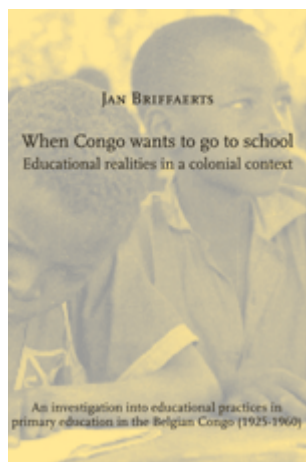


When Congo Wants To Go To School - Part III - Acti Cesa



A few years ago Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch wrote about the results of the educational system in the Belgian Congo that “(This) in depth work concerning mentalities was started to be felt from 1945. [i] We have tried to approach the issue of the effects of the missionary education from two angles. On the one hand, on the basis of the written testimonies that can be found, from which it is apparent how the Congolese reacted, how they acted and what they thought about that education. Publications in which the opinion of the Congolese pupils and former pupils can be found were sought as contemporary sources. Concrete, extensive and detailed research was carried out into one of those publications, *La Voix du Congolais*. On the other hand, it is possible to make use of memories. These are preferably the memories of the people themselves. A number of interviews with the Congolese helped complement the very sparse literature available in this regard.

When considering this theme, the original boundaries of the research subject were slightly deviated from. The research subject was deviated from as regards the material, as the

interviews are situated both within but also partly outside the mission area of the MSC. The existing research results that were consulted and used also relate to areas outside the Tshuapa region. Moreover, the research subject was deviated from with regard to content due to the conclusion that research into the effects of education is inextricably connected to the “memory” of the colonial period. Consequently, it seemed interesting to us to take the memories of former pupils into account. That has the undeniable advantage that the image drawn may be confronted to a certain extent with the memories of the Congolese.

In the previous four chapters, written material was primarily collected that spoke about the events that took place in and around the school in the mission area of the MSC. The image created as a result is perhaps still not very clear but the outlines may be discerned. Naturally coloured by all the information I collected myself as a researcher and undoubtedly also coloured by the information I did not

collect, I did not think it very useful to consider all that material again in a conclusive chapter and to attempt to distil a summarising image from that.

I will therefore restrict my conclusion to an indication of the image drawn and the formulation of a number of considerations regarding the way in which this past is handled and the role this research may hopefully play in it.

NOTE:

[i] Tshimanga, C. (2001). *Jeunesse, formation et société au Congo/Kinshasa 1890-1960*. Paris: L'Harmattan. p. 5 (préface). [original quotation in French]

When Congo Wants To Go To School - The Short Term: Reactions



Effects on the colonists: initiation of an African science of education?

In 1957 Albert Gille, Director of Education at the Ministry for Colonies, wrote that the biggest problem of education at that time remained the lack of well-trained teachers. He claimed that the quality of the teaching staff remained low and that there would be no improvement over the next few years.[i]

There was not much opportunity to climb the social ladder. There were very few signs that the educational principles had changed under the impulse of Buisserets policy, which indeed 'broke open' the educational system. In fact, education in the Congo then became 'metropolised',[ii] but the changes in the curriculum were not accompanied by a significantly different composition of the body of teachers. The impact of the changes was quantitatively too limited to be able to bring about a general change in the short term. Until after independence, education would still remain almost completely in the hands of the mission congregations.

The early Congolese universities did produce some scientific research on education, but this research did not break out of the familiar straightjacket either. At the University of Lovanium research results and opinions in the field of education were published in the *Revue pédagogique*, which has already been mentioned. At the Official University Paul Georis was particularly active in the area of educationalism, but the results of his investigations only appeared after independence.[iii] Georis was the head of a so-called “interracial” high school in Stanleyville for four years and studied the possibilities of developing educational theory adapted to African circumstances there. His colleagues did the same in Luluaburg and Lodja. The most important elements that came to the fore in the research on such new educational theories, which he published in 1962 (but had written before independence), were the community life of the Congolese, the uniqueness of Congolese culture and respect for foreign cultures. In addition, the importance of an improvement of the level of education was also emphasised. Georis also referred to the splitting of education into mass- and elite-education. That it was necessary to point out, even in this publication, which was written in rather ‘progressive’ milieus, that “*the qualitative equality of the intelligence of the Black and the White can be proven*” is telling of the zeitgeist. In that respect the author also argued for a uniformity and equivalence in the primary education system for all levels of the population.

However, there were a number of obstacles in the way of the development towards a balanced educational system. Besides the vast size of the country and – here too – the poor quality of the teaching body, Georis mentioned the Congolese attachment to their ancestral traditions and the influence of magic as primary elements. Generally speaking, he seemed to argue for blending the traditional African values with imported Western ideas, which naturally did not prevent him from arguing within a progressive or developmental paradigm. Despite all his good intentions, he regularly remained bogged down in the model of ‘civilisation versus primitivism’. The “black”, he concluded in his study, could free himself from his neuroses and his complexes. Apparently that was still necessary.

On the other hand, an 1958 editorial contribution in the *Revue Pédagogique* about the “*programmes métropolitains*” and the adaptation of education, stated that: “*In the Congo, we have for a long time attempted clumsy and timid adaptations, which proved inoperative. Now we are turning away from this path and are increasingly adopting the metropolitan curricula from Belgium, following the*

example of France, which has applied the French curricula for a long time." Consequently, at that time, there was some hard thinking going on in both university milieus concerning the direction of education. In both cases questions were being asked aloud about the manner in which things had been done in the past. It is not illogical that in university circles at that time more discerning and detailed analyses were being made. There was a great deal of political activism at that time: in 1956 the manifestos of *Conscience Africaine* and the ABAKO had already been published and in 1958 the MNC of Lumumba and Ileo was formed; local council elections were also organised in 1958. The predominant attitude, also applicable to the educationalists, was still very expectant, cautious and doubtful.[iv] Even the contribution mentioned above, after initially pleading pro *métropolisation*, stated that it was very unclear what the Africans really wanted. They longed for Western education, to be able to get Western diplomas, because that was the only way to be recognised as an equal. But at the same time they also wanted something else and the next step would then have to be recovering their own cultural identity. The periodical's attitude was summed up well in the last sentence of the contribution: "*These are the general and imprecise assertions that must nevertheless be taken into account.*"

Effects on the colonised: the needle in the haystack

2.1. At a university level

If we want to judge the effects of education, we must necessarily search for the voices of the people involved and those are primarily the Congolese. In the case of the universities and the science of education itself, this voice did not ring out very loudly. The reasons for this are not hard to find: it was too late and there were too few of them. At the University of Lovanium the first seven Congolese students graduated in June 1955 from the first year of a bachelor in Educational Science. Of these only two graduated three years later in June 1958 with a master's (these were two priests, Michel Karikunzura and Ildephonse Kamiya).[v] In Elisabethville, where the 'Official' University operated from 1956, a 'School for Educational Sciences' was set up from the beginning. During the academic year 1957-1958 five African students were enrolled in the first year of the bachelor's degree at the school (there were a total of 17 African students enrolled at the University at that time). In Lovanium there were 110 African students, of which 18 studied educational sciences.[vi]

Congolese writing only seldom found its way into scientific publications published

in the academic milieu. In 1957 a contribution by the Congolese Kimba, a journalist with the newspaper *L'Essor du Congo*, appeared in the *Revue Pédagogique*. He wrote about "*What the Congolese expect from the teaching of French*".[vii] His contribution was only four pages long and was even then introduced with a few strong considerations from the editors. The introduction indicates that it was still very uncommon at that time for a Congolese to be able to vent his opinion in a scientific publication or make a contribution at all. It stated: "*It is interesting to hear the opinion of a Congolese on the matter*". In his contribution Kimba briefly stated the reasons why the Congolese wanted to learn to speak French: it was the only way to create a "*trait d'union*" between all Congolese population groups, and to achieve a common language. Above all French was the only means that would help them to gain access to higher civilisation.

However, the article also contained a very subtle example of the manner in which colonial relations worked. The author summed up everyday situations from which it appeared that Congolese learning French was still not considered as an obvious matter. He stated that differences still existed in the manner in which the Congolese and the Europeans interpreted some situations. By way of illustration he gave the following example: "*One expression has an odd interpretation with the Congolese: this is the common expression 'Il n'y a personne?' [tr.-Is anybody in?] which some Europeans use to ask after the person in charge. The Congolese translate this phrase literally and in this way the Europeans disregard their human nature by considering them beings that do not have the right to be called 'personne = être humain' [tr-a person or human being]. This is certainly an error of interpretation on the part of the Congolese. The sense the European gives to this phrase is different to that of the Congolese. We know that responsible jobs are still held by the Europeans, from which stems the frequent use of the expression 'Il n'y a personne!', i.e. 'European' in the current situation.*" However, much the author tried to make this appear as a special or divergent meaning that had to be given to the cited words, the true meaning and scope of this anecdote are still clearly apparent here. It is difficult to decide whether this was very deep naivety or supreme irony, as the rest of the article does not display any critical attitude at all towards the colonists. Kimba did not give the impression of wanting to wake sleeping dogs. On the contrary his approach tried to be as conciliatory as possible.

The vast majority of the contributions published in the *Revue Pédagogique* were written by white people, of which the majority were members of religious congregations. In the last year the journal was published, two other contributions by Congolese authors appeared. A F. Lumpungu, *teaching assistant*, wrote a piece on the educational value of games.[viii] Antoine Kimpono, *head teaching assistant*, made a brief contribution on the influence the teaching assistant must exercise on the children in an urban environment. His article described the city as a place of ruination. The people had to live so close to each other in the *Centres Extra Coutumiers* that it seemed almost impossible to lead a hygienic and moral life. The teacher was then a man with a mission, and that mission was clearly an extension of the work of 'real' missionaries. He must work as a spiritual guide through the darkness and lead by example of his own lifestyle. That a number of *teaching assistants* did not correspond to that picture was also a true scandal. The opinion put forward in the contribution was overly-simplified and above all showed the religious workers in a good light. "Undoubtedly, *teaching assistants know well that priests are also people with all their failings. But they also know that the priests have a divine mission to fulfil.*"[ix] According to the author, cooperation with the parents and with the priest was one of the most important tasks of the teacher.



2.2. In the media

The content of these Congolese contributions was not especially shocking or innovative, and above all too modest to be able to exert any influence. A similar conclusion could have been drawn concerning the media that reached a broader public (i.e. the daily newspapers). Here again, it was precisely the voice of the Congolese which was seldom to be heard. Van Bol, who wrote a short book on the press in Congo in 1959, stated that it was certainly not originally intended to inform the Congolese, let alone to educate them. On the other hand it cannot be denied that the creation of a Congolese voice in the colonial press must be considered one of the effects of education. Also according to Van Bol several of these newspapers decided to make space available for reactions from the Congolese themselves after the War. All in all it was not a great success: only the largest newspapers did so effectively. *Le Courrier d'Afrique*, despite being the press organ of the church and the missions in the Congo, had launched a supplement 'by and for the Congolese', which would become a separate

publication from 1957 (*Présence Congolaise*, a name derived from *Présence Africaine*). *L'Avenir*, from Leopoldville had also recruited a number of Congolese editors by the early 1950s.[x] Kimba was the only Congolese editor at that time at the *Essor du Congo*. It was not until the end of the 1950s that there was any sign of publications completely in the hands of Congolese editorial staff. The only exception, which can be mentioned, is the publication of *La Voix du Congolais*.

As late as 1959 the following opinions could be read in a scientific contribution on Congolese literature and authors. The fact that the Belgians had taught the Congolese little to no French before the Second World War could not be criticised. The author referred to arguments from people like the Senegalese Cheikh Anta Diop, who was the first to blame the colonial powers in his country for only teaching the Africans French and, in this way, denying them any chance of a form of cultural autonomy.[xi] The Belgians, in contrast, had not done anything wrong in this respect: “*We did nothing, from 1885 to 1921, to systematically detribalise the Congolese.*” Even so, the same author concluded that they had not done anything to prevent the Congolese from shifting from an oral culture to the written counterpart either. After all, education had been a primary factor in the development of literacy among the Congolese and as a consequence in the transition to a written culture. These ideas are also present in the testimonies of the Congolese today. The ancestors had understood that they could make progress by learning to read and write, or at least make advantageous use of it in their relationships with the colonists.

