 1954), 2.
[43] Ibid, 4-5.

mission in Africa."[44] IRSAC's goal, as stated in its statute was to "generate, promote, accomplish, and coordinate, especially in the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, the study of the human and natural sciences. Finally, IRSAC would be headquartered in Africa, in Belgian Congo's capital Leopoldville, and with research centers in designated field locations.[45] A1954 IRSAC statement of purpose reads:

> A dozen researchers study African man from physical and social perspectives: his nutritional habits, his physical characteristics and aptitudes, his political organization, his ancestral culture, the meaning of his closed organizations (this term must replace "secret societies"), new movements of ideas, the real position of chiefs, land ownership, demographic data, median salaries, uses of money, the rehabilitation or development of abandoned or sparsely populated areas, linguistics, and soon psychology and psychotechnics. Precise knowledge of these topics must lead to an understanding of the human environment in Africa, and then to the country's economic and political development [46]

Another postwar creation of the newly "welfarist" colonial state was the Fonds du Bien Etre Indigène (Native Welfare Fund; or "F.B.I."). This Belgian initiative took inspiration from French and British colonial welfare models.[47] Its task was to carry out development policies and interventions in Congo's rural districts, considered as more impoverished than industrial and urban zones. Like IRSAC, it was a parastatal

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[44]Among many others: Institut pour la recherche scientifique en Afrique centrale, *I. R. S. A. C. Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale. Instituut Voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek in Centraal-Afrika. I. W. O. C. A.* (Bukavu, Congo, 1954), 4–5.

[45] Ibid.; Centre d'information et de documentation du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, *Social Action in the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi.*; Fonds du bien-être indigène, *Une oeuvre de coopération au développement.*

[46] Ibid., 11. "Une douzaine de chercheurs étudient l'homme africain des points de vue physique et social: sa nutrition, ses caractéristiques et aptitudes physiques, son organisation politique, sa culture ancestrale, la signification de ses associations fermées (terme qui doit remplacer celui des sociétés secrètes), les mouvements nouveaux d'idées, la position réelle des chefs, la tenure des sols, les indices démographiques, le revenu moyen, l'utilisation de l'argent, la revalorisation ou le développement de territoires abandonnés ou peu occupés, la linguistique et bientôt la psychologie et la psychotechnique. Une connaissance précise de ces sujets doit mener d'abord à la compréhension du milieu humain africain et conditionner ensuite le développement économique et politique du pays."

[47] Fonds du bien-être indigène, *Une oeuvre de coopération au développement,*19.

organization, situated outside colonial territorial administrative structures.[48] From 1948 to

1958, the F.B.I. focused its actions on rural areas in territories deemed to be most

"backward." Very active in Katako Kombe territory where Luc de Heusch was working,

a key F.B.I. aim was to promote the "paysannats," an initiative first discussed in the

1930s, which sought to create an independent rural yeomanry of progressive or

"improving" farmers. The Belgian colonial "paysannat" experiment proved unsuccessful,

even counterproductive, as it met with a great deal of Congolese resistance. Most rural

subjects remained impoverished through and beyond this late colonial era.[49]

Frans Olbrechts, the powerful director from 1945 of the Museum of the Belgian

Congo at Tervuren, recruited Luc de Heusch in 1950 to become one of IRSAC's new

ethnographers (within its "human environment" branch)[50] at a time when he was still a

doctoral student in Colonial Sciences at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. Olbrechts let

de Heusch choose where to complete his anthropological training on an IRSAC

scholarship before setting off to do fieldwork in the Congo; he chose Paris and went to

study at the Sorbonne with Marcel Griaule, a famous French anthropologist of the

interwar generation.[51] Jan Vansina, who was also in the 1950 IRSAC cohort, instead went

to the United Kingdom to study social anthropology at University College London.[52]

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[48] Ibid., 20; 30.

[49] See, Osumaka Likaka, *Rural Society and Cotton in Colonial Zaire* (Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1997). Officially, Congolese in cotton growing areas, for instance, owned the product of their harvests and were able to sell this to cotton company buyers. The reality, however, was that cotton-growing (as a cash crop) had been obligatory since the 1930s, and that the buying price of cotton was set not by the market, but by the cotton companies with full support of the colonial state and its administrative personnel.

[50] Institut pour la recherche scientifique en Afrique central, 11.

[51] Marcel Griaule was the leader, in 1931-1933, of a west to east expedition across Africa, in which the French surrealist writer Michel Leiris participated. Leiris published his journal of the two-year journey as *Ibid.*. Also, see Osumaka Likaka, *Rural Society and Cotton in Colonial Zaire* (Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1997).

[52] Osumaka Likaka, *Rural Society and Cotton in Colonial Zaire.*

Belgian anthropologists Daniel Biebuyck and Jacques Maquet similarly chose London over Paris.

De Heusch had hoped to return to work among the Boyo, "a little known tribe in the eastern part of the colony."[53] In this case, he had no choice. Olbrechts sent him to live and work among the Tetela in Congo's Kasai province, with the idea that he would accompany the linguist John Jacobs, charged with producing an Otetela dictionary for the premier Catholic missionary of the region, Monsignor Hagendorens.[54] In 1952, Luc de Heusch set off to the Belgian Congo. He went with his wife Marie and with Jacques Maquet, the slightly older, more experienced, and also IRSAC-funded Belgian anthropologist. They crossed the Sahara and a good part of British and French West and Central Africa by automobile before arriving at Bukavu in eastern Belgian Congo. In 1952, Maquet was head of IRSAC's important station in Astrida (now Butare, Rwanda). He was also working on what would become *The Premise of Inequality in Ruanda; A Study of Political Relations in a Central African Kingdom*.[55] In 1955 he and Luc de Heusch turned this work into a fiction film illustrating "feudal" relationships in (pre-colonial) Rwanda.[56] Luc de Heusch later distanced himself from this work and its intellectual underpinnings, realizing, as he told me in 2006, that feudalism was a European (or perhaps Japanese) political "invention."[57] Interpreting Rwandan and Burundian societies through a framework of "feudalism," rather than clientage, became

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[53] Nysenholc, *Cobra En Afrique*, 20.

[54] Ibid. Hagendorens produced a number of dictionaries and grammar primers of Otetela. Ibid.

[55] de Heusch, "Interview I"; Nysenholc, *Cobra en Afrique*, 20.

[56] Luc de Heusch, *Ruanda: Tableaux d'une féodalité pastorale*, 16mm (Fonds Henri Storck, 1955).

[57] de Heusch, "Interview II."

problematic of course, especially in light of post-independence ethnic massacres in Rwanda and Burundi.

Olbrechts cultivated and separated "his" ethnographers. Their work had more to do with art, myth, and oral tradition, rather than modernizing, scientific, and policy endeavors.[58] A student of Frans Boas at Columbia University in the 1920s, Olbrechts was also known as a connoisseur of African art, an aficionado of "*Art Nègre*."[59] Did he favor Luc de Heusch's candidacy because of his close connections within artistic circles in Brussels, notably the distinguished film director Henri Storck? It is surely plausible that this bourgeois network mattered to Olbrechts, himself a man of the arts. In 1953, when filing a report on his ethnographic work to his boss Olbrechts, de Heusch wrote of aesthetics: "the Lukutu dance is certainly the Hamba's greatest aesthetic expression," while reminding him of his achievement: "the celebration was filmed." De Heusch also reported that he had "elaborated, around this purely documentary sequence, a script that reconstituted the festivity's preparations and showed the most typical moments of family and social life."[60] With this report, de Heusch was, of course, referring to the script and footage that became *Fête chez les Hamba.*

Between Glossy Propaganda, Hollywood, and "Cinema for Natives"

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[58] Nancy Rose Hunt, "Colonial Medical Anthropology and the Making of a Central African Infertility Belt," in *Ordering Africa. Anthropology, European Imperialism and the Politics of Knowledge* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007), 262.

[59] Constantijn Petridis, ed., *Frans M. Olbrechts, 1899-1958: In Search of Art in Africa* (Antwerp: Antwerp Ethnographic Museum, 2001).

[60] Luc de Heusch to Frans Olbrechts, "Second rapport semestriel de la mission de M. de Heusch. juillet-décembre 1953", December 31, 1953, Correspondance IRSAC, Museum for Research in Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium. Sciences Humaines - Menswetenschappen.

While before the war, propaganda film production in the Belgian Congo was sporadic, the situation changed dramatically after the Second World War. There had been discussions about sending official filmmakers to the Congo in the late 1930s on behalf of the Ministry of Colonies; but, due to European political instability and the economic insecurity of the Depression, propaganda film did not yet figure among the colonial state's funding priorities.[61] Colonial film truly took off after the war thanks to a booming economy, and technological advances that made filming easier and less expensive. Belgian colonial visuality in the 1950s, to mention only cinema, was multifarious: it was a rich and also disparate field. Taking inspiration from the British Central African Film Unit, the Belgian colonial state began producing, in the late 1940s, films specifically aimed at Congolese colonial subjects. Some were about agriculture (A vexed subject, as Congolese were never able to grow enough foodstuff in the colonial cash-crop regime); others sought to demonstrate the benefits of "modern" institutions – the savings bank, for instance.

A few missionary orders who operated in the colony developed their own film production operations and were well known for producing "entertainment for natives." The most famous remains Father Van Haelst's broad slapstick comedy, *Les Aventures de Matamata and Pilipili.* Based on the idea that cinema for natives had to be "simple," this 1950s series utilized the language, and even reproduced the technology, of early cinema; it was meant as a *Laurel and Hardy* take-off.[62] Nonetheless these *Matamata* films were

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[61] "La propagande coloniale par le film. Interview de M. Bagage, secrétaire du Fonds Colonial de Propagande Economique et Sociale."
62 Nancy Rose Hunt, "Tintin and the Interruptions of Congolese Comics," in Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 105. And, Francis Ramirez and Christian Rolot, *Histoire*

enormously popular with Congolese in the 1950s, who read their own colonial

modernities (with and against the grain) into the slapstick action onscreen. Films like the

Catholic missionary Abbé Cornil's edificatory melodrama, *Marie Lépreuse*, as well as

agricultural instruction films aimed at Congolese, fit into the "modernization" efforts of

the Belgian colonial state. Official censorship forbade films deemed sexually suggestive

or violent for fear that "white prestige" would be injured, or that violent films would feed

the imaginary of youth gangs; even so, Hollywood westerns were exceptionally popular

in the cities, among 1950s Congolese (and more broadly African) youth.[63] It is hard to

imagine that the edifice of colonial censorship would have been without fissures. The

Provincial Commissaire of Coquilhatville, for instance, writing in 1954 to his Territorial

Administrators, complained that a significant number of films coming into the colony

were never subjected to the appropriate censorship commission.[64] By 1950, even as

colonial policy sought to exclude Congolese from visual and cinematic modernity, there

was a Congolese *ciné-club* in Léopoldville, where Congolese elites (the so-called

évolués) learned to shoot films.[65] Antoine Bumba, assistant to the most famous

missionary filmmaker, Abbé Cornil in the 1950s, was among the first Congolese

filmmakers.[66]

Du Cinéma Colonial Au Zaïre, Au Rwanda Et Au Burundi (Tervuren, Belgique: Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale, 1985), 271.

[63] Ch. Didier Gondola, "Tropical Cowboys: Westerns, Violence, and Masculinity Among the Young Bills of Kinshasa," *Afrique & Histoire* vol. 7, no. 1 (2009): 75–98; Marissa Moorman, "Of Westerns, Women, and War: Re-Situating Angolan Cinema and the Nation," *Research in African Literatures* 32(3) (2001): 103–122; Convents, *Images & Démocratie*, 168.

[64] Gondola, "Tropical Cowboys"; Moorman, "Of Westerns, Women, and War"; Convents, *Images & Démocratie*, 168.

[65] On the Congolese ciné-club of Léopoldville, see: Convents, *Images & Démocratie*. Guido Convents.

[66] Ibid.

A Colonial Departure: *Fête chez les Hamba.*

When Luc de Heusch set out for the Congo the second time in 1952, Henri Storck encouraged his son-in-law (whom he had trained in the art and craft of filmmaking) to take a small movie camera with him.[67] So it was that de Heusch began filming with a 16mm Bell & Howell camera, which could not record sound. Indeed, in *Fête chez les Hamba* the visual track is not synchronous with the soundtrack, it is rather quite separate from it. Instead, de Heusch and Marie Storck made different sound recordings in the field, which de Heusch added later, during the editing process. There was no attempt at a natural correspondence between sound and image, which remain autonomous elements, save for a loose structure of ambient sound (bird calls, some animal sounds). Neither is there any dialogue in the film. A highly didactic voice-over, mostly descriptive and "impartial," but sometimes lending voice to a particular character, guides the viewer through the film.

Fête chez les Hamba begins with a didactic presentation of space. It spatializes its subject matter through the device of the map, and specifically by zooming a camera in on a map of the Congo until the image reveals the hyper localized setting of the village of Pungu Djuke, where de Heusch filmed. The twin authorities of a scientific regime of geography and the all-encompassing point of view, provide an immediate frame to the film. Such initial visual framings through the means of the map were typical of documentary films from the 1930 to 1960s that took place "abroad," "overseas" or in "foreign countries;" in short, "elsewhere." A pivotal visual artifact of empire, the map created and consumed its object. In *Fête*, the first live-action sequence consists of three shots of sky and trees; it is followed by a long tracking shot that descends along the trees,

onto the roofs of dwellings, then pans across huts, to finally settle on the people themselves. Once more, there is a deliberate framing of the subject: the viewer is acquainted with the "environment" before being introduced to the people who are *in* it. After the initial geographic presentation of the space as the "Belgian Congo," the codes switch, and there is but little suggestion of the reality of a colonial situation; *Fête* never attempts to characterize the overall context of colonialism.

Fête chez les Hamba is organized into three main parts. The first portrays a series of scenes of "daily life." The middle part of the film considers two particular aspects of Hamba society, and stages them as two "crises," which must be resolved. The third and final part of the film brings the entire community together around an important event, and attempts a narrative synthesis. In the first and last parts of the film especially, Luc de Heusch's camera is mostly stationary. The filming appears almost "amateurish." There are jump cuts and the seams of editing are visible. In *Fête's* middle part, on the other hand, the camera is more mobile, the edits are tighter, and the overall continuity smoother. While the extremely didactic voice-over constitutes the "educational" aspect of the film, and while it also tends to dominate it and lead its viewer, *Fête* possesses a clear and autonomous visual language and even a separate visual narrative. Watching the film with the volume turned off, reveals an entire other layer of meaning. Throughout much of *Fête chez les Hamba*, the visual codes of colonial ethnographic documentaries alternate, sometimes quite rapidly, with these very codes' subversions at the hands of Luc de Heusch.

Djowo, a young man and one of *Fête's* main characters, emerges from his hut in the morning, rubbing his eyes. An older woman follows, gingerly carrying embers to start a

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[67] de Heusch "Interview 1."

cooking fire. (The voice-over reveals that this is his mother, with whom he lives.) Djowo is followed by one of his wives, who is carrying a small child. As Djowo sits by the fire, his wife washes the child. Djowo's friend walks over, and both men sit and chat by the fire. Djowo's other wife emerges from her hut with a younger child, whom she proceeds to breast-feed. This scene, which could find no colonial propaganda equivalent, is filmed at length and at close range. Meanwhile the voice-over informs the viewer that Djowo has two wives, and that each has her own separate dwelling.

The scene changes: two boys are shown hunting with bow and arrows, a common visual trope among many others that locate "primitivism" in Africa. Luc de Heusch makes use of this common place, clichéd code, even filming one of the boys from behind as he draws and releases the arrow from his bow. This kind of shot was also common in colonial and propaganda documentaries about Africa; it sets up the viewer to admire the "native's skill" with his "primitive weapons." Yet, *Fête* reverses expectations once more when the shot cuts to the arrow bouncing uselessly off a tree trunk. The boys laugh. They are not very good with their bow.

Nkusu, a neighbor, arrives. She is seven months pregnant, the viewer is told, and because of this she must receive, together with her husband, special magical ministrations. This woman is very tall and muscular, and clearly de Heusch found her fascinating, for, without fail throughout *Fête*, he framed her through the means of low-angle shots. These visual framings constitute another code switch, and immediately connect the viewer to an older representational mode, one favored by early imperialist visual ethnographic practices, which "typified" people and placed them in registers of

savagery *and* what could be glossed as "nobility."[68] De Heusch then films the village's

traditional doctor rubbing a red paste on Nkusu's belly, chest, neck and back, a lengthy

scene, which, once again, would be unthinkable in colonial propaganda documentaries.

Later scenes show children playing at "marriage." A boy builds a hut in the forest, while

a girl makes a fire and begins cooking. The girl's brother then arrives and demands "a

gift" from the boy who is "married" to his sister. The spectator learns, through the means

of the voice-over, that for the Hamba, a man is permanent debtor to his father and

brother-in-law. At this point in the film, gift-giving emerges as *Fête's* central concern.

The middle part of the film (like a feature-film script) is built around "crises." The

first is a conflict over adultery between a wife, her older husband, and her younger lover.

The Nkumi – or brotherhood of wealthy village elders – who were introduced earlier in

the film, are described by the voice-over as a committee who resolves problems in the

community. The betrayed husband happens to be a member of the Nkumi, while the lover

is a younger unmarried man. After animated discussions between the parties, all of whom

air bitter complaints, the Nkumi solve the dispute in favor of the older man, with a

compromise worked out for the wife, whom her husband will allow to visit relatives more

often. The younger man uses the situation, a fictional conflict staged by Luc de Heusch,

to harangue, through the means of the voice-over, the elders about his inability to marry

because he has no family support and cannot provide gifts to potential in-laws. The

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[68] The photographic practice of framing a subject from a "low-angle" position, where the camera
is staring up at a subject as though through the eyes of a child, was commonplace in fascist or
soviet representations of heroic bodies, as well as in early ethnographic photography. The African
photographs of Leni Riefenstahl, (a Nazi photographer and filmmaker famous for photographing
the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin) provide key connections across registers of: aestheticized
sublime and powerful physiques (the heroic body), and "civilization" as "overrated," "decadent,"
or both See, for instance, Leni Riefenstahl, *The Last of the Nuba* (New York: Harper & Row,
1974); Leni Riefenstahl, *Vanishing Africa* (New York: Harmony Books, 1982).

dispute sequence between the older husband, his wife, and her lover brings about another code switch; the ambient sound, which de Heusch uses through most of *Fête*, becomes more self-consciously a "soundtrack." When the jealous husband discovers the treachery, he is shown charging down the lane, gesticulating, and shouting at his unfaithful wife. Here de Heusch uses decontextualized rhythmic Tetela men's songs, of which the viewer is told nothing (when and why were they sung? what are they saying?) as rhythmic emphases for the gestures of husband, wife, and lover, as they engage in an explosive shouting match. Such use of sound and image, with rapid point of view editing, catapults the viewer, from Luc de Heusch's joyous and somewhat anarchical "showing," into a vastly more clichéd world of colonial "telling," which quickly becomes an overdetermined and potentially tedious visual experience.

Rituals

Fête chez les Hamba's second "crisis" (more in a figurative than actual sense) is Djowo's initiation into the top rung of the Nkumi brotherhood. The ritual of initiation marks a candidate's crossing a threshold to a higher level of knowledge. Luc de Heusch was himself initiated into the order of the Nkumi. He wrote about it as a frightening and violent ritual, as such things often are and perhaps must be, but he also wrote that his Hamba hosts, "thankfully," did not put him through the full physical challenge of the initiation.[69] The ostensibly secret ritual was filmed by de Heusch. The statuette of Inundu, the ancestor who only reveals himself to initiates, is brought out together with his antelope companion and shown to the camera. Performances were put on for the ethnographer; de Heusch wrote that during his stay a new lineage was created with

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himself as its elder. "In this film," de Heusch wrote, "initiation ceremonies were captured live."[70]

The third and final sequence stages celebration and dance, where the entire community, including Hamba of surrounding villages, comes together and takes part in a great celebration of feasting, marriage contracting, and ritualistic dancing (the Lukutu dance) — what de Heusch glosses as an enormous "potlatch."[71] In this last part of *Fête chez les Hamba* de Heusch allows aesthetics a great deal of space: the film concludes with highly aestheticized sequences of ritual dancing by men and women in full paint and regalia. The dancing is interspersed with cuts to the sidelines; the viewer also sees what went on around the dancing, and gift-giving is reintroduced as de Heusch's central theoretical argument. But the sheer flamboyance of the Lukutu dancers with their eagle-feather headdresses and elaborate face paints hijacks ethnographic and academic propositions.

