

SELECTION OF
EXHIBITION TEXTS

MEMORY OF CONGO

THE COLONIAL ERA

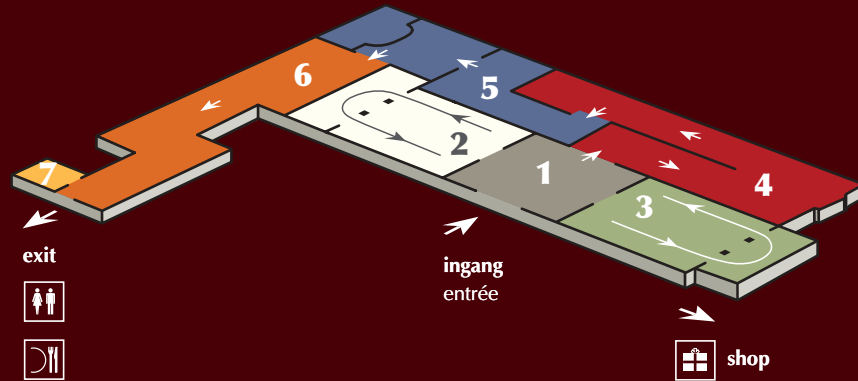
Under the scientific direction of
Jean-Luc Vellut



Africa
Africa
TERVUREN

KONINKLIJK MUSEUM
VOOR MIDDEN-AFRIKA
MUSÉE ROYAL
DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE

- p. 4 — **1** **Terug in de tijd**
Temps long
- p. 4 — **2** **Hiërarchieën**
Hiérarchies
- p. 17 — **3** **Transacties**
Transactions
- p. 29 — **4** **Ontmoetingen**
Rencontres
- p. 39 — **5** **Beeldvorming**
Représenter
- p. 41 — **6** **Onafhankelijkheid**
Indépendance
- p. 43 — **7** **Documentatiecentrum**
Centre de documentation



The captions in the exhibition rooms are in French and Dutch. In order to facilitate your visit, we have made a selection of the texts here in English. The visit begins by room 1. You then continue to either room 2 or 3, according to your choice. The visit continues through rooms 4, 5, 6, and finally 7.

introduction

The Royal Museum for Central Africa has chosen the medium of an exhibition to examine a crucial period in the relationships between the Congo and Belgium. This project is vital to the renovation of the RMCA, partly through which the Museum aims to become a new centre of knowledge about Central Africa.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, the exhibition offers visitors a wide range of information about the Congo during the colonial period.

The visit begins with a journey back in time, to the beginning of a long history on which the colonial period was grafted, impelling a period of change in the region. Then comes the actual colonial experience, explored according to major themes: social hierarchies, economic transactions, encounters between people and cultures, and finally images the period created of itself. The visit concludes with Independence and the passing of the colonial era into history.

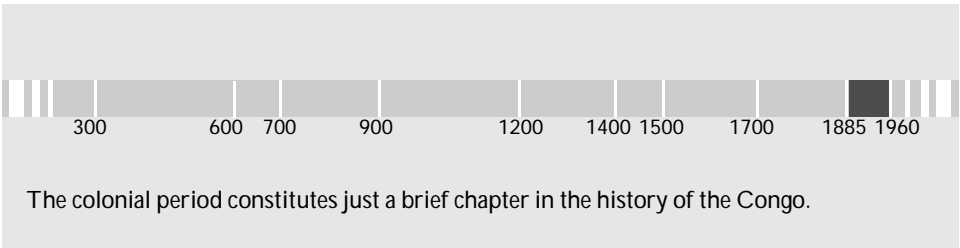
This is a shared history, charged with emotion, and as such the voices of those who experienced it or who interpret it today need to be heard. The exhibition therefore features interviews through which Belgians and Congolese relate their experiences.

ROOM 1. BACK IN TIME

In Central Africa as a whole, the colonial era lasted a little more than three generations, whereas archaeology and the study of Bantu languages have unveiled a much longer pre-colonial past.

In the course of two thousand years, agriculture and cattle-breeding are established and the use of copper and iron develops, while a network of commercial, technological and artistic exchanges is formed. During the 16th century, relations with the world beyond Africa are established via the Atlantic seaboard, as a result of European navigation. From this time onwards, in some areas, centralized political systems began to form around royal courts, thus introducing a new phase of the region's history.

The Congo's colonial history, which begins at the end of the 19th century, is part of a wider history.



ROOM 2. HIERARCHIES

Colonization introduced new power structures, replacing the old structures or integrating them and so establishing new hierarchies. Initially, throughout the era of Leopold II, the Congo Free State was a colony, without a true parent-state. It was a piece on the international chessboard and was managed like a private enterprise.

From 1908 to 1960 – the era of Belgian rule – the Congo was managed according to principles of profitability, tempered by the interventions of the administration and the Church. Throughout this time Africans both helped and hampered the establishment of new forms of power until they finally demanded an active part in controlling the State. **(Photos 1 & 2)**

Photo: Vanderlinden



Photograph attributed to Michel



Photos 1 and 2: Dr Meyers in Nyangwe, in the service of the State, sitting comfortably on an African symbol of power. Djabir, Bandia 'sultan', proudly wearing the emblem of the new rule. Maniema, 1897 and Bondo, 1894

Dreams of Africa

Interest in Africa grows in Europe and the Near East during the last third of the 19th century, leading to dreams of conquests, religious conversion and an open economy. Travellers' accounts contribute to awakening these 'dreams of Africa'. In 1884–1885, the Berlin Conference brings together representatives of the European, American and Turkish governments with the aim of establishing rules to govern future intervention in Africa. Leopold II takes advantage of the situation to secure international recognition of the territories claimed on the basis of treaties secured by Stanley for the King and his private commercial enterprise, the Association Internationale du Congo (AIC).

The Congo Free State

The creation and organization of the Congo Free State was thoroughly unconventional, adapting to circumstances the King elaborated his geostrategic ambitions, in campaigns against Arabs and their African allies and in shifting relations with local chiefs. The attributes of the modern State were set down in writing: laws, public services, hierarchical schemes. However, much of the State was designated a 'private estate', in which the natural resources above and below ground were reserved for Leopold's State and very soon for a number of companies. Within this private estate, there was the 'estate of the crown', a concession managed by the State, the revenue from which would allow the King to finance long-term projects in Belgium. Before its annexation to Belgium, the Congo was more of a private enterprise than a colony.

The State called into question

The enthusiasm that accompanied the early days of the Congo State, opening up great opportunities for 'works of civilization' and the fight against slavery, was soon replaced by disappointment. In the 1890s global speculation on rubber saved Leopold's enterprise from imminent bankruptcy, but at a heavy price. The embryonic State was diverted from its 'duties' and put to work towards making it profitable, which basically entailed producing rubber by every means possible. This resulted in abuses of all kinds. A climate of accusations and counter-accusations engulfed the State and deeply divided public opinion in Europe and the United States.

The Inquiry Commission

The number of revelations increased – official claims, confidences communicated in private correspondence, court actions – leading the King to send out an international inquiry commission. The Commission found that, contrary to



Photo 3: 'Bargaining – Business is Business' Caricature. *L'Assiette au beurre*, Paris, 1908.

Genocide in the Congo?

Recent endeavours to make the history of the Congo more accessible to the general public through the relay of the media have led to the spread of accusations of genocide against the Congo Free State. Do these accusations have a historical basis?