In the same article the first traces of an early Congolese literature (meaning literature written by the Congolese) were discussed. The author gave the periodical *Brousse* as the first interesting publication, published by a society that called itself *Amis de l'Art Indigène*, which stood under the patronage of a whole series of personalities from the colonial establishment (including the governor-general, important industrialists and the Catholic bishops). *Brousse* was the first periodical to publish stories written by the Congolese, from the end of the 1930s. These publications were within the aims of the periodical, the ‘preservation of the oral culture’. In most cases it related to the publication of fables, adaptations of local stories or works of fiction.[xii] A number of stories by Antoine Bolamba, who would later become the editor-in-chief of *La Voix du Congolais*, were published even before the war. However, there are no traces of non-fiction or opinions published in the press or other publications before 1945, at least not in French.

Considering the situation of education, that cannot be considered a great surprise. Naturally it is harder to make observations on the formation of the opinions of the Congolese for publications in local languages.

2.3. Regional

Similar trends may also be observed at a regional level, for example in the mission area of the MSC. In his overview of the local press Vinck reported a whole series of publications, in which the Congolese only rarely voiced critical opinions. Besides the periodicals that were published by the missionaries, there were also a few initiatives by the administration, although it is probably more accurate to state that these were taken by a few specific officials. That was also the case in Coquilhatville. In 1947 the periodical *Mbandaka* was formed, originally intended for reporting sports news. The publication was in the hands of a colonial official, Victor Brébant, the local *chef du bureau d'information*. After a while the content of the publication was broadened to general news. The editorial staff and the editor in chief were made up of the Congolese clerks at the information service, including Justin Bomboko.[xiii] According to his successor, Albert Bolela, it was under his initiative that the periodical applied itself to social, economic and political topics. All, he added, "*conforming to the general policy of the Government*". That this was probably realised under strong censorship from the administration is apparent from the latter: he described Bomboko's position as "*handicapped by the department of Native Affairs*".[xiv] Bolela wrote that *Mbandaka* enjoyed immediate success, particularly with the "*class of the population who were insufficiently educated*", by which he probably meant those who knew no French.

Most 'Congolese' periodicals that started before independence in the mission area of the MSC, were in fact founded at the initiative of the Catholic (and sometimes the Protestant) missionaries. The publications concerned were mostly those in which the missionaries themselves wrote articles and only allowed a few contributions by the Congolese. Only one of them began, in the course of time, to comment on the news and allowed the Congolese to express their views in their own language. Paul Ngoi declared in 1955 in the periodical *Lokole*: "*In other regions of the Colony, the natives already have their own press in their own language. Do the Nkundo-Mongo who inhabit a vast territory not deserve their own newspaper? It is not enough to always rely on our civiliser. We are responsible for our country's progress. (...) consequently we have judged it useful*

to publish a periodical ourselves under our management.”[xv] The great problems of colonial society were discussed in the paper according to Vinck: “In the beginning they were still considered from a traditionalist point of view but these questions were quickly asked with a view to the interpretation of events and development in current affairs: fundamental ownership, the use of African languages in public life and education, the fall in the birth rate with the mingo, the organisation of justice, the development of the colony and when nearing independence opinions were expressed relatively freely on major political topics and the formation of political parties.”[xvi] This therefore only applies to the last five years of colonisation. We cannot, in any case, state with any certainty that the impact of these publications was very important. The circulations were fairly limited (e.g. 1500 copies of Lokole were published in 1956; after a few years Mbandaka managed to reach something over 2000 copies).

The voice of the Congolese

3.1. The universe of the évolué

It may be deduced from the above that it was the *évolués*, who emphatically wished to become the equals of the whites and therefore also sought and demanded their channels of opinion from the coloniser. *Evolués*, were defined in the first instance by the fact that they had integrated a certain level of western values in their lifestyle. The medium in which they developed emancipation and the best-known and studied example of this question is the publication of *La Voix du Congolais*. The periodical was set up in 1945 and was published until 1959. In the beginning it was published every two months and from July 1946 it became a monthly periodical.[xvii] The precise history of its foundation is rather difficult to reconstruct, but from the different sources reporting on it the following story can be distilled. The initiative for the publication came from the colonial administration. An official in the colonial administration, Jean Paul Quix, is usually indicated. In 1943 he was charged by the governor-general with organising a new department in the colonial administration, the *Service de l'Information pour indigènes*. The original requirement for setting up such a publication would probably have come from *évolués*, who had been admitted to a number of associations of Europeans (e.g. Antoine Bolamba, through *Brousse*).

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of *La Voix* in 1955, one of the editors of the periodical, Joseph Davier, wrote an overview in which he revealed the role of Quix. He described his task as “finding a *soupe de sûreté*”, and indicated the

existing unrest of a large number of Congolese as one of the incentives for the initiative that was taken. In very moderate phrases he related the unrest that was the basis of the periodical, and the ambivalent attitude that was held by many people towards the initiative: *"I will always remember those stormy sessions in which each of us poured out our excessively ulcerated spleen to Mr Quix, as though he were responsible. I also remember the calm serenity with which he faced our complaints and calmed our poor nerves. Nobody could understand that an official could bear these bitter torrents and criticisms of the Belgian policy without turning a hair; they accused him of 'l'Oeuil de la Sûreté' (the Secret Service) that would soon come and cause hardship on the foolhardy people that had confided him all the sorrows of their heart."*[xviii] The author of the contribution was not excessively critical: the earlier problematic circumstances had improved long ago, and interracial relations had become *"(...) in general (...) excellent"*. This indicates that the references to these relations, made very cautiously and well wrapped up at the time, probably have to be taken seriously. Davier wrote for example about the attitude of the Congolese towards the Belgians: *"It goes without saying that in our Congolese milieu, the Belgians received a bad press."* It also concedes that the tone of the *évolués* was still not very radicalised in 1955 and that no real open opposition to the coloniser existed or could exist there. Kadima-Tshimanga, who looked at what happened from a very different perspective (and *a posteriori*), stated that the formation of the periodical *"(...) appears an opportunistic political measure. It served, before the official installation of the status of the évolués with the civic and registration certificate of merit, to channel forces which had no outlet."*[xix]

There is no doubt that the Belgian colonists at first carefully inspected the contents of *La Voix*. The control certainly always continued to exist, the periodical was always under the supervision of an information official, but there is not much more information on that available. It is also impossible to describe in any detail the exact development of the ideas and standpoints and, above all, the degree of freedom of the editorial staff. On the other hand, the periodical does seem to be a good indicator of the post-war development of Congolese society. In the initial period some articles raised very negative reactions from the establishment. They regularly had to defend themselves, as happened with the article *"Nos écrits et leur but"* by Joseph Tamba: *"On reading our writing, some people appear to have the impression that the blacks and more particularly the 'évolués', are excessively critical and even have a tendency to deny the benefits of civilisation. The proof is*

that in reply to our articles, we are told again and again who the black people were before the whites arrived and who we would still be today, without the presence of the Europeans in the Congo.”[xx] Thirteen years later, in 1959, Van Bol wrote about *La Voix* (and about another publication of the colonial administration, *Nos Images*): “These two publications which exactly filled the desires of the indigenous population in their time, today only reflect the more moderate and official opinions of these.”[xxi] Bolamba admitted that: “(...) we must confess that our periodical is currently no longer able to fulfil its role as the mouthpiece of the Congolese with very great effectiveness.”[xxii] That primarily shows that in the post-war years an enormous increase in consciousness had occurred in the Congolese population, but this does not completely solve the mystery of the exact attitude and ideas of the contributors of the periodical. No matter how well-behaved it was, *La Voix* was an important publication and it probably fulfilled a symbolic function for many Congolese.

Because it was written by Congolese *évolués*, and considered topics that interested them, *La Voix* is a very interesting object of study. In the past decades there have already been a number of academic studies of the periodical, especially by Congolese authors. In his study on *La Voix du Congolais*, Pius Ngandu mentioned a number of criteria that the *évolués* used to define themselves. The contents of these make it embarrassingly clear how contradictory the creation of this category of ‘evolved person’ was. According to Ngandu a first criterion was the distance to the traditional way of life, to “*coutume*”. The ‘evolved’ made that clear in their reactions themselves, including those printed in *La Voix*. They loaded the concept of ‘primitivism’ with a pejorative connotation. Ngandu correctly remarked that in Congo “*the assimilation movement arose, not from the coloniser but the colonised*”. He also stated that neither the missionaries nor the administration had made any attempt to assimilate the Congolese (and, for example, for the MSC that was very definitely not the case). Still there were a number of political choices, or really administrative creations from the colonisers that the Congolese could use as aids to help them to realise their longing for assimilation. For example, the creation of urban areas (the C.E.C.’s), in which a way of life different from that in the countryside came into existence and where the social control that accompanied the traditional way of life was much less tangible.

Besides this, other even more important factors played a part in this self-

definition. There was for instance the general level of education that was reached. The boundary is difficult to define exactly but it was generally accepted that the *évolué* should at least have completed primary school. Knowledge of French seems to have been a clearer evaluation criterion. Whoever spoke French, could always communicate with the whites. The most important element could simply be described as 'lifestyle' but interpreted according to western norms. Of course, these included the moral values inculcated at school, but also the material lifestyle had to be sufficiently similar to that of the West. To fulfil this last condition required sufficient financial means. As a result Ngandu eventually, ten years after independence, regretted that it was precisely this requirement that ensured that the Congolese always strove with inexhaustible eagerness for the highest functions and the best paid jobs: "*Later, it was always in order to achieve a higher salary that the Evolués abandoned the offices to throw themselves onto ministerial positions. The model children of the Belgians sought to impose their will on the masses, in their turn to become exploiters, the oppressors of their brothers.*" Ngabu further claimed that *La Voix du Congolais* had cooperated particularly actively by publishing all manner of articles, contributions, interviews about and with the people who 'succeeded' and who had received formal recognition of their evolved status (the *carte de mérite civique* or the *carte d'immatriculation*). Naturally, the question is whether this occurred only at the initiative of the *évolués* in the editorial staff. It is possible that there was a certain pressure from above to do this, but it would be very difficult to find out.

In any event, from earlier research it seems that *La Voix* offers an interesting universe for the interpretation of the complex relationships between colonists and *évolués*, *évolués* and non-*évolués*, and among *évolués*. The abovementioned criteria were not at all watertight. They leaned on one main foundation: in the last instance the colonial administration decided whether a statute was recognised or not. That was the case *de iure* in the context of the handing out of the *carte de mérite civique* and was, as has already been said, laid down in a very vague legal definition. It is more than likely that this was also the case in daily life. There was a sort of deliberate lack of certainty about what being civilised meant which also made it possible for there to be different categories of *évolués*. Naturally, the differences among *évolués* were important, to the extent that people were eager to be as 'real' as possible. It was about being as evolved as possible. Whoever was only considered so because he was recognized as such by the Belgians for some obscure reason or another, could be sure to arouse the disdain of the others. They

therefore appealed to other 'objective' criteria to distinguish themselves and to position themselves better in society. Merely a normal social phenomenon, one could say.

A consequence of this was that the *évolués* themselves began to consider their land as a land without a culture and they began to take on the role of 'civiliser' towards their non-evolved fellow countrymen. The initiative of Buisseret to generalise the European curriculum in the Congolese schools was very well received as a result. Independent of the motives that formed the foundations of this decision, they represented an end to the fundamental and double frustration that the educational system in the Congo brought with it. Up to this time there had always been Congolese schools and European schools and the curriculum of both had always been different in principle. Bringing the two together not only ensured that the *évolués* were brought to an equal level with the Europeans in an important domain, it also ensured that they were especially distinguished among the other Congolese. The ability to make the distinctions was picked up during education, completely integrated by the *évolués* and illustrated in *La Voix*. In this context the remark made by Kadima-Tshimanga must be quoted: *La Voix du Congolais* was really "*La Voix de l'Evolué*".[xxiii] Naturally, that was the case because the criteria of the concept *évolué* were exactly attuned to this. A person only had a voice when it fitted precisely within the lines of that concept.