In these closing sequences "native dancing" is reintroduced as that which stands for "native" in colonial visual meaning-making and in classic ethnographic presentations. And yet, de Heusch is clearly fascinated by the "strangeness," the "otherness" of the dance, the feather headdresses, and the elaborate face painting. The viewer is taken in, convinced of the beauty and refinement of these dancers with their delicate eagle feather headdresses, prepared for hours for that occasion. Tight close-ups of painted and adorned dancers' faces follow one another with little commentary. But because of a shared language around "African dancing" as one of many indexes of "savagery," this final

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[69] de Heusch, "Interview I."
[70] Nysenholc, *Cobra en Afrique*.
[71] de Heusch to Olbrechts, "Second rapport semestriel de la mission de M. de Heusch. Juillet-décembre 1953."

sequence shows the connections between classic ethnographic representation, which seeks to "study" and mediate its understanding of the "other," ethnography's surrealist critique (here the savage is inscrutable, but it is his authenticity that is desired), and colonial scopic regimes, which deploy "savagery" as tropes to demean and do violence. *Fête chez les Hamba* switches back and forth between colonial visual codes and de Heusch's own rebellious and idiosyncratic perspectives. It also alters between a functionalist "telling" – whose narrative and visual codes are aligned with colonial narrative visuality, authority, and ideologies of representation – and an anarchical, joyful and mimetic "showing," happy to shock, mock and unsettle the colonial order.

Although it was created in a time contemporary to the heyday of state propaganda and didactic missionary films, Luc de Heusch's *Fête* must be understood in a contrapuntal relationship to these. Colonial propaganda images became increasingly sanitized and smooth in the postwar years: randomness and incongruity were never permitted to enter the visual field (although of course, no photographic visual space can have completely watertight frames). Bodies were either attractive or heroic; and European classical music was likely to fill viewers' ears. These propaganda films emphasized a colonial world where the presence of Belgians and Belgian-ness was clear. The colonized were imaged through invented collective identities encapsulated by a narrow set of characteristic traits, or by the work performed; thus, the "Wagenia" *are* always fishermen and powerful swimmers who set giant fish traps in the Kisangani cataracts. Inforcongo films presented fishing and swimming as Wagenia identity. Luc de Heusch, in contrast, presented a "modern ethnographic" world where Belgians were visibly absent, but strongly suggested, and where Congolese individualities,

subjectivities, desires, and ethical or cosmological values played an important, vital role, which the ethnographer, through his framing and authority, sought to define. Yet, *Fête* reveals that the Congolese subjects of this ethnographic mise-en-scène of tradition, traced their own paths through the cinematic spaces of the film, and wrote their own visual scripts.

The Science of Ethnography

In "On Ethnographic Authority," James Clifford writes "The predominant mode of fieldwork authority is signaled: '*you* are there… because *I* was there.' "[72] Interestingly, he uses the example of a photograph – the frontispiece to Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*[73] – to launch his argument. This photograph, Clifford indicates, signals the presence of two things: the scene before the lens, and that of the ethnographer.[74] One key feature separating Luc de Heusch's work from propaganda films is his attempt to deploy a specific professional *ethnographic* authority. Clifford identifies "fieldwork" as *the* methodology of professional anthropology, thereby opening the possibility for, and legitimating the "authorship" of the ethnographer who conducts it.

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[72] de Heusch to Olbrechts, "Second rapport semestriel de la mission de M. de Heusch. Juillet-décembre 1953", December 31, 1953, Correspondance IRSAC, Royal Museum for Central Africa. Ethnography Section.

[73] Bronislaw Malinowski, Argonauts of the Western Pacific; an Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea (London, New York: G. Routledge & sons, ltd.; E. P. Dutton & co., 1932).

[74] James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority," in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 22. Although, I would add, photography "de-authors" its image. It is only in a subsequent interpretive move that one is able to reintroduce the idea of authorship.

In *Fête* the "more or less discrete 'other world' carefully and deliberately composed by the individual author"[75] can exist because of – and in opposition to – the chaos that stalks its margins. The classic ethnographer's first task was to stake out a claim, to demarcate a territory. Classic anthropology rested in part on evolutionary epistemological frameworks that lead to classificatory differentiations between "races" and peoples, and also to the preservation of knowledge about cultures that are always, by definition, on their way to extinction. Because anthropology has historically created its objects, the classic ethnographic monograph exists, at this meta-level, as a result of the individual anthropologist's creation of the conditions for its existence – and therefore for the existence of the people or cultures studied and imagined – out of an unstructured, chaotic environment; i.e. out of nothingness. Yet, many anthropologists have felt a need to tell "the other story." This is certainly the reason that most classic ethnographies carry personal stories and contextualizations in peripheral discursive spaces: either in the guise of introductions and conclusions, or as separate "memoir" volumes. Luc de Heusch's published texts are no different. Introductory chapters and separately published memoirs and interviews give readers an idea of the difficulties, boredom, and frustrations of ethnographic fieldwork, but also of its joys and intellectual triumphs. They offer at least an idea, in Clifford's words, of the "garrulous, overdetermined cross-cultural encounter shot through with power relations..." that informs the possibilities of fieldwork.[76]

In *Fête chez les Hamba*, however, the viewer sees some of the chaos of life break into the visual world de Heusch created. Ultimately, he could or would not stem it. Animals wander in, intrude, and sometimes draw the camera's attention away from

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

human subjects; a toddler sits on the ground and cries indignantly because his mother set him down and walked away; a small boy drags a flattened, old, worn, and dusty men's shoe with one foot until an adult quickly scoops him up. Considered in the context of de Heusch's autobiographical writings and personal stories, and of *Fête chez les Hamba* itself, the appearance of an extremely dilapidated shoe acts as a *visual* foreshadowing, perhaps unintended, of the Coca-Cola bottle in *The Gods Must be Crazy*.[77]

The more or less discrete worlds classic ethnographers sought to present were, after all, staged. The "ethnographic present" was the result of a *mise-en-scène*, a conscious arrangement of the elements of "encounter."[78] *Fête chez les Hamba* was shot in 1954. The context of its production was "the colonial situation." The "present" of the dramatic action was ostensibly also the colonial situation, but at the same time, the film, in order to maintain its ethnographic identity and authority intact, sought to bow out of defining, or squarely taking place in a real moment of time and history. Like classic ethnographies, it mostly refused contextualization or engagement with a historicized present.

Yet, in the introduction to the film's final dance and celebration sequence, genres and codes get mixed-up once more. In one scene men in traditional costume dance in single file, shaking small grass brooms. In the next a young man in western trousers and knit shirt, rolls his bicycle along as he walks to perform an obligatory visit to his father-in-law. Paper money is laid out next to copper rings as transactions take place between men and their fathers- and brothers-in-law. The "extra-customary," that is the physical

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[77] In this 1981 South African comedy, a *Coca-Cola* bottle drops from the sky and lands in the middle of a San' community. Chaos ensues. In addition to its overtly racist rubrics of "Bantu" Africans who also appear, this film's message is that white man's technology will mar a heretofore harmonious and uncontaminated "primitive" environment. Jamie Uys, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, 1981.

and conceptual space of colonial African modernity, enters into the ethnographic image-world. The end is chaos coming in from the margins.

Customary or Extra-Customary?

A fundamental question of this chapter is, what became of the "customary" in 1950s Belgian Congo? *Fête chez les Hamba* itself is an answer to this question, one that profoundly destabilizes the colonial edifice of the "customary." Most Congolese knew the customary as a space of poverty from which they wished to escape, and most desired to leave the countryside and the constraints of the customary-cash crop regime for the city. The colony's urban population grew significantly in the 1950s.[79] By 1960, the black population of Leopoldville-Kinshasa was more than ten times that of 1930.[80] Yet, in the early 1950s, close to 80% of Congolese, it was claimed, lived in so-called customary zones.[81] For the colonial state and the global business interests to which it was articulated, the priority was to maintain subject populations in the countryside, where they could grow cash crops and work on infrastructure projects, while drawing a minority into an urban industrial and white collar labor pool.[82]

Fête chez les Hamba shows a profound disconnection between itself – a mainly ethnographic filmed performance that sought to recreate and give life to traditional ways of being – and the experiences of actual people living in rural areas in the last decade of Belgian colonialism. But it is precisely because the film allows space for the colonial

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[78] Peter Pels, "The Construction of Ethnographic Occasions," *History and Anthropology* 7, no. 1–4 (1994): 321–51.

[79] Mutamba Makombo, *Du Congo belge au Congo indépendant, 1940-1960*, 127.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Centre d'information et de documentation du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, *Social Action in the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi.*, 24.

[82] Maurel, *Le Congo, de la colonisation belge à l'indépendance.*

experiences of Congolese, that such a disconnection can be perceived. The experience of rural colonized subjects was largely one of poverty, but also one of being asked to "buy into" the colonial state's new hyper scientific and rationalizing efforts at development and its promise of modernity. Science and development set the terms of Belgian colonialism in the 1950s, but they also took Luc de Heusch to the Tetela and the Hamba from 1952 to 1954.

Between the late 1940s and the late 1950s, increasingly significant numbers of rural people moved to "extra-customary centers" in urban and industrial areas, where they were segregated from Europeans.[83] Congolese who lived in the extra-customary centers were not subject to traditional "customary" laws (set-up by the colonial power according to what they believed were "traditional customs"). Many lived in extra-customary zones but from time to time returned to their villages to get married or fulfill obligations to their families or in-laws. Others, who remained in, often rural, "customary zones" were involved in cash-crop production, eking meager livings. The "customary" was an edifice that the colonial state built together with the Catholic Church since at least the 1910s. It was an administrative and political category and came to exist in relationship to its opposite, the "extra-customary." By the 1930s, customary and extra-customary were also concrete spaces. Legislation in 1931 defined extra-customary centers in Belgian colonial cities; these African townships were distinct from the European zones of colonial cities.[84]

Extra-customary spaces could be workers' compounds in mining zones, where miners lived with their wives and children in ways deemed decent, appropriate, and

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[83]Ibid., 146–147.
[84] Johan Lagae, "Modern Living in the Congo: The 1958 Colonial Housing Exhibit and Postwar Domestic Practices in the Belgian Colony," *Journal of Architecture (London)* 9, no. 4 (2004): 477–494.

modern. Stabilizing labor and encouraging industrial workers to live with their nuclear

families and marry *in situ* rather than in remote home villages was a novel Belgian

approach to a general "problem" in colonized Africa: how to control black urban

populations, the circulation and activities of women, and the reproduction of a healthy

colonial labor force, whose normativity – as a uniquely modern reordering of village-

bound "tradition" – the colonial state worked to promote. [85] Indeed industry sought an

easily accessible and controllable labor pool. Extra-customary centers were, however,

important spaces for Congolese colonial modernities while also serving as reservoirs of

industrial, plantation, administrative, and domestic labor. Colonial discourse, including in

its visual expression, had long written and imaged the customary as rural, traditional, and

not modern. This "customary" vs. "non-customary" dichotomy structured knowledge,

understanding, and sensibilities for members of Belgian colonial society, even when its

elements lay at odds or in contradictory tension.[86]

    Fête chez les Hamba is set in a very remote rural area, where Congolese were likely

to be employed in the cotton industry by the Cotonco or Colocoton firms, or perhaps as

laborers on the plantations of Europeans; or, if not directly employed in factories or

plantations, they were made to grow cotton and sell it to the big firms. Cotton production

had been made mandatory in Sankuru by the colonial government since the early 1930s.

Some Congolese were forced to convert from subsistence to commercial agriculture,

while others were expropriated by the state and made to work as agricultural workers on

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[85] Nancy Rose Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumbura's Foyer Social, 1946-
1960," *Signs* 15, no. 3 (April 1, 1990): 450–451. For a non Belgian Congo perspective, see, Luise White,
The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990)..
[86] V. Y. Mudimbe, *Les Corps Glorieux Des Mots Et Des Êtres: Esquisse D'un Jardin Africain à La
Bénédictine* (Montréal: Humanitas, 1994). Also see Hunt, "Noise over Camouflaged Polygamy, Colonial

European-owned land. Peasants were by far poorer than miners or industrial workers, and the large cotton companies bought the cotton at prices that were advantageous to them, and unfair to the Congolese.[87]

In late 1952 and early 1953, at around the time that Luc de Heusch was doing ethnographic work in Sankuru, and more or less simultaneous with his shooting of *Fête*, Patrice Lumumba (who was originally from Katako Kombe territory in Sankuru) was traveling with the French sociologist Pierre Clément. The two men had become good friends in Stanleyville, often debating and discussing late into the night, the issues and challenges of decolonizing Africa.[88] In late December 1952 or early January 1953, Lumumba and Clément made a stop at Pungu Djuke, where Luc de Heusch had been filming. Remarkably, and to de Heusch's certain chagrin, he and Lumumba did not meet or overlap.

From Clément Lumumba learned some sociological methodology, and based on their trip to Sankuru, he published articles about the "problem" of rural drain or "exodus." Among the ways of solving this "problem," Lumumba proposes very clearly and directly that cotton prices ought to be higher, that price should actually be *remunerative* (*un prix rémunérateur*),[89] as opposed, one can infer, to something known colloquially in English as "slave wages." Yet, while the same expression is not found in

Morality Taxation, and a Woman-Naming Crisis in Belgian Africa," *The Journal of African History* 32, no. 3 (January 1, 1991): 471–494.

[87]Maurel, *Le Congo, De La Colonisation Belge À L'indépendance.*, 78–87

[88] Pierre Clément, "Patrice Lumumba: Stanleyville 1952-1953," *Présence Africaine*, no. 40 (1962): 57–78.

[89] Cited in Mutamba Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba, correspondant de presse, 1948-1956*, Collection Etudes africaines (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 24. The articles in question are Patrice Hémery Lumumba, "De l'exode vers les villes," *La Croix du Congo*, August 9, 1953; Patrice Hémery Lumumba, "L'exode rural' in 'Impressions de voyage au Kasaï," *La Voix du Congolais*, March 1954. Lumumba's emphasis in article.

French, the sentiment behind it remains: Luc de Heusch remembers his Hamba friends and *Fête* actors asking him, Why are we slaves?[90] De Heusch attempted an explanation invoking colonial exploitation, and global and state capitalism. In fact, these Tetela-Hamba were oppressed by the cotton regime, which forced them to grow cotton and sell it to private companies or the state, giving them little revenue and disrupting other important agricultural and social activities. In the world of colonial cotton production, oppression and hegemonic practices went hand in hand: brutality, threats, and taxation, went together with cultural politics. Rural Congolese, it was widely perceived, had long resented and resisted the obligation to grow cotton, and the state sent cotton monitors and agronomists to enforce and oversee agricultural activities related to growing cotton.[91] Many monitors were former Force Publique soldiers. There was much whipping and jailing for offenses such as failure to finish a job on time, imperfect weeding, etc. Whipping was a spectacle, a ritual.[92] It continued to be practiced and was considered an acceptable disciplinary measure until 1959.[93] Congolese defiance was never lacking, however. A common practice of resistance was to sabotage an entire growing enterprise by boiling cotton seeds before planting them (ensuring that they yielded nothing worth harvesting). Michel Ngandu, a Tetela I interviewed in Lubumbashi in 2009, told me the story of his uncle, who refused to weed his cotton field once it had been planted. For this

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[90] de Heusch, "Interview II."

[91] Likaka, *Rural Society and Cotton in Colonial Zaire*; Rosine Lewin, "Dominer Pour Servir? Pierre Ryckmans, La Colonisation, L'anti-colonialisme," *Les Cahiers Marxistes* 236 (2007): 100. A 1933 letter from a cotton grower to an administrator complains that the "Batetela" are forcing the "Bakela" to work on the former's cotton fields, and that the "Basongo-Meno" took advantage of these disturbances to abandon their fields. Cotton Grower to M. Tavernier, Report, 1933..

[92]Likaka, *Rural Society and Cotton in Colonial Zaire*. A theme of Congolese popular and "history" painting (a genre discussed by Bogumil Jewsiewicki and Johannes Fabian among others) called "the Belgian colony," depicts scenes of Congolese being whipped by (colonial) Force Publique soldiers, while pith-helmeted white men stand nearby.

offense, the colonial agronomist (the "agronome")[94] ordered him whipped, but after a few strikes, Michel's uncle became so angry that he snatched the whip and began to whip the agronomist![95] Michel's uncle, as one would expect, was arrested and jailed for this offense. In 1952, there were more than 20,000 convictions, colony-wide, for infractions classified under the rubric, "Educational Cultures and Works Beneficial to the Community" (Cultures éducatives et travaux dans l'intérêt des communautés).[96]

The colonial state also used a "softer" approach: in recompense for their efforts, highly productive households received prestige goods, which almost exclusively went to men. "From 1936 to 1959, as peasants' income increased, men, who controlled the levers of power within the households, diverted the cotton money to brideprice, as well as to gramophones, bicycles, and sewing machines. These objects remained husbands' property; wives received only items for daily living such as clothes."[97] (Women fought back with lawsuits and divorces.) Bicycles and cotton cloths appear at the figurative margins of *Fête chez les Hamba*, and often in the depths of undisciplined filmic spaces.

In one instance, however, Luc de Heusch addresses the issue of desired "western goods" directly. The voice-over informs the viewer that Tangu's wife, Ekodi often asks him to buy her the cotton cloths that "whites offer to the covetousness ("*convoitise*") of women. She asks *in vain* for these cloths."[98] The camera cuts abruptly to another woman, Ekodi's friend who is dressed in a cotton garment, as though she were some sort of

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[93] Ibid., 55.

[94] A colonial state technocrat, and a stock figure in Tetela stories about colonialism. A particularly hapless agronomist was said to have been "eaten" by members of some Tetela clan.
[95] Michel Ngandu, "Interview About Tetela History, and Life Story", February 7, 2009. This story was also meant to illustrate, to me, Tetela courage and "fierceness."

[96] Lewin, "Dominer Pour Servir? Pierre Ryckmans, La Colonisation, L'anti-colonialisme," 100.

[97] Likaka, *Rural Society and Cotton in Colonial Zaire*, 136.

[98] de Heusch, *Fête chez les Hamba*. [Emphasis added].

confounding exhibit (a). The viewer sees, but does not hear, Ekodi's friend laugh. Smiles

and laughter appear throughout *Fête*. Many interpretations are possible. At the very least,

laughter, though silent and only seen on the faces of actors, functions as a separate track.

Ekodi's friend's laughter bears no intended textual or narrative relationship to the voice-

over, which continues to take Tangu's side by lending voice to his escalating anger. The

film frames the dispute between husband and wife, over buying cotton cloths, as

something that causes great stress to the husband, who, the viewer learns, has enough

financial difficulty meeting obligations to his in-laws. This framing is ultimately at the

service of Luc de Heusch's central argument in the film: gift-giving maintains

relationships and coherence in Hamba society. This and other instances of laughing in

Fête, are one of the many ways that Congolese (Hamba) subjectivities inscribe

themselves in the filmic space. Yet, and this is where the co-productive aspect of the film

is clear, Luc de Heusch never tries to force his actors (who seem to be playing at acting)

to be serious, or ponderous, or enter into any kind of disciplinary framework, be it

colonial, ethnographic, or even anti-colonial. The utter anarchy – a sentiment at the heart

of *Fête* – makes it a fairly unique artifact in its time and place.

The kinship relations that have characterized segmentary lineage societies in

Equatorial Africa, as well as mobility in late colonial Congo, suggest that there was some

coming and going in and out of Tetela-Hamba villages.[99] Luc de Heusch, however, never

made the colonial situation explicit in *Fête chez les Hamba*. Instead, this reality haunts

the film's margins rather insistently, and makes itself known. The question, once posed to

Luc de Heusch by his Congolese friends and informants, "Why are we slaves?" required

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[99] For a discussion of mobility in late colonial Congo, see Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon: Of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Duke University Press, 1999).

more than an "explanation." It was an interpellation, which de Heusch, in *Fête chez les Hamba*, mostly chose to ignore, but which nonetheless manifested itself clearly and visibly in the film through the actions of the film's Hamba subjects and actors, who in turn were given the space to fashion their own meanings.

Metropolitan Quotidian: After the Hamba.

Fête chez les Hamba broke with a number of cinematic conventions of 1950s colonial propaganda films. Instead Luc de Heusch created spaces of intimacy between images and viewers, allowing the camera to come closer to people and creating visual proximity for his audiences. The film also de-aestheticized bodies by lingering closely over details. It introduced sexuality as ordinary and familiar by showing aspects of pregnancy, a fertility ritual, infidelity disputes, and children at play.

At the time, his intent seemed to create an authoritative ethnographic film, and denounce the colonial order, but not only that. De Heusch also sought to upset petit-bourgeois propriety and his lifelong, intensifying antagonist, the Catholic Church. Pregnant bodies and African flirtation were unthinkable subjects for official propaganda films of the same decade. The latter presented shiny, smooth, and happy surfaces of Congolese colonial life. De Heusch knew these conventions well, of course; this was also his environment. In our interviews Luc de Heusch recalled that he began recording images regularly after the ceremony marking his induction into the Nkumi. "This was a real initiation," he said. "I staged and directed it (j'ai mis cela en scène). I scripted the precise moment when this and that figure was going to be illuminated, so they followed

my rhythm, that of the *mise-en-scene*. Other than that it's completely authentic." [100] The

discursive anxiety suggested by such a statement (What could possibly have remained of

any putative "authenticity" at a moment when a Belgian colonial ethnographer filmed this

ritual?) frames de Heusch's experience upon his return to the metropole.