The first estimates of the population of Central Africa date back to the end of the 19th century. They are based on the extrapolations of travellers who founded their estimates on the places they visited. High estimates, it was thought, would overcome the reservations of European public opinion about colonization. An abundant supply of labour offered prospects both for European exports and for the production of tropical goods, in a word, it constituted a guarantee for European investments. Suggested figures between 1885 and 1910 were 20 to 30 million inhabitants for the Congo and 8 to 15 million for what was to become French Equatorial Africa.

The accusations against the Leopold regime also involved demography. In 1906, Edmund Morel published *Red Rubber. The Story of the Rubber Slave Trade Flourishing on the Congo in the Year of Grace 1906*. Morel was the first to put a figure to the loss of human life in the Congo, which he arbitrarily estimated at between 100,000 and 500,000 a year. He finally reached the figure of 10 million lives lost for the period from 1890 to 1910 and he attributed all these losses to colonial violence. Since he assumed that the population had been 20 million, he concluded that it had diminished by one half. This estimate later became firmly embedded in popular accounts. Similar proportions were suggested at the time for the results of conquests in, among others, the Sudan and French Equatorial Africa.

In the 1920s the alarm was raised again that Central Africa was suffering from depopulation. This time the purpose was to demonstrate the urgent need for public health programmes and a policy promoting a rise in the birth rate. What mattered henceforth was safeguarding the region's 'human heritage'.

Given the lack of a reliable population census, observers at that time thought it probable that there had been a 50% reduction in the population in the Belgian Congo, assuming a hypothetical figure of 18 million in 1885. This was said to be the result of epidemics and disruptions brought on by conscription of labour and the movement of people. Similar theories about the decline of populations were put forward in neighbouring countries. All these estimates were based on unverifiable information as demographic knowledge was poor.

Today a scientific consensus has been reached for the whole of Central Africa. Population historians unanimously reject the high estimates for the 1890s. They do, however, take into account the concordance of the observations, even those not backed up by figures, reporting a decline during the 1920s, the grounds for which lay in the period prior to that. They have found, again unanimously, that there was a period of demographic growth from the 1930s onwards.

The history of demographic decline in the period between 1875 and 1925/1930, estimated at 20%, now sets the abuses of power of Leopold's regime within a wider context including health factors and movements of people, without attributing exclusive significance to any one of these factors alone.

Unfortunately, the media today appear to be unaware of these conclusions, as the estimates of human losses made in the 1920s are maintained and attributed exclusively to human factors and deliberately described as 'genocide', i.e. the deliberate and systematic extermination of an ethnic or national group. This interpretation has no scientific basis.

Bibliographical note:

Demographic historians see three phases in the population history of Central Africa:

- a phase of very slow growth during most of the 19th century;
- a phase of marked décliné (perhaps 20%) from about 1875 to 1930;
- sustained growth from the 1930s onwards.

C. Sautter, *De l'Atlantique au fleuve Congo. Une géographie du sous-peuplement*, 2 vols., Paris-La Haye, Mouton, 1966.

B. Fetter, *Demography from Scanty Evidence. Central Africa in the Colonial Era*, Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner, 1990: in particular, for the Congo and French Equatorial Africa, the contributions by L. de Saint Moulin, R. Headrick, J. Sabakinu and J. Stengers.

B. Etemad, *La Possession du monde. Poids et mesures de la colonisation (XVIIIe-XXe siècles)*, Brussels, Complexe, 2000.

Photo: H. Delvaux



Photo 4: The Inquiry Commission at Basankusu. Albert Longtain, Director of the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company ((ABIR), is testifying. Basankusu, 1905

Photographer unknown



Photo 5: Inauguration of the Leopold II-monument at Léopoldville-Est. Leopoldville, 1928

and in spite of official directives, abuse had become widespread in the absence of any control. The Commission concluded that the State administration and the contracting companies were implicated in atrocities, as were numerous militias who terrorized the region. **(Photo 3)**

Repercussions in Belgium

Towards the end of Leopold's reign, the debate spread across Belgium. The various political persuasions were themselves divided between those who opposed and those who supported Belgium's annexation of the Congo.

In 1908 the annexation was accepted by a new generation of politicians, disheartened by the King's insensitivity, frightened by his foreign critics and determined to draw the line with an abusive regime. **(Photo 4)**

Belgian nationalism

Under the Belgian regime, the Congo became an integral part of the Belgian 'nation'. Once a new page had been turned, the people were inclined to forget the conflicts that had occurred during Leopold's reign. The nationalist climate that followed the 1914–1918 war favoured support for the 'colonial endeavour' and encouraged the cult of Leopold II as an 'inspired founder'. This movement, cultivated by the first generation of colonials, gathered momentum in 1930 with the Belgian centenary celebrations. **(Photo 5)**

Towards a 'model colony'

The small parliamentary committee that had set the framework for the annexation of the Congo laid the foundations for a 'model colonial regime' that would be beyond suspicion. It devised a hierarchical and paternalistic system that would be controlled from Brussels. The colony would be efficiently managed and economically autonomous, but would as far as possible be relieved of non-administrative tasks (education, public works and medicine). This system was also authoritarian. The Colonial Charter, which served as the constitution of the Belgian Congo, had, for example, outlawed compulsory labour, but this provision was not implemented until the 1930s. Freedom of the press, the right to hold meetings and the right of association did not come into effect until 1959. In the 1950s the ideals of material modernization reinforced the belief that the Congo was indeed a 'model colony'. Without a guilty conscience, the sections devoted to the Congo at the 1958 World Fair put across a message brimming with material optimism.

Administrative hierarchy

More than the neighbouring colonies, the Belgian Congo was subject to tight administrative control. At the local level, after the 1914–1918 war, the minis-

ter for colonies encouraged the integration of traditional chiefs within the administration. In practice, however, many chiefs were chosen simply for their ability to cooperate with the administration. After the Second World War, the theory of indirect administration lost some of its relevance as the modern economy took hold and traditions were eroded. It was the new urban elites rather than the chiefs who negotiated independence.

Minister of Colonies

Having learned from the experience of Leopold's regime in the Congo, the Minister of Colonies (so called even though there was only one) managed the Congo from Brussels while trying to supervise local administration.

Louis Franck, Minister of Colonies from 1918 to 1924, had connections with the business world and more particularly with the diamond industry in Antwerp. He argued for the rapid development of a two-tier colonial economy: capitalist enterprise, supported by a modern infrastructure, would enjoy the support of the administration in the hope of attracting the leaders of the Belgian economy; the native economy, for its part, would remain marginal, under the control of the traditional authorities. This programme was never unanimously supported by the upper echelons of the colonial administration.

(Photo 6)

Governor General

The governor general directed local administration and was accountable to the Minister of Colonies.

Pierre Ryckmans (1891–1959) was Governor General from 1934 to 1946. He expanded his idea of colonization in *Dominer pour servir* (*Dominate to Serve*, 1931) and *Politique coloniale* (*Colonial Policy*, 1934). During the Second World War, Ryckmans committed the colony to the Allied cause. He had problems with the private sector due to his desire to defend the interests of the native populations in the face of large-scale capitalism.

Administrateur territorial

The *administrateur territorial* – AT for short – was the kingpin of the administration, its representative 'in the field'. They were responsible for carrying out the daily tasks of the State: tax collection, agricultural works, civil engineering works, rural hygiene, native courts, and so on. The ATs relied on the help of trusted Congolese to carry out their duties and had to negotiate continually with the local African authorities. There were around one hundred such ATs, whose duty, according to Minister Franck, was to 'further the economic and political interests of the fatherland', to ensure the well-being of the population



Photo 6: Louis Franck in the Belgian Congo.
Belgian Congo, 1920

and to 'make them progress' in all respects. A circular from 1932 still laments the fact that many ATs were prosecuted for ill-treating Africans; such abuse became increasingly rare over time.