3.2. Antoine Roger Bolamba: *la voix du Congolais*.



Antoine Roger Bolamba was a perfect example of this. He was the editor-in-chief of *La Voix du Congolais*. [xxiv] The predominance of the influence of Bolamba in *La Voix*, is apparent from several elements. He wrote the editorial opinions at the beginning of each issue. Of all the journalists of *La Voix* he also wrote the most contributions. In addition he wrote a large proportion of the 'general' sections, such as the *Chroniques* or the *Ephémérides*, in which interesting occurrences and news events were often reported. Above all he did not recoil from taking standpoints or publishing the

contributions by other authors under his own name or that of the editor. In 1975 a study appeared in the *cahiers du CEDAF* in which the content of the articles that

appeared in the last full year of publication of the periodical (1959) were analysed linguistically.[xxv] Although it was limited in scope, this study showed among other things that the use of language in the opinion pieces and the politically inspired articles of the editors was rather poor. The difference between the editor-in-chief and the rest of the contributors was very marked, since Bolamba possessed a much more graphic and subtle use of language than his colleagues. Besides this the author also remarked that there were repeated references to the programmes of the *Radio Congo Belge*, which were “better directed than many articles in *La Voix*“. The conclusion of the general evaluation of the writing style was: “*If we put aside the articles by Antoine Roger Bolamba and the broadcasts by Belgian Congo Radio, it may be concluded that the writing in La Voix du Congolais is close to zero, i.e. a naïve and unaffected discourse, denuded of any innuendo, which calls ‘a spade, a spade’*“. These are certainly interpretations that are based on a relatively limited number of sources and come from a study, that was rather technical and used a qualitative linguistic approach. Nonetheless, it seems to me that these pronouncements, which do not concern the essentials of the cited study, are still significant enough for the interpretation of the opinions and contributions of the authors.

This all goes to show, not so much that the periodical was a vehicle for Bolamba, but that his influence was certainly very important and, to consider it from another angle, that he was representative of the ideas and standpoints of *La Voix*. In the last issue of *La Voix* he wrote in a concluding assessment of the periodical: “*All its attention was paid to the realisation of a fraternal community between Blacks and Whites; it dedicated itself to removing the discrimination which made contact between the two groups of man present here difficult; it stigmatised the abuses of those who made a public display of excessive racism; it always talked in the language of truth and reason, without being afraid of the criticism which evil intentioned men threw at it.*”[xxvi] Bolamba probably represented a sort of moderate striving for emancipation on the basis of his own convictions. This meant above all that he did so without being forced by the colonial administration. The fact that he became a cabinet assistant of Buisseret in 1956 indicates that he was on very good terms with the Belgians and that he was a perfectly acceptable character to them. In any event it is certain that he was a very good pupil of the colonial discourse.

In his first editorials Bolamba was undoubtedly the humble servant of his masters.

His pen sometimes seemed to be sugar coated. The superiority of the whites over the blacks was certain beyond doubt, and could not have been otherwise considering the long history of western culture. His own people's culture and history was obviously not something that concerned him. This remark should not be understood cynically, it was clearly really the case: *"A large gap actually exists between our civilisers and ourselves. From what does this arise? Very simply from the fact that the Whites have a very superior personality to our own, as a result of slow and profound work over more than two thousand years."*[xxvii] Bolamba was not at all satisfied with the term *colour bar* used by some. He defined the *colour bar* as a form of racial discrimination, either at a political level or at an administrative level. In this he referred to the examples of legal segregation in the United States, South America and South Africa. He claimed that similar forms did not exist in the Belgian colony. However, he would not be so categorical with regard to the administration. It was hard to avoid the concrete examples: segregated shops, station platforms, etc. *"But all this is not intended in a bad way, as we realise that it is not done with a desire to keep us in a position of inferiority and that it is not the result of a rigid political line."* Bolamba had clearly absorbed the colonial discourse very well: *"We can sense in all our civilisers' deeds that they consider the humanity within us and not our ebony skin."*[xxviii]

In 1949 Bolamba published a book (at that time that was an unheard of achievement for a Congolese in itself) on one of the most important social problems confronting the *évolués*: *"Les problèmes de l'évolution de la femme noire"*. [xxix] Bolamba's premises were clearly set out in the introduction to his book: Congolese women could not take part in the development of the land, because they were not sufficiently educated. The contrast between education for boys and that for girls, which at that time was also recognised by the administration (it could not be denied) were listed by Bolamba. The concept of *évolution* was prevalent throughout his argument. *"If educated men have taken a leap of ten centuries on the road to civilisation, this is not the same for our women who remain stuck at the initial point of our development."*[xxx] The problems caused by marriages contracted between educated men and lesser or completely uneducated women would be the subject of the book, he claimed. *"I have shown the abuses which are the main cause for the instability of our households."*

The book described the marital problem in six chapters: *“On the reflection before marriage”*, *“The serious nature of marriage”*, *“On the harmony and peace within the household”*, *“Practical advice”*, *“Family and morality”* and *“Instruction and education of children”*. It was written completely in agreement with the missionary moral codes and was really just as conservative as the Catholic church itself with regard to women. Its approach was not particularly subtle. The *“caractère sérieux”* of marriage implied for example that marriage with a person of a sickly constitution must be avoided: *“It is necessary to avoid marrying a person from a family where there is hereditary illness, for example, tuberculosis. Some illnesses occasionally have long-term causes. Do not forget, you are called to have children.”*[xxx] That also implied, in fact, that potential marriage partners should best find out in advance whether they were fertile and this was said in so many words. Marriage should happen as quickly as possible (and that could be at a younger age than in Europe, which was brought in as a reference) and waiting a long time was a bad thing in any event. Once married, it was important to try to be a model family. The woman must be *“matinale”*: she must get up early to do the housework. Naturally, she must take good care of the children. The man had to ensure the woman was well dressed but she must not make unreasonable demands concerning her wardrobe.

There was clearly an attempt to bring about a change in a number of areas in traditional customs and usages of the Congolese. For example with regard to food: *“The housewife should prepare the food in the kitchen itself and not outside, close to the house, in view of passers-by and visitors.”*[xxxii] In fact, the culture of eating posed a number of problems because there seem to have been big differences in that area: Bolamba strongly emphasised that a man should eat at the table together with his wife (which contrasted with the usual custom).[xxxiii] Here, too, the missionary approach was heard in Bolamba’s words: *“Discipline is nowhere more apparent than at the table...”* The text was a long list of what was considered exemplary behaviour and was quite without complexes in its prescriptiveness. The woman must be graceful and submissive; the man patient, amiable and understanding: *“Before becoming angry at the vexations of their spouses the men must try to explain their errors to them.”* This chapter also practically emphasised that alcoholic drink was the greatest enemy of woman. Drink was also bad for men, but even more so for women. Enough sleep was also important and consequently going out late was not a good idea. Care must also be taken with food, so that the digestion would not hinder sleep. In very guarded and

modest terms, warning was also given about sexual excesses or 'abnormalities'. The children, finally, should learn to be obedient and must be disciplined, particularly and above all during their adolescence, which must be considered the period in which a person was the most exposed to all sorts of bad influences and passions.

Throughout this, Bolamba referred to the 'good old times' that he himself had experienced as a young adolescent. It was a time in which it had been much safer and simpler to be an adolescent: *"I often dream of that time when the children of my age steered clear of the dances called 'Maringa', where they would not accept that a man would order them to find loose women at his place, where we would find pleasure in studying, singing, praying, telling stories or when walks in the mountains, excursions in the countryside accompanied by a teacher, a hunter of wild animals, constituted real treats for us. I dream of that time when life was not a dangerous peril for young people as it is today."*[xxxiv] In these places his testimony seems to have a lot in common with what was advocated by the MSC. At the conclusion of his book he finally switched over to an even stronger patriotism and attachment to the colonists: *"We love the Belgians because they are our benefactors, we love them even more because they are our saviours. Let us gather together in the shade of the blue flag with its golden stars, let us search there for the courage and will needed for the development of our fatherland. We entrust our life and our peace to them. Let us give thanks and sing praises as never before for the Belgian Royal Dynasty to which we owe our current tranquillity. The Belgian African Empire will only become a large, strong, beautiful and prosperous country if it respects the following three words: GOD, FAMILY, FATHERLAND."*[xxxv]

4. *La Voix du Congolais: the évolués' voice*

4.1. *Views about society and education*

La Voix paid regular attention to education or related subjects. Most of the articles that had education as a subject were reports about specific schools. The representation that dominated in these contributions was that of optimism, of progress. True to the name they used for themselves, they used phrases like *"jalons de notre progrès"*, *"développement au pas accéléré"*, or *"envisager l'avenir avec confiance"*. Education reached a great proportion of the population, education penetrated to the farthest corners of the primeval jungle, the Congolese themselves gave lessons in very many schools: all of these

pronouncements were evidence of an indomitable belief in progress.[xxxvi] This is especially true, because it was just as possible to consider each of these observations from another, less positive side - something that now and again gave rise to more critical approaches. In particular, the demand for more schools was regularly recurring.

In spite of the often conciliatory and sometimes even submissive language used by the people who wrote contributions in *La Voix* there were real problems behind the articles. The problems which came to the fore about the educational system, were part of the broader context of problems linked with the changes taking place in Congolese society now that a large part of its members increasingly adopted the customs and (at least) the vocabulary of European society. Very often more personal problems, that the confrontation of cultures brought about in the relationship between parents and children, were referred to. Mobé wrote about the education of the masses that fell under the responsibility of different groups in society. Besides the missionaries, the colonists and the administration this also included the *évolués*. An exemplary function was reserved for them.[xxxvii] This exemplary function was exercised in the contributions that were published in the periodical. A subject that seemed to be perfectly suitable was that of education in the broad sense and the role of the parents therein. Other important and frequently published themes were the use of language at school, the position of the woman, the development of the educational system and dissatisfaction with the emancipation of the Congolese. That last theme was almost never present as a subject per se but was often prominent in the background when other subjects were discussed.

4.1.1. Society and educational problems

There was a great deal of emphasis placed on the fact that the school should be on the same wavelength as the family. With the regularity of a clock articles or letters were published in which it was stated that education began at home. Obviously, it regularly happened that the parents did not want to cooperate or did not take any account of the fact that the children had certain obligations at school or were not at all interested in school attendance. As early as 1948 a certain Ngandu was very concerned about the deep moral crisis that Congolese society was going through. Dazzled by money, the population only wanted more and more education. This desire for knowledge was certainly positive in itself, but there must be something else to keep the knowledge in check and give it direction. In

the moral education of youth the parents had an important responsibility, of which they had to become aware most urgently.[xxxviii] These important social problems in connection with Congolese youth were reported quite regularly. These were usually discussed with great concern by the editors-in-chief: drinking by the young (Colin, 1954), the condition of the youth in the towns (Bolamba, 1956), wholesome literature (Colin, 1956).