In 1954, back in Belgium, Luc de Heusch finished editing, scored, and released,

Fête chez les Hamba. Belgian television aired this film as *Les Mongo du Kasai* ("The

Mongo of Kasai") during the 1955-56 season of the program *Exploration du Monde*

("World Exploration")*.* The television program also published a brochure – somewhat

like a catalog – entitled *Vie Quotidienne des Mongo du Kasai* ("Daily life among the

Mongo of Kasai") to coincide with the program's broadcasting in 1955. This booklet,

written by Luc de Heusch and containing many photographs he took during his 1952-54

fieldwork, was also produced by Corneille Hannoset, de Heusch's old friend from

COBRA days, who supervised the layout of de Heusch's photographs. This brochure was

part of a press kit, but also functioned as a postscript, a way of looking-back. Its tone is

melancholy, even mournful. In it, the "ethnographic present" exists side by side with the

colonial present. The juxtaposition of these two temporalities allows the author to critique

the profound changes brought by European intrusion, mourn the fading away of an

idealized way of life, and contemplate inexorability. Cold war era anthropology,

according to Edwin Wilmsen, situated itself between a universalist western bourgeois

appropriation of "man" and his "family" as the categories of final analysis; and the

rejection of modernity, science, and technology, associated with humanity's speeding

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[100] de Heusch "Interview II."

toward its ultimate nuclear self-destruction.[101] In his article, Wilmsen begins his discussion of 1950s and 1960s anthropology with a consideration of Edward Steichen's photographic exhibit "The Family of Man" launched at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1955. From 1956 to 1962, this high profile exhibit was presented in 38 other countries and turned into a very popular book of photographs. Steichen's exhibit was certainly a global context for de Heusch's film.

A very positive and flattering 1955 review of *Fête chez les Hamba*, appearing in the journal *Pourquoi Pas* misses many of de Heusch's points, yet it too embraces universality, albeit from a more resolutely Belgian colonial angle.[102] The Mongo, the article informs, can be found at the border of forest and savanna in the Congo. They are "altogether three to four thousand souls, *who believe* that humanity is one great family, issuing from one common ancestor."[103] The review goes on to demonstrate how laughable this belief really is by subverting the correspondences it proposes (Belgians and Congolese are "other" in each other's eyes) with evolutionary frameworks that place Belgians in modernity, and the "Mongo" on an evolutionary ladder, somewhere below the natives of "French Sudan."[104]

Luc de Heusch told me that he had prepared a censored version of *Fête* to show in Catholic schools.[105] Colonial visuality, and ethnography in particular, freely exploited colonized bodies for its visual pleasure, something de Heusch's images mostly refused. On the other hand, flirtation, pregnancy, and adultery (all subjects of *Fête*) were

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[101] Edwin Wilmsen, "To See Ourselves as We Need to See Us: Ethnography's Primitive Turn in the Early Cold War Years."

[102] A.P., "Un Léopard parmis d'autres," *Pourquoi Pas* (Brussels, Belgium, November 11, 1955), sec. Chronique Coloniale.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid, 37.

excessively ordinary and familiar, and thus beyond the pale. Although much of the film

would prove shocking to many in Belgium, according to Luc de Heusch, it was also

meant as an attempt at a filmed monograph of ritual and daily life in a Congolese village.

It was meant to be educational. De Heusch had wanted to intervene strongly in the

representations of Africans in the era of mass culture, which from about the 1930s

constructed and circulated meanings about Central Africans (in particular) as embodying

the abstract and capacious European category of "savagery."[106] But the experience of

presenting his film on the Hamba in Belgium brought disillusion. In 2006 Luc de Heusch

told me he no longer believed in the usefulness of ethnographic film as an educational

tool.[107] De Heusch toured "deep" Belgium with his film in 1955, just as King Baudouin

toured the Belgian Congo that year. De Heusch remembers,

> I noticed – it was the end of the colonial era – that my presentations were not
> convincing anyone. People still considered blacks as savages. I had been careless to
> argue that civilization was a relative term, and that … there were no savages. But
> [these prejudiced Belgians] were the savages! In spite of this, I continued to make
> films.[108]

Conclusion

Fête chez les Hamba emerges, upon careful consideration, as a unique visual

artifact that defies classification. The intended representational, visual, and discursive

strategies of *Fête chez les Hamba* were based on a model of ethnographic authority;[109]

but it was never entirely an ethnographic film in any classic sense. *Fête* never simply

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[105] de Heusch "Interview II."
[106] The 1933 film, *King Kong* is of course the most cited example of the "savagery" that defined central Africa in much of the twentieth century. Merian C. Cooper, *King Kong*, RKO Radio Pictures, 1933.
[107] de Heusch, "Interview II."
[108] Ibid.
[109] "Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority."

captured aspects of life "as it was lived." Indeed, it had a fictional narrative structure and a script.[110] At the heart of this impulse was de Heusch's attempt to represent a social world and characterize the likes, dislikes, actions and motivations of his Tetela-Hamba subjects, as well as to illustrate his academic arguments about the function of gift-giving in Tetela-Hamba society. Yet, despite its earnest ethnographic aspirations, *Fête*'s production coincided with the arrival of Patrice Lumumba, who was himself a Tetela from Katako Kombe, on the late colonial political scene. The next chapter of this study explores his figure and its visuality. Perhaps because of his avant-garde and surrealist background, de Heusch refused to impose boundaries between "science" and aesthetics.

Fête chez les Hamba positioned itself as an important and strong negation of official colonial visuality. Yet it shared many of its underlying premises, and this is the reason that I suggest a contrapuntal relationship between *Fête* and colonial propaganda films. Postwar colonial films expressed ambivalence about the desirability of Congolese subjects becoming "modern," even though the colonial development regimes to which they were harnessed relentlessly promoted development and rationalization. De Heusch's *Fête*, on the other hand, denounced "civilization" and colonialism, conflating them as artifacts of *les blancs* ("the whites), and suggesting that his Tetela-Hamba subjects might be better off in "primitive" or traditional states.

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[110] De Heusch cites the American social documentarian Robert Flaherty as one of his main influences. Flaherty was famous for carefully scripting his anthropological films, and handing over the performance of self to the "native." In a 1962 UNESCO commissioned book about the state of ethnographic cinema, Luc de Heusch wrote that audiences did not always realize that Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* was structured like a fictional film. "Nanook acts the part of Nanook; he expresses himself within the framework of a prepared story, which he conveys *artificially* piece by piece, in other words in accordance with the demands of a *director*." Luc de Heusch, *The Cinema and Social Science; a Survey of Ethnographic and Sociological Films* (Paris: UNESCO, 1962).

What is *Fête* a record of, therefore? And, what did it *want* to be a record of? Visually, de Heusch' direction favored the highly theatrical stationary camera. *Fête's* filmic space is open and Congolese of 1954 could bring their "everyday" and its objects into it; as a result, on a specifically visual level, *Fête chez les Hamba* conveyed its moment as one of social and political change. Luc de Heusch, on the other hand, situated it as one of radical cultural change. Part of the film's manifest goal was to present a window on a "rapidly vanishing world."

"Excess" within visual spaces, moreover, operates as a key representational device in *Fête*. Objects extraneous to a tightly-constructed diegetic space – that is to the ostensible narrative and its cinematic delivery – continually appear; Luc de Heusch's direction and cinematographic style permitted Congolese participants to introduce these kinds of modern objects that his own authenticizing instincts would have preferred to exclude. In some cases, the film builds a narrative around these visual *faits accomplis*. (For instance Ekodi's desire for cotton cloths, and its denial by her husband, Tangu.) De Heusch's mise-en-scène makes this possible: he sets-up many of his lengthy shots with a stationary camera that stays in one spot alone, taking into its scope of a large visual field – one both wide and deep. This was a dynamic space where *action* happened. In the film, people and animals, both near and far away from the camera, come and go; they traverse this open cinematic space as they wish. Tetela-Hamba who appeared in, or otherwise helped create the film, wove their own subjectivities and 1954 preoccupations into de Heusch's filmic space. By carrying meaningful objects, (bicycles, hats, or paper money) into the ethnographer's visual space, and also by wearing trousers, shirts, and cotton cloth dresses, Congolese demonstrated visually and unambiguously the manner and means of

their self-fashioning in 1950s Congo. Most Congolese in the 1950s were more interested in owning bicycles, riding in cars, and watching *Matamata and Pilipili,* as my interlocutors recalled in 2008-09, than in Luc de Heusch's wistful representations of a traditional way of life. Yet the traditional or "customary," had by the 1950s become a significant "structure of feeling,"[111] deeply ingrained but nonetheless in tension with other ways of being, aspirations, and desires.

In July 2008, I attended a celebration honoring the construction of a road being built from Kiomi, a tiny village in the Katako Kombe forest, to an even more remote location. On this occasion, as I mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, I happened to meet Chief Albine Kabange Kabangu Pungu, a Hamba man and "Customary Chief" from the exact same village, Pungu Djuke, where de Heusch filmed *Fête chez les Hamba* 52 years before. Chief Kabangu had not been born in 1954, yet he told me that his Hamba compatriots remembered the anthropologist as *Nkumi Osungu.* Having said this to me, Kabangu added a French translation: *"Le blanc de la coutume,"* he said. (In English, it would be "the customary white man.") While *Osungu* is an Otetela term that encompasses the identity of "white foreigner," the fact that my interlocutor translated *"Nkumi"* (elders, masters) as "custom" reveals intriguing semantic slippages. *Nkumi* as that which stands for "custom" points to the glosses of late colonial ethnography, but also to the fact that the notion of "the customary" had, in 2008, become incorporated into the historical and mnemonic discourse of this Tetela-Hamba leader, himself bearing the title of "customary chief," a nomenclature still in use at this late postcolonial moment. Luc de Heusch was the most authoritative producer of ethnographic, "customary" knowledge about the Tetela and Tetela-Hamba in the Belgian Congo. Many Tetela with whom I

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[111] Williams, "Structures of Feeling."

spoke in 2008-09 considered him as *their* expert. Such memories suggest that Tetela and Tetela-Hamba "tradition" went through processes of reification at a triangular intersection of colonially constructed "custom," Tetela knowledge production, and vernacular processes of self-fashioning.

When Jean-Michel Kibushi, the Tetela filmmaker with whom I traveled in 2008, showed excerpts of *Fête chez les Hamba* in a Katako Kombe village, the audience laughed at seeing 1954 Hamba go about "half-naked."[112] At the end of the excerpt, we gave the microphone to the audience for some comments. Some expressed relief that they were "no longer savage," while others expressed a longing for the past, for some of that ancestral harmony *Fête* depicts. One man said: "would that we could, today, solve conflicts in the manner of our ancestors." Kibushi, whose purpose in his yearly screening tours is to educate and empower his fellow Tetela by showing them African films from all over the continent, would never have considered showing *Fête chez les Hamba* in its entirety, nor would most viewers have tolerated such a strange and antiquated film. But Kibushi was willing to show an excerpt of fifteen minutes, as a favor to me and in order to help me in my research. *Fête* was an odd interlude between contemporary African films like *Bamako* and *Lumumba*.[113] It seemed cartoon-like, strange, and apt in stirring a certain emotional dizziness.

That Luc de Heusch's African praise-name was *Nkumi Osungu* is interesting.[114] On

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[112] Luc de Heusch claimed to have witnessed the appearance of "new taboos," like bare breasts. And indeed, the audience hooted, laughed, and expressed shock at seeing scantily-clad adults onscreen, but especially bare-breasted women.

[113] Abderrahmane Sissako, *Bamako* (New Yorker Films, 2006); Raoul. Peck, *Lumumba*, DVD (New York: Zeitgeist Films, 2002).

[114] On Congolese praise-names through the colonial era, see: Osumaka Likaka, *Naming Colonialism: History and Collective Memory in the Congo, 1870-1960* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

one hand, it connects him to colonialism, and to the ways that the "customary" system could be ferociously oppressive for most Congolese. Yet, it is also an affectionate nickname; Luc de Heusch was inducted, after all, into the ranks of the Hamba Nkumi brotherhood, a ceremony he filmed, and an institution he wrote a great deal about. De Heusch was never a colonial agent and he seems to have been well-liked by his Tetela-Hamba informants and collaborators. This multivalent nickname, remembered by Tetela-Hamba I met in 2008, points to the crooked pathways of Congolese knowledge production; and also at the fashioning of identities and subjectivities through and beyond colonialism.

Counterpoint

"Lieux de mémoire"

Cotton processing factories and equipment, as well as adjacent administrative and residential buildings, once meant for white or sometimes "*évolué*" employees, sat abandoned and hollow among tall grass. The Sankuru landscape is dotted with the ruins of the colonial era. Milestones or huge cement cubes stand at crossroads, indicating, in impressively carved Art Deco script from the 1930s, the number of kilometers to the next big town or administrative center. The cubes are worn-down, sometimes moss-covered or blackened, and most have corners missing. It was striking to me, after having seen the same in Maputo and Lisbon, and on old postcards about colonial Mozambique, that the aesthetic choices for these milestones ran once again to a of quasi-fascist or at least authoritarian "Art-Deco" block letter script, which some European powers seemed to have particularly favored to manifest their cultural power over space and people.

Figure 93: Colonial era milestone (photograph by author)

The old mission posts built for Catholic missionaries, and those built for Methodists, are now nearly the only structures built with industrial brick and cement technology ("durable" materials as Congolese like to call them) that are still in use. Here, churches and the living quarters once reserved for European priests, nuns and monks or American pastors and their families, are now inhabited by Congolese priests, nuns, and pastors. These are places where travelers can usually find accommodation. In the colonial era, missionary spaces were laid out in ways that reflected hierarchy and privilege, and also separation. In the years after independence, local people built houses: square or rectangular "*cases*" based on a wooden structure filled in with locally produced adobe-like yellowish dry mud bricks, then covered in another layer of mud, and topped with a

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thatched roof, mere yards from the mission buildings. In the colonial era, the outdoor space of the mission included a "perimeter," and was regulated in quite different ways. Congolese, I was often told, lived some distance from the mission, were not permitted to walk through its grounds at will, and were only permitted to visit or seek audience at certain hours.

The Sankuru landscape is also marked by local knowledge and history: huts, villages and gardens built by humans; woods and hills; rivers and ponds; termite hills; mango and palm trees, all of these blend into the green and yellow of forest, and humid and dry savanna. They are organic things that live, die, move away and disappear. In the rather dry and expansive savanna south of Tshumbe on the way to Lubefu, Papa Rudolphe showed me magical ponds that would "go away" and "come back," where a crocodile would suddenly take up residence and then go away again, leaving behind a sudden bonanza of fish. I was told of inexperienced whites, usually soldiers or missionaries, drowning and disappearing without a trace in apparently tame bodies of water. Villages are the most impermanent of all vestiges of human history because houses only last a few years and must rebuilt, and because entire villages can vanish or relocate.

The two memory sites that I had identified as most important for my research in Congo were Ngandu, Ngongo's capital – or "stronghold," depending on whether the story is being told in the Belgian archives (the latter) or by Congolese (the former) – and Onalua, the village where Patrice Lumumba was born and grew up.

Before going to the Ngandu – also called Kiten'gandu – site, Papa Rudolphe and I stopped in at the chief's house. The chief reiterated the Songye understanding that Ngongo is "their child." He also made a few remarks about the Asambala (Ngongo's

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people) linking them with rubber collection. After this meeting, a few of the chief's notables accompanied us over to Ngandu, which was only a dry grassy hill, about 2 km from the path. Ngongo Leteta's grave in Ngandu is marked by a termite hill, as is the lot where his dwelling once stood. People eat termites, and termite hills like anthills or beehives, are natural phenomena. Termite hills are also extremely hard and long lasting. They often mark important chiefly sites, and particularly graves of chiefs or other notable characters (whether there are actual remains underneath is a not at all certain).

Across the site our guides identified as Ngongo's house (variously called *maison or palais*) was a hill where they said he had fought the Belgians. There was a wooden stick in the ground next to Ngongo's grave. The chief's notables who accompanied us and served as our guides said this was what remained of a cross. They also said that in 2002 occupying "Rwandans" not only desecrated Ngongo's tomb, but invoked evil spirits that are known to inhabit the site. They wanted power, I was told, and wanted to access the bad magic associated with Ngongo. There seems to be a more or less direct genealogical and interpretive line that runs in many of my interlocutors' minds, from Ngongo to the Batetela rebellions of the 1890s, to the Mulelist rebellion, and to the different wars and rebellions of the late 20th century. In all cases, the acts of violence and the "evil" of the perpetrators were in some ways the same and have been encoded in interchangeable narratives. Many Tetela consider Ngongo Leteta and the Batetela rebels of the 1890s as the direct ancestors of Patrice Lumumba.[1]

On our way to Lubefu, Papa Rudolphe and I stopped in Onalua, Patrice Lumumba's birthplace, and later spent the night at Wembo-Nyama, about 10 km away.

Figure 94: At Onalua, Images on the Chief's wall (photographs by author).

We talked with a few people in Onalua. The "Customary Chief" was absent, and no one knew when he might return. There were a number of images in the chief's house. The living room operated as a museum. Whenever I have seen pictures in Sankuru households and living rooms, they were usually placed high on walls, almost up to the ceilings. Whenever I asked why, I was told: because it keeps them out of harm's way, that is people can't touch or take them. The images in the chief's front room were lined up as follows: a Tshibumba[2] painting depicting Lumumba's famous June 30, 1960 speech with Lumumba holding the terrestrial globe and King Baudouin holding his hat. The painting evokes Lumumba's rousing and poetic speech, a clear denunciation of Belgian colonialism. There was an official portrait of Patrice Lumumba as Prime Minister; two pictures of the current chief as a younger man, with complete regalia of leopard accoutrements. A second Tshibumba painting closed the series of portraits: Patrice Lumumba in handcuffs and undershirt being taken off the plane in Elisabethville,

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[1] Charles Lobandji Dieudonne and Madame Nongo, "Interview About Tetela History," interview by de Isabelle Rezende, Digital Recording, April 7, 2008; Papa Paul Diambulu, "About the Batetela Rebellion of 1895."
[2] I did not see the signature on the painting, but it looked like a possible Tshibumba original

escorted by two UN soldiers.[3] There were other photographs on other walls representing more recent members of the family. I asked the chief's brother and the notable who were showing us these images to comment on them and tell me what was going on in the paintings. They were not able to formulate narratives from these images. I asked the older man if he remembered hearing Lumumba's June 30 speech, and if he remembered what Lumumba said. He said: "Lumumba exhorted people to grow their crops and tend their fields." They were not very clear on the history of Lumumba's arrest and murder.

Mango tree groves are also signs of human habitation. These trees are remarkably long-lived and act as signposts for human settlements long after the people, animals, houses and gardens have gone. In Onalua, I was shown the spot where Lumumba's family's house once stood. Our guides that day also showed us a coconut tree saying that it had been planted by Patrice Lumumba himself. Historical in Sankuru memory rests upon all of these visual markers, and perhaps to a greater extent than on the artifacts of the colonial Congo and its postcolony.

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[3] As I already mentioned in Chapter 5, Jewsiewicki and Fabian have both written about the "popular painting" genre in 1970s and 1980s Zaire. Jewsiewicki, in particular, has analyzed such Lumumba paintings. Lobandji Dieudonne and Madame Nongo, "Interview About Tetela History"; Papa Paul Diambulu, "About the Batetela Rebellion of 1895."

Figure 95: Coconut tree planted by Lumumba (photograph by author).

Figure 96: Location of Lumumba's house (photograph by author).

Figure 97: Lumumba's "monument" (photograph by author)

The "monument" was built in the 1960s. It is a simple unattractive concrete structure that looks like a mausoleum. It looked like something I had seen elsewhere, in rural France perhaps, to pay respects to the dead at a crossroads. It was another instance of monuments built to Lumumba by the Zairian state that both celebrated and diminished him. Such monuments are usually in an awkward location, or else make Lumumba look small or less "attractive."[4] One in Kisangani has a life-sized image of Lumumba enclosed inside a glass cage, itself encased in cement.

For the people of Onalua, Lumumba's memory did not dwell in this awkward, small, and insulting structure. In general, people's legacies could be found in the living

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[4] Congolese say that Mobutu commissioned Lumumba's statue at the "Echangeur de Limete" – a junction of several roadways in Kinshasa – to be built according to his own physiognomy. The statue is small, and once again awkward and insulting; it does not depict Lumumba as a tall, lean man, but looks instead like Mobutu's. Nancy Hunt, Personal Communication, 2012.

environment, in the trees they planted, in the rivers they crossed, and in natural "monuments," like termite hills, that grew up for them.