Chef médaillé

The *chef médaillé*, who wore the medal with which he had been awarded by the colonial authorities, embodied the participation by pre-colonial authorities in the administration. In theory, the chief was chosen and governed his district as custom prescribed. In practice, however, the system had its limitations, as the administration wanted to see society develop according to its own ideas.

The Churches

Motivated by the anti-slavery ideal, several Belgian religious orders took part in the evangelization of the Congo from the end of the 19th century. They had been preceded by several Protestant missions, some of which had been established even before the beginning of Leopold's 'enterprise'. The administration of the Belgian Congo largely delegated social, cultural and medical work to missionaries, who put much effort into what was considered a 'work of civilization'. In 1959, Rome recognized the establishment of the country's own hierarchy, and thus heralded the Church's entry into the post-colonial era. Meanwhile, Protestant churches of the Congo also became independent from their European or American mother societies. Since independence, the Churches have survived as independent organizations, actively involved in society; there are also a great many congregations inspired by Christianity.

Maintaining law and order

The judicial system

The colonial judicial system comprised two categories of jurisdiction, one mainly for Europeans and the other for Africans. The first administered mainly written law, the second mainly customary law. The first was almost exclusively entrusted to Europeans, the second was entrusted to Africans, supervised by European civil servants.

Symbol of oppression?

Flogging by whip or stick, a punishment reserved for Africans, was allowed by penal law until 1940. It was also allowed by army and prison regulations. It could also be used as a form of punishment whenever custom allowed it. Flogging had already been denounced when Stanley was 'founding the Free State'. It was then a vestige of pre-colonial slavery. Thus it is not enough to regard the whip as simply the symbol of colonial oppression. **(Photo 7)**

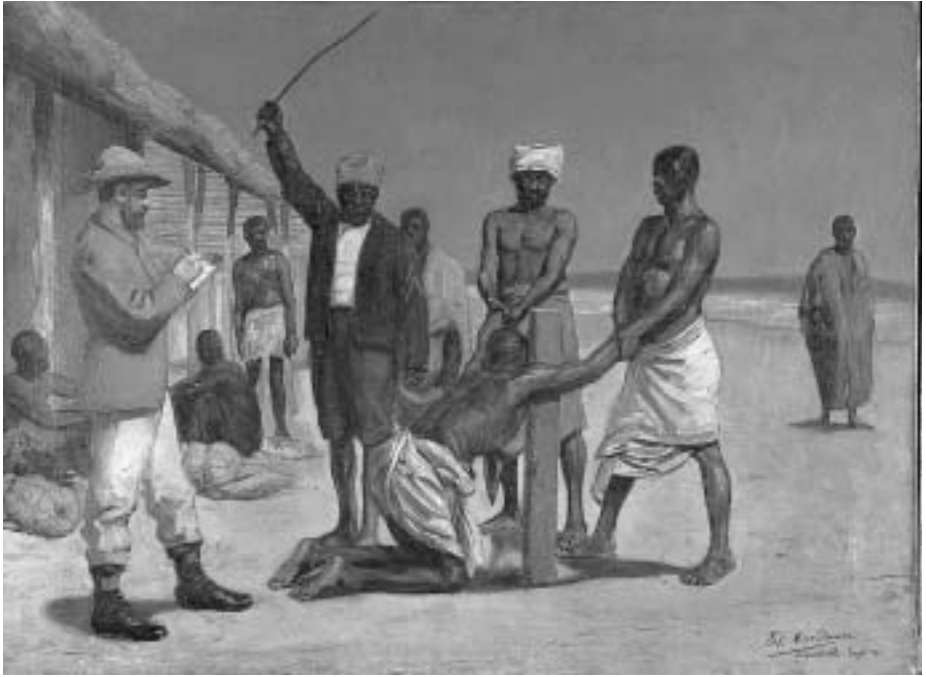


Photo 7: Edouard Mandouau, 'Civilisation in Congo'. Leopoldville, 1884

The Force Publique

An integral part of colonial power in the Congo, the Force Publique was both army and police force. The European (Belgians, Scandinavians, Italians, etc.) and African (West-Africans, 'Zanzibaris', etc.) recruits who first made up the Force Publique were gradually replaced by local recruits, who were under Belgian supervision. In peaceful times, the Force Publique comprised some 13,000 non-commissioned officers and soldiers who were natives and 350 officers and non-commissioned officers who were European. The Force Publique played a social role, more specifically in the sphere of vocational training, as it carried out services to the public. However, its mutinies in 1895, 1899, 1944 and 1960 constituted some of the major episodes of upset and suffering of the colonial era. **(Photo 8)**

Medicine

Around 1900, a sleeping sickness epidemic aroused fears for the very future of the population of the Congo. Marked by this disaster and following the major trends in tropical medicine world-wide, the Belgian colonial medical profession devoted itself first and foremost to the eradication of major endemics.



Photo 8: The *Force Publique* in Buta, 1930



Photo 9: Bicycle assembly plant. Leopoldville, 1950s

A sign of progress and authority, the demand for bicycles tripled between 1948 and 1955. This rise was followed by a growth in the demand for gramophones, records and cameras.

From the 1930s onwards, an ambitious programme to combat the country's health problems was set up; it combined both permanent and mobile units and had the State medics and missionary medics working in partnership with company medics from the agro-industrial sector. Based on periodic medical surveys and early screening, the aim was to achieve health for all by the year 2000.

1955: Belgian colonization at its peak

The need for the ties between the colony and the Mother-State became very apparent in the 1950s. A revision of the constitution (1953–1954) provided for the inclusion of the Congo in the Belgian national territory. There was talk of a 'tenth province'. Back in the Congo, Europeans and Congolese look forward to the visit of King Baudouin, whose triumphant tour of the country in 1955 emphasizes the need for the regeneration of relations between Belgians and the Congolese. The advent of a Belgian-Congolese community is stressed in the propaganda. The colonial regime seems at its peak and yet, 5 years later, the Congo attains independence.

ROOM 3. TRANSACTIONS

The Congo finds itself part of the world economy, first through King Leopold II's undertakings, and subsequently by the Belgian colony. The old economies initially enter the global networks with the country's natural resources: ivory, rubber and oil. The growing demand for ivory and rubber intensifies the harvesting of natural products.

After the First World War, these products are grown on plantations in order to increase production and profitability. Scientific research determines the selection process. Transport and infrastructure are developed. Mines are exploited. The village economy continues to play a vital role in colonial Congo. The capitalist type of economy is in the hands of the Société Générale de Belgique and a few Atlantic partners. A newly organized work structure provides increasingly for salaried employees. **(Photo 9)**

Tapping the old economies

Initially the colonial economy was built on the existing economies. The commercial networks already covered large areas. The region was able to import textiles, arms, small tools and consumer products from the outside thanks to its exports of harvested products (oil, ivory, rubber and coffee).

The first European companies used the old production, exchange and trans-

Brutalities and acts of barbarism

During the 1900s the Congo Free State was accused of having tolerated and even of having organized a huge 'system' of brutality involving mutilations, acts of cannibalism, massive reprisals and so on. Let us look at the charges and at the way these charges have been used. Does history allow us to explain these events without justifying them?