In general the contributors often wrote very negatively about their fellow Congolese. In 1948 one contribution stated the following: the blacks had an education without scruples, without shame, and gave way early to their sexual desires. Intellectual degeneration was the consequence. With respect to the European child, *“The latter lives in a more wholesome and less degenerate world. Their parents watch over and follow the development of their senses, they discipline them and arm them against all abuses.”* According to the writer, the *évolués* tried to do the same, but once the child left the family circle it only saw bad examples. The only solution was radical: simply shut the children away from the bad environment, by bringing them up in boarding schools. The author compared the blacks with animals and took a Eurocentric point of view, in which the behaviour of his countrymen was talked about in rather pedantic terms: *“Il s’abandonna à sa nature et au déchaînement de ses passions.”* It is obvious that a number of people at that time had utterly and completely adopted the European way of doing things and showed no resistance at all to the new way of life, let alone thought about criticising it.[xxxix] Justin Mabanza addressed parents some years later with a plea that they should educate their own children. He criticised heavily the matriarchate that determined social relations in a number of regions. It was rather common there that children were brought up by other family members than their biological parents. The author described that bluntly as a *“véritable fléau”* and he developed an extended argument to show that this was particularly bad. [xl]

Michel Landu particularly indicated the responsibility of the teachers themselves in an article from 1952. Rather traditionally minded and exaggeratedly law-abiding, his premise was the principle *“The class is only as good as the teacher”*, by analogy with classical proverbs such as *“The earth is only as good as man”* or *“We will always end up resembling those we often see”*. He followed with a real exhortation: *“That work, politeness, patriotism, Christian virtues stand at the forefront in our classrooms and impose themselves on the public’s attention. With*

patient tenacity and a savoir-faire worthy of high class educators, let us create a climate that forces admiration among our pupils. Indeed, the worth of the class is as good as that of the master.”[xli] Dominique Iloo, who himself was a teacher, reacted to that article by stating that it was somewhat naive only to look at the teacher. In very many cases the parents’ attitude formed a millstone around the teacher’s neck. The latter could be as good an example as possible but if the parents did not change their behaviour according to his directions and instruction, it was a lost cause: *“Consider, in passing, the Christian obligation of attending Sunday mass. In the classroom, the teacher talks and helps his children fulfil this obligation. At home the father or mother advise the child against it. (...) Their recurring absences confirm their words and convince their children. In numerous cases the parents are responsible for the misbehaviour of their children.”*

Another important aspect of education did not escape the attention of Iloo. Almost triumphantly he remarked that the level of the pupils was not necessarily improved in comparison to those ten years before: *“What is the reason for this? Is it the books used that are at fault as maintained in n° 73 of the ‘Voix du Congolais’ (...) No! Particularly in the large centres where we live with this modernisation - and unfortunately it is also being felt in the interior - the pupils give way too much to pleasure. The bars and nightclubs they visit make them dreamers at their school desks. The teacher is often mistaken in their looks and their apparent application. They barely remember a few notions which they forget the following day.”*[xlii] The observations of another author, Gabriël NgbongboIn, took the same tone. His opinion was that the pupils no longer showed respect any more for the teachers and that the parents agreed with them, rather than standing on the side of the teachers. He begged the parents to do as follows: *“Correct your children if you learn that they have written disgraceful words on the walls. Nor should you allow your children to be members of bands playing in bars. And you parents, do not insult or hit the teachers. They are not insane and would not punish your children without good cause. Allow them to do their work.”*[xliii]

Iloo argued, just as others before him, to make the boarding school regime general. Bolamba himself had written an article about it a year earlier. In it he quoted among other things the beliefs of eminent Jesuits, whom he called “specialists in the matter of the black soul”. Boarding schools protected the

morals of the young black. Youth needed to be confronted with discipline and compulsion: *“If boarding schools, armies, hierarchical associations of young people are maintained everywhere that is because it is considered important for young people to be confined by discipline, a constraint that makes their will more supple and will mould their character.”* In many cases these blessings could not come from the parents: *“Certainly, the parents also have an important role to play in their children’s education but everyone knows too well that Congolese parents are currently unable to fulfil that role satisfactorily.”*[xliv]

According to the editorial staff of *La Voix*, the moral situation of the population did not really seem to improve in the course of the 1950’s. Contributions regularly appeared in which authors either regretted the lamentable morals of the young or their parents, or gave tips on ‘how it ought to be done’. In 1957 Nkonga wrote: *“Today the time has come that families desire, even make sacrifices for their children’s education.”* Many parents did not spur their children on with a desire to work, and left that to the upbringing by the school. They agreed with their children too much. According to the author, it did not contribute to a good teaching environment.[xlv] In 1958 a certain Luvuvuma wrote a number of recommendations for the maintenance of a good relationship between the family and the school in *“Quand l’école et la famille formeront-ils une unité au Congo?”* The author observed that very many children were sent away from school. On the part of the school not much effort was made to take account of the character of the children, or simply to find out about it. That caused rancour and regrettable reactions from the parents. The teachers must remember that they were not employees, they had a vocation. The parents for their part must realise that the child needed good care. Often there were parents who knew nothing about the education and the studies of their children, they were not concerned about them at all: *“But they will be the first to be surprised or even to become angry if their children fail an exam.”*[xlvi]

Bolamba also put his penny’s worth in here. He found it necessary to regularly cite articles from other periodicals which were considered to have sufficient educational worth for Congolese parents. In 1958 he cited an article from *“L’Afrique Nouvelle”*, a periodical of the White Fathers in the French colonies, in which a list was given of matters that should be avoided in the education of children. In 1959 again, he reacted in a somewhat remarkable manner to an article that told the story of a group of Congolese girls who were asked by Belgian

colonists to let themselves be photographed while were performing traditional dances round a campfire, topless. The author of the article reacted indignantly and found such behaviour by the Belgians and the Congolese completely inappropriate. The Belgians should not make the Congolese a source of ridicule. The Congolese parents should take care of their children and give them moral support to avoid such excesses. Bolamba reacted to this in a note from the editor. In the light of his previously cited statements, his position can seem a bit unusual: *“Certainly the parents have an imperative obligation to be concerned with their children, especially young girls; but there is a margin between that and taking exception to folk dances. Male and female dancers in the villages adopt the clothing that fits perfectly with the customs they inherited from their ancestors in their performances. (...) So what?”*[xlvi]

4.1.2. *The position of women*

We have already referred to the articles that appeared in *La Voix* about women who took up positions in social life, worked outside the house, earned money and made a career. The views of the *évolués* in their own contributions only agreed with this in part. The well-known story of the need for the *évolués* to have wives who could understand them, but at the same time run a household, was never very far away. Someone wrote: *“If the domestic work is not carried out orderly and properly, the man will not stay at home. He will seek distraction elsewhere, which will ruin the harmony of the household.”* The author of this article clearly emphasised two requirements: the woman must be a good mother and a skilled housewife. A girl’s education must therefore be developed in this direction. A list of the tasks that were most neglected by women, indicates the importance the author gives to them: washing up, the kitchen, the daily cleaning of the bedroom and the bedclothes, the household expenses (*“The reader will not be surprised at me writing that black women are improvident by nature and that they are unable to order their household expenses”*), the vegetable garden, the chicken run, and finally, care for the children.[xlviii]

In an article from 1957, criticism of girls’ education in Boma was hardly veiled: *“Nevertheless we consider it useful to bring it to their (the Sisters, JB) attention that they seem to have missed out on certain points relating to the development of Congolese women, although this certainly is an important problem.”* The lack of development of the education was indicated as the immediate origin of its low output. It was not the fault of the girls themselves, but their enthusiasm was

simply being destroyed: *“And yet, you should not be mistaken: black women are avid to learn, to perfect themselves. In our opinion the overly rudimentary curriculum is the main cause for the lack of diligence established amongst the school-going population. A lot of girls realise the lack of intellectual and domestic training they will receive if they continue such studies. They are consequently forced to conclude that the final result does not justify such long attendance at the institution.”*[xliv] This certainly elicited a reaction from the missionaries, who did not like criticism of their educational approach. They also tried to refute the problem of absenteeism. That was solved for the major part through discussions with the parents of the girls concerned. The staff was also of more than decent quality. If there were complaints in that area, they were caused by the fact that so many female teaching assistants resigned when they started a family. The Sisters also had a difficult task as they continually had to start training new staff.[1]

The positions taken concerning the development of women, were often very traditional and, in many cases, confirmed the existing state of affairs. Like, for example, Evariste Iyolo, from Monkoto who claimed the school must speed up the intellectual formation of women. He refused to comment on the leadership of the administration but certainly did criticise the behaviour of a number of girls, who were showing too little interest. He did not go much further than repeating the statement that a woman should get an education to be able to keep up with the man. That remained the goal to strive for: she should be able to understand her husband better.[li] Dominique Iloo, himself a teacher, called on evolved parents to show understanding and respect for the teaching staff. He also called on men to help their women in bringing up the children, revealing then a very paternalistic standpoint towards the woman: *“We cannot ignore that as long as black women are not any better educated than they are today, the education of our children will always leave much to be desired. But our companions do not have to be the only ones to fulfil this position of education. We are obliged to support them, or even to take their place if they are incapable. We should help our women. We should induce them to work better for our children. We are supposed to know things, let us show our abilities through examples that will unquestionably convince our still ignorant women.”*[lii]

4.1.3. Language use in education.

As early as 1947 Bolamba wrote a commentary on an article that had appeared in the *Courrier de l’Afrique* about examinations in the Scheutist schools. Apparently,

a system was applied there whereby several languages were chosen, and there was mention of Dutch and English. Because, unlike the Belgian pupils, the Congolese really had no mother tongue that they had a good grasp of: *“Here our pupils do not have a native language as the native languages or dialects cannot be considered languages.”* He asked whether it would not be better to restrict them to French as people already laughed at the Congolese because they could not even speak that language decently.[liii]

Everybody seemed to agree with that. There should be more French at school. This was still being heavily discussed in the second half of the 1950s. Lundulla called for teaching French from kindergarten. He strongly opposed the use of native languages in primary education. These languages were too primitive and could not master the concepts of technology and science. He used a special argument from authority to close his argument: *“According to our information, the teaching of French was developed in Belgium, on the accession of King Leopold I who married Queen Marie-Louise of France soon after. We are proud to say that the latter has a special place in our hearts.”*[liv] Iyeki, also regularly exerted himself in his articles to promote French. In 1956 he wrote: *“Our aim is to emphasise - for the umpteenth time - the language to be used in the schools.”* He opposed the argument that children who learnt French at school would lose the other languages. Furthermore, he referred to the fact that a child that knew no French would be threatened with isolation: *“French is a language that will facilitate the meeting of new flows of ideas.”*[lv]

The lack of knowledge of French in certain schools was also regularly mentioned in contributions.[lvi] A commentary by Okoka on the school for teaching assistants in Tshumbe Ste-Marie seemed to point out situations that were also reported in the mission area of the MSC: *“I established that the teaching was not at the same level as elsewhere. With regard to the French language, the courses were only 30 minutes a week and this was given in a monotonous or even unpleasant tone. On the other hand, those who tried to speak French were immediately singled out and considered a revolutionary element. Indisputably French is a language which is linked to literary and scientific culture in Congo as elsewhere. I maintain that at the moment, French is neglected in the classrooms in our region.”*[lvii] The girls’ school in Boma, also criticised by Vumuka, had the same problems. *“If the education given in Boma merits consideration and acknowledgement, it no less remains true that it could gain a lot by being*

improved. A good number of pupils are not even able to stammer the slightest bit in French, or write a letter in Kikongo, their maternal language."

Still, this language question also exposed a number of ambiguities. Bolamba again voiced his opinion concerning the use of language at school in 1956. He conceded that much had changed in the meantime: educational reforms had taken place, there was education by lay people, university education had started, and *metropolisation* was in full swing. Still, it was necessary to argue for French at school. According to him cultural formation in French should begin at kindergarten, although that did not mean that he wanted to turn away from the traditional usages and customs: *"Nobody will throw the first stone at us, if we dare to confirm and maintain the incomparable superiority of French language to those languages of our native Africa. The teaching of tribal languages is a necessity for our general education but it should not be the object of exaggerated fanaticism. The natives of the Belgian Congo have unanimously opted for the study of French. They understand that prolonged education in a primitive language would hinder the cultural aim they envisage. It should be pointed out that the well wishing European support our theory."*[lviii] The arguments used by Bolamba make it clear that the promotion of the superiority of European civilisation was still intact in these circles.