Chapter 5

History as Spectacle: Patrice Lumumba

« Lumumba se considérait à chaque instant comme un blanc. » (Lumumba always thought of himself as a white man) [1]

« Ce film crée en nous de l'émoi à voir comment Patrice Lumumba s'était sacrifié pour l'obtention de notre liberté. » (Through this film, we were touched by seeing how Patrice Lumumba sacrificed his life to bring us our freedom)[2]

Figure 98: Lumumba inside a 500 mm lens, artfully framed by filmmaker Raoul Peck

'Look a Negro.' It was an external stimulus that flicked over me as I passed by. I made a tight smile. 'Look, a Negro!' It was true. It amused me. 'Look, a Negro!' The circle was drawing a bit tighter. [3]

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[1] Jean Tshonda, "Memories of Patrice Lumumba," Interview by Isabelle de Rezende, August 2, 2008, Onalua, Katako Kombe Territory, Sankuru Province, DRC.
[2] A young man speaking after the projection of Raoul Peck's *Lumumba* in the village of Kahudi, August 11, 2008.

Starting in about 1954, Congolese in Stanleyville and Leopoldville became aware of Patrice Lumumba as a rising star in a late colonial context of politically ambitious and activist-leaning, colonized urbanites. Like others among his contemporaries, Lumumba wrote articles, engaged in debates and polemics, and expressed his views in a number of publications, chiefly in the "*évolué*"[4] journal and newspaper, *La Voix du Congolais* and *La Croix du Congo*. He joined and often took over the leadership of professional, alumni, and "tribal" associations first in Stanleyville, then in Leopoldville. After 1958 and until the very end of his short life in January of 1961, widening constituencies in Africa around the world heard Lumumba's voice on the radio, and saw his image - many different images – in newspapers and newsreels and on television.

This chapter traces and contextualizes a visual genealogy of Patrice Lumumba within historical discourse; it argues that his trajectory from *évolué* to statesman to martyr possessed a visual expression around the pivotal category of the *évolué*. The chapter also considers how social and visual categories that attached themselves to Lumumba's persona, as a man and as a historical actor, built ontological frames upon one another, where the meaning each image was dependent on, and implicated the others. Lumumba's political and increasingly his personal life were lived on stages of visuality, that is, first with attention to dress and appearance, and later in relationship to the growing interest he received from photographic and film cameras. In his final weeks, as politics spun out of control in newly decolonized Congo, Lumumba's life became a "Paparazzi" circus. Sometime in July and August of 1960, in some senses, real political significance gave way to nothing more than pure spectacle. Lumumba's visuality connects with an embodied

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[3] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968), 111.

politics of emancipation, which found cultural and aesthetic expression in relationship to the colonial category of the *évolué*. Lumumba's political trajectory was one of politics embodied and visualized. His body, therefore, an intense focus of attention from early moments of his public life to his death and beyond, is also central to this chapter.

Lumumba's public life began in the Belgian Congo as a late-colonial "*évolué*," cultural commentator, moralist, and political actor.[5] In June 1960, he was a statesman pronouncing his famous speech to the assembled Congolese parliament, the Belgian king, and a host of other colonial notables. His party, the MNC-L having won the first national elections in May 1960, Lumumba who was its leader became Congo's first Prime Minister. The political rivals, Bakongo leader Joseph Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba worked out a compromise, sharing power in the way that reflected each man's political ascendency. Kasa Vubu, got the presidency and became the head of state, while the office of Prime Minister, the position of real power at the head of the government, went to Lumumba. Seven months later, Lumumba was the new nation's martyr and a global symbol of the vexations and victimizations of an emergent Third World; postcolonial subjects, left-wing commentators, and persons of color worldwide in the 1960s and 1970s equated Lumumba with the violent forces of imperialism and neocolonialism. In alternative, shadowy reckonings that also drove his fate, Lumumba became a dangerous communist agent and Soviet creature whose death was welcome news.

During what became known as the Congo crisis of 1959-60, Lumumba's mediatized image in newsreels and press agency photographs was ubiquitous. Indeed, as framed and

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[4] See chapters 2, 3, and 4. The *évolué*, a key colonial category in the 1950s, is central to the argument of this chapter.

[5] Mutamba Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba, correspondant de presse, 1948-1956*, Collection Etudes africaines (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005).

filmed by international media, Lumumba became the main protagonist of one of the most important chapters in the many dramas of Africa's decolonization. The western media expressed its doubts about whether Africans could competently handle the governance in newsreels and newspaper articles chronicling Lumumba's "rise and fall" in 1959-60. Lumumba's image still possessed ambiguity; the images' contexts of reception and of course, the audiences who viewed them created and framed their visual receptions and readings.

Most images have individual viewers and collective audiences. Some invite or engage investment and for this reason may be said to have publics, constituencies, and counter-publics. I use the term constituencies to emphasize personal and emotional investment, particularly when it comes to strong iconic images such as those of Patrice Lumumba. As many have proposed with regard to South Asia, notably Ramswamy and Pinney, many images have *devotees*.[6] Lumumba's visual embodiments expressed tensions among his many selves: statesman, martyr, *évolué*, family man, and the gregarious, socially successful man or charismatic leader. Each of these images simultaneously contained the others. Indeed, the frames of *évolué*, statesman, family man, and martyr morphed, giving way to one another through their visual, material, and emotional connections with particular audiences. Lumumba's personage as a complex global sign, or icon, represents an ideal opportunity for thinking about visuality in connection with embodiment, emotion, affect, all of which are elements of a somewhat elusive notion of

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[6] Bishnupriya Ghosh, *Global Icons: Apertures to the Popular* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2010); Christopher Pinney, *"Photos of the Gods": The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* (London: Reaktion, 2004). Also, Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1998). In particular, see his discussion of the "distributed person."

subjectivity. These embodiments constituted, and were also the products of, the late

colonial aspirations of an emerging Congolese bourgeoisie.[7]

For many Congolese, but very significantly for Tetela, Lumumba is the slain hero of

the people who rose from humble beginnings to bring Congo its independence.[8] Tetela tell

stories of fantastical events and apparitions connected with Lumumba's birth, foretelling

his role as a Congolese hero. Lumumba's mother, for instance, Julienne Amato,[9] tells of

an *almost* total eclipse of the sun on the day of Lumumba's birth in the vicinity of Wembo

Nyama, a few kilometers from Lumumba's birthplace. During the few minutes it lasted,

she recalled, it was *almost* impossible to see anything. That same day, it is said,

Lumumba's father, François Tolenga came face to face with a snake in the field; he killed

him.[10] Other stories speak of seeing a shooting star fall to earth, the growth of a palm tree

with six heads, and an earthquake.[11] Amato also spoke of a snake appearing to her on the

day of the earthquake, when she was pregnant with her second child, the future Patrice

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[7] Maurel, *Le Congo, de la colonisation belge à l'indépendance*, 186. Maurel calls the emergent late colonial middle class a "petite bourgeoisie." Mainly composed of salaried personnel, it progressively thought of itself as a class forming the political leadership of the nationalist movement.

[8] Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Figure des mémoires congolaises de Lumumba: Moïse, héros culturel, Jésus-Christ," in *Patrice Lumumba entre Dieu et Diable: un héros africain dans ses images* (Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 1997), 356. Jewiewicki argues that Lumumba's "figure," that is the historical man, his political choices, and their understandings, was more complex and contested in the 1960s than it becomes in later decades. He further suggests, without wishing to overstate the argument, that the work of Tetela academics in the 1980s, and that of Tshibumba and other Katangese popular painters in the 1970s, fixed a certain number of meanings of "Lumumba" in the popular imagination.

[9] Omasombo and Verhaegen chose to spell her name "Amatu," whereas Halen and Riesz (see below) chose the spelling "Amato."

[10] Halen, Pierre and János Riesz, eds., "Quelques témoignages sur Lumumba. Receuillis par Alphonse Mbuyamba Kankolongo le dimanche 15 octobre 1995 dans la zone de Lemba à Kinshasa, de 16h40 à 18h30," in *Patrice Lumumba entre Dieu et Diable: un héros africain dans ses images* (Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 1997), 129. Emphases added. While the eclipse memory comes from Lumumba's mother, the story of the snake presenting itself to his father has no clear author in this testimony.

Lumumba. The snake quickly vanished as she yelled for help and her husband ran over.[12]

What seems striking, moreover, are stories about Lumumba's early childhood. Lumumba was not an active baby, it was said; he was placid, cried little, and later, instead of trying to crawl like other children, he simply sat wherever he was set down. His stare (*regard*) seemed strange and worried his parents. The latter thought of throwing the child into the river, as they considered his behavior an evil portent, but, Lumumba's father told his wife that the colonial administration would punish them severely for what the Belgians considered a grave crime.[13] The kind of myth making that includes babies who appear to lag developmentally behind their peers, but who then become heroes, is a key aspect of central African oral traditions, from Lianja to Mwindo. They are also reminiscent of the story of another African hero, Sundiata.[14] In addition to rich archival documentation, Jean Omasombo Tshonda and Benoit Verhaegen's biography of Patrice Lumumba, especially the first volume narrating Lumumba's trajectory to 1956, contains interviews with many Tetela in Sankuru: family members, neighbors, childhood friends, and associates.[15] Omasombo is a Tetela sociologists, and the history he writes at times borders on eulogy.

According to many who knew Lumumba, the boy was exceptionally bright and always thirsted for knowledge. Not only smarter than his friends, he educated himself whenever possible and soon outsmarted his Flemish and American missionary teachers, including – the height of insult – by demonstrating a better command of French grammar. As a student he was "unruly," which meant that he did not accept the often brutish

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[11] Jean Tshonda Omasombo and Benoît Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba: jeunesse et apprentissage politique 1925-1956* (Bruxelles: Institut africain/CEDAF, 1998), 78.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 80.
[14] Sundiata was the thirteenth-century hero who united the Mande clans and founded a great empire in Mali, but who did not walk until he was seven years old.

authority of his colonial educators; he knew he was receiving a sub-standard education and publicly outwitted his European or American teachers whenever possible. His friends and peers said he thought of himself as a "white man" and asked to be called "Osungu," the Tetela word for White.[16] He was willing to fight anyone who made fun of him for this insistence.[17]

Like a trickster, easily slipping by his dull oppressors Lumumba who would forge travel papers in the early 1940s to leave Sankuru, wove a course between the Methodist and Catholic educational systems, leaving one school, getting expelled from another, and going on to the next. His last attempt at formal education was a brief enrollment at the Ecole d'Aides Infirmiers at Tunda in Maniema province.[18] In the early 1940s, he quit his colonial education, forged travel papers to leave his home region of Sankuru, and went to work briefly at the Symétain plant at Kalima, Maniema province, in the canteen. Another account has him working for the state rail company, Société des Chemins de Fer, also in the early 1940s, at Kindu in Maniema, again as a canteen manager.[19] Lumumba's next move was towards Stanleyville, the capital of Province Orientale, at the bend of the Congo river.

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[15] Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*, 78.

[16] Ibid., 80. By and large, "Osungu" is Otetela for "White." It also means powerful, successful, as well as oppressor, and even "eater" of Africans. In certain rhetorical contexts, it also signals colonized status as an "*évolué*." Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*, 87. n.13.

[17] Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*, 88; Jean Tshonda, "Memories of Patrice Lumumba," interview by Isabelle de Rezende, Digital Recording, August 2, 2008, Onalua, Katako Kombe Territory, Sankuru Province, DRC.

[18] Omasombo and Verhaegen do not give precise dates. It is not clear when exactly Lumumba left the area of Sankuru-Maniema for Stanleyville. The authors guess it may have been around 1944. See, Ibid., 88.

[19] Halen, Pierre and Riesz, "Quelques témoignages sur Lumumba. Receuillis par Alphonse Mbuyamba Kankolongo le dimanche 15 octobre 1995 dans la zone de Lemba à Kinshasa, de 16h40 à 18h30," 131.

In Stanleyville, "a simple provincial *évolué*?"[20]

In Stanleyville, from the mid-1940s, Lumumba began to make cultural and
intellectual contributions, both as a press correspondent for the *Croix du Congo* and the
Voix du Congolais, and as a member the "*Cercle des Evolués* de Stanleyville." By 1953,
he was in high demand for his leadership and organizational skills, and held key positions
in seven city or provincial associations.[21] When Pierre Clément, a French sociologist,
came to Stanleyville in 1952 to study urbanization in African contexts (*milieux africains*),
he befriended Lumumba, or at least this is how he remembered events in 1962. In
Clément's recollections, published after Lumumba's murder in 1961, he remembered him,
their work and friendship.[22] In December 1952, they traveled to Sankuru together.[23]
Lumumba had not been home in ten years, and, was eager to be reunited with his parents,
brothers, friends, and relatives. He also wanted to see his newborn son, born to his wife
Pauline Opango who had gone home to give birth some months earlier.[24] Clément took
photographs during this trip "home." Figure 99 and Figure 100 show Lumumba and his
family in his native village of Onalua.

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[20] Thomas R. Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo: The Rise and Fall of Lumumba*, Penguin African
Library (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

[21] Pierre Clément, "Patrice Lumumba: Stanleyville 1952-1953," *Présence Africaine*, no. 40 (1962):
73.

[22] See chapter 4 of this dissertation. Also, Pierre Clément, "Patrice Lumumba: Stanleyville 1952-
1953," *Présence Africaine*, no. 40 (1962): 73.

[23] Ibid., 69.

[24] Ibid.

Figure 99: "PH Lumumba with his mother and father." Pierre Clément, *PH Lumumba avec son père et sa mère*, b&w photograph, 1952"[25]

Lumumba was strikingly tall. He towered over most other men in photographs, and this hieght, combined with his extreme thinness, played a part in constituting his visuality, and how Congolese and Europeans saw and received him. This photograph reveals that his father (François Tolenga, to the right of Lumumba) was at least as tall and also well dressed. The photographer had lined up the subjects of the photographs, from left to right, according to height. Lumumba's mother and uncle were barefoot.

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[25] The caption does not name the fourth person in the photograph. Figure 100 below identifies him as Lumumba's uncle.

Photo 1 : P. Lumumba entouré de sa famille au village d'Onalua, lors de sa visite en décembre 1952. De g. à d. : KALEMA Ferdinand (Mateleka), un oncle ; MUNDALA Pierre, un ami ; LUKULUNGA Charles, son frère aîné ; AMATO Julienne, sa mère ; P. LUMUMBA ; TOLENGA François, son père ; KODJELA Hélène, sa belle-mère ; DEMBO Marie, épouse de DJONGANDEKE TADJA Victor , son oncle paternel, situé à côté d'elle ; DIMOKE Henriette, leur fille (cousine) portant sa fille aînée BEMA Thérèse ; LOKOMBE Marie, une tante paternelle ; OTSHOPE Véronique, une tante paternelle , portant son fils, ONEMA Louis ; KALEMA Émile, son frère cadet. Photo prise par Pierre Clément.

Figure 100: Pierre Clément, *Lumumba entouré de sa famille*, b&w photograph, 1952. Lumumba with his extended family. Onalua, 1952. Printed in *La Voix du Congolais*, 1954.

Clement took these photographs (Figure 99 and Figure 100) on the same day.

Lumumba wore his impeccable postal uniform. Clément wrote that crowds greeted

Lumumba with expressions of boundless joy as the two men approached Onalua.[26]

Lumumba had come home a "Monsieur," a man of consequence who enjoyed a great

measure of success according to late colonial standards. His prestige, Clément wrote, grew

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[26] Clément, "Patrice Lumumba," 70.

greater still when he paid a visit to the sector chief (*Chef de Secteur*)[27]; the latter was clad

in his official uniform, a " 'capitula,' 'safari,' and a cap, all white as snow, and many

insignia indicating his rank in the colonial administration.[28] Such uniforms were emblems

of aspirations. Congolese like Lumumba contested how clothing and status belonged to a

system of oppression. Yet, all the same, clothing was part of visual performances of power

and status.[29] Alphonse Mbuyamba Kankolongo, related, from testimonies he gathered, that

when Lumumba went to Wembo Nyama[30] during this same trip home, he "caused general

hilarity" for showing up at the administrative post to validate his visitor's permit (*permis

de séjour*) in civilian clothing, rather than in his official postal uniform, as required by

law.[31]

The people of Wembo Nyama appreciated Lumumba's rebellious spirit.[32]

Testimonies by friends and detractors alike relate that the man had a high opinion of

himself, and could be arrogant toward white "underlings" in the colonial administration.[33]

Not wearing his uniform represented an act of defiance, performed on the visual terrain of

colonialism's symbolic language. By wearing "civilian" clothing, as would an ordinary

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[27] A "customary" administrative position held by a colonized individual.

[28] Clément, "Patrice Lumumba," 70. "capitula" and "safari" are respectively Bermuda shorts, and a safari style jacket.

[29] See, Thomas Turner, "Images of Power, Images of Humiliation: Congolese 'Colonial' Sculpture for Sale in Rwanda," *African Arts* 38, no. 1 (April 1, 2005): 64. The genre of so-called Popular and History painting by artists such as Tshibumba foreground clothing and dress (as well as other objects) as important historical and visual signifiers. Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 233.

[30] Wembo Nyama continues to be a sizeable town, the seat of the Sankuru's Methodist mission, and the closest colonial administrative post to Lumumba's native village of Onalua.

[31] Halen, Pierre and Riesz, "Quelques témoignages sur Lumumba. Receuillis par Alphonse Mbuyamba Kankolongo le dimanche 15 octobre 1995 dans la zone de Lemba à Kinshasa, de 16h40 à 18h30," 132. Mentioned in Halen and Riesz' volume as someone who collected testimonies about Lumumba in Kinshasa in 1995, Kankolongo is not further identified.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*, 59–61; Clément, "Patrice Lumumba," 67.

colonial subject, Lumumba was protesting against the bureaucratic requirement that "natives" register their presence and movements with "permits." He also was asserting his right to wear, as a human being, the clothing of his choice. The choice was not really between "civilian" clothes and "uniform." More than an *évolué* wanting to be recognized by colonial power, it was a political assertion of refusal on the part of a colonized subject.

Photographic services were not new to Congolese in the 1950s. However, after World War II two things, at least, changed: Congolese were living in cities in greater numbers than they had in the 1930s; because of Belgium's welfarist development policies, they had more money to spend, and, something that was especially new, late colonial Congolese had their public spheres and forums: journals and magazines like *Nos Images*. Having one's portrait taken was an important way of expressing status and fashioning selves.[34] The monthly *La Voix du Congolais*, founded in 1945, was the most important print venue for late colonial *évolués* to discuss politics and culture, as well as imagine their late colonial and future selves. Congolese used the publication also to address the colonial state,[35] and created a space for dialogue with the state. This journal, along with the Catholic daily newspaper, *La Croix du Congo* founded in the 1930s constituted much of the late colonial subaltern public sphere. While quite under state censorship controls, *La Voix du Congolais,* was still a vehicle for *évolué* discourses. The illustrated bi-monthly magazine, *Nos Images* (Our Images), was founded later, in 1948, as a decidedly less highbrow magazine; it presented a wider and much more visual field and was a key site

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[34] In particular see Geary, *In and Out of Focus*; Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Corps interdits. La représentation christique de Lumumba comme rédempteur du peuple zaïrois (Forbidden Bodies: Lumumba Christly Image as Redeemer of the People of Zaire)," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 36, no. 141/142 (January 1, 1996): 113–142. In Sankuru, Rudolphe Lonyembo and Jean-Michel Kibushi spoke to me of the prestige bestowed by having one's portrait taken.
[35] Daniel Tödt 2011

for the visual self-presentation of new Congolese, who cannot be subsumed under one social category. They could have been "elites," *évolués*, as well as working urbanites and those, living in customary areas, who wished to be urbanites.

A simple definition of "*évolué*" referred to colonized persons who were at least somewhat educated and had become sufficiently "Europeanized" in manner and dress as to get some kind of recognition from the colonial state. The nature of that recognition was vague. One could apply to be inscribed in a special "registry of civilized natives," or one could receive a card attesting to this higher status. "*Immatriculation*," the inscription into the "civilized register" was "like a certificate of civilization for natives."[36] In addition to official bureaucratic recognition, *évolués* were given some legal privileges in relation to other Congolese (natives). Thomas Kanza writes that Belgians and other white colonials in the Congo (*colons*) used the term *évolué* to refer to "any Congolese whom they deemed to have ideas above his station."[37] Mutamba Makombo gives a longer history of the "*évolué*;" the idea of "more modern" natives went back to the earliest days of the colonial conquest. It was dropped for several decades, to be taken up again in the late 1940s. The term itself was a topic of heated debate, indeed a site of self-creation and group-creation for politically active Congolese writing in the *Voix du Congolais*.[38] Conceptually, "*évolué*" was a site of becoming. Early Congolese intellectuals agreed upon a number of parameters within which to establish their *évolué* identity: education, salary, work ethic and level of responsibility in one's job, and morality.[39]

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[36] Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*, 97.
[37]Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 12.
[38] Mutamba Makombo, *Du Congo belge au Congo indépendant, 1940-1960*, 49.
[39] Ibid., 50.