The case for the prosecution is substantial and convincing

It covers twenty years of a global rubber boom. In private and in public, hundreds of African and European witnesses, villagers, men, women, the military, magistrates, public servants of all ranks and the clergy reported abuses of power, linked to the collection of rubber, by the African militia serving the State and the contracting companies. Even though such violence was prohibited by law, it affected vast regions, extending to neighbouring territories such as the French Congo and Katanga. In the wake of the report by the British Consul Roger Casement, Leopold II agreed to the dispatching of a Commission of enquiry. In 1904 this Commission took many statements and saw how powerless the embryonic justice system was in the face of this climate of brutality. The public sessions held by this Commission remain a pioneering initiative in the history of human rights in Central Africa. The Commission's report was at the basis of the decision by Belgium to annex the Congo in order to put an end to a system 'of organized and systematic protection of injustice' (Félicien Cattier, law professor at the time).

A catalogue of acts of barbarity with a turbulent history

Before the State published the Commission's report, it had already ensured that extenuating circumstances were emphasized. However, the campaign of denunciation organized in England by Edmund Dene Morel from 1904 onwards used this report as one of its major sources. Morel's indictment against the Congo State only made reference to the charges, saying nothing about the general context in which various murderous 'systems' ravaged the region at the time. It considered irrelevant another historical aspect – equally real – which was the sense of liberating progress that the Congo State constituted for numerous witnesses and collaborators from the very beginning, African as well as European.

This partial amnesia matched the organized amnesia back in Belgium, particularly once it had annexed the Congo: politicians, the press and schools kept silent about the errors of the past whilst pursuing the critics of Leopold's regime. In Belgium, this revisionism was rarely questioned, particularly since archives remained either closed or subject to arbitrary access. The internation-

al press for its part continued to portray the Congo as an example of colonial abuse and Western humanitarianism.

Today, the history of atrocities in the Congo has given rise to a 'genre' all of its own, as prominent authors capitalize on the catalogue of atrocities, the boldest and most extreme working it into an extensive account of 20th-century barbarity and, more particularly, a history of mass murder. Here too, amnesia is the rule. It is in fact a black legend that is being set before us. It reduces an entire history to the balefulness of one man, Leopold II. It disregards any kind of social and cultural analysis of the Congo of that era and reduces the Congo State to a theatre of horrors.

Can the turmoil of the rubber era be placed in a historical context?

Africa is entitled to historical investigation without the interference of sentiment, amnesia or censorship from all sides. In this instance, too, the basic prerequisite of any historical examination is to identify the contexts that enable plausible explanations. When it comes to the Congo State, such identification is lacking. The Congo's past serves as a pretext for controversies that are alien to it, whether they touch upon Belgian identity or whether they serve to pander to guilt feelings of Western intelligentsia. There is no recognition that the Congo basin may have a history in its own right and that there is also a global context of a crisis in the region between 1870 and 1920.

Indeed the abuses of the 'rubber regime' should be fitted into the wider context of the crisis that decimated the 'tribal populations' in Oceania and the New World as well as in Africa. In Central Africa the factors contributing to this 50-year crisis were manifold: the brutalities of the 'pre-colonial' slavery system; the brutalities of the colonial wars, which worsened during the era of speculation; epidemiological disasters; famines, etc.

Forced labour was one of the many flash-points of this period of violence. First in the Congo and then in the Amazon, Roger Casement meticulously chronicled acts of barbarity committed against 'tribal populations' against the backdrop of the global rubber market and within contexts in which violence was already rife. In the Congo, through a process that was already well known elsewhere, forms of violence that were widespread – specifically the mutilations – were condoned by the 'civilized' and by their indispensable and active local allies.

The context of Congo's atrocities is one of a period of extreme violence in world history. We know that, within such contexts, the line between human dignity and barbarity is frequently crossed. History also tells us that this line is never crossed in one direction only. Herein lies the task ahead of thinking about periods of violence in the history of the Congo.

Photograph attributed to Michel



Photo 10:
Harvesting latex from the lianas
in the forest.
Lusambo, 1897

Photographer unknown



Photo 11: Léon Tonneau (left) and Ascenso riding zebras.
Upper-Luapula, early 20th century

port networks. Their objectives, like those of the first colonial governments, would be to seize control of the commercial systems and to increase their productivity.

Harvesting wild rubber

As hevea rubber grew in the wild in Brazil, it was being harvested on a small scale in Amazonia when new industrial uses for rubber made the demand skyrocket. Between 1880 and 1910, the region produced up to 40,000 tonnes of rubber per year. Speculation caused a flood of thousands of 'economic refugees' in Amazonia. To harvest the hevea rubber, these 'refugees' brutalized the Indian workforce, who was reduced to a position of servitude.

In the Congo, the inadequate Brazilian production brought about a wave of speculation that had repercussions in the Congo basin, where wild rubber grew as vines (*Landolphia*) and herbs (*Carpodinus*). In the 1900s, the Congo produced an average of 5,000 tonnes a year.

In the Congo, a handful of agents of the State and of monopolist companies surrounded themselves with armed African 'sentries', who were often survivors from the laboratory of brutalities that was the slave trade. They forced the population to supply rubber for next to nothing, often using violence to achieve their aims. **(Photo 10)**

Intensifying a new economy

Between 1910 and 1960 the Congo went through several economic periods. Economic activity was driven on from 'the top'. The trend was to encourage investment, scientific research, use of a better skilled 'human capital', and Congolese farming production geared towards sustainable crops. The increase in the growth rate was tangible between 1949 and 1959 as the GNP per African inhabitant of the Congo lay between that of East Africa and that of the Rhodesia-Nyasaland Federation.

By 1960, the Congolese economy remained mixed, the different economic sectors varying greatly in nature. Training a skilled black workforce set the Congo apart from South Africa, although the latter was less dependent on outside expertise and capital. In both cases, however, the unequal distribution of profits remained a major structural problem which has still not been resolved today.

Re-organizing the agricultural sector

Like the other colonies, the Congo had a two-tier farming sector. On the one hand, the 'native' families produced partly for their own consumption and partly for the market. On the other hand, the European colonists controlled a

sector based on employed workers and the market. Between 1950 and 1959, 'native production' represented 21% of the GDP, compared with 11% for the colonists.

The road to expertise

Before the mineral discoveries, the economic future of colonial Congo seemed to be in agriculture and, as it appeared at the time, would be limited to a selection of spontaneous crops (coffee, rubber and cotton) to be integrated in the plantation economy. In the absence of a colonial tradition, Belgian agronomists quickly learned harsh lessons about tropical conditions. Many were the setbacks before real expertise began to take root. **(Photo 11)**

Institut national pour l'étude agronomique du Congo belge (INEAC)

Inaugurated by King Leopold III in 1934 and developed thanks to the Decennial Plan, INEAC was considered the scientific jewel in the colonial crown. Its success in tropical agronomy spread beyond the borders of Congo (palm oil, high-altitude tea, plantain bananas, etc.). For example, the INEAC prided itself on its genetic improvement of palm oil (*Elaeis guineensis*).

Alongside the work carried out in Belgium (Meise and Tervuren), the work INEAC carried out on Congolese flora remains a precious resource for researchers today.

Small farmers

The administration pursued a policy of organizing the small farmers, particularly after the Second World War. Ultimately it involved around 10% of the 'native' farmers.