4.1.4. Level of education

The question of French was only part of a broader movement. Léon Ilunga made it clear in 1945: *"The instruction we receive in general makes us simple auxiliaries. It does not allow us to progress and to complete this development."* In his contribution he asked for the creation of higher education and trade education 'for our children'. Primary education must be reorganised and must become a springboard that would allow these children to reach higher than was now the case. The administration must seriously reform the curriculum (which at that time had not yet happened), make French instruction available to all and ensure that the children who finished school must be capable of tackling further studies. At present one was hardly able to understand French after finishing primary school. The vocational schools must also reach a level that was much higher than that of 'dumb assistants' who could not work independently. To sum up: *"The door to European civilisation having been opened to us, it is a human obligation to allow us and our children to enter."* Ilunga expressed himself somewhat sceptically about the level of the Congolese elite, to which he belonged: *"The knowledge we*

have is truly very elementary. We talk of a black elite; where can that be sought? (...) Perhaps in the groups of those who claim they know about the affairs of the whites because they can speak French more or less correctly? No, one thousand times, no."[lix]

In 1950 the question of pre-university education for Congolese was still formulated in a very well-behaved and respectful manner: "*Certainly, we are only children...*"[lx] Bolamba also remained friendly to the Belgians for a long time, but stated in 1953 that the further extension of education should occur as soon as possible, though he was in agreement with the position that it would be a long time before the Congolese would reach the right level and be of equal merit to the whites.[lxi] In 1954, on the occasion of the opening of the University in Kimwenza he then wrote a few remarkable editorials. In contrast to what might have been expected, Bolamba was not brimming with enthusiasm. He observed that everything had been organised a little hastily. He urged speedy arrangements for Congolese students who wanted to go and study in Belgium.[lxii] Towards Buisseret he was again very positive. He defended the views the minister had taken in his first policy statement. Bolamba particularly defended the creation of lay education on the grounds of democratic principles, which "were introduced by the Belgians into the Congo". Furthermore the editor-in-chief mentioned that university education was naturally very welcome, but that above all there was a demand for adequate preparation for that education and that there was a need for good primary and secondary education. He was pleased to say that the scholarships for the Congolese in Belgium had become a fact by that time.[lxiii]

The quality of education or the lack of education in certain regions were recurring themes in *La Voix*. [lxiv] A contribution from 1957 looked a little further. The introduction of education at all possible levels had indeed not seemed to be a solution for all problems, the author understood: "*Nevertheless our civilisers that appreciate our intellectual and professional abilities leave us perplexed before the hesitation that they show in granting us our total confidence.*" That lack of trust was indeed expressed in other areas. The development of consciousness by the *évolués* took another step forward: "*We cannot accept to see our graduates subordinate both in relation to wage and respect to white women who work in offices and factories who do not have the equivalent diplomas to these graduates. Acting in this way would be to commit a grave offence.*" In the same article the author also argued for more "*increasingly skilled labour*".[lxv]

The call for emancipation became increasingly louder: *“One cannot deny the value of the studies done by those who finished secondary school. In earlier times it were the middle schools that trained excellent black employees. Despite their average education numerous of them have managed to take on the work as yet only entrusted to the white race. We think it illogical in the current situation of the development in the Congo that young men leaving secondary school become typists in the same sense as those leaving middle school. Why can they not immediately take on the position of editor?”*[lxvi] Another author, Ntamba, remarked that there was a great lack of respect from the white bosses for Congolese having secondary diplomas. The only solution was systematically making all types of education equivalent: *“The era of curricula specifically adapted to the native population has passed.”*[lxvii] On the other hand, Bolamba himself stated in 1958 that a university level of knowledge did not offer sufficient guarantees on its own. Everything depended, after all, on what exactly was being taught. And in the case of Congo, the knowledge being passed on was obviously still too theoretical. He thought that the new graduates should really be able to travel to Europe. The reason: *“We do not doubt their intellectual ability but, let’s face it, their knowledge is theoretical.”*[lxviii]

4.1.5. Dialogue about education

A very detailed article on education that is doubly interesting in this context was published in 1952. The article, written by Bolamba, was the result of a thought exercise, in which thirty or so *évolués* from all over the country had taken part. The discussions, the article reported, were held in the presence of *“a top civil servant from the Department of Education of the General Government”*, who was thanked extensively by Bolamba and described approvingly as *“an impartial guide and informed of schooling issues”*. [lxix] The article summarised a number of criticisms made about the existing educational system. The form of the article and the manner in which the criticism was formulated and subsequently evaluated, revealed much about the colonial relationships at that moment and also reflected the distorted position of the *évolués*. After every point of criticism, an ‘answer’ to the criticism was set down. That was not only a rather paternalistic approach to the readers of *La Voix* (but that was generally the case), it also perfectly allowed any possibly embarrassing points to be neutralised immediately and almost unnoticed.

Most attention at the level of elementary education was paid to language

problems. The *évolués* obviously pushed forward the point that French should be generally adopted as the language of education. The list of claims began with the statement that French should be adopted as the national language in the whole colony. At school, education in local languages still played far too great a role. The question was also posed as to whether too much was going wrong because of the excessively free application of the school curriculum. In the answers given to the different points, it was apparent that native languages were indeed no longer a priority at school. In fact, the school curriculum still stipulated at that time (1952) that the language of education had to be a native language. In the remarks that were formulated in this article it was finally stated that the native languages could not be pushed aside completely.

Again, the residency issue for the children in the towns came up during the meeting. The Congolese advocated the introduction of compulsory school attendance but the administration continued to defend that it would be more efficient to systematically send the children back to their village of origin, if they had no family in the town able to accommodate them and they could not find a place in a boarding school. For the first time, the article also formulated a claim, unheard of at that time: a serious and well-organized secondary education must exist for women as well as for men, so that they could also go to work and earn money. Here the *évolués* were confronted with complete incomprehension. The administration evidently saw no need to develop this education. It was still too early for it. All the efforts must be directed to the formation of good housewives and dedicated mothers. The parallels between this answer and the views in Bolamba's book are striking. The only point of criticism to which those responsible could really formulate no answer was evidently the level of the teachers. People who were employed had often progressed no further than the third or fourth school year with regard to intellectual skills. It is apparent from the reaction that a diploma was still not required for a subsidy.

The laconic reply to the request for university level education was: "it will come, when it comes". The Congolese then asked to be able to send students to Belgian universities. University level education was one of the topics that the editorial staff was very concerned about. Articles were not published on it very often but the editorial staff clearly followed the question carefully. At the end of the first academic year they were ready and waiting to report the scores of the Congolese students in the paper. At that time this still related to a preparatory year, because

the Congolese students were not considered ready to go straight to the university level. Of the 31 candidates who began the year, only 11 passed but the editorial staff spoke of a great success.[lxx] When a person could leave for Belgium to go to study there, or if somebody came back with good results, this was also reported.[lxxi] In 1956 the speech Buisseret gave at the opening of the second University in the Congo (the 'state' University) was published in extenso as a supplement in *La Voix*. [lxxii]

The last part of 'the great educational article' included yet another variety of questions and remarks that arose, of which one was about religious education. Again, here the *évolués* and administration were involved in a dialogue of the deaf. The *évolués* had noticed that there was too much religious education in the schools and that less time should be spent on it. In reply it was stated: "*Religious education in schools is not exaggerated at all. This education is necessary for the pupil's moral education. It does not take any more place than that reserved in the curriculum.*" [lxxiii] The attitude of the editorial staff seemed in any case to be ambiguous on this topic. In general the missionaries were treated protectively. "*We must ensure not to find ourselves in the wake of those who denigrate religious education.*" [lxxiv] Rather exceptionally, the missionaries were the subject of criticism from the editorial staff. That normally happened in veiled terms, as here.

However this may be, these contributions, often still dominated by colonial discourse, did not voice critical attacks so much as rather desperate questions on their own fate, their own future. On the other hand sharp analyses were made about the exodus from the countryside. One author remarked that even if all *imposed works, chiefdoms and native districts* were immediately abolished, people would still continue to leave for the town. The true reason was not to be sought in repugnance for traditional village life (an analysis that was made regularly by well intentioned whites), but was caused by the complete dislocation of these traditions: "*The day the young black boy enters the school, the time he starts to touch the mystery of the alphabet, the key to all knowledge, at that time, he buried his ancestral customs.*" The author of this contribution went much further than this observation. Confronted with contradictory expectations, a feeling of confusion overcame many Congolese, he stated: "*And it is the summit of his disappointment to establish that after having initiated him in their pleasures and life, after having him inculcated with European ideas and principles over the*

years, he is reproached for not having kept his black soul, not having preserved the good things in his ancestral customs, of wanting to abandon his native lifestyle, etc..."[lxxv] That feeling even led to distrust: "The increasingly numerous natives are wondering with our friend Tshibamba Paul if they haven't knowingly placed us outside the path that has to lead man to his social destiny." In an 1956 article about education in Luozi, the author referred to a teacher who stood in front of an apathetic class at the beginning of the school year and spoke to them threateningly: "This is going to be serious for you." At which the children answered: "Those who studied before us are still in the village, why should we do our best?"[lxxvi]

4.2. Local contributions and insights

4.2.1. The state in the region.

La Voix circulated throughout the entire colony and therefore certainly did not focus exclusively on news from the Equatorial Province. In 1950 Bolamba wrote a travel report on his visit to the Equator and Coquilhatville. He was moderately positive about Coquilhatville: he found people there very pleasant and hospitable, but observed that the material state of the native neighbourhood left much to be desired, in contrast to the European town. Most dwellings were still not built in durable material. Again, four years later he wrote: "The visitor who leaves for Coquilhatville for the first time, cannot fail to suffer from some deception. While Léopoldville, Matadi, Elisabethville, Bukavu and Stanleyville (only to cite these towns) make giant leaps in the fields of economics and urbanisation, the progress of the capital of the Equator province is slower." According to Bolamba, much work was also to be done in the black areas and new expansions ("Coq II") looked like camps. In another contribution an article from *Mbandaka* was quoted in which there was a complaint about the lamentable state of the houses in the C.E.C.[lxxvii] The villages in the surrounding area were not much better. People there lived in very uncomfortable circumstances. Bolamba was very critical towards the *évolués*: they did not behave as he expected of them. The *Cercle Léopold II*, which had been set up some years earlier, as in other towns as a means for social uplift was already disbanded. Bolamba remarked cynically: "This association has the inevitable bar and an official library that is little used, except by the pupils from the school."[lxxviii] The relations between the evolved Congolese and the rest of the population were not positively assessed at all, the attitude of the *évolués* was very disparaging and belittling. "This is very serious. If such a situation should become more generalised, a fatal blow would inevitably be

given to Congolese society."

Bolamba went still further and reported the existence of a number of 'associations' of a very dubious nature at the same time. Again, in a contribution from 1955 he seemed to be especially fixated on the lamentable moral state of the educated Congolese of the area. He referred repeatedly to the high consumption of alcohol among the *évolués*, and moral degeneracy. The tone was clear: "*The civilised men of Coquilhatville must unite and get along. They must blow life into their Leopold II association. They must read numerous books made available to them by the State. They must avoid mutual criticism, the malicious mind of disparagement and the tendency they have to disgrace their fellows with their European chiefs, in the aim of destroying their reputation or career.*" The club life did not represent that much, it appears. The *Cercle Léopold II* functioned more as a café than club house. Bolamba described the people responsible and in doing so described also the prevailing atmosphere: they were, according to him, "*indifférents, moqueurs et insouciantes.*" From time to time a Belgian passed by to chat, but in general there was very little contact between white and black. In fact, Bolamba called these contacts "*presque inexistantes à Coquilhatville*". Despite some attempts to get cultural life going again, he said people remained in a deep lethargy.