Yet the vagueness and the ambivalence of this category, which existed in all late-colonial situations in Africa, was what gave it meaning. First, ambivalence about "detribalization" and vulgar paternalism often replaced *évolué with évoluant* – or evolving – as an insult that smarted. Second, the term became a site of Congolese contestation since increasingly not everyone aspired to the *évolué* label, which took on meaning in relation to an imagined European model and everyday humiliations. Of course, not everyone was either "white" or "black" in the colony either. The *évolué* category gained its fullest meaning, however, in its heuristic function. Educated Congolese with social and political aspirations used it to enter into dialogue with representatives of the state or with one another. The plasticity of the *évolué* status, self, or experience meant it was a category to be filled with bodies and persons of certain kinds who could fulfill certain needs, but also be demeaned and discarded.

Evolué was also an intensely visual category. An *évolué* had to visibly demonstrate his and his family's degree of "civilization." *Evolués* were subjects in colonial propaganda, used to showcase development programs. Yet in apparent contradiction, in scornful and derisive ways,[40] the outward, material appearance of *évolués* contained much of their *évolué* identity. According to Mutamba:

> "An *évolué's* standard of living was also evaluated by the goods he possessed. He would be dressed in a decent manner; he would live in a brick or cement house (*maison en dur*); he would own at least a bicycle, a record player (*phonographe*), an incandescent lamp, and sometimes a sewing machine and a radio"[41]

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[40] Nancy Rose Hunt, "Tintin and the Interruptions of Congolese Comics," in *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 90–123; J. M. Jadot, "Lumumba écrivain," *Bulletin des Séances. Académie Royale d'Outre-Mer* 7 (1961): 581–93. In this article, Jadot devotes sixteen prosaic pages to a scornful critique of Lumumba's writing, through, specifically, the analytic of the *évolué*.
[41] Mutamba Makombo, *Du Congo belge au Congo indépendant, 1940-1960*, 50.

Like "natives" or "workers," also salient colonial categories, "*évolués*" could sometimes be photographed; they learned that their homes had to be *presented* a certain way, because, as Rudolphe Lonyembo who was a child in the 1950s told me in 2008: "the white man came to check."[42] There was a lot of stress put on presenting the "right" appearance, and Patrice Lumumba was not immune to this pressure.
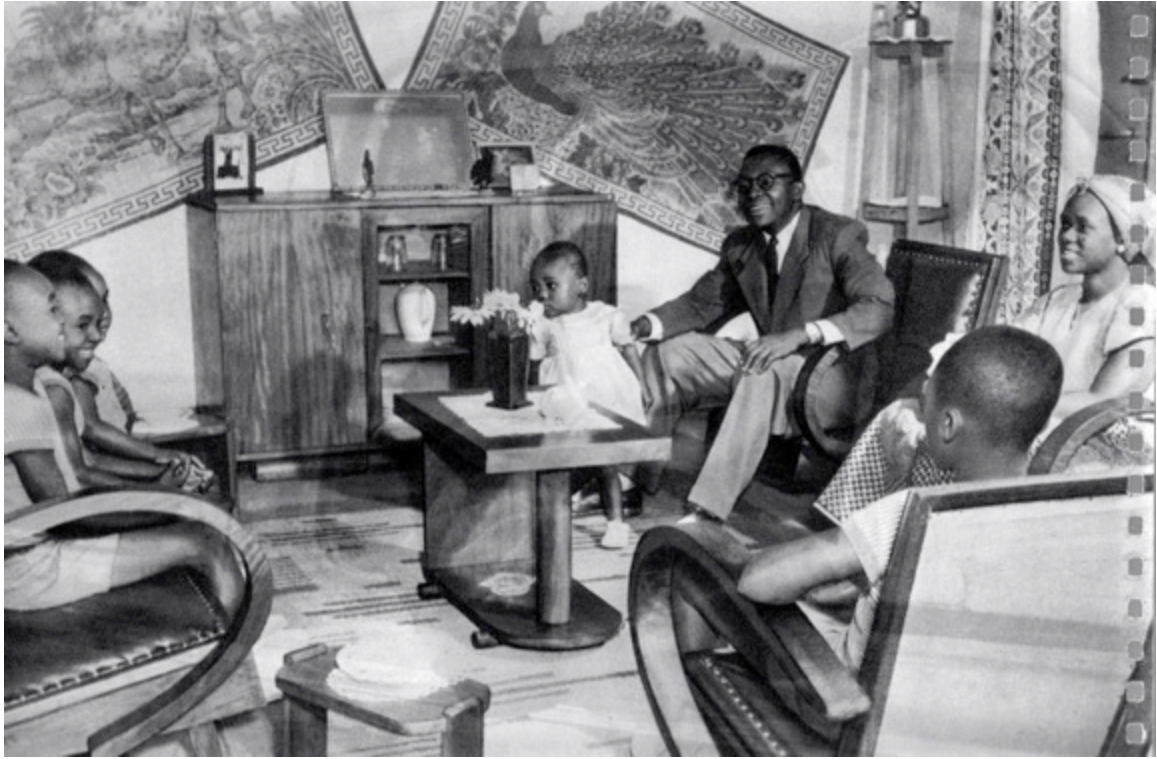
Figure 101: An *évolué* family c. 1950s. Untitled.[43]

When Patrice Lumumba appeared on the late colonial Congolese scene visually, he was an early 1950s *évolué*, active in the subaltern public sphere. Stanleyville was his first political stage, and during those years the first photographs of Lumumba appeared in the

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[42] See chapter 3. Rudolphe Lonyembo, "Life as a child of an Evolué," interview by Isabelle de Rezende, digitally recorded, August 4, 2008; Also, see Nancy Rose Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumbura's Foyer Social, 1946-1960," *Signs* 15, no. 3 (April 1, 1990): 454.

[43] *Family Album*.

évolué press. Figure 99 was published in the March 1954 issue of *La Voix du Congolais*. It is interesting to note that *Voix* published an image of Lumumba with his parents and his uncle Kalema Ferdinand, rather than the group photograph showing his greater family and friends. Lumumba's younger brother, Kalema Emile on the far right, bears a striking resemblance to him. Kalema appeared even taller than his older brother Patrice. Three of the young men in Figure 100, including Lumumba and his brother Kalema, wore parts in their hair. This sign would become iconic in later years, when Lumumba's image became ubiquitous. The *Voix* photograph was captioned, "with his mother and father," leaving out any mention of the uncle and indicating that it was the nuclear family, and really, the parents, who mattered. Figure 99's use in *Voix du Congolais*, was like many late colonial Congolese photographs that sought to mark bourgeois respectability (discussed in Chapter 3 above). The *Voix* editors, in order to show an up-and-coming *évolué* leader such as Lumumba looking less "customary," might have preferred to print a photograph of the young man with only his two parents instead of what might have *looked* in the estimation of *Voix's* self-conscious *évolué* editorial staff and readership, the entire village; the uncle, perhaps could not be avoided.

Two Signal Years: 1944 and 1956

In Congolese political history and in Lumumba's life, which became enmeshed with politics by the early 1950s, the years of 1944 and 1956 were important. The first marked the end of Nazi occupation in France and Belgium, and almost the end of the Second World War; in Africa, 1944 was the year of General De Gaulle's famous "Brazzaville speech," which set out, in Kinshasa's twin city, premises and vague promises for the

decolonization of French Africa.[44] In 1944, the Force Publique garrison at Luluabourg

(Kananga) mutinied. It was also the year Lumumba moved to Stanleyville.

Fourteen years later, 1956 became the year of "political manifestoes" initiated by

Joseph Van Bilsen's article, "Another 30 years before independence can be granted to

Congo."[45] Van Bilsen was a Belgian colonial "Africanist," a legal scholar who had

traveled in Belgian, French, and British Africa. In the early 1950s, he served as chief of

staff for Belgium's Education Minister. Van Bilsen's 30-year "plan" was a manifesto of

its own, albeit a colonial one, seeking to set forth a dynamic project for political, social,

and economic change in the Belgian Congo. Its boldness, in light of the colonial

establishment's myopia and lack of interest, was perhaps a response to international

pressures, of which the General Assembly of the United Nations was the most vocal

expression.

Soon other manifestoes followed, also in 1956. The "Conscience Africaine

Manifesto," published in the Catholic Congolese journal *Horizons*, and its rebuttal, the

"ABAKO Manifesto,"[46] responded directly to Van Bilsen. Their publications constituted a

major turning points in catapulting Congo into a politics of decolonization. While the

Conscience manifesto was conciliatory, taking the Van Bilsen proposal seriously and

requesting full Congolese participation in implementation, the ABAKO manifesto,

authored by Kikongo-speaking intellectuals, radically demanded immediate emancipation

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[44] The speech is typical in many ways of De Gaulle's characteristic demagoguery, yet his words had their impact.

[45] Mutamba Makombo, *Du Congo belge au Congo indépendant, 1940-1960*, 233.

[46] ABAKO stood for "Alliance des Bakongo." On the topic of the ABAKO manifesto's radical politics, see Yolanda Covington-Ward, "Joseph Kasa-Vubu, ABAKO, and Performances of Kongo Nationalism in the Independence of Congo," *Journal of Black Studies* 43, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 72–94.

and claiming no interest in Belgian reforms.[47] Van Bilsen's plan was in many ways

progressive, calling on the state to nurture an educated African middle class apt to take the

reins of governance a few decades hence, yet it was also a late attempt to accomplish what

the French, and especially the British, had begun in their colonies two decades earlier.

Thomas Kanza, who was among the first Congolese to receive a diploma from a Belgian

university, and who served as Lumumba's ambassador to Sweden in 1960, wrote that in

1956, Belgium only had about thirty university students from Congo and Ruanda-

Urundi.[48] The Belgian Congo did, however, have an important number of seminarians

who received university-level humanities educations, including rigorous training in Greek,

Latin, and philosophy.[49] In this postwar context, just one year after the 1955 Bandung

conference, which, in a rather muscular political act, proclaimed the "Afro-Asian" alliance

or block of "non-aligned nations," Van Bilsen's proposal was already "old news."[50]

The colonial state largely ignored Van Bilsen's ideas, and instead continued to

promote its project of forming a "Belgian-Congolese Community" (Communauté Belgo-

Congolaise), while seeing the Congo's future as Belgium's "tenth province." What also

differentiated the ABAKO manifesto from the Conscience Africaine one was that the

former was a product of the party of men who identified as Bakongo, while the latter was

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 11. He was one of them, studying psychology at the Catholic University of Louvain.. He was one of them, studying psychology at the Catholic University of Louvain.

[49] Herbert Weiss, "The Congo's Independence Struggle Viewed Fifty Years Later," *African Studies Review* 55, no. 1 (2012): 110. Weiss points out that by 1960, 3000 Congolese had attended seminaries, while about 500 were working as priests.

[50] These were sentiments expressed in the ABAKO Manifesto. See, Thomas R. Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo: The Rise and Fall of Lumumba*, Penguin African Library (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 11.

the seed of a national unity party.[51] These forces began to confront one another after 1958. Echoing De Gaulle's 1944 Brazzaville speech, in 1956 the French National Assembly adopted a plan setting out a framework for universal suffrage for French colonial subjects.[52]

From Notability to Notoriety

In 1955, Belgium's then Prince Baudouin I made a triumphal and quite colonial visit to the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. During this journey, the king and Lumumba met together privately for an hour. In 1956, Lumumba participated in the third "notables' trip" to Belgium; It was his second trip to the metropole; his first to Brussels had taken place the previous year, immediately following Baudouin's colonial tour. "Notables' trips" to Belgium were a rare honor reserved for the high elite among Congolese *évolués*.[53] When he returned in June of that year, Lumumba was arrested, right when he got off the plane in Léopoldville. It was on this occasion, when charged with embezzling the postal funds and losing his post as a Congolese civil servant, that he launched his career as politician.

Let's think about these two signal years in another manner. In 1944, Patrice Lumumba was joining the colonial postal service, where his "unruly" manner had him speaking out against the far lower pay for equal work received by Congolese and European civil servants. Wishing to make improvements to his home and bring up his

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[51] The Bakongo are among the Congo's largest self-defined ethnicities, claiming historical roots to the fifteenth century Kongo kingdom. It geographical distribution spans the coast of Central Africa, from present-day Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) to the north of Angola. The eastern boundary is more or less the Kwango river. Also see, Ibid.

[52] This plan included greater autonomy from the metropole, and generally moved France's colonies forward on the road to independence, except in Algeria, where white settlers maintained their electoral privileges.

[53] Mutamba Makombo, *Du Congo belge au Congo indépendant, 1940-1960*, 259.

family's standard of living, Lumumba took (or borrowed) money from the service.[54] By

1956, he was the subject of an embezzlement trial, during which Belgian co-workers

repeatedly characterized Lumumba as "haughty."[55] Jean Van Lierde, the radical Belgian

priest who was present at the time and became his friend, observed years later in 1963 that

Lumumba comported himself as a man who was free. This attitude, according to Van

Lierde, lay in striking contrast with how most Congolese presented themselves in the

presence of most whites in the colony during these years.[56]

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[54] Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*, 23.
[55] Ibid., 59.
[56] Thomas Giefer, *Patrice Lumumba, une tragédie africaine*, Thema Congo (Germany and France: ZDF/ARTE, 2005),
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S99pw7HTZ3g&feature=player_detailpage#t=331s. Van Lierde published a book containing much of Lumumba's writing. Jean Van Lierde, *La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba* (Paris, France: Présence africaine, 1997).

Figure 102: An early Lumumba and a late colonial évolué c. 1951-55? Source unknown.

Figure 103: Lumumba in the crowd at Prince Baudouin's visit, 1955. Belgavox.

This freedom is difficult to read in Lumumba's early photographs. In Figure 6, we

see Lumumba in his guise as a colonial *évolué* in a crowd greeting Prince Baudouin. In

Figure 105 we see Lumumba's reserve and studious attentiveness. He was the youngest of

the four men most visible in the image. His hands appeared behind his back, as though he

dared not touch the materials on display. This photograph from May 1956 was taken only

some weeks before Lumumba's arrest for embezzlement. In Figure 104 he looked more

relaxed, finding himself home again after that same 1956 trip to Belgium. However he

stood close to another, older, member of his delegation. In Figure 104 he seemed shy; a

colonial subject, and, compared to later photographs, no one in particular. In Figure 102,

probably taken between 1951 and 1956, Lumumba's body appeared tense, his arms held

tightly to his sides. His clothes were not of the best cut, the sleeves of the jacket too short

for his lanky frame. He stood nervously. His right hand was clutching perhaps a book or

an agenda with papers tucked inside. He clutched it closely to his side. Held a little higher,

and it would have been next to his heart. Looking like his object of reassurance, the object

almost seems to materialize his dreams and aspirations. He was not yet comfortable in his

image, yet keenly aware of being photographed and aware of photography's importance to

his life as an embodiment of decolonizing politics. But he had not yet become the

irresistible icon of 1959-60. His hair was not as closely cropped; his glasses were different

from the iconic "Lumumba" glasses that became a rage in Harlem c. 1965. These were the

"Browline" glasses, the most popular style in men's eyewear in the 1950s and 1960s, in

the United States in particular. Malcolm X wore the same model. In four other

photographs (Figure 99, Figure 100, Figure 102, and Figure 105), Lumumba looked tense

and preoccupied. He also seems young in these images before he sported his trademark
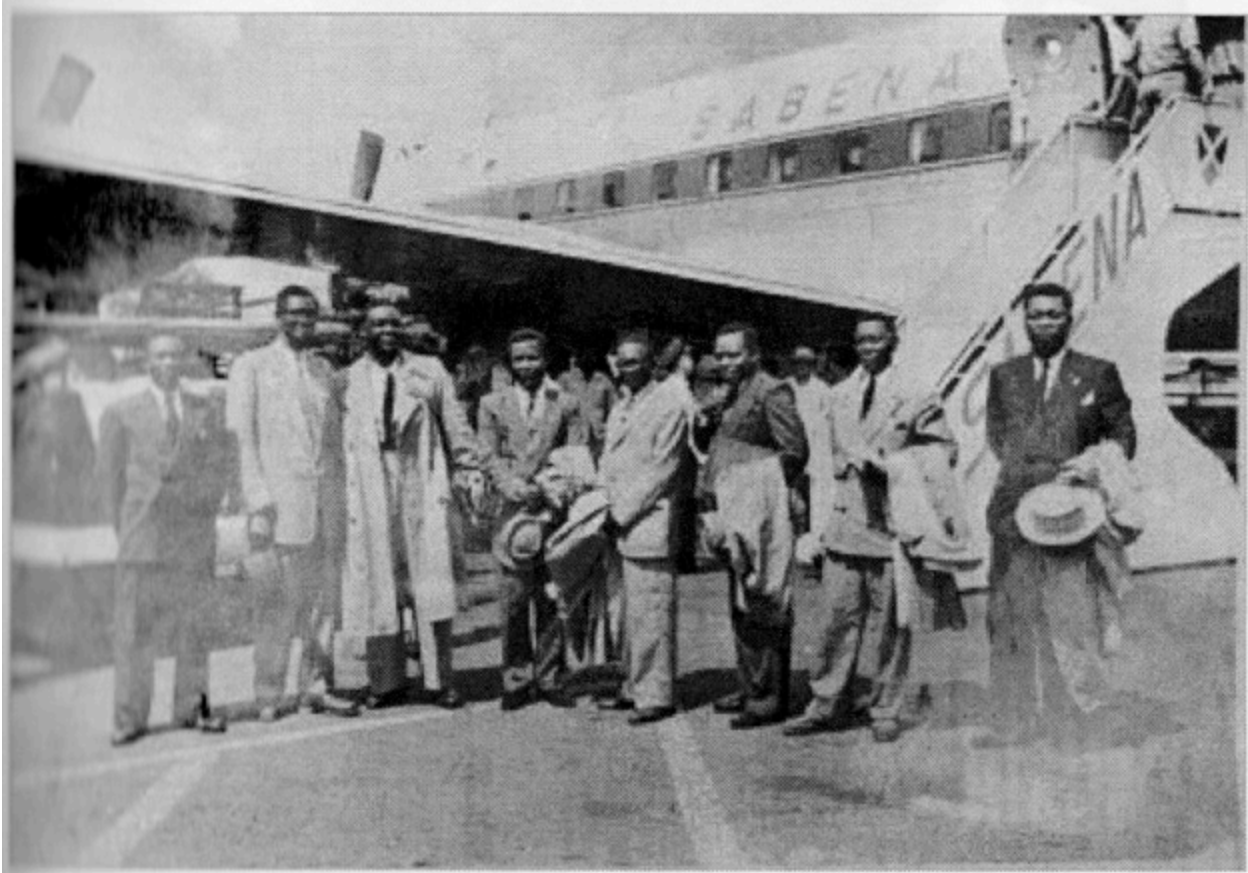
goatee.

Photo 10 : Huit membres de la délégation, à leur retour à Léopoldville, le 24 mai 1956.

Figure 104: *Huit membres de la délégation, à leur retour à Léopoldville, le 24 mai 1956*, **b&w photograph, 1956.Lumumba among members of the 1956 notables' trip delegation upon their return to Léopoldville.**[57]

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[57] In Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*.

Figure 105: La délégation de notables congolais qui séjourne en Belgique a visité les installations du « Soir », b&w photograph, 1956, Le Soir. Printed in the Belgian daily, Le Soir.

Lumumba called himself an *évolué* at first when speaking directly to power,

positioning himself in relation to this category. From his prison cell in 1956-57, Lumumba

wrote to King Baudouin, making the case that Congolese clerks were severely underpaid

compared to their Belgian colleagues in the colonial administration: "Many other *évolué*

families suffer as I do."[58] Visuality, of course, was important terrain in late colonial

politics and cultural politics. Omasombo and Verhaegen argue that Lumumba's 1956

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[58] Ibid, 95.

embezzlement trial upset practices of colonial management and administration (*gestion*).[59]

I add that through deft use of rhetoric and visuality, Lumumba destabilized cultural

politics in the late colonial regime by introducing a very loud and public rupture in the

meaning of *évolué,* right on the white man's stage. One of his defense strategies during the

trial was to put himself forward as an "*immatriculé,*" requesting special treatment and

legal consideration based on this status. Another was to use his appearance. He knew this

cheek would not only be noted, inscribed into the record of proceedings, but that it also

would become part of the conversation. Lumumba marshaled his appearance during the

trial in order to make a set of arguments. During the pre-trial depositions, the Belgian

postal agent Charles Collin noted that Lumumba "must have had a certain 'pride,' as he

was always clean and proper in his manner of dress."[60] Lumumba's sartorial moves were

of course visual ones and they took on full meanings in late colonial Congo. The *évolué*

identity also rested in great part on someone's "look," on the performativity of surface. In

jail, Lumumba requested clarification about whether his status as an *immatriculé* – a quite

fancy rank not to be confused with the more plastic and vague *évolué* category – allowed

him to wear a different prison uniform than "natives." The latter wore "blue indigo"

outfits. Those known as *mulâtres* (mixed-race Congolese) wore khaki clothing. The social

distribution of blue vs. khaki colored prison outfits mapped onto a similar distribution in

the colonial army; common foot soldiers wore dark blue, while white officers wore khaki.