Coupled with agronomic research, this programme enjoyed some technological successes. In the absence of a comprehensive understanding of 'traditional' agriculture and within the authoritarian setting of that time, the improvement of a variety did, however, sometimes have a detrimental effect on productivity – factors such as working time, transport, exhaustion of the land, and so forth may explain this paradox. The efforts to change the 'native' agriculture were plagued this absence of understanding.

The technocratic agriculture of the small farmers did not reach the stage of autonomous development. It collapsed soon after independence.

Palm oil

The *Elaeis guineensis* palm, native to Africa, had various local uses. The modern oil factories co-existed with difficulty with the economy of the village palm groves. The resulting abuses produced a scandal in the 1930s.

Twenty years later, produced increasingly for the domestic market (local consumption of oil, margarine, soap, etc.) and supplying a local industry, palm oil was at the heart of the on-going changes in the Congolese economy.

Photo: Lujja



Photo 12: A coffee and cocoa dryer. Sankuru, 1913

Photo: Lujja



Photo 13: Tap hole, Funtumia. Sankuru, 1914



Photo 14: Kiosk. Leopoldville, 1950s



Photo 15: Building the Matadi-Leopoldville railway line.
Bas-Congo, 1893-1897

Coffee

Plagued by failures, the introduction of plantations of Robusta coffee – native to Central Africa – did not fully take hold until after 1935. The history of Robusta is beset with bitter struggles of great consequence which brought the colonists into conflict with the 'native' planters and the administration. In the 1950s, coffee production shattered all the provisions of the Decennial Plan, rising to first place in the Congo's agriculture exports. **(Photo 12)**

Plantation rubber

In the 1920s the global rubber market was controlled by a handful of monopolies. Around 1930, as the threat of another war increasingly loomed, 'outsiders' entered a market that was set to grow. The Belgian group Hallet, established in Southeast Asia, was one of the first to set up rubber plantations in the central basin of the Congo. During the war, the harvesting of spontaneous rubber resumed, something which heavily affected the populations involved.

Scientific advances in the introduction and selection of Asian varieties contributed to the rise in Congo's production from 1,000 to 40,000 tonnes between 1937 and 1959. The hevea was thought to be a resource of the future for a renewed African agriculture. **(Photo 13)**

Village economies

Throughout the colonial period the village economy provided employment for the majority of the working population. Colonial intervention occurred through imposed crops and, especially after the Second World War, through small farmers programmes which involved up to 10% of Congolese farmers. Food crops remained mainly due to the work of families.

Commerce

After the Second World War the Congolese standard of living rises in the Belgian Congo. The equipment and the consumption of imported products and local agro-industrial products (sugar, beer, margarine and soap) become more diverse throughout the country. A middle class made up of merchants and craftsmen set up their own businesses, as is the case for the owner of this kiosk. **(Photo 14)**

Modernizing transport

In the Leopold era, the first railways and inland navigation were saluted as the flag-bearers of a progressive state. As time went on, in the period from 1885 to 1960, transport represented 22% of overall investment.

As an example of the unequal partnership between the State and private companies, the railways were financed by private funds but enjoyed guaranteed

profitability from public funds. Meanwhile the most profitable activities of these companies escaped state control.

The Congo's railway networks were developed independently from each other on the basis of what productions needed to be evacuated, without any concern for regional integration. **(Photo 15)**

Developing a mining sector

When King Leopold II's enterprise was in its initial stages, the speculation on rubber and the discovery of mineral resources were both unforeseeable. Around 1910, as the forest rubber market went into crisis, mining deposits were being discovered one after the other in the Congo, giving rise to the possibility of a diversified economy which would avoid the bankruptcy that threatened Brazil. Mining investment led to many spin-off activities such as railway infrastructure, urbanization, ancillary industries and the food-processing sector. Between 1950 and 1959 the mines and metallurgy represented 21% of the Congolese GDP.

Diamond industry

Diamonds were and remain an anchorage point for the Congo in the international economy. Apart from the share the State held in the ownership of Forminière, the company's diamond mining activities involved Belgian (Société Générale) and American (Ryan-Guggenheim) capital. The same alliance controlled production in Angola (Diamang).

During the Second World War the key role of Congolese industrial diamond was to supply the precision machines industry, which even gave rise to clandestine activities at the time.

As a co-owner with 50% of Forminière's capital and through tax-collection, the colonial State gained a significant part of its revenue from the diamond industry. **(Photo 16)**

Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK)

Founder of the modern copper industry in Kantanga, UMHK was the jewel in the crown of the Société Générale empire. At the forefront of its sector globally, UMHK stood out from the other industries in the Congo, whose technological development varied greatly.

In 1959, UMHK was responsible for around a third of Congolese exports and that share increased in the years that followed independence. UMHK was a veritable 'state' within the colonial State.

Initially relying on a flow of unskilled temporary workers, often recruited by force, UMHK adopted a policy of employing a stable skilled workforce in 1926, an initiative that was presented as a model of paternalistic social policy. **(Photo 17)**

Photographer unknown



Phot 16: Looking for diamonds. Belgian Congo, undated

Photographer unknown



Photo 17: *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK)*. Kipushi, 1926

Uranium and radium

Initially used to provide radium for medical purposes, uranium became a strategic asset during the Second World War when the United States and Great Britain but also Germany were advancing research on nuclear weapons. During that period UMHK supplied more than 70% of the uranium used in the development of the first atomic bombs to the United States.

Harnessing hydro-electric energy

Estimated at twice that of the United States, the Congo basin's hydraulic power potential is considerable. As huge energy consumers, the mining companies (Kilo-Moto, UMHK, etc.) were the first to develop the hydro-electric resources.

In 1957, the Katanga barrages represented 84% of Congo's hydro-electric power capacity. At that time, charcoal, which was used in the 'traditional economy', was still producing 50% of the energy produced throughout the colony.

Concentrating capital

In 1906, fearing the pressure of South African interests, Leopold II convinced Jean Jadot to participate in the 'Congo enterprise'. An engineer, Jadot had worked in railway construction in China and elsewhere and was an associate of Francqui, Leopold II's right-hand man. With his help, Jadot became director of Société Générale, launching the bank into three ventures: Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK), Forminière and Chemin de fer du Bas-Congo au Katanga (BCK). Having been reticent up until then, the Société Générale gradually became the Congo's main source of capital and from the late 1920s onwards played a determining role in the country.

As the most profitable branch of this global trust, the colonial sector of the Société Générale was managed by a few interrelated families.

At the same time, prospective foreign investors were attracted to the Congo: the colonial contingent hoped that, associated with Belgian capital, Lever, Ryan, Guggenheim and Robert Williams would give the Congo an air of respectability.

ROOM 4. ENCOUNTERS

Distinguishing people according to 'racial' criteria was inherent in the colonial context. This was demonstrated in various ways, from regulations to social behaviour: in the Belgian Congo segregation was even observed during religious services. All the same, there were multiple forms of 'encounters' between Africans and Europeans, both in peace and in war, in the work place and off-duty, or through diverse personal experiences. In particular, the encounters and mutual discoveries between religious worlds were the fruit of efforts to reach out to 'the other'. No one passed through the colonial period unscathed; all experienced successes and failures.

Education

Unlike the French and British colonial powers, the Belgian colonial state favoured mass education, of a non-homogenous standard and delivered in local languages, over educating an elite.

Up until the 1950s the State relied exclusively on religious missions to provide basic education to a maximum of Congolese children. On the eve of independence, the colony prided itself on the network of primary schools throughout the Congo. In 1960, however, 95% of the school population was concentrated in primary education; the universities were only just incipient, counting a meagre 29 Congolese graduates. No more than a few dozen Congolese students attended Belgian universities.