The news about the *Cercles* in the Equatorial Province and, more specifically, in the Tshuapa was, for that matter, seldom very encouraging. The *Cercles* were initially intended to be a Congolese version of association life after the Western model and sprouted like mushrooms after the Second World War. However, they had great difficulty freeing themselves from the influence of the Belgians. *La Voix* reported in 1946 that people in Coquilhatville had, for the present, decided not to start their own publication for *évolués*. Louis Ilonga, a clerk with the colonial administration, obediently wrote about "*nos éducateurs*", and reported only that this postponement was justified by the lack of resources of the authorities responsible for 'évolué-affairs'. In 1949 the existence of a circle of *évolués* in Ingende was reported, but evidently after a few years this had been totally non-existent.[lxxix] In 1950 Bolamba showed his approval for the reader's remark that in the association in Boende people only talked and complained but that no initiatives were taken. From the text of the letter it seemed that the *évolués* mostly argued among themselves.[lxxx] From the report of a general meeting of the same association, which was also reported in *La Voix*, it did indeed seem that

few initiatives were taken: *“Healthy distractions are periodically organised. Evening courses are given to residents who ask for them once the circle has the necessary materials available.”*[lxxxii] In 1951 it was reported that in Bongandanga, again in the Equatorial Province, the local *Cercle* was really led by a Belgian, who was described as *“animateur”*. This ‘animateur’ himself arranged the lectures for the association.[lxxxii]

Fundamental contradictions in discussions between the *évolués* also came to light in the reporting on the Equatorial Province, as well as contradictions between discourse and reality. On the one hand there was a powerful, incorrigible optimism, belief in the future and joy in what the Congolese experienced as emancipation. In a section entitled *“Au tableau d’honneur de l’élite congolaise”* Bolamba reported the people who announced that they had received a *Carte du mérite civique*. [lxxxiii] In 1952, *La Voix* also reported with some pride on the opening of the first African restaurant in Coquilhatville.[lxxxiv] In a majestically optimistic style the periodical invariably carried such contributions as this about the appointment of a new chief in the C.E.C., in which the new representative was introduced as “very dynamic” and “very suitable for the job”. Criticism was not often seen in such contributions and that remained the case to the end. On the other hand, in articles and reports very often information trickled through that showed that reality was very different. In 1957 Iyeki wrote in an *“appel aux amis de Coquilhatville”* on the relations between the *évolués* in Coquilhatville. He spoke of *misunderstandings, a lack of community spirit*, and revealed dubious practices therein: *“But also how unhappy we feel to hear them say: ‘Here you cannot do anything. Everything is reported to the authorities by anonymous letters and the people keeping black lists are very numerous.’ What? ... Do anonymous letters still exist where you are? ... But isn’t that an outdated process for the African elite?”* The local administration evidently still had a sturdy grasp on the Congolese elite in this region.[lxxxv]

4.2.2. *The position of the évolués in society*

In the first few years editorial staff evidently did not adopt a very assertive attitude towards the colonists. Reports of particular incidents were certainly made. In 1947 the editorial staff gave some commentary on a case in the medical inspection service in Coquilhatville. One of the Congolese officials was found in an obvious state of drunkenness during working hours. In response to this the responsible doctor had announced a general ban, for coloured staff in the medical

service, from entering bars. In Flandria one of the editors had been to interview the Congolese employees of the HCB and was on that occasion a witness to how one of the European managers himself misbehaved towards the Congolese: "(...) *a European came to "question" a clerk from the accounting department in a rather ...coarse manner, throwing his hat in the air, under the pretext of him having abandoned his work. This took place at the H.C.B. beach in the presence of a relatively large number of witnesses.*"[lxxxvi] The editorial staff, and particularly Bolamba, clearly condemned this event. It was reported along with another incident, in Jadotstad, in which a European had abused a Congolese man in government service, calling him a *maqaque*. When this man had answered that his job could not be done by an ape, he had attacked him. All in all the reactions from the editorial staff remained relatively 'well behaved', but the tone that was used, indicated that this was only the tip of the iceberg.

This same editorial staff compromised pretty well between complaining about, contradicting and agreeing with the coloniser, which regularly led to moralising contributions. At one time the Brothers of the Christian Schools decided to exclude from their school the children whose parents did not live in the town itself. When a complaint was made against this decision in a reader's letter, the editorial staff made some excuses for it, with the argument that there were probably practical reasons for it. Besides, the editorial staff argued, Brother Director applied the ruling with some flexibility in practice.[lxxxvii] When a report appeared in 1957 on a change to the curfew that had applied for a long time in the *Centre Extra Coutumier* of Coquilhatville, it was accompanied by suitable approval but at the same time with a number of warnings. After all, now the curfew had been relaxed, cafés and bars could stay open longer. The editorial staff wagged a finger: "*If we applaud this new decree, it is not without reserve. Everything depends on the way in which it will be used. The authorities wanted to satisfy the wishes of the population. We should benefit from this new favour and act as men who may be trusted and relied upon.*" At the same time there were warnings about the formation of gangs of young people

This ambiguity was also illustrated by a number of other examples. Dominique Iloo described in 1950 how a common church service was organised as the result of an accident in an army barracks in Bikoro, whereby a Belgian captain and three Congolese soldiers had died: "*Ce jour-là, Blancs et Noirs se sentirent frères.*" He wrote that there had never been such an event at which whites and

blacks had taken part together since the foundation of Coquilhatville.[lxxxviii] The remarks were made in passing in a report that further attributed heroic qualities to the unfortunate victims of the accident and as a consequence was not free of an exaggerated use of language. However, it does indicate that there was a very great divide between blacks and whites in daily life.

The commentary that Bolamba wrote on the visit of King Boudewijn to Coquilhatville in 1955 is just as typical. In contradiction to his strong views a few years earlier, he now showed no trace of criticism any more in his description of the town. The new black neighbourhoods here were suddenly "*une jolie agglomération en croissance*", Coquilhatville as a whole was "*une des villes les plus exubérantes du Congo Belge*". The editor-in-chief of *La Voix* had followed and reported on the whole royal progress. He was obviously gripped by the general enthusiasm, brought about by the propaganda around the monarch's visit, and that seemed to have infected his reporting.

Finally, Bolamba's reaction to an article by Joseph Lomboto, on the materialism to which some women (the wives of *évolués*) were subject was typical of the values held by the paper. The author reported the existence of a number of associations of Congolese women, which kept themselves busy with the cultivation of a certain material living standard: "*I have learnt from a trustworthy source that there is an association of women and young girls called 'pourries de sous' (the 'filthy' rich), who boast of wearing new clothes every Sunday. Yet, by what means can they pay for a new piece of such expensive cotton each week, if not by surrendering to that debase trade that is prostitution?*" Bolamba also added in his commentary: "*For Coquilhatville I would notably refer to the association 'Misses Millionaires', newly established, that is made up solely of black women, who are the housekeepers for the Europeans. The latter do not want any contact with other women from the city and seek to establish a perfectly homogenous group in which the members share the same desires and needs. All these women dress in identical clothes, have bicycles of the same make and colour, etc. In short they do everything in their power to be distinguished from the masses. Yet is this distinction necessary or even desirable? Is the fact that it is sought not in itself prejudicial to the most elementary morals? And the spirit that pervades this association and the showy luxury of the members constitute sufficient elements to justify its suppression.*"[lxxxix]

On the one hand, this text forms another illustration of the fact that Bolamba had

obviously assimilated certain Western values very well. It definitely shows that he had the tendency to take strongly moralising standpoints. On the other hand the example given perfectly illustrates the mechanism the *évolués* were also susceptible to: the formation of groups and the tendency to cut themselves off and set themselves above other groups of theoretical equals. What Bolamba here almost contemptuously defined as the enthusiasms of a group of housekeepers, who wanted to feel they were better than other Congolese women, obviously applied equally well to himself. All the attempts, displayed here, to describe, evaluate, analyse and consequently control the situation of others, were equally a means of winning a position in colonial society for himself. Because of their strongly opinionated content it seems obvious from these articles that Bolamba (and the others) did not notice that at the time.

4.2.3. Observations and discussions on education

Over the course of the years, local education was also discussed a few times. In 1953 Gabriël Baelenge wrote an overview article on the education in the Equatorial Province. He remarked in it that education was distributed very unevenly across the land area of the province and that the young people who studied further afield often took account in their choice of the nearness of one or another establishment. The north of the province, the Ubangi-district, was the best provided with establishments, with one junior seminary, two teacher training colleges and an agricultural vocational school. Coquilhatville, in the western part of the province, had a teacher training college, a secondary school and a junior seminary. In the Tshuapa area (to the east of Coquilhatville) there was nothing. It was obvious to the author that this uneven spread had a negative influence on the employment market.[xc] Especially for people who went to work for the state, and sometimes had to move house, it was not easy to find good schooling for their children. Baelenge referred to the fact, obviously generally true in the colony, that children were not allowed to go to school in a place where they had no family living. More had to be done with boarding schools and he considered the argument that the Congolese were not prepared to pay for them as being incorrect.

A contribution such as this makes it clear that the educated Congolese were primarily concerned with the question of how they could fit in with their 'new' community (that of the colonists). They had been to school, had an education and a diploma in demand with the Europeans. They also wanted to make their

contribution to the community, but then they were faced with practical problems such as these. The question is naturally whether something like this was possible in any case at that time. The financial argument was not really a problem there. During the 1940s, the MSC had themselves toyed with the idea of charging school fees, but at that time it was obviously not appropriate. The school regulations did not mention anything about *droits de scolarité*. The 1948 school programme included the application of a rather broad subsidy arrangement. It also seems logical to assume that in this context there was no room for alternative financing. However, from inspection reports from the early 1950s it certainly seems that school fees were in fact sometimes charged. The inspector made no fuss about it, which indicates that it was acceptable practice.[xci] However, even if the parents were able to pay for the education of their children and also wanted to do so, there were other obstacles. The organisation and structure of the Belgian Congo with its very large area did not permit education to be organised in the short term in a way that allowed all wishes to be fulfilled.

In fact, Bolamba hardly mentioned education in his travel report for 1950. He mainly discussed the schools of the Brothers, which he – not surprisingly, considering his own educational history – called “*d’excellents pédagogues*”. The MSC were only mentioned in connection with their novitiate in Bamanya. In a contribution from 1954 he did consider some questions of content more deeply. The missionaries taught ‘a little’ too much Lonkundo to the young. Bolamba was obviously aware of the discussions on the use of language, and referred to it incidentally: “*All kinds of arguments have been put forward to explain this. Only those who forget that the Congolese do not ignore anything of their maternal language are convinced of this preference.*”[xcii] The girls were taught as good as no French. “*Even in Coquilhatville, those who complete the courses at the domestic school are unable to put a few words of French together.*” That was heavily criticised, but only because the future housewives would feel inferior to their husbands and this could threaten the proper functioning of the family. He also complained of the moral degeneracy of the young on this occasion. The odd thing is that Bolamba and others in general took on the role of the ‘elite’ and emphasised a sort of pride and a sort of identification as a group, but that they also criticised *évolués* just as strongly. On the one hand they thought that they were on the right track, that ‘evolving’ was a necessary and morally responsible employment and that this also happened, but at the same time they gave out signals that in reality things were not proceeding so perfectly. Bolamba liked to

use the word *évoluant*, to show that one had not yet reached the final goal.

In the late 1950s some more critical voices could be heard in connection with education. A certain Norbert Mpako reported the problems with which the inhabitants of Monkoto were confronted in education in 1956:[xciii] *“There are no school institutions in Monkoto. Young children have to travel 324 km to Wafanya where there is a primary school run by the Sacred Heart missionaries and where the courses are taught by religious missionaries. There are rural schools in our territory but their number is negligible. In addition, the lessons taught there are neither efficient nor profitable for good basic culture.”*[xciv] In addition a frustration with the rural schools became apparent here: *“The rural schools that have multiplied so happily are only a trick of the eye. The pupils who attend are of all ages and, consequently, they are not all capable of tackling the primary subjects.”* It was again pointed out that it did not make much sense to send the children to the big city, because of the *“politique de refoulement”* that was generally applied. The article clearly touched a sensitive nerve because a few months later a reaction, signed by four people, was published. The authors accused Mpako of not having been to Monkoto for over ten years and that his article was much too negative on the attitude of the coloniser and the state of the region.

Mpako's article started a real polemic. The arguments used in this, tell a lot about the thinking of the *évolués* concerned, the attitude of the Congolese in general and the position of the editorial staff of *La Voix*. An argument against Mpako was that he did not know the current situation he was criticising. He was said not to have been in the area for a long time. The distance from Monkoto to Wafanya was also reduced to about 50 kilometres (which was correct). This does raise the suspicion that the 350 kilometres from Mpako's article was at the least a 'literary' exaggeration. Concerning the school, it was pointed out that there were at least three central schools in the immediate neighbourhood of Monkoto, of which two were Protestant, and also a whole series of rural schools. It was also remarked that the workforce in the region was large enough, something that Mpako had also denied, and that the colonists were certainly not so unfriendly and racist as it would appear from his article.