Khaki and indigo were also, of course, the colors of Belgian colonialism, as symbolized

by the Force Publique.[61]

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[59] Ibid, 59.
[60] Ibid.
[61] See, Michael Taussig, *What Color Is the Sacred?* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 159. Taussig suggests that color is, itself, "a colonial subject."

Congolese readers as well those photographed were intervening into the visual world of *Nos Images and Voix du Congolais*; they were also fashioning them. These visual worlds expressed modernity as not only "a claim-making concept,"[62] but as self-fashioning. Claims and self-fashioning, however, were in no way separate. Neither was their visuality "supplementary."[63] *Evolués* took care to present appearances: clean-cut hairstyles, suits, shoes, ties, and they did so with a sense of style, modifying small aspects with flair. If colonial administrators might show up to inspect the surface of the *évolué* household at any time, *évolués* also competed among themselves and in relation to possible acts of compliance and dissidence.

As a 1950s urbanite first in Stanleyville and then Leopoldville, and a high raking *évolué* with *immatriculé* status, Lumumba dressed with care, participating in visual performances of self-fashioning that passed through clothing.[64] In 1951, Lumumba wrote a letter to the editors of *La Croix du Congo* about his disapproval of the "new fashion" of wearing shirts that did not require tucking into trousers (*la chemise pendante*).[65] This letter was printed under the title "La mode masculine à Stanleyville." Lumumba denounced this Congolese fashion as an incorrect imitation of European styles. Europeans only wore shirts of this kind when playing sports, he argued. Citing tennis, propriety, and "savoir vivre," this short letter by the 25-year old Lumumba may seem naïve, yet it shows his concern with appearance, strength of character, and willful determination to be *better* than

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[62] Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 115; 146.
[63] Mitchell, "Showing Seeing."
[64] It seems significant that in both French and English, "fashion" etymologically is a mode, a means, an artifice, a presentation, a guise, a version of a fact.
[65] Patrice Lumumba, "La Mode Masculine à Stanleyville," *La Croix Du Congo* (Leopoldville, May 20, 1951).

whites around him. The *Croix* editors replied "fashion is fashion," and as such could not to be dictated. In any case, they added, they had not noticed such a trend in Leopoldville.

As he rose in late-colonial Congolese politics, Lumumba became a model in many interconnected indeed mutually constitutive ways: politics and style; the pursuit of modernity; and subject formation. Lumumba cultivated his physical and visual appearance in public through objects and features that became iconic. The hair part, as historian Mutamba Makomba told me, had its own nickname: "Albert." The glasses were sometimes dark; also included were the trimmed mustache and goatee, *almost* always a suit, and either a tie or bowtie. When not a suit, he wore a crisp white-collared shirt. Lumumba cultivated this look early on. His visual presentation was an element of his politics. *Evolués* and especially *immatriculés* as "political categories" could not exist apart from clothing. Clothes and hair belong, still most everywhere, to the material culture of politics; they ground, in the words of Jean-François Bayart, the political *imaginaire*.[66]

There was an idea of the "false *évolué*" – who drank in bars and socialized with "free" women, who had hidden wives,[67] and did notspend enough time reading books.[68] This "false *évolué* was often denounced, his practices *unmasked*, in the *évolué* press. Such denunciation remasked the tenuousness of *évolué* as a category, its rigidities, hypocrisies, and ultimately its repressive aspect. This ambivalence points to competition for approval on the part of colonial figures who occupied the "middle" of a mass of "natives." The world of the *évolué*, in many respects, was unreal.

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[66] Bayart, *The Illusion of Cultural Identity*, 181.
[67] Hunt, "Noise over Camouflaged Polygamy."
[68] Tödt, "'Vers L'avenir.' The Making of an African Elite in Belgian Congo," 1–37

The preferential treatment accorded to *évolués* became an important topic of

discussion.[69] If *évolué* was a contested category, its rhetorical use was performative.

Photographic images expressed this well, and portrait photography was a favored genre of

this bourgeois-aspiring category. Bogumil Jewsiewicki writes that the portrait was a genre

that allowed fixing of persons to objects, "the possession of which indicates a given

position in social space: glasses, tie, suit, etc.[70] Alphonse Mbuyamba Kankolongo writes:

> Before the country gained independence, people wore beards. It was considered as a
> distinguishing feature of revolution. With this in mind, Lumumba had asked all
> Congolese to keep their "beards" until the country gained independence. Whites
> became frightened of all those who let their "beards" grow as a sign of revolution, as
> this was the symbol of the struggle.[71]

And indeed, the beard in the 1960s and 1970s became an international signifier of

anti-imperialist, "*tiers-mondiste*" revolution. American "beats" in the 1950s sported

beards and goatees,[72] but Lumumba may have initiated this particular "look" in Congolese

politics.

Let us consider the decade that followed Lumumba's elimination from Congolese

politics for a moment. When the head of state, Joseph Desiré Mobutu, proclaimed his

policy of "recourse to authenticity" in 1972,[73] many "people hid their ties and suit

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[69] Ibid.

[70] Jewsiewicki, "Corps interdits. La représentation christique de Lumumba comme rédempteur du peuple zaïrois," 119.

[71] "Avant l'accession du pays à l'indépendance, il y eut le port de la *barbe*. Celle-ci était considérée comme un signe distinctif de révolution. A ce propos, Lumumba avait demandé à tous les Congolais de garder la "barbe" et ce, jusqu'à l'accession du pays à l'indépendance. Symbole de combat, les Blancs eurent peur de tous ceux qui avaient laissé pousser leur "barbe" en signe de révolution." In Halen, Pierre and Riesz, "Quelques témoignages sur Lumumba. Receuillis par Alphonse Mbuyamba Kankolongo le dimanche 15 octobre 1995 dans la zone de Lemba à Kinshasa, de 16h40 à 18h30," 135.

[72] Paul O'Neill, "The Only Rebellion Around: But the Shabby Beats Bungle the Job in Arguing, Sulking and Bad Poetry," *Life Magazine*, November 30, 1959, 116; 130. The "beard" figured among the "beats'" supposed "shabbiness."

[73] According to this new policy under Mobutu, the country was renamed Zaire. Its citizens were made to give up their "western" names in favor of "African" ones. For men, the classic suit and tie

jackets." They became afraid of being associated with Lumumba: "Anyone who publicly evoked Lumumba's name or displayed a photograph of him in the front room was considered a communist."[74] Yet did the suit-and-tie still evoke an *évolué* in the 1970s? And was this dress more a symbol of Lumumba? When Tshibumba Kanda Matulu began painting popular paintings of Congo's history in Lubumbashi in the 1970s, he included many of Lumumba.[75] Most painters based their images on press photographs of the "crisis," making visual arguments about Lumumba's arrest that show him, pointedly and as was the case in the newsreels, in an undershirt.

When Mobutu prohibited suits and ties and imposed the Abacost in the name of "authenticity," he was responding less to the visuality of the *évolué* than to the politics of the master *évolué*, Lumumba Clothes do not simply participate in politics of aesthetics. Rather Mobutu, like *évolués*, situated dress itself as a strong political statement. When in 1990, Mobutu decided to allow opposition parties to organize and express opinions publicly, he decided to lift the interdiction against the suit and tie, to "make his thaw more credible."[76] When Mobutu lifted the authenticity dress prohibitions, Bayart also noted, people dug up their old clothes or that of their parents, and the effect was "surreal," with temporality momentarily unhinged, and everyone going around wearing 1960s styles.[77]

Mobutu never engaged in loud public denunciations against his nemesis, Lumumba. Initially he feigned to promote him, and then imposed a regime of silence and invisibility

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were replaced by something called the "Abacost" (which stood for A bas le costard – or "down with the suit").
[74] dia Mwembu, "Popular Memories of Patrice Lumumba," 65. Dibwe is citing an interview with "an old Songye" conducted in 1995. Songye, who, at least since the end of the nineteenth century have been very close to the Tetela, as well as the latter, Dibwe writes, continued to hold Lumumba up as their hero through the Mobutu era.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Bayart, *The Illusion of Cultural Identity*, 219.

toward the hero's person, life, and figure.[78] At the same time, Mobutu sought to own

Lumumba's legacy, and this involved another kind of battle on a terrain of visuality.

Mobutu and his advisers were savvy in manipulate media and its images. The visual

universe of political performance in the late Belgian Congo had a bourgeois surface; men

presented a type of masculinity, indexed by the suit and tie and hair part. This visual

history is one of social and political relations in a world of photography and film, open to

and contiguous with material worlds. Mutamba writes about Lumumba moralizing in his

articles, seeking greater cohesion among *évolué* elites, to lift up ("réhausser") their

image—in the eyes of Europeans, but perhaps especially Congolese.

Lumumba was acutely aware how whites looked at Congolese. He felt the colonial

gaze, and wanted to counter it. A great deal of his interventions were on the terrain of the

seen; they were about the look, that is, ways of dressing and presenting oneself. They were

about style.

The "beer wars:" Non-*évolué* discursive spaces.

Upon his release from prison in the fall of 1957, Lumumba moved to Léopoldville

where he began working for the Bracongo beer company, promoting its Polar beer in bars

across this booming city. Lumumba was extremely successful at his new job. Polar's rival,

Primus, began its own campaign in Leopoldville's "native" bars. This beer-drenched

commercial rivalry became known as the time of the "beer wars." Congolese bars were

also sites of late colonial political activity.

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Jewsiewicki, "Figure des mémoires congolaises de Lumumba: Moïse, héros culturel, Jésuvrs-Christ," 355; dia Mwembu, "Popular Memories of Patrice Lumumba," 63.

This beer war truly translated atmosphere in native Leopoldville at the time of the political discussions of 1959 to June 1960 […] The native masses really formed their opinions at night, in the bars of the township, and not around the conference tables of Brussels or Léopoldville.[79]

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[79] "Cette guerre des bières fut vraiment l'atmosphère du Léo indigène pendant les discussions politiques de la fin 1959 jusqu'a juin 1960 […] la véritable opinion des masses indigènes se formait le soir, dans les bars de la cite et pas autours des tables de conférences de Bruxelles ou de Léo." Halen and János Riesz, eds., "Patrice Lumumba et la guerre des bières. Un témoignage (anonyme)," in *Patrice Lumumba entre Dieu et Diable: un héros africain dans ses images* (Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 1997), 93.

Photo 11 | Une manifestation au bar de la Bracongo. On reconnaît P. Lumumba, derrière l'un des directeurs européens de la brasserie en 1958, et Louis Sockony, à droite de ce dernier, portant un nœud papillon.

Photo 12 : Publicité pour la bière Polar.

Figure 106: Top: An event at a Bracongo bar. Bottom: Polar beer advertisement.[80]

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[80] Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*.

Figure 107: 16 Congolese delegates on a fact-finding mission to Belgium. 1956.[81]

Like the spatial dislocation of politics from conference tables to bars, Lumumba's

visuality had other contexts. He had existences other than his smooth and impressive

presentation. Evenings spent in bars, drinking, dancing, and talking with men and women

of all ilks, loosened real and figurative collars. Yet, such occasions did not necessarily

disrupt Lumumba's careful image, particularly if cameras were present. Léopoldville in

the 1950s had a more relaxed social atmosphere than the provincial capital of Stanleyville.

In the capital, Congolese and Europeans socialized together more easily and openly, and

with less anxiety. Lumumba and another Belgian friend, the administrator Albert Hubert,

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[81] Ibid.

went bar crawling in European bars, where Lumumba perhaps danced with European women.[82]

African photographers like the Angolan, Jean Depara, drifted through this late colonial urban world. Depara presented Leo as endless corridors of night. While his images of subcultures and nightlife stand in opposition to respectable or "bourgeois" family portraits, these image worlds are in many ways contiguous. They flow into each other, presenting a continuum of the experience of being a colonial subject in cities of 1950s Belgian Congo. This is where images of Leopoldville nightlife connect with self-presentations as *évolués*. The nighttime images, by Depara, constituted the other side of the images in *Voix du Congolais* or *Nos Images*. In these urban spaces of the night *évolué* respectability – whether aimed at Congolese or at Belgians – was no longer present.

Accra, a turning point

Having written his book *Le Congo, terre d'avenir, est-il menacé*[83] from prison, Patrice Lumumba began to shed his *évolué* skin after 1957. His December 1958 trip to the "All African Peoples' Conference" convened by Kwame Nkrumah, president of Ghana, sub-Saharan Africa's first decolonized nation in 1957 was, according to most historians, the turning point. It was the moment Lumumba's "horizons of expectation"[84] began to recede beyond what the Belgian Congo had to offer him, politically, socially, and

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[82] Ibid., 108.

[83] Patrice Lumumba, *Le Congo, terre d'avenir, est-il menacé* (Bruxelles: Office de publicité, 1961). This text, conciliatory and even obsequious toward the colonial regime, has been much debated. "Who" was Lumumba when he wrote this text? Most believe that he was still, very much, a colonial *évolué* whose wish was This text is often considered as the antithesis of Lumumba's "inflammatory" 30 June speech.

[84] Koselleck, *Futures Past on the Semantics of Historical Time*.

culturally.[85] The speech Lumumba made in Accra that year prefigured his famous

independence day speech of 30 June 1960.[86]

> Down with colonialism and imperialism.
> Down with racism and tribalism.
> And long live the Congolese nation, long live independent Africa[87]

Figure 108: Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba speaks at the opening of the All-African Peoples' Conference in Accra, Ghana. 1958.

Compared to the enormous, ordered, and grid-like spaces of Belgian political

conferences (see Figure 107), the Accra conference room in Figure 108, was not made to

assist in a colonial performance. Yet, in the photograph of Lumumba reading his speech,

he still had a slouch, and still seemed nervous.

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[85] Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba,* 171–175.
[86] I return to this speech and its consequences below.
[87] Reprinted in Lierde, *La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba*.

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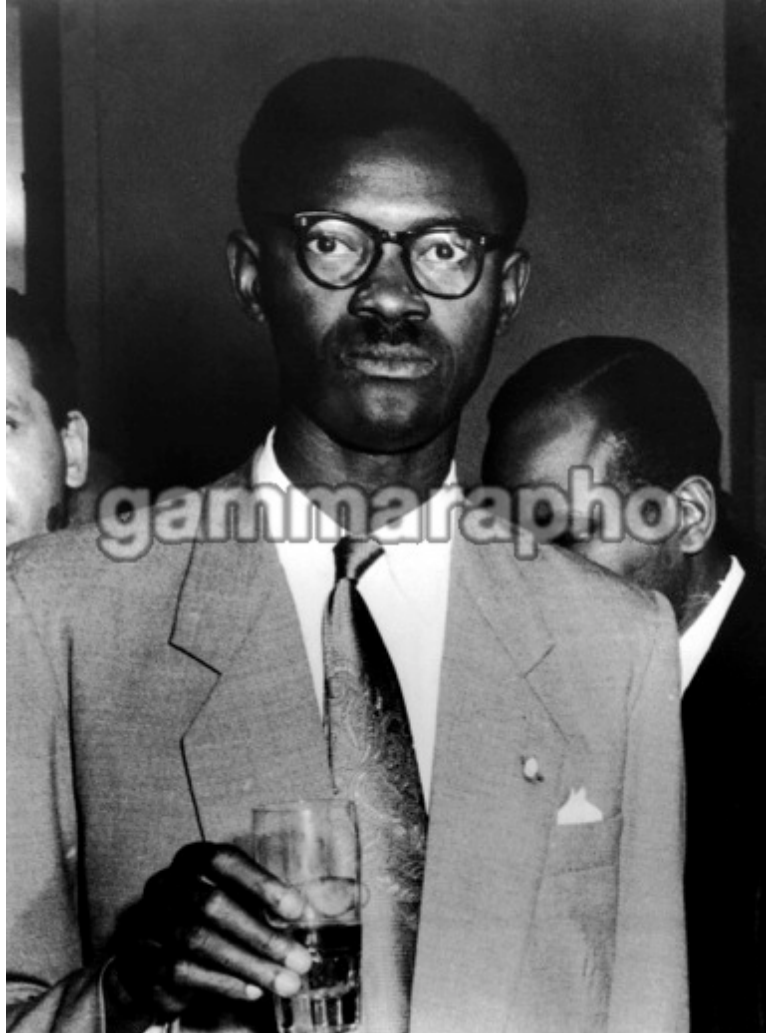
Figure 109: Belgium c. 1958: Patrice Lumumba, in Brussels, 1958 (Photo by Keystone France/Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images)

Taken in 1958, in Belgium, Figure 109**,** reveals, once more, a nervous Patrice Lumumba. The glasses were not quite right; the mustache was not right; the tie was askew. The eyes were wide; the mouth was tense. The expression was serious. Here, Lumumba was in Belgium for the World Exhibition and meetings with politicians. Belgium had hosted dozens of world exhibitions since the 1880s and had a long history of

inserting Congolese into its colonial performances.[88] Congolese villages and other such

displays were a featured part of every world and colonial exhibition down to 1958. While

high ranking *évolués* such as Lumumba visited the World Fair, they were also confronted

by, once more, "native villages," located next to, and so as to form a contrast with, the

"ultramodern" buildings and atomium, built for the occasion.[89] In Figure 109 Lumumba's

bearing reveals the tension of the *évolué*.

Beginning about 1959, a completely different Lumumba emerged. At the head of his

party, the MNC-Lumumba, he was no longer *évolué*. Instead he was about to become the

Prime Minister of an independent African nation-state. There are several "Tetela images"

of Lumumba, which clarify this transition from *évolué* to what lay beyond.

Lumumba Tetela.

As several photographs that most Congolese would recognize as "Tetela" show,

Lumumba's image acted as visual medium that brought ancient histories of leadership and

prestige in Congo to a late colonial moment, connecting them with modern ideas about

"Tetelaness." How and when this "ethnic" fact came into play depended on political

expediencies. Lumumba utilized the fact of his Tetela belonging and its visuality to garner

political support. Strikingly, this visuality had little relationship to the colonial

representations of Tetela I discuss in Chapter 2, which favored musical instruments and

feather headdresses. Instead, Lumumba's "Tetela" look foregrounded other insignia of

customary power: the leopard skin and the tipoy. These two elements brought together

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[88] Matthew Stanard, "'Bilan Du Monde Pour Un Monde Plus Déshumanisé': The 1958 Brussels World's Fair and Belgian Perceptions of the Congo," *European History Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (April 2005): 269–70.
[89] Ibid.

symbols of chiefship common to the entire central basin, mostly of the equatorial forest, and a more recent symbol of unified politics. The "tipoy" is an old symbol of paramount chiefship. Tetela associate the tipoy with Ngongo Leteta. For all Congolese, it became associated with colonialism, that is, with white men and women, being carried by African porters. Figure 110 and Figure 111 also served a "universalizing" Tetela agenda that put forward Tetela leadership. By the 1950s, this agenda focused on Lumumba, as salutary for the emerging nation because of a widespread understanding, shared among Tetela, Congolese in general, Belgian colonial administrators and missionaries, and even historians, that the Tetela are a people who possess intrinsic "leadership qualities." In a 1963 article about Sankuru, Verhaegen wrote:

> The rise of Mr. Lumumba to power in Leopoldville and the departure of the Baluba [from the MNC in Sankuru in 1960], further increased the Batetela's relative advantage in [the area of political leadership]. Indeed, nothing impelled them toward ethnic or regional particularisms, from which they would have little to gain given the relative poverty of their region.[90]

Dibwe argues as well that the Tetela "lifted up the memory of the liberator of the Congo, the only true leopard. They refused to concede this symbol of supreme power to Mobutu the dictator."[91] The leopard has been a symbol of power and leadership throughout the Congo's forest areas since perhaps the fourteenth century.[92] Yet in the twentieth century, it became highly contested in symbolic struggles, mediated by photography and television. In Figure 111, Lumumba's "lifting" upon a tipoy, to use Dibwe's terms, was literally performed, and then photographed.

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[90]Benoît Verhaegen, "La Province Du Sankuru," *Etudes Congolaises* 5 (1963): 23. Emphasis added. "This area" refers to the leadership of a unified Congo. Emphasis added. "This area" refers to the leadership of a unified Congo.
[91] Mobutu always wore the leopard-skin toque as a symbol of power.
[92] Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

Figure 110: Lumumba with Leopard Toque. Taken on July 3, 1960.