Towards a Congolese elite

Seminaries

For a long time, the only form of education available at a higher level was that provided in the seminaries, which educated men wanting to enter the priesthood. The White Fathers opened the Grand Séminaire de Baudouinville in 1905, followed, more than 25 years later, by the seminaries in Kabwe, Mayidi and finally Niangara. Between 1949 and 1959 the number of ordained Congolese priests rose from 154 to 389. The first bishop, Mgr Pierre Kimbondo, was consecrated in Mayidi in Lower-Congo in 1956. On 10 November 1959, the Vatican recognized the emancipation of the Congo Church by establishing 26 dioceses, which replaced the old Apostolic curacies. Congolese bishops gradually came to take the place of the old missionary hierarchy. **(Photo 18)**

Training the health auxiliaries

As the mass state-run health system generated tasks that could not be carried out by the European doctors and health officers alone, Congolese auxiliaries were trained to undertake the fight against endemics, epidemics and infant mortality. They were also trained to carry out the laboratory work that was vital to the screening of diseases.

The universities

University education reached the Congo only in 1954–1956, whilst Great Britain had already opened several universities in black Africa and whilst France and Great Britain were progressively admitting African students to their universities.

At the time of independence, the Lovanium university at Leopoldville and the Université Officielle du Congo in Elisabethville had a total of 420 'African' students, a minority of whom came from African countries other than the Congo. Both universities were multiracial, but at Lovanium European students were a minority, whereas at Elisabethville white students formed a large majority.

Mass education

Estimates claim that at the time of independence 40% of the Congolese population was literate, a figure exceeded only by South Africa, whereas in the rest of black Africa, including Ruanda-Urundi, approximately 10% were literate. A total of 15% of the Congolese budget went towards education, the highest proportion on the continent after Tunisia. However, the figures in the Belgian Congo were lower than the African averages when it came to higher levels of education. **(Photo 19)**

Vocational training

The school network established in the Congo greatly availed its vocational training programme. The Congo's vocational training focused on manual work, as its purpose was to provide the colony with skilled workers who would be able to fulfil the need for labour in the agricultural, crafts and industrial sectors. Technical and agricultural training, which had been limited until then, saw a rapid expansion in the wake of the Decennial Plan, involving almost 20,000 pupils in 1958. **(Photo 20)**

Education for women

Young and adolescent girls did not attend school as much as boys, mainly because of family reticence. When they were given the opportunity to attend school for several years, they were generally taught home economics. Like in Belgium, it was thought this would make them good wives and housewives.

Photo: E. Gourdinne



Photo 18: Stefano Kaoze in his seminary cell. Katanga, 1918

Photographer unknown



Photo 19: General education in the Congo. Kisantu, undated

The world of the others

Certain people from very different social backgrounds, brought up in contrasting historical traditions, chose trajectories in search of a deep understanding of the new worlds with which the colonial system confronted them.

Karl E. Laman (1867–1944) and Tito Makundu (c. 1870 – † ?)

A missionary of the Svenska Missionsförbundet (SMF), the Swedish Evangelical Church, Karl Laman was the author of studies on Kongo language and culture. These studies were considered prerequisite to putting across the Christian message. Laman worked in close collaboration with the Kongo, who were often *minlongi* (catechists).

He worked mainly with Tito Makundu, whom he averred to be a 'living dictionary'. In 1928, Makundu wrote an essay about the *minkisi*, which are objects that possess powers. He also wrote about the cultural misunderstandings that arose during the early days of the Swedish mission in Kongo territory.

Renée Lestrade-Simul (1900–1949)

A Protestant missionary nurse, Renée Simul departed for Rwanda in 1924. Moved by her encounters with the women during their consultations at the dispensary, she carried out a field study on maternal and infant mortality in order to gain a better understanding of women's everyday problems. This exchange proved authentic and fruitful as the Rwandan women told her about their family and medical histories.

Simon Kimbangu (c. 1890–1951)

Simon Kimbangu's impact was brief but dramatic. Within just a few months he rose to great heights joining the spiritual with the political. Brought up within the Kongo and Baptist tradition, Kimbangu launched in 1921 a movement that emphasized healing, preaching, and the destruction of 'fetishes'. Attracting crowds from both sides of the 'Franco-Belgian' border, he troubled the colonial world. Brought before the special court of Thysville in 1921, the prophet was sentenced to death, but because King Albert granted him a royal pardon, his sentence was changed to life imprisonment. A victim of vindictive treatment, Kimbangu died at the age of sixty, having spent half his life in Elisabethville prison.

Leo Bittremieux (1881–1946)

Leo Bittremieux was one of the leading linguists and ethnographers of the colonial period. His first work, published in 1911, was about the initiation society of the Bakhimba, in Mayombe, in which he described the group's organization, ceremonies and material culture. The *Mayombsch Idioticon*, a

dictionary with explanatory comments, or a 'popularized encyclopaedia of Mayombe' to use his own words, is his main work.

Joseph Conrad (1857–1924)

Born Konrad Korzeniowski, Joseph Conrad embarked on a career at sea but abandoned it in order to devote himself to writing. His one visit to the Congo was as an officer on a riverboat working for a trading company. Conrad himself claimed that *An Outpost of Progress* (1898) and *Heart of Darkness* (1902) were all the spoils he was able to bring back from Central Africa. Mercilessly, *Heart of Darkness* describes the soulless world of colonial trade. Conrad couples irony with fantasy as he presents Africa as alien, 'savage', and yet also familiar.

This short story is often misunderstood as it is linked with the 'rubber era', which had hardly begun when Conrad was in the Congo. *Heart of Darkness* has been overexploited by the Western media, who use it as a magic wand with which, supposedly, to reveal the 'mysteries of deepest Africa'.

Paul Panda Farnana (1888–1930)

Nowadays Paul Panda Farnana is considered to be the precursor of Congolese nationalism. Adopted by a Belgian family in 1895, he studied in Belgium and in France and then worked in the Congo as an agricultural agent. Isolated in the Congo, he returned to Belgium where he joined the army in 1914 as war broke out. He was taken prisoner and spent the next few years in captivity.

On his return, Panda Farnana led the Union Congolaise, an association for the 'moral and intellectual development' of the Congolese in Belgium and in Congo. He made a name for himself as a spokesman of the Congolese in Belgium. He became a target for intolerant colonials and subsequently returned to the Congo in 1929.