The editorial staff (Bolamba) supported the authors in this dispute and condemned Mpako because he had spouted criticism *à la légère*. Mpako reacted, and his reaction was published almost a year later. He conceded that he had not

been in the area for more than ten years, but said that the criticism he made was not less valid as a result. He considered the fact that there was no secondary education in the region a particularly sore point, which his opponents did not mention. In a last article yet another writer, Jean-François Iyiky, gave his opinion. He approached the subject in a more balanced way, took a reconciliatory tone towards the missionaries and the territorial officials but still observed that there certainly was a shortage of educational facilities in the area. The remarks he added to this showed more fundamental frustrations concerning the nature of the education offered: *“And who would not want a school with 4 to 6 post-primary years in Boende, the district capital? We are against schools where the pupils are more gardeners or builders than students. And besides, not anybody who aspires to be a schoolmaster, also is one. There are experts in education. They are expensive? Nobody denies it! Nevertheless, the problem is there!”*[xcv]

Iyiky was obviously greatly concerned with this question, and could also place it in a wider perspective. In a contribution published a few months later in *La Voix*, he returned to the problem of education (or the lack of it). In it he assumed, like the MSC, that it was necessary to keep young people in the region and to combat the exodus from the countryside. The foundation of new local schools was a first vital step in this. He did not, however, discuss the contradiction with the observations made previously concerning the nature of education.[xcvi]

Conclusions

At around the time this polemic was underway, an article was published by Thomas Bessembe, who also came from the Equatorial Province.[xcvii] He reacted to an article that had previously appeared about a *chef de secteur* in another area.[xcviii] Bessembe made a strong plea for the appointment of sufficiently trained *chefs*. Really he was referring here to the problem of the exodus from the countryside. Many *évolués*, he said, were quite ready to go back to their village or area of origin, but they were put off by the lack of understanding for them in the villages and that was obvious from the attitude of the chiefs. He defined the aim of his own article as: requesting the authorities to send a well-educated and progressive chief to his area, so that all the problems could also be solved there. Then, after all, the *évolués* from the town would want to return to the countryside and help develop economic activity there. The article ended with a question directed at the colonists, who, in the best tradition, were still referred to as *“civilisateurs”* in the article. This was typical of the feeling in this group. On the

one hand, the time had come according to the *évolués* themselves “*tant attendu par tous les Congolais*”: Congo was “in full development”. But on the other hand the *évolués* could still not stand on their own feet, or so they assumed. The conclusion of this development still had to come from above, from the colonists.

This message came from Bolamba and his colleagues, the editors and writers of *La Voix*, the group which must be considered as the most successful in terms of social standing. After all, they were the people the colonists had allowed to take the positions, which entailed the most risk and therefore also the greatest responsibility. Indeed being the mouthpiece for the Congolese was an immensely important task in a context in which their voice could hardly be heard. It was also obvious that no revolutionaries or idealists could be chosen for this but they had to be very moderate, docile people. They had to be the best pupils of the class, those who had been exemplary at school. Bolamba himself would keep it up to the last issue of his periodical, in his pleas for moderation and caution, but just as much in the style in which he put the message forward. The picture fitted exactly. Undoubtedly, the *évolués* themselves were the most important result of the educational system installed in the colony. They proved this in their attitude and reactions in *La Voix*. They had made the values they had been given their own. One of the most important values was respect for (and dependence on) a higher authority. They had accepted that salvation would come from upbringing and education according to the western model, as propagated by the missionaries and once on that path it was difficult to turn back.

The contributions extensively referred to in this chapter nonetheless showed “that something was wrong”. Often subconsciously, they conceded that they had been set on a road with a dead end and that the development in this sense was a false ideal the coloniser had given them. The debate on moral values, that was fought out passionately at times gave the impression that development under the influence of the western example was in fact not so positively evaluated as it looked at first sight. In my opinion that can be interpreted in two ways. Above all it concedes that Christian morals as a background of “civilisation” were very well integrated in the world image of the *évolués*. Fulfilling this moral standard was probably one of the ways they could distinguish themselves and still be more evolved than the others. In addition it was probably also a way of venting dissatisfaction about the existing situation and these discussions functioned in many cases as a sort of lightning rod for the real problems.

Demands were formulated to solve all those things that weren't right. These demands could only go in one direction. They could never be capable of imagining that an alternative existed to the path they had taken. It would have been outrageous to imagine a return to a classical, traditional model of society. That can especially be seen in the authors' attitudes in *La Voix*. The general tenor of the contributions evolved from an almost general gratitude towards the benefits of "civilisation", to a steadily growing questioning of colonial society and the status of the Congolese in it. In any event this was intrinsically linked with the foundation of the periodical that precisely was meant to respond to the growing dissatisfaction about the existing social situation. Increasingly, demands were formulated and without exception these went in the direction of further emancipation, the further continuation of the process that had been started. The demands for a further development of and a higher participation in the educational system fitted within this. These two naturally had to go together. After all, education was the motor of this evolution, at least at the beginning. Indeed, the initial reason for attending school lay in the improvement of the circumstances of one's own life that one intended to be able to bring about. That is one of the elements that comes out very clearly in the memories of former pupils of the mission schools which are central to the last chapter.

NOTES

- [i] Gille, A. (1957). L'enseignement organisé au Congo belge par les pouvoirs publics ou avec leurs concours. In *Belgique d'Outre-Mer*, XII, 273, p. 909-913.
- [ii] From 1956 a new structure was accepted, consisting of three times two years, and it was announced that the curriculum must increasingly correspond with the Belgian syllabus 1936. From 1958 that became the 1958 syllabus. Kita, P. (1982). *Colonisation et enseignement*. p. 230-231.
- [iii] Pol Georis was a colleague of Sylvain De Coster, Professor of Education and Educational Psychology at the Free University of Brussels. During the 1960s he published a number of works on education in the Congo/Zaire, in the context of CEMUBAC, the Centre Médicale de l'Université de Bruxelles Au Congo.
- [iv] The periodical mentioned two "publishers": the CEPSI in Elisabethville, and the Institut de Pédagogie of the University of Lovanium.
- [v] Bolamba, A.R. (1955). *Brillants résultats à Lovanium*. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XI, 113, p. 678. Colin, M. (1958). *Proclamation des résultats universitaires à Lovanium*. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, 150, p. 570.
- [vi] Missine, L.E. (1968). *L'institut facultaire de psychologie et de pédagogie. Son*

organisation et ses recherches. Kinshasa: Lovanium; *Universiteiten van Belgisch-Congo en van Ruanda Urundi*, information brochure of the administration. Brussels, 1958.

[vii] Kimba, E. (1957). Ce que les Congolais attendent de l'enseignement du Français. In *Revue Pédagogique Congolais*, n°9, September 1957, p. V-IX. L'Essor du Congo was published in Elisabethville and was one of the three important newspapers in the Congo (besides *L'Avenir* and *Le Courrier d'Afrique*). It was traditionally a conservatively-minded newspaper, although after the war some space was given to different opinions about the social situation in the Congo. The newspaper was described as follows in a study of the press in the Congo from 1957: "L'Essor du Congo, conservative, may be classed to the right, perhaps to the extreme right." See Van Bol, J.M. (1957). *La presse quotidienne au Congo Belge*. Bruxelles: La pensée catholique. p. 81.

[viii] Lumpungu, F. (1958). La valeur pédagogique du jeu. In *Revue pédagogique congolaise*, n°12, July 1958, p. XXVI-XXX.

[ix] Kimponto, A. (1958). La fonction du moniteur de la ville et l'influence qu'il doit exercer. In *Revue pédagogique congolaise*, n°11, March 1958, p. XIX-XXII.

[x] One of these was the later general and president José Désiré Mobutu.

[xi] **Sheikh Anta Diop** (1923-1986). A Senagalese scientist (he studied mathematics, nuclear physics and philosophy and was also known as an archaeologist and historian). Diop was one of the African intellectuals who went to study in Paris in the context of the French assimilationist educational ideas. From 1946 to 1960 he studied and worked primarily in Paris, where he defended a doctorate in literature with the theme "L'unité culturelle de l'Afrique noire". At that time he also published a number of articles on African history and its perception in Europe. Diop was also one of the advocates of African independence, but was excluded from politics for the greatest part of his life. Zorgbibe, C. (2004). Senghor and Sheik Anta Diop or the restoration of African conscience. At www.african-geopolitics.org

[xii] Jadot, J.M. (1959). *Les écrivains africains du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi. Une histoire - Un bilan - Des problèmes*. Académie royale des Sciences coloniales. Classe des sciences morales et politiques. Mémoires In-8°. Nouvelle Série, 17, 2. Bruxelles: ARSOM. Remarkably enough, a text by a Mongo-teacher from Boende on land laws among the Mongo is also in the same publication. The text, which was sent to the Academie by Boelaert and translated by him into French, won the annual prize awarded by the Academie.

[xiii] Justin Bomboko (°1928) studied political science at the Université Libre de

Bruxelles. He founded the Unimo (Union des Mongo) in 1960 in Coquilhatville. In the 1960s he was twice Minister of Foreign Affairs, and now is vice-president of the senate (October 2003). Ganshof Van der Meersch, W. (1960). *Congo mai-juin 1960. Rapport du ministre chargé des affaires générales en Afrique*. Bruxelles, s.n.; Ferrand, I. (2001). *Congo 1955-1960. De aanloop naar de onafhankelijkheid. Een analyse van de berichtgeving in drie Vlaamse kranten*. Masters' thesis Universiteit Gent. On www.ethesis.net

[xiv] Bolela, A. (1971). Un aperçu de la presse congolaise écrite par les noirs de 1885 à 1960. In *Congo-Afrique*, XII, 1, p. 12.

[xv] Vinck, H. (2000). Périodiques coloniaux en langues africaines dans les archives Aequatoria. On www.aequatoria.be/archives_project. Edited version of the article "La presse à Mbandaka", appeared in Vinck, H. (ed.) (1990). *Mbandaka, hier et aujourd'hui. Eléments d'historiographie locale*. Etudes Aequatoria 10. Bamanya: Centre Aequatoria. p. 227-234. [original in French]

[xvi] Ibidem.

[xvii] In total 170 issues were published.

[xviii] Davier, J. (1955). Souvenirs d'anniversaire. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XI, 106, p. 6-16.

[xix] Kadima-Tshimanga, B.D. (1983). *L'univers socio-politique de l'évolué congolais entre 1955 et 1959. Une étude du vocabulaire de "La Voix du Congolais"*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Paris, Nouvelle Sorbonne. p. 26.

[xx] Tamba, J. (1946). Nos écrits et leur but. In *La Voix du Congolais*, II, 10, p. 416-418. [original in French]

[xxi] This other publication is described as follows by Van Bol: "*un illustré, qui poursuit avec bonheur sa mission d'éducation populaire.*" [original quotation in French]

[xxii] Bolamba, A.R. (1959). In *La Voix du Congolais*, XV, 163, p. 575-576. [original quotation in French]

[xxiii] Kadima-Tshimanga, B.D. (1983). *L'univers socio-politique de l'évolué congolais entre 1955 et 1959*. p. 76.

[xxiv] Bolamba, Antoine Roger (1913-2002). Born in Boma but a Mongo by origin. He attended school with the Brothers of the Christian Schools, continued his studies at the Ecole pour Assistants Médicaux in Kintambo (near Kinshasa), and worked for a number of years as a clerk for Foréami (*Fonds Reine Elisabeth pour l'Assistance Médicale aux Indigènes*). He became editor-in-chief of *La Voix* in 1946. In 1956 he was a cabinet assistant of Buisseret for a year. The obituaries written on the occasion of his death on 9 July 2002 emphasised his literary

qualities, although mainly one work was referred to, his bundle of poems "Esanzo", with which in 1955 he became the first Congolese to receive international recognition for his literary work. After this Bolamba had a short political career. He was appointed to the post of Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs by Patrice Lumumba and later he was Minister of Information in the administration of Cyrille Adula (1960-1964) for a short time. Subsequently, he fulfilled all sorts of positions in the entourage of Mobutu. After zairisation, Bolamba adopted the name "Lokolé" to replace his baptismal name. See MMC (2002). Obituary: La Rdc orpheline du doyen de ses écrivains: A-R. Bolamba disparaît à 89 ans! On <http://64.224.66.88/public/congo/pages/nouvellet.asp?nid=274>. Concerning Bolamba's literary work see above all Gérard, A. (1977). *Etudes de littérature africaine francophone*. Dakar/Abidjan: Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, p. 97-114.