Photo 20 : Patrice Lumumba transporté en *tipoy* à l'aéroport de Ndjili à son retour de la Table Ronde politique tenue à Bruxelles (janvier–février 1960), Léopoldville, 29 février 1960. Il est coiffé d'un bonnet et porte la ceinture en peau de léopard que les membres de son ethnie, les aTetela, lui ont conférée. Photo Onawelo.

Figure 111: Lumumba carried in a "tipoy" in the manner of Tetela customary chiefs.
Onawelo, *Patrice Lumumba transporté en tipoy à l'aéroport de Ndjili...*, b&w photograph, 1960.

Elsewhere Verhaegen writes that the Zanzibari gave the "Bakusu-Batetela" the opportunity to "test their ability" to impose their domination over other groups, but that the Belgians interrupted the process. Congo's decolonization between 1958 and 1960 offered the Tetela another chance at exerting authority over the entire nation. This is the reason, he writes, that "the M.N.C was in part the political expression of Bakusu-Batetela expansionism, as well as the staunchest bastion of the national unitary ideology.[93]

In his discussion of the 1964 Mulele (or Simba) rebellion, launched and fought in the name of Patrice Lumumba in eastern Congo, Verhaegen linked rebel leadership strongly with a "Bakusu-Batetela" ethnic identity, and once again connected Lumumba and his MNC party with a Tetela ideology of political unitarism. With Lumumba's visualized as a

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Tetela chief in 1959 and 1960, we are far from his *évolué* visuality of the mid-1950s. If "bar life" was a relief from the strongly textual, rigid and anxious *évolué* self-presentations, where smoothness of surface was key, Tetela visuality became a clear assertion of post-*évolué* and national decolonizing politics.

1960

In 1960, Lumumba had been thrown in prison once more on charges of inciting the Stanleyville riots of October 1959. Again, almost directly from prison he entered into a hastily concocted independence scheme: the Belgian-Congolese Round Table Negotiations held in Brussels in 1960. From June 30, 1960, the date of Congo's independence, Lumumba's rise and fall was dramatic. He struggled to stay at the head of a unified Congo against opposing political and economic interests, both national and international. Captured on December 1, 1960 as he tried to escape from Mobutu soldiers, he was murdered in January of 1961.[94]

On June 30, 1960, at the ceremony marking Congo's independence from colonial rule and attended by Belgium's King Baudouin, Lumumba, who was not among the scheduled speakers, got up and made a rousing, eloquent speech. He denounced colonialism, and told his fellow Congolese gathered throughout the country around transistor radios, that from that day forward they were free, that, whatever came next, they would never again be the slaves of white men.

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[93] Verhaegen, "Les rébellions populaires au Congo en 1964," 357.
[94] Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*; Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*; Mutamba Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba, correspondant de presse, 1948-1956*; Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London and New York: Verso, 2001).

Lumumba's friend, so it was said, was Joseph Desiré Mobutu, a journalist who had

once been a sergeant in the Force Publique. Lumumba appointed him as the head of the

army in the new government, thereby handing him the means of betrayal. In 1960, as the

Force Publique, recently renamed the National Congolese Army, fed up with the lack of

advancement opportunities for Congolese non-commissioned officers and frustrated by

their low salaries, mutinied and went on a rampage against many white colonials. In the

summer of 1960 the newly independent country fell apart in a very public, mediatized

fashion; its armed forces spun out of control; newsreels showed its white population

attempting to flee in a state of panic, while the Kasaï province exploded into violence. On

July 11, 1960, Katangese leader Moïse Tshombe declared his Province's secession from

the Congolese nation. Lumumba asked the United Nations and the United States for

support against Tshombe's secession. This was refused. The Soviet Union, on the other

hand, was happy to oblige and offer its assistance. This series of events provided the

Western powers with the justification they needed to get rid of Lumumba. Tshombe and

Mobutu, together with the Belgian government, and with some assistance from the

American C.I.A. conspired, and carried out a plan to destabilize the new government, and

then depose, kidnap, and assassinate Lumumba.[95] Two other men were killed with

Lumumba in Katanga: his Ministers of State, Joseph Okito, the same man who had written

a biographical article about Ngongo Leteta, and Maurice Mpolo. Many historians and

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[95] Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo: A Memoir of 1960-67*, 1st ed. (New York: Public Affairs, 2007); Scott Shane, "Memories of a C.I.A. Officer Resonate in a New Era," *The New York Times*, February 24, 2008, sec. International / Africa, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/24/world/africa/24congo.html. Larry Devlin, CIA station chief at Leopoldville in 1960, has recently revealed that the "lame duck" Eisenhower administration had ordered him to carry out Lumumba's assassination. He refused, but lent his and the United States' support to the Belgians who made it happen. Also see, Ibid. De Witte blames the Belgian government and connected business interests almost exclusively for Lumumba's assassination.

observers believe that Lumumba's June 30 speech, which so offended the Belgian King, was a mistake that cost him his life, and that a Belgian conspiracy to destabilize and oust Lumumba took shape in the immediate aftermath of June 30, 1960.[96]

The "Congo Crisis:" Cold War in High Gloss Black and White.

The Lumumba of the "Congo Crisis" was overwhelmingly a Lumumba reflected in a mirror of hegemony. From 1959 to 1961, the western media provided the stage, and to some degree set the terms of Lumumba's global visuality. In response, also on a mediated stage of international politics, a counter-discourse seeking to challenge western capitalist characterizations of Lumumba, performed its own visual dramas. In 1959-60, white anxiety at the possibility of black power and leadership presented Lumumba as "worrisome" (*inquiétant*).[97] This worry was not only based on Lumumba's words and actions as his politics radicalized in 1959. It was also based on what many called his limitless capacity for work, his boundless energy, and his physicality. High-level magistrates and administrators in the Congo, whether they supported Lumumba or were his adversaries, saw him in similar ways. They cited his dynamism, his "great arms, and eyes that threw lightening bolts into the African night [...,] his gaze, which at times could cause some concern."[98] They spoke of his eyes that lit up when he became enthusiastic in discussions; he appeared a lunatic in such moments.[99] Jean Aubertin, Lumumba's attorney during the Stanleyville riots trial wrote: "tall, flexible, thin, he is the very incarnation of fluidity [...] behind his dark glasses, which only half conceal his gaze, his eyes oscillate to

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[96] De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*.
[97] Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*, 232.
[98] Ibid.

and fro. He reveals white teeth…"[100] These descriptions also entered the ways Lumumba's image appeared in mass media during the his last two critical years, 1959 and 1960.

1950s and 1960s photography had a visual "edge," a sharpness due to better technologies of filming and printing, and achieved by the use of glossy paper. High-gloss black and white photography characterized the semiotics of Cold War visuality, and this visuality became one with "crisis." [101] This visual world was largely composed of political portraits; tense, frozen poses of men in suits shaking hands or standing side by side as so many ostensible displays of political cordiality that were really visual codes for the possibility of full breakdown. In the case of the Congo, breakdown is precisely what happened.

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[99] Ibid. The term used is *illuminé*, in French, which meant that one was as though lit from the inside, and was therefore unable to perceive reality.

[100] Ibid.

[101] A great visual commentary on this particular set of scopic regimes is Stanley Kubrick's 1964 film, *Dr. Strangelove*. Stanley Kubrick, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, 1964.

Photo taken in June, 1960, when Kasavubu and Lumumba had decided to cooperate. Cyrille Adoula (in middle) encouraged this reconciliation. ——Associated Press (Wide World Photos)

Figure 112: The Associated Press (Wide World Photos). Lumumba, Kasavubu, Adoula. 1960.

Figure 113: *Prime Minister Lumumba and Premier Eyskens Signing Act of Independence*, b&w photograph, 1960, © Bettmann/CORBIS.

Figure 114: Ian Berry, *AFRICA. Congo. Leopoldville. King Baudouin II of the Belgians Arrives at the Airport to Be Greeted by President Elect Joseph Kasavubu (centre) and Prime Minister Elect Patrice Lumumba (left). 1960,* Magnum Photos.

Figure 115: Ian Berry, AFRICA. Congo. Leopoldville. Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba Arguing with a Belgian Military Officer, 1960, Magnum Photos.

The Cold War era was marked by great displays of military pageantry. Unlike those

of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the military parades of the atomic age were

fraught with profound existential anxiety. Their terrifying pageantry was also circulated

into every corner of the world in newsreels and increasingly on television. In the 1950s

and 1960s, in a world still traumatized by the filmed and photographed horrors of the

Second World War, the nuclear bombing of Japan, and the colonial wars that followed

Cold War, military paranoia met ongoing decolonizations. This meeting generated images,

frightening to whites, of black and brown soldiers pointing guns at white civilians. Many Cold War newsreels contained loud, exaggerated, distorted operatic music, as jarring as it was ominous. It contributed to the anxiety of a starkly black-and- white, hyperglossy visuality. 1950s clothing styles similarly contributed to this visual starkness. Late 1950s and early 1960s clothing design was based on simple, streamlined, economical lines, dispensing with excess or opulence. It was well suited to the atomic age. Men's hair was trimmed very short, in nearly "military" fashion. Few grew beards. After he was arrested in his attempted flight and transfered to Léopoldvile, Lumumba was handed over to Tshombe and his henchmen. When he landed at Elisabethville (Lubumbashi), his last stop before he was murdered, Lumumba's goatee had been cut. Cutting his goatee was a petty act. It was a final visual and symbolic gesture, signifying to all that the man who had dared take the visual and discursive space reserved for those who thought themselves his "betters," was finally taken down.[102]

Spectacle: the *évolué's* demise

Thanks to television in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States and to a lesser extent in Europe, international news in pictures became more immediately available, making its way into "living rooms," into households' spaces of sociability. In Congo, radio remained the primary means of receiving national and international news. Colonel Joseph Désiré Mobutu, having organized a first coup d'état on September 14, 1960, issued a special invitation to international press photographers and TV crews to "witness" the

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[102] It was also clearly a symbolic act of castration.

mistreatments and humiliation of the "great" Lumumba.[103] The last the world saw of

Lumumba were the images of his brutalization.

Figure 116: Bettmann/CORBIS, *Troops Capturing Patrice Lumumba*, 1960.[104]

Lumumba's arrest, torture, and murder participated in introducing an extremely

public and scopic regime of violence, this time postcolonial, made for television and the

newspaper or magazine. It is ironic that while images of postcolonial violence in the 1960s

became commodified, through television's implantation into the "private sphere," the

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[103] Tshonda Omasombo and Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba*, 232.
[104] The original caption read as follows: "They've Got Him. Leopoldville, Congo: His arms roped behind him, ousted Congo Premier Patrice Lumumba (center) is roughly handled by soldiers here. Lumumba, attempting to flee to his stronghold at Stanleyville, was captured by troops of

preceding half-century of colonialism, with its own violences and horrors, remained more abstract, remote, simply hidden from sight. For the west, television inaugurated a new regime of public violence, whose preferred site was the "Third World," where it seemed acceptable, and soon normal, therefore, to show people being maltreated or even killed.[105]

Postmortem

Lumumba's "afterlife," as living memory, has also been of a strikingly visual nature, both in Congo and globally. In Congo, popular painters, most famously Tshibumba, to whom I have already referred above, have inscribed Lumumba's life and deeds in paintings.[106] These paintings condense popular memories, stories, and meanings as well as Zaire-era political commentary woven around the figure of Lumumba. Lumumba's life lends itself to dramatic narration: from a simple village boy, he rose to become the man who freed Congo from white domination, and then its martyred hero. His story is easily transformed into that of a black Christ,[107] savior of his people. A black Christ is not a "white" Christ; his is not the story of humanity's redemption through a wiling sacrifice.

Congolese strongman Col. Joseph Mobutu and returned to Leopoldville. on Dec. 6th, a Soviet effort to have Lumumba's treatment debated at the United Nations was defeated."

[105] While the 1960s produced an endless cortege of racial violence in the United States, this was not considered a state of "normality" the way that violence in the developing world is "seen." Euro-American projections of violence onto "other" spaces and bodies, first imperial, then post-imperial, was by no means a new political or representational device before the era of mass culture, yet the visuality of these projections proliferated and intensified in the 1960s. On imperial "representations," see for instance the essays in Henry Louis Gates, ed., *"Race," Writing, and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

[106] For examples of his work: Fabian, *Remembering the Present*; Jewsiewicki, *A Congo Chronicle*.

[107] Bogumil Jewsiewicki has written at length about Lumumba as a Christ figure. See, *A Congo Chronicle*; "Corps interdits"; dia Mwembu, "Popular Memories of Patrice Lumumba." While Jewsiewicki also interprets Lumumba, in certain representations, as a Moses figure, Dibwe sees him as a Black Christ.

An African Christ is more like an Old Testament hero or, as Jewsiewicki argues,[108] like

Moses, whose story told as a tale of oppression and liberation and even prophecy is an

especially embodied story.

The visual and affective registers, comprised by images and experiences of seeing

connected with Lumumba's person and his body, were not to be contained by the event of

his death. Quite to the contrary, Lumumba's visuality encompassed so much discourse,

rhetoric, representation, contestation, popular and official re-appropriationa and *bricolage*,

that it had the effect of unmooring Lumumba's image from fixed temporal orders, yet not

from history. His visuality, moreover, projected itself beyond his death to other places and

times. Pedro Monaville calls for a reevaluation of the causality driven, temporally

anchored discourse of history that relies on shared conceptualizations of progressive

temporality and on seldom challenged models of continuities and ruptures.[109] Lumumba's

image and his visuality only partly belongs to a specific historical time. Yet it continues to

produce history. In this regard, Bishnupriya Ghosh's recent writing about global icons is

germane.

Ghosh argues that icons are "corporeal apertures" to the popular or the possible.[110]

As such they invite "devotion," a physical and phenomenological relationship to the icon

in a religious sense. Icons are therefore "alluring" and "luminous" objects.[111] Certain icons

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[108] *A Congo Chronicle*; "Corps interdits. La représentation christique de Lumumba comme rédempteur du peuple zaïrois (Forbidden Bodies: Lumumba Christly Image as Redeemer of the People of Zaire)," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 36, no. 141/142 (January 1, 1996): 113–142; dia Mwembu, "Popular Memories of Patrice Lumumba."

[109] Pedro Monaville, "Histoires politiques congolaises. Esquisse d'une réflexion sur la chronologie," forthcoming, 2012.

[110] Bishnupriya Ghosh, *Global Icons: Apertures to the Popular* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[111] Ghosh does not insist on this point, but the inanimate and objectifiable quality of the iconic figure is achieved through the process of image-making, that is of transforming a person into an

become corporeal points of opening into subaltern social action, and connect, through the body of the iconic subject, with "the popular." At the point of intersection of people and icon, myriad potential reappropriations, or reassembling practices, such as cutting pasting, and citing, appear.

In Lumumba's case, visual inscriptions of history, postmortem, become a partial hagiography.[112] The global icon contained and expressed other images: that of the politically and socially engaged *évolué,* and that of the politician. The new elite, as it intervened in a vibrant public sphere of journals, magazines, clubs and associations, leaned on images of the monogamous, nuclear family with clean children, "separate spheres" ideology, and "*évoluée*" wives who kept a correct household. These images were in return the basic building blocks of late colonial *évolué* identity. Social categories were always also visual categories. Here, the image was the discursive surface of identity, putative, real, or imagined. The icon was also charismatic, including in a religious sense.[113]

Patrice Lumumba – as a man, figure, legend, and icon – still commands a geographically wide and a temporally deep visual field. This field encompasses a wide range of subject matter: Lumumba's earliest days as a colonial *évolué*, autodidact, but also restless spirit, and uncontainable maverick figure. Lumumba created himself visually for public consumption. But as decolonizations unfolded in Africa on a backdrop of the Cold War, and as Africans and subalterns throughout the world began to realize that

image fixed in materiality, such as a photograph, a drawing, a billboard, a digital or filmed image, etc. A human being who, as an icon, has become a "luminous" and "alluring" object has done so because all of his or her characteristics, contradictory or disparate, have been smoothed over, rounded-out and unified into surface.

[112] Bogumil Jewsiewicki, *A Congo Chronicle: Patrice Lumumba in Urban Art* (New York, NY: Museum for African Art, 1999).

decolonization was to remain an unfinished process, Lumumba's image became disconnected from this strict historical frameworks, from historicity.

Lumumba's visuality was also a set of visualized responses to his image. Images of him continued to circulate globally for decades. In the 1960s especially, these had the power to mobilize and radicalize political actors; they catalyzed anger, anchored demonstrations and protests, and generated new political visualities. In the 1960s and 1970s, Lumumba joined Ernesto "Che" Guevara in a romantic pantheon of fallen freedom fighters.

Burning cars, riots and protests in front of embassies, the unprecedented riot at the United Nation's General Assembly in 1960; all of this was photographed (and filmed for news) and is part of the wide field of Lumumba's visuality. Television spectators and news consumers created new visual regimes in the mid-twentieth century. In this virtual arena, the stakes were real: there were violent protests, riots, and arrests, but the process was also performative. The cameras made it so. Lumumba's postmortem image was especially meaningful in a context of mass media and popular reappropriation of his visuality, that of his own gaze upon his body, reprocessed by the gazes of others.

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[113] Max Weber, *Wirtschaft Und Gesellschaft* (University of California Press, 1978).

Figure 117: Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone, *Ghanians Demonstrating in Accra in February 1961 to Protest Against the Assassination of Patrice Lumumba, ex-Prime Minister of Congo*, **1961.**

Figure 118: James Whitmore, *Students Demonstrating at Belgian Embassy After Learning of Patrice Lumumba's Death*, 1961, Time Life Pictures/Getty Images.

As a field, Lumuba's visuality encompasses so much that it unmoors his image from temporality itself. The popular paintings tell a history that is not always tied to strict linear chronologies. Some Lumumba visuality could be reverberation or refraction, the result of visual and material phenomena, or a visual and phenomenological after-effect, as in the demonstration and riots. The post-mortem visuality also delocalizes and globalizes the

Lumumba icon, as his image is continually reinscribed and reassembled.[114] Consider non-Congolese contexts, as in the personal styles of Thelonius Monk and Malcolm X. Why did Malcolm X and jazz musicians like Theolonius Monk take on Lumumba's look, his glasses and goatee? Because of the appealing masculinity with an edge, one which combined unshakable elegance with a will to challenge oppression.

Lumumba's Body

Gerard Soete, the guilt-ridden police commissioner was among those responsible for "disposing of" Lumumba's dead body. The idea was to make it literally disappear after his murder. During an interview for a documentary, Soete produced two of Patrice Lumumba's teeth and a bullet also removed from his skull. De Witte noted: "Elsewhere [Soete] said he 'may have' kept one of Lumumba's phalanx bones.[115] For the Belgian state and other Cold War interests in the early 1960s, the idea was not only to physically eliminate the man; in addition, as De Witte notes "his life and work were not to become a source of inspiration for the peoples of Africa either."[116] Physical eradication of his body became a precondition for political neutralization. This fascination with Lumumba's body, with the ways that his murderers became fascinated with the object and its destruction, came up again in a documentary on the French-German television network, ARTE. The film opens with Gerard Soete, laboriously unwrapping Lumumba's teeth from a tiny tightly folded piece of paper.[117]

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[114] Bishnupriya Ghosh, *Global Icons: Apertures to the Popular* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
[115] De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, xviii.
[116] Ibid., xxi.

Conclusion

A visual history of Patrice Lumumba must continually divide and reunite historical actor and figure - the image, the icon that was and is still produced, circulated, taken apart, reassembled, and consumed across times, contexts, histories, and social relations. Lumumba the man cannot exist, whether in memory or scholarship, without his image. The relationship of man to image continues to be dialectical. One constantly redefines the other; they are correlated.

Lumumba at first put himself forward in the world of 1950s Belgian Congo as a Congolese *évolué*, and, in his last moments, it was *that* visuality that was taken down, after being paraded in front of the world in photographs and newsreels. Yet through a number of politically and visually transformative acts, Lumumba was a reorganizer of decolonizing and early postcolonial Congolese visual categories. He was also the victim of his own visuality, one whose victimization was, in important ways, a spectacle, a grotesque, macabre *mise-en-scène* aware of its own theatricality.

Lumumba's visuality has spanned overlapping categories and temporalities. Visually, Lumumba was an icon bore a relationship to the category of *évolué* in the Belgian Congo, his cultural politics, existential anxiety, and dependence on the apparatus of colonialism. Yet Lumumba's desire to turn Congolese into decolonized subjects and his political and visual jettisoning of the *évolué as* that anxious and insecure colonial category precipitated the backlash: Mobutu's postcolony as an attempt at neutralizing the decolonized subject, keeping him/her, in a very concrete and material way, from being a free person.