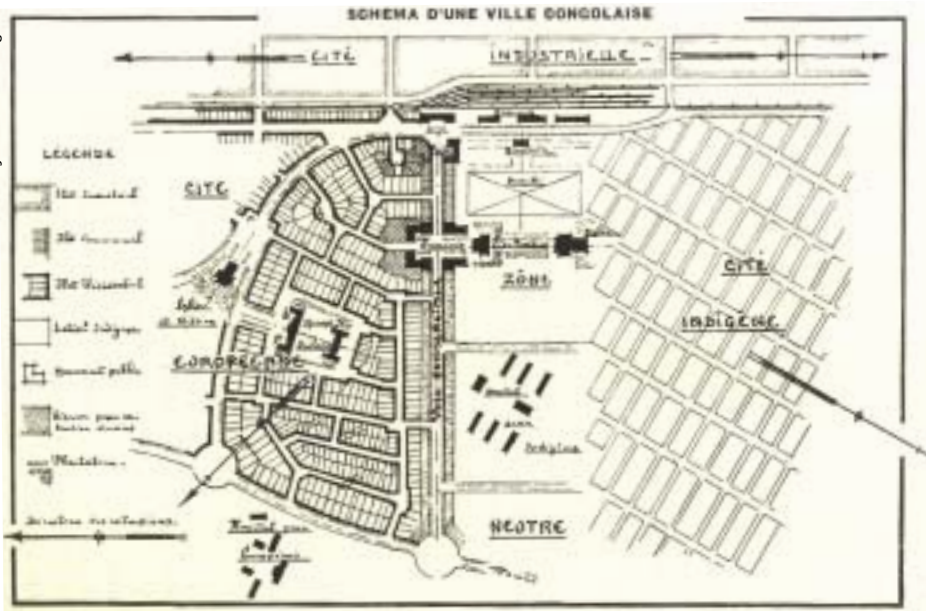
William Henry Sheppard (1865–1927)

An American missionary of African origin, William Sheppard was, in 1893, the first foreigner to enter the Kuba court, where he was recognized as an ancestor who had returned to his native land. He thus formed a close friendship with the royal family. Deemed to have become too close to the native populations, he was recalled to the United States in 1910. Through his lectures and collections he introduced the kingdom to black Americans.

In 1900 Sheppard published an account of his encounter with a raiding expedition carried out by Zappo Zaps, allies of the State, as they plundered and harried a Kuba territory, thus telling the outside world of the unstemmed violence that prevailed in some regions of the Congo.



Photo 20: Learning to use the lathe at the technical college in Lusambo, 1918



Drawing 21: René Schoentjes, 'Map of a Congolese town'. Brussels, 1933

This map was drawn up by an architectural engineer from the Ministry of Colonies. For 'hygienic reasons' a 'neutral zone' separated the 'European' and 'native' areas. With a total width of 500 metres, this was, according to its designer, the maximum range of a malaria-carrying mosquito.

Placidus (Frans) Tempels (1906–1977)

A Franciscan missionary with a passion for African culture, Tempels was convinced that the social relations between Europeans and Africans were undermined by the European obsession for profit. In 1946, Tempels published *Bantoe-Filosofie* which was soon translated from Dutch into French and noticed by *Présence africaine*, who then published it in Paris.

Tempels was away from the Congo for a time but returned in order to find a Christian answer to the 'Bantu' aspiration to shared development and fulfilment. Convinced that people find fulfilment through encounters and exchanges within spiritual families (*jamaa*), this charismatic missionary experienced his dialogue with Africa as a personal encounter with Christ.

The Museum holds musical recordings made by Tempels at the start of his time in the Congo.

Living together separately

The colonized and the colonizers did not form a homogenous society. Colonial society was made up of groups of different origins, distinguished by colour, class, language, etc. This heterogeneous society was further divided by the racial segregation between 'White' and 'Black'. In the Belgian colony, this 'colour bar' regulated public and daily life. However, in the Belgian Congo, discrimination was never a systematized policy as it was, for instance, in South Africa. **(Drawing 21)**

Cities divided

Less noticeable in the smaller settlements where colonists and colonized had closer contact with each other, segregation was explicit in the way towns and cities were organized. 'European' and 'native' areas were separated by a 'neutral zone'. Mobility between the two parts of the town was regulated, the application varying according to local and practical conditions.

The 'mixed-race issue'

Statistics for the mixed-race population of the Congo are rare, which itself bears witness to the quandary the issue represented: as late as 1958, official sources classed them together with 'persons of black race from non-border countries of the Belgian Congo'. Estimated at some 10,000 in 1956, the mixed race represented only a tiny fraction of the total population (0.075%), a proportion that was fifteen times less than that in neighbouring Angola.

Even though the 'mixed-race issue' was not significant at a quantitative level, it was the source of deep uneasiness in the colonial period: far beyond the Congo,

there was a long history of prejudice against persons of mixed race, from both sides of the 'colour bar'. (Photo 22)

'Is there a "colour bar" in the Belgian Congo?'

In 1951, the newspaper *La Libre Belgique* asked this very question and answered it in the affirmative. Segregation was denied in official discourse, despite the petty regulations that organized segregation between 'Whites' and 'Blacks' in housing, leisure, education, transport and health. Two judicial systems operated side by side. In the course of the 1950s, segregation was seriously questioned and discriminatory regulations were gradually abolished. From 1952 onwards, the 'civil merit card' was meant to give certain Congolese a status that was close to that of Europeans, although few actually received these 'cards'. Until then, only those that were registered (*immatriculé*) enjoyed that status. By 1958, such privileges, more significant in the judicial sphere than in the social sphere, were enjoyed by no more than 2,500 Congolese (of the some 10,000 *evolus*).

Crossways glances

Some exchanges between Europeans and Congolese take place on the fringes of hierarchical colonial society. Painting, sculpture and music bear witness to the dynamics that pervade the arts in the Congo. While the Congolese artists project their perspectives on the colonial world, the Western artists live their own experiences without really being influenced by local aesthetics.

Colonial society through Congolese eyes

Congolese artists and craftsmen have portrayed their European masters and their African auxiliaries with both irony and realism. Both colonist and everyday colonial life are evoked through a variety of techniques and on various media.

Encounters on the fringe

Jeanne Tercafs (1898–1944)

In 1935, Jeanne Tercafs leaves for the Congo hoping to inject new life into her sculpture. Between 1935 and 1940, she goes to Uele on three separate occasions.

With clean and sensual lines, she creates portraits that reflect the intimacy of the relationship she forged with the Matari women. It is these close bonds rather than local aesthetics that regenerate her art.

Photographer unknown



Photo 22: '*Mulâtresses élevées par les sœurs de la Mission de Lubunda*'. Original caption: Mulattos brought up by the sisters of the Lubunda mission. Lubunda, undated

Photo: F. Hubin

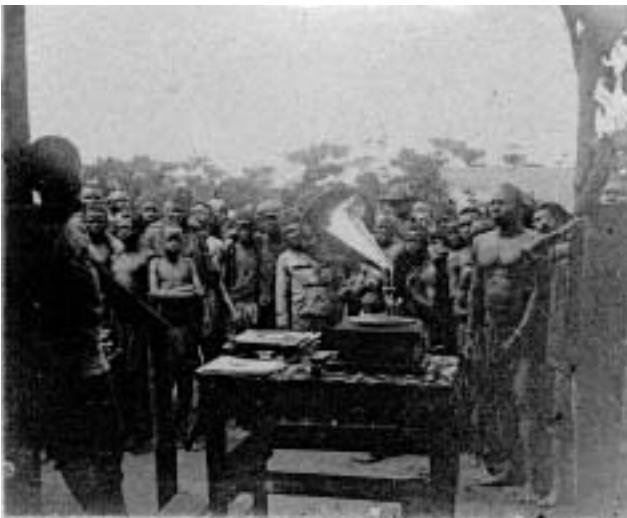


Photo 23: A gramophone session in Musa, 1907

Anne Eisner (1911–1967)

After the Second World War, Anne Eisner sets herself up at the edge of the Ituri Forest (the Epulu River) where her husband, anthropologist Patrick Putnam, has set up camp. She relentlessly paints and draws the three worlds she has known in the Congo: the forest, village life, especially that of the women, and the world of the Pygmies.

Anne Eisner compiles numerous notes on the Pygmy culture during her stay in Ituri. She becomes one of the adoptive mothers of three orphaned pygmies, who will be her only children.

Pierre Romain-Desfossés (1887–1954)

An artist and former French army officer, Pierre Romain-Desfossés sets up home in Elisabethville at the end of the Second World War. His passion for African cultures leads him to open an experimental studio where talented artists of all ages come to express themselves.

What makes this studio special is the many different and original techniques the artists use. Every artist uses his cultural heritage to its full potential whilst still partaking in the new culture.

The Congolese rumba, the fruit of different encounters

A significant proportion of modern Congolese music was born from the encounter with popular Cuban music in an urban context.

Born in the late 1940s, the 'Congolese rumba' enjoyed the support of a very dynamic record industry created by Greek merchants and Belgian musicians and relayed via the radio. It would take less than two decades for this music to come to symbolize African modernity internationally. **(Photo 23)**

Encounters with Cuban music

In the 19th century, the final stages of the slave trade between Central Africa and Cuba had a regenerative effect on 'Afro-cuban' music. When it spread across the world under the name of rumba (1930) and then mambo (1950), its African elements were immediately recognized as such by the Congolese, who 'reappropriated' it.

Introduced in the Congo by West African immigrants, Cuban music continued its penetration through records, first with French imitations and then with original recordings. It ultimately became the main source of inspiration for the pioneers of modern Congolese music.

Producers and musicians

Ngoma Label

Nicolas Jeronimidis, a Greek merchant from Alexandria, arrives in Leopoldville in 1947. He opens a large store and, for his own enjoyment, sets

up the Ngoma ('drum') record company. He starts out with traditional music. One of his first 'modern' artists is Wendo, whose song *Marie Louise*, said to 'wake the dead', was to be the first major commercial success of the Congolese record industry.

Opika Label

In 1949, Rhodian shopkeeper Gabriel Benatar creates his label called Opika ('prepare yourself!'). In order to set himself apart from the competition, he gets foreign musicians, mostly Belgian, to manage his artists and to train them according to the Cuban model. Congolese and Belgian musicians have a relationship that is not as unequal as it may at first appear to be, since the music they create is foreign to both their worlds. This results in a relationship of esteem and mutual respect, which was not common within the colonial context.

Loningisa Label

Also a merchant and music-lover, Athanase Papadimitriou organizes fashion shows accompanied by an orchestra in his shop. On the suggestion of singer Henri Bowane, he creates his own label. Loningisa ('shake yourself!') proposes harsh, sometimes violent music – the complete opposite of the Opika style – that evokes the first years of rock. The resident orchestra, brought together by Bowane, would later become OK Jazz.

ROOM 5. REPRESENTATION

The Free State, followed by the Belgian colony, produced a mass of images on the Congo. The colonists represent themselves and the peoples they have colonized for propaganda purposes.

The way the Congo was being portrayed in Belgium is shown here with two case studies: the beginnings of the Museum and the 1958 World Fair. Despite the years that separate them, the messages conveyed by the 1897 and 1958 exhibitions, i.e. civilization, progress and modernity, remain similar.

The Museum as a colonial tool

The Museum of Tervuren, which stemmed from the 1897 exhibition and was founded by Leopold II, was a great producer of images on the Congo and the colonization. A propaganda tool, it was also a scientific establishment dedicated to the study of the colony through its Human Sciences and Natural Sciences collections. **(Photo 24)**

Postcard: Nels



Photo 24: Old display of a 'buffalo mask'.
Musée du Congo Belge, Tervuren, undated

Photo R. Stalin



Photo 25: The Grand Palace of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi.
The Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi section, 1958

The Congo at the 1958 World Fair

At the height of the Cold War, the Brussels World Fair was dedicated to 'Man and his mission in a peaceful and humane world, in a better world'.

Belgian Africa features prominently in the exhibition, as Belgium takes up an area of 8 hectares with its Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi section: seven pavilions dedicated to the economy, industry, science, energy and religion in colonized Congo.

In its eagerness to portray an image of a harmonious colonial society, Belgium invited many Congolese to take part in the exhibition. (Photo 25)

ROOM 6. INDEPENDENCE

In the wake of the royal visit of 1955, Belgium celebrates its colonial endeavour at the 1958 World Fair in Brussels, wishing to demonstrate that the foundations for a long-lasting Belgian-Congolese community had been established.

However, in the Congo itself history takes a different course. The idea of independence has begun to take hold and is driven on by the riots of January 1959 in Leopoldville. Independence is gained on 30 June 1960, whilst the country is severely unprepared for the change. The mutinies by the Force Publique and the collapse of the administration threaten to plunge the country into chaos and violence.

In certain areas such as education, the country continues along the same path. In other areas such as agriculture, the changes in progress are discontinued. On the whole, despite the definite mark colonization has left on the country, the new Congo is a different Congo.

Kongo Ya Sika

In the 1950s a song entitled *Kongo Ya Sika* (the new Congo), translates the feelings of the Congolese population: the African Jazz and OK Jazz orchestras accompany a period of change, playing songs full of political references. The international anti-colonial climate (with the 1955 Bandoeng Conference and the position of the UN) and the recent decolonizations across the African continent hasten the political awareness of the Congolese elite, who is tired of the rate of reforms in the colony. The aspirations of Congo's emancipation begin to manifest themselves openly: 1956, the Manifesto of *Conscience africaine*; 1958, the Manifesto of ABAKO (Association des Bakongo); and 1959, the Declaration of the Apostolic curacies of Belgian Africa. (Photo 26)

Photo: C. Lamote



Photo 26: Mail delivery. Leopoldville, between 1945 and 1959

Photo: R. Stalin



Photo 27: President Kasa-Vubu and Prime Minister introduces his State Secretary of Defense, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, to King Baudouin. Leopoldville, 1960

Decolonization

The mutinies by the Force Publique, the secessions, the UN intervention and the rebellions are the main expressions of the 'Congolese crisis'. The 'Belgian order' is brought to an end.

Mobutu, who became president following the coup on 24 November 1965, gradually imposed a new order, that of the State of Zaire. The process of decolonization was fully completed with the adoption by the Mobutu regime in the first half of the 1970s of the policies for 'recourse to authenticity' and for the 'Zairization' of the economy. (Photo 27)

Belgium and independent Congo: co-operative links

Despite the many crises between the two countries, Belgium continues to provide a significant amount of aid up until the 1990 rupture with President Mobutu. Between 1960 and 1990 the total amount of public aid is 7.4 billion euro. During those thirty years, Belgium was Congo's main partner in terms of co-operation. Since the late 1990s, Belgium has undertaken to develop new collaborative links with the Congo and Central Africa.

Tribunal

It is impossible to assess the full impact of colonization as it is too recent to be able to examine it with sufficient scientific distance and detached from all the controversy surrounding it. Today, this history takes on different allures depending on the perspective in which it is placed.

We have therefore decided to ask fifteen or so people, Belgian and Congolese, men and women, who were direct or indirect witnesses of the Belgian colonization of the Congo, to say a few words about their experiences. All of them, each in their own way, talk about what moved, astonished, hurt, shocked or pleased them.

room 7. documentation centre

The colonial past has left many vestiges in a wide variety of spheres. This documentation centre's aim is not to compensate for elements that are not found in the exhibition, but rather to simply invite the visitor to access some of the many historical sources, ranging from press cuttings that date back to the colonial era and administrative archives, to maps and photographs.



04.02.2005 – 09.10.2005

MEMORY OF CONGO

THE COLONIAL ERA

www.congo2005.be

ROYAL MUSEUM FOR CENTRAL AFRICA
Leuvensesteenweg 13
3080 Tervuren
+32 (0)2 769 52 11
www.africamuseum.be



L'AURVAMEDE