[xxv] Eloko a Nongo Otshudiema (1975). *Les structures inconscientes de "La Voix du Congolais" (1959)*. Les cahiers du CEDAF, 2/3. Bruxelles: CEDAF.

[xxvi] Bolamba, A.R. (1959). In *La Voix du Congolais*, XV, 163, p. 575-576.

[xxvii] Bolamba, A.R. (1948). Editorial: Relations entre blancs et noirs. In *La Voix du Congolais*, 23, p. 53-54.

[xxviii] Bolamba, A.R. (1948). Editorial: Colour Bar? In *La Voix du Congolais*, 24, p. 101-103.

[xxix] Bolamba, A.R. (1949). *Les problèmes de l'évolution de la femme noire*. Léopoldville: Editions de l'Essor du Congo.

[xxx] Ibidem, p. 12.

[xxxi] Ibidem, p. 33-34.

[xxxii] Ibidem, p. 48-49.

[xxxiii] See on this matter Ceuppens, B. (2003). *Onze Congo? Congolezen over de kolonisatie*. Leuven: Davidsfonds. p. 46-55. She claims that this not necessarily meant that men did not want to eat with their wives or families but that according to the traditions they were expected to eat in public.

[xxxiv] Ibidem, p. 148-149. [original quotation in French]

[xxxv] Ibidem, p. 167.

[xxxvi] Ditungunuka, F. (1954). Les Jalons de notre progrès. In *La Voix du Congolais*, X, 95, p. 96-97.

[xxxvii] Mobé, A.M. (1952). De l'éducation de la masse. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VIII, 77, p. 473-477.

[xxxviii] Ngandu, E. (1948). L'école instruit mais la famille forme la caractère. In

La Voix du Congolais, IV, p. 242-245.

[xxxix] Bongongo, L. (1948). De l'éducation de nos enfants. In *La Voix du Congolais*, IV, 33, p. 501-504.

[xl] Mabanza, J. (1951). Elever soi-même ses enfants. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VII, 68, p. 602-606.

[xli] Landu, M. (1952). Conseils aux éducateurs. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VIII, 72, p. 132-133.

[xlii] Iloo, D. (1952). A propos de l'article "Conseils aux éducateurs". In *La Voix du Congolais*, VIII, 79, p. 594-596.

[xliii] Ngbongbo, G.-A. (1953). Parents, travaillez avec les Educateurs. In *La Voix du Congolais*, IX, 88, p. 456-457.

[xliv] Bolamba, A.R. (1951). A propos des internats pour enfants Congolais. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VII, 60, p. 128-130.

[xlv] Nkonga, L. (1957). De l'éducation et de l'instruction des enfants. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 141, p. 945-946.

[xlvi] Luvuvamu, B. (1958). Quand l'école et la famille formeront-elles l'unité au Congo? In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, 150, p. 552-553.

[xlvii] Katamée, L. (1959). A propos de l'éducation des filles congolaises. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XV, 154, p. 8-9.

[xlviii] Kangudie, P. (1948). Des écoles ménagères pour nos filles. In *La Voix du Congolais*, III, 37, p. 141-143.

[xlix] Vumuka, J.J.W. (1957). A propos de l'école des filles à Boma. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 140, p. 904-905.

[l] Delanaye, [Père] (1958). A propos de l'école des filles de Boma. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, p. 168-169.

[li] Iyolo, E. (1957). L'école doit favoriser la culture intellectuelle de la femme congolaise. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 140, p. 846-847.

[lii] Iloo, D. (1951). Quelques réflexions sur le rôle de l'instituteur. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VII, 68, p. 598-601.

[liii] L'échotier (1947). In *La Voix du Congolais*, III, 20, p. 881.

[liv] Lundulla, V. (1956). Enseignez le français. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XII, 122, p. 327-328.

[lv] Iyesty, J.-F. (1956). Nous voulons le français dans les écoles. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XII, 127, p. 701-703.

[lvi] Bulangi, A.-J. (1957). L'enseignement à Kalima. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 131, p. 145.

[lvii] Okoka, D. (1958). A propos de l'école des moniteurs de Tshumbe Ste-Marie.

In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, 143, p. 120-121. Mabanza, J. (1957). Le problème de l'enseignement dans la région de Kasi. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 136, p. 543-544.

[lviii] Bolamba, A.R. (1956). Le problème des langues dans nos écoles. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XII, 119, p. 85-88.

[lix] Ilunga, L.G. (1945). L'enseignement dans le Congo de demain. In *La voix du Congolais*, I, 5, p. 175-176.

[lx] Moukeba, J.-D. (1950). Est-il prématuré de parler de l'enseignement pre-universitaire pour Congolais? In *La Voix du Congolais*, VI, 48, p. 149-150.

[lxi] Bolamba, A.R. (1953). L'expérience universitaire au Congo. In *La Voix du Congolais*, IX, 91, p. 655.

[lxii] Bolamba, A.R. (1954). Enseignement universitaire au Congo Belge. In *La Voix du Congolais*, X, 97, p. 243.

[lxiii] Bolamba, A.R. (1954). Après les déclarations ministérielles. In *La Voix du Congolais*, X, 100, p. 513.

[lxiv] Masudi, S.T. (1957). A propos des écoles dans le Maniema. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 138, p. 687; Ngobongo, G.-A. (1956). Les qualités d'un bon instituteur. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XII, 122, p. 337-338.

[lxv] Zunbgu-Kanda, G. (1957). Quel sera l'avenir des universitaires congolais? In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 139, p. 763-764.

[lxvi] Salumu, B. (1958). Les écoles secondaires au Congo Belge. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, 148, p. 485-486.

[lxvii] Ntamba, L. (1958). A côté des universités, il faut multiplier les écoles secondaires et normales. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, 152, p. 678-679.

[lxviii] Bolamba, A.R. (1958). Les étudiants africains devraient effectuer des voyages dans les pays de l'Europe. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, 148, p. 486.

[lxix] It is unclear who it related to precisely, but from the vocabulary used it may be deduced that it was the head of the relevant government department or someone in a similar position.

[lxx] Colin, M. (1954). Une brillante réussite. In *La Voix du Congolais*, X, 102, p. 709.

[lxxi] Bijvoorbeeld Colin, M. (1954). Un futur régent littéraire en Nouveau sujet congolais à l'Université de Louvain. In *La Voix du Congolais*, X, 105, p. 880-881.

[lxxii] *La Voix du Congolais* no. 119 (1956).

[lxxiii] Bolamba, A.R. (1952). L'enseignement pour Africains au Congo Belge. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VIII, 73, p. 188-203.

[lxxiv] L'échotier (1953). Enseignement missionnaire. In *La Voix du Congolais*, IX,

92, p. 759.

[lxxv] Ngandu, E. (1946). Pourquoi le jeune noir fuit son village? In *La Voix du Congolais*, II, 12, p. 492-495.

[lxxvi] Baniengumuna, A.J. (1956). L'enseignement dans le territoire de Luozi. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XII, 128, p. 783-785.

[lxxvii] Bolamba, A.R. (1951). Chronique. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VII, 61, p. 207.

[lxxviii] Bolamba, A.R. (1950). Impressions de voyage. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VI, 49, p. 212-214.

[lxxix] Bolamba, A.R. (1949). Activités des Cercles. In *La Voix du Congolais*, V, 36, p. 127.

[lxxx] Bolamba, A.R. (1950). Activités des Cercles. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VI, 48, p. 185.

[lxxxii] Bolamba, A.R. (1947). Activités des Cercles. In *La Voix du Congolais*, III, 21, p. 934.

[lxxxii] Bolamba, A.R. (1951). Activités des Cercles. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VII, 66, p. 526.

[lxxxiii] For example a certain Mr Mosikwa from Boende, reported during 1952. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VIII, 70, p. 56. See also number 73, p. 245.

[lxxxiv] Bolamba, A.R. (1952). Ephémérides. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VIII, 80, p. 703.

[lxxxv] Iyeky, J.F. (1957). Appel aux amis de Coquilhatville. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 133, p. 306-307.

[lxxxvi] Bolamba, A.R. (1949). Chronique. In *La Voix du Congolais*, V, 35, p. 72.

[lxxxvii] Bolamba, A.R. (1949). Chronique. In *La Voix du Congolais*, V, 35, p. 70-71.

[lxxxviii] Iloo, D. (1950). Coquilhatville en deuil. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VI, 54, p. 548-549.

[lxxxix] Lomboto, J. (1950). Veillons sur la jeunesse. In *La Voix du Congolais*, VI, 54, p. 518-520.

[xc] Baelenge, G. (1953). L'enseignement dans la province de l'Equateur. In *La Voix du Congolais*, IX, 82, p. 41-42.

[xci] Africa Archive Brussels, electronic inventory, no. 12.452, Commentaire rédigé à la suite de l'inspection d'écoles du Vicariat de Coq de février à juin 1951 par l'inspecteur-assistant, ff., C. Eloye.

[xcii] Bolamba, A.R. (1955). Coquilhatville en 1954. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XI, 106, p. 88-105.

[xciii] Monkoto is to the south east of Wafanya and consequently to the very south

of the mission region of the MSC.

[xciv] Mpako, N. (1956). Problèmes complexes de la vie des habitants du territoire de Monkoto. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XII, 127, p. 708-710.

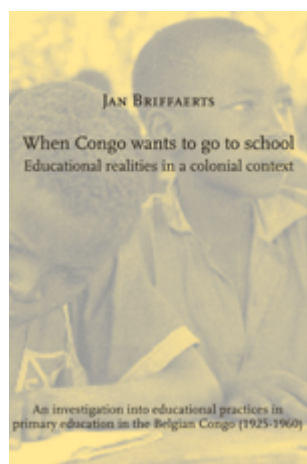
[xcv] Iyeky, J.F. (1957). Vers l'éveil de Monkoto. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 141, p. 941-943.

[xcvi]< Iyeky, J.F. (1958). La Tshuapa, mon district. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIV, 143, p. 122-124.

[xcvii] Bessembe, T.C. (1957). Tous les chefs de secteurs doivent au moins être des intellectuels. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XIII, 137, p. 590-591.

[xcviii] The Congolese filled these positions in the context of the indirect administration that was introduced even before the war. The *secteur* was essentially the lowest administrative level, above the *chefferies* (villages).

When Congo Wants To Go To School - The Long Term: Memories



“We arrive, it is as though it is some amusement, the people are standing there, we left for school, my poor father stood on the road until I disappeared from view. And I occasionally saw him when I turned around. But, he did not enjoy it. But me, on the other hand, I was attracted as if it were a game ...[i]

A final piece of the puzzle

After reading the Congolese comments in *La Voix* the question naturally arises of whether these points of view corresponded to reality. It has certainly been adequately shown that a rather large gap yawned between the picture the

Belgians gave of the situation in the Congo on the one hand and the actual problems of the colonised population on the other. The “elite” of the time were considered in the previous chapter. However, their contributions are situated in a strongly opinion-oriented framework. How education was experienced in practice by the pupils cannot be discovered directly from that. It is a piece that is still missing in the picture I want to reproduce: what was the experience of those who really encountered it? A search into literature on the memories of the education of the colonial period is not very productive. The information is scarce and very scattered. For this reason I considered it useful, in addition to the relatively large amount of written sources available to me, to search for a few people who had been going to school in the period and the region concerned. What they remember, and the way in which they do that, forms a very interesting supplement to the written sources and at the same time clarifies them and also puts them into context. Parts of their testimony have appeared here and there in the previous chapters because they naturally gave information on classroom practices. In this last chapter I want to place the story and the memories of my main witnesses at the centre. What is left from these experiences, what remained