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[117] Giefer, *Patrice Lumumba, une tragédie africaine*.

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Images construct and are constructed by their audiences. Photographic images, in particular, operate discursively and emotionally; their reception modes constantly switch from one register to the other.[118] Lumumba has meant different things to different people. There is a sense in which "Lumumba" has become an image; in fact he has *long* been one. But not just that. Rather he is still, and has been for several decades (probably since about 1960), a "man-image" (half-man, half-image). Lumumba as a "were-image" has inhabited the historical figure, the father of Congolese independence, the "national hero," the family man, and of course the *évolué*. The man-image has inhabited Lumumba as symbol of Third World aspirations and of Cold War "anti-Communist" paranoias. It has inhabited figures such as Malcolm X and even Thelonius Monk.

Those who actually remember Lumumba are few; the majority of Congolese were born long after Lumumba's death. But his image has endured. His legend is intensely connected with a visual mythology or a mythological iconography.[119] In the Congo, and later in Zaire, Mobutu developed a ruthlessly effective policy of simultaneously suppressing and promoting Lumumba's memory.[120] Lumumba's actual comrades were killed or exiled; and Mobutu sought to banish, or at least minimize and control, all images of Lumumba in favor of his own as the only leader of Zaire. Monuments were left half built, or were built in places that the regime rendered inaccessible, such as Onalua, for example, Lumumba's birth village. After 1965, Mobutu deliberately marginalized Sankuru province which stayed poor and isolated.[121] What is astounding about Lumumba's "monument" in Onalua is that it looks like a tomb. In a perverse twist, the

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[118] Thomas, "The Evidence of Sight."

[119] Jewsiewicki, *A Congo Chronicle*; Jewsiewicki, "Figure des mémoires congolaises de Lumumba: Moïse, héros culturel, Jésus-Christ."

[120] Ibid.

inscription reads: "Here was born the National Hero, P.E. Lumumba." The little niche in the front was meant to house a photograph. When Papa Rudolphe and I traveled to his birthplace of Lubefu in Sankuru, he showed me his parents' house, now without a secure roof. At the back are his parents' graves. And he too, has two photographs that he keeps with the intention of placing in a special niche in each tomb, when he finds the money to build the tombstones.

Figure 119: Patrice Lumumba's monument in Onalua (Photograph by author)

In the 1960s and early 1970s, Lumumba's global visibility was an after-effect since his body disappeared at the time of his murder. In the turbulent contexts of cold and

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[121] de Heusch, *Mémoire mon beau navire. Les vacances d'un ethnologue*.

"proxy" wars, and hoped for revolutions, his visibility was mainly expressed in his

circulation as a "super-icon" of the left, whether by the self-appointed institutional left

represented by China and the Soviet Union, or the "free thinking" radical left of students,

revolutionaries, and Pan-Africanists. As more colonial regimes fell in Africa, Lumumba's

name was inscribed and consecrated on cityscapes as a symbol of the progressive

modernist dreams of early postcolonial nation states. Almost every major city in Africa

has a large and important street or avenue, a school, or a hospital named "Lumumba."[122]

"Lumumba" continued to function thereafter, doubly, as signifier and trace of what

remained of such early dreams: cityscapes that decayed into material expressions of vexed

and ruined nationalisms and their historiographies.[123]

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[122] Tillim, *Avenue Patrice Lumumba*.
[123] Ibid. I weave the notion of historiography into Tillim's argument; in doing so I reintroduce early postcolonial historiography in Africa as sharing discursive space with social and political action.
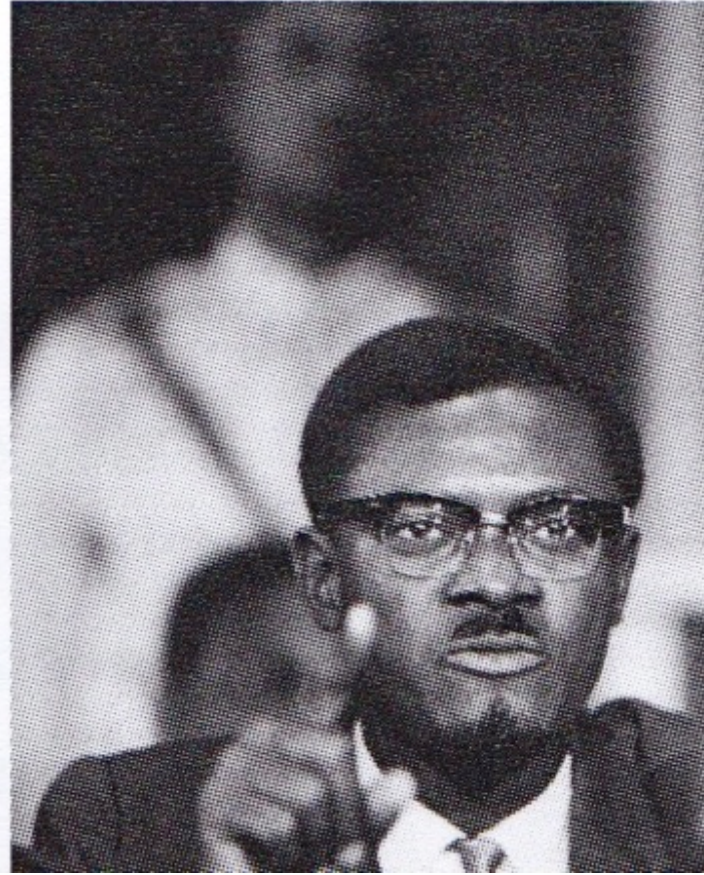
Figure 120: Bob Gomel, Prime Minister of the Congo Patrice Lumumba at a UN Security Council Discussion About the RB-47 Incident, 1960, TIME & LIFE Images.

Conclusion

Empire was visual. This is more significant than merely stating that Belgium put a

cultural politics in place alongside its political, social, scientific, and economic agendas.

The visuality of colonial states, moreover, is also broader than what colonial museums,

exhibitions, publications, and films could encompass. What became "the Congo" was

"imagined."[1] Interactions among Zanzibari, Congolese, and Europeans in the 1870s and

1880s, created new mental pathways, new categories of knowledge, and new possibilities

for self-fashioning. These emerged, perhaps especially, through visual experiences and

exchanges.

This dissertation on colonialism and visuality in the Congo is a work in visual

history, grounded in examples and artifacts from the history of the Congo Free State

(1885-1908) and the Belgian Congo up to the time of decolonization and independence

(1908-1960). It is divided into two main historical periods separated by the global event

of the Second World War. The pre-war chapters (1 and 2) operate in tandem and provide

an analysis of how and why social and "ethnic" categories of Tetela and their visual

meanings emerged and changed over fifty or so years. By the 1950s, the last decade of

Belgian colonialism in Africa, all such Tetela characterizations, imaginings, and

elaborations were in place. These were also the categories that late colonial Congolese

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

engaged. By 1950s, there was a shared frame of reference among persons in the colony about "who" the Tetela were.[2] Those who partook in this Tetela knowledge included Belgians, Congolese, and all such other colonial "others" as Lebanese, Greeks, Portuguese, and the like. In using the term "partake," I wish to emphasize the collective and unstructured aspects of acquiring, using, and producing knowledge – in this case ethnic/ethnographic knowledge. By organizing the dissertation into two parts, and making each do different work, I bring visuality to the dissertation's conceptual front and show how, as an academic and intellectual construct which nonetheless continuously gestures back to the phenomenological and the material, it is deeply embedded in the production of "history" – in the academy and elsewhere.

Two figures, both key to the history of the Congo, bracket this dissertation: Ngongo Leteta and Patrice Lumumba. Both are Tetela, and neither remains entirely uncontested by Tetela. Struggles around these figures' memories and histories continue to have a clear visual dimension, in paintings and photographs. Such contestations, which take place on the terrain of visuality, organize Congolese conversations about Ngongo and Lumumba, and do so in relation to a Tetela "ethnic" category. Some images reiterate Patrice Lumumba as a Tetela, and, as I have suggested, to an important degree this has organized certain constituencies in relation to the history of Congo's decolonization and of Joseph Mobutu's thirty-year dictatorship.

The visualities of Ngongo Leteta and Patrice Lumumba, both of whom have been "Tetela" historical actors in addition to other kinds of subjects, suggests that modern Congolese sociological and political imaginations should not be conceived apart from

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[2] It is understood that such "being" is never singular nor necessarily ever really known from one moment to the next.

their visualities. Ngongo was a seeing actor *and* a seen subject. To return to the question of why there are no photographs of Ngongo, this visual erasure is significant on many levels. Instead of there being "incontrovertible" evidence of Ngongo's historical existence, which a photograph could offer, we are left with insistent archival evidence of his seeing. Quite apart from the violence his personage exuded, evidence that Ngongo Leteta was a visual subject is also evidence of his having been a historical subject. The Congolese "history" paintings of Ngongo Leteta fit within a specific genre, one which, by following a particular formula, brings out, emphasizes, and truly renders the visuality of early textual accounts.

In the 1970s, Joseph Mobutu's clever and sinister strategy was to subtly hijack and appropriate Lumumba's *visuality*. Coming up as a colonial subject in the Belgian Congo, the former Zairian dictator was well aware that Lumumba's impact was, almost from the beginning of the latter's public life, chiefly visual. In Patrice Lumumba's time of global mass media, imperial erasure could not occur visually. Instead, the furies of neocolonialism made every effort toward his absolute physical elimination. Lumumba's image, which cannot go away, has overtaken his "identity." Here I use the term identity to refer specifically to the fixed "civil" or bureaucratic category, beloved by the modern state, that relies on data such as one's birth, schooling, marriage, movements in time and space, and finally death. In the chief's house at Onalua,[3] Papa Rudolphe and I were greeted by an elderly woman; and while Papa Rudolphe whispered to me that she was "inebriated," she shook my hand very demonstratively and insisted on showing me her old Zairian identity card, which of course contained her picture. Jewsiewicki's work on "ID" pictures in 1970s and 1980s Zaire proposes these as models and bases for the

popular genre of portrait painting. In Zaire, men and women would commission painters to make their portraits, which would be displayed in "middle class" homes in Zaire and were, according to Jewsiewicki, key ways of demonstrating prestige and respectability. What Jewsiewicki retrieves from of these practices is a "being Zairian" (*être Zairois*), the performance of collective subjecthood in relationship to national identity.[4]

Figure 121: In the Chief's house at Onalua (photograph by author)

Photographs are especially in tension with verbal and textual forms, and in at least two ways. One is the "archival" level. Historical actors take particular photographs, print them, prepare them, embed them in printed matter, and publish them. They embed them in discourse and wrap them up in bundles of text and rhetoric. As such photographs have social and material lives and contexts. Photographs are also in tension with text at a

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[3] Patrice Lumumba's birth village.

"cognitive" level: the tension between what Julia Adeney Thomas has called "recognition and excavation."[5] On one hand we "understand" a photograph when we reposition it into "the discursive system that produced it."[6] On the other hand, there is a "recognition" process at work in seeing that, according to brain scientists, occurs pre-verbally, the moment before the seeing subject goes through the process of calling what is depicted by its name. Recognition is thus pre-discursive,[7] and seeing has a certain unstructured autonomy that will, no matter what other social and cultural systems may be in place, lend a pure "imageness" to an image.

Photographs are also in tension with other types of images. "Intervisuality" is a key analytical concept for any visual history. Images can exist in discursive contexts; they can be embedded in social relations and practices, but they also exist, and must be considered, in visual contexts. In the second chapter we saw that a number of colonial photographs passed into other kinds of media, illustrations most particularly. Drawing or painting an image from a photograph turns the photograph's ontology on its head. Not only does such a process take away a photograph's indexicality, it also imposes degrees of authorial control and intentionality, from which, because of its very nature, a photographic image always escapes. In the cases of the colonial images I considered here, the illustrations made from photographs (as in chapters 2 and 3) resulted in a flattening of the originals. On the other hand, such illustrations have the effect of revealing to contemporary viewers the visually expressed ideology that the colonial apparatus sought to impose on representing and seeing.

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[4] Jewsiewicki, "Corps interdits," 114.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Thomas, "The Evidence of Sight," 154.
[7] Ibid., 158.

In my fieldwork in and out of Sankuru in 2008 and 2009, it was clear that the set of images I had brought with me – a very diverse but easily reified visual archive – had become imbricated in the subjectivities of many contemporary Tetela. Photographs allow simultaneous meanings to exist side by side, and "alternative" readings to emerge. Particular photographs can act as sites of dialogue in the formation of individual and collective subjects. They are also surfaces upon which to inscribe meanings about selves. The photographic images I showed interlocutors in Sankuru allowed seeing subjects to inscribe many Tetela meanings at their disposal onto these images. Very clearly, seeing itself is inscribing.

What many Tetela think of as "history" nowadays is oftentimes a set of seemingly irreconcilable narratives and "explanations."[8] When I traveled to Sankuru, I wanted to visit the locations I had read about in colonial archives, and experience them together with Tetela as "memory sites." I also wanted to meet and interview as many Tetela men and women of various ages circumstances as possible. In these conversations we spoke about life trajectories, Tetela histories, and Tetela spoken traditions. The latter are epics: historical narratives rendered in a symbolic mode, and containing structuring elements.[9] Oral narratives were important for my interlocutors. They were ways of reaching back beyond and bracketing colonialism, as well as pulling a specifically *Tetela* reality and experience into the present, thereby also marginalizing the significance of colonialism. Second, these mythologized and historical narratives were means of periodization. In

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[8] No only are the foundational oral traditions in "contradiction" with other historical narratives about the more recent past, but all are significantly contested by Tetela, and participate in constant political reckonings and balance sheets.

[9] For different approaches to myth and history, see, Thomas, "The Evidence of Sight," 158.

conversations, Tetela cast the precolonial as the time "before the rupture" of a modern

political history, a rupture of which Ngongo Leteta remains the symbol and the

facilitator. Finally, precolonial histories and narratives emplace different Tetela groups

within the geography of modern Congo, thereby naturalizing the colonial invention of

"Sankuru."

In Sankuru especially, but also in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, and Brussels,

conversations about the past often began with the "present." Narratives of recent

experiences, or those within living memory, served as a means of reading and re-

narrating older histories. Whether ancient, colonial, or postcolonial, Tetela histories are

of course dynamic; their production continues to be a process of creating and recreating

categories, narratives, and structuring features.[10]

In this dissertation I have engaged with connections between violence and

visuality by analyzing texts and their rhetorical strategies. We have seen that

"eyewitnessing," as a rhetorical operation, organizes economies of vision and visuality

around violence. Connections between violence and visuality suggested themselves to me

strongly during my field research in Sankuru. In the village of Lubefu I spoke with Abbé

Marcel. He wanted to speak about the events of the recent past: the 1998-2002

"Rwandan" invasion and made connections between recent and more distant events.

Many blended into one another. He spoke about the "Mai Mai" of today's wars, drawing

a distinction between "real" and "false" ones. Those near Lubefu in the late 1990s and

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[10] The histories Tetela tell, which they also consider to be memories, are meant to be spoken narratives, and this oral rhetorical form has also been the basis for much historical writing on the part of Tetela intellectuals. Luise White, Stephan Miescher, and David William Cohen, eds., *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History*, African Systems of Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). Cohen, White, and Miescher's introduction to this volume is worth revisiting.

early 2000s were thugs, Abbé Marcel said, who committed atrocities against the population. On the Lomami river, only a few miles east of Lubefu, some Mai Mai perpetrated horrible acts; they burned people alive. Marcel ended by saying: "There is a boy here who witnessed all of this. He is still around." He left this information to linger between us, suggesting nothing further. It seemed his way of expressing disbelief that someone who witnessed such horrors as a child could still be "around," casually, like everyone else.

Tetela ethnographic knowledge, elements of which Congolese conveyed into colonial knowledge systems through their early contacts with Europeans, came out of texts and photographs from the 1890s to about 1930. This ethnographic knowledge was shaped into ethnic identity politics in later decades, and especially at decolonization. Such processes are well-known, and students of colonialism in Africa have described the complex workings of colonial ethnicity creation time and again.[11] On the other hand considering how ethnicity emerges and develops in visuality points us in a new direction: that collectively held meanings (about oneself, one's people, tribe, nation, etc.) developed as dialogic processes. Visual history allows us to perceive the role of colonized – individuals and groups – in the elaboration of colonial registers of meaning that were at once ethnographic and political, and that also implicated the fashioning of individuals

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[11] Works dealing with "ethnicity formation" in Africa constitute a very long list indeed. See for example, Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*; Jewsiewicki, "The Formation of the Political Culture of Ethnicity in the Belgian Congo, 1920-1959"; Jean-Loup Amselle, *Au Cœur De L'ethnie: Ethnies, Tribalisme Et État En Afrique.* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1985); Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton University Press, 2002); Bayart, *The Illusion of Cultural Identity*; Geschiere, *The Perils of Belonging*; Edouard. Bustin, *Lunda Under Belgian Rule: The Politics of Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/[u]: mdp.39015022216512; John L. Comaroff and Jean. Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.*, Chicago Studies in

and groups. Thus chapters 1 and 2 locate the manners and reasons for the constitution of a particular Tetela *visual* archive.

It is no revelation to state that photographs of human figures are occasions for performing collective and individual selves. This dissertation's latter half has shown that, through inscription, photographic and sometimes film images operate as sites for negotiating meanings and subjectivities. Colonized Tetela subjects participated – whether gladly, willingly, or not – in photographic encounters. The surface of a photograph is perhaps the space of inscription of subaltern meanings and subjectivities.[12] In Luc de Heusch's film, it is his use of depth of field that permits such inscriptions. Chapter 3 shows that Tetela men, women, and children produced themselves as individuals in missionaries' photographs. They did so in the context of a certain cultural universe that can also be glimpsed in photographs.

Visuality was foundational to the history of twentieth-century Congo in that it created a set of available categories, which gradually coalesced to form such complex objects of thought as "Tetela." To go further, Tetela knowledge, such as it appeared in the 1950s, could not have existed apart from the visuality that constituted it in the previous decades. Indeed, this is what chapter 1 and 2 of this dissertation set out to demonstrate. Tetela "ethnic" or social categories continued to evolve as their constitutive elements and meanings were utilized, modified, and then perhaps "replaced" for further collective and individual use. What this dissertation has argued with regard to ethnicity is that, in the case of the Belgian Congo, ethnic imagination could not exist apart from its visual

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Practices of Meaning (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Turner, *Ethnogenèse et nationalisme en Afrique centrale.*

[12] See introduction, and in particular, Pinney, "Notes from the Surface of the Image. Photography, Postcolonialism and Vernacular Modernism."

dimension. In other words, the "Tetela" – or Atetela, as they prefer to be called – are collective subjects, and *as such* are images as much as persons.[13]

How the "Belgian Congo" was known and understood was in part visual. King Leopold II's creation, the Congo Museum at Tervuren, had a central place in the Belgian colonial apparatus. And what it took from the Congo, it reprocessed and projected as the extravagant dreams of a colonial state. European and African photographers, whose work and practices fashioned and defined the colonial "everyday," but especially Congolese who *saw,* and perceived the possibilities of photographic visuality in particular, as well as its importance for creating their modernities, imagined the colony as a state of being, and as an emotional condition.

This dissertation on colonial visuality has woven a light thread through Tetela meanings and histories. It has engaged with inevitable questions of "identity" as a set of collectively and individually held ideas, feelings, and concepts that, as historians, we ought to consider through an analytic of "collective subjects," who situate themselves collectively at particular moments and for particular reasons.[14] This work has not been about the emergence and development of Tetela collective selves and subjects through the seventy years of colonialism. Nor is it simply a visual history with a particular emphasis on methodology that takes the Tetela as an apt example. Rather it is both of these two things at once. Visuality, to borrow Jacques Derrida's phrase, is "always already"[15] at the center of history. In this history, visuality and the historical formation of collective Tetela subjects, cannot not exist apart from one another: the emergence and

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[13] To be clear, I am not suggesting that a person is the "same thing" as an image. Instead, I wish to bring up the notion of "collective subjects," which has been key to this dissertation.
[14] All subjects are also collective subjects. There can be no human subjectivity without the collectivity.

constitution of new and ever shifting ways of knowing and being Tetela implicate in turn seeing, including oneself, *as* a Tetela.

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[15] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

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　　　　Society. Katholieke Universiteit. Leuven, Belgium
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　　　　Methodist Archives and History Center, The United Methodist Church,
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Michel Ngandu (Lubumbashi, DRC)

Joseph Mulemba (Kinshasa, DRC)

Up018utute Jean (Tshumbe, DRC)

Father Isidore Maes (Wezembeek Oppem, Belgium)

Luc de Heusch (Brussels, Belgium)

Loo Ayela Gandu Berthold (Lubumbashi, DRC)

Abbé Antoine (Kiomi, DRC)

Abbé Marcel (Lubefu, DRC)

Abbé Nguwo (Lodja, DRC)

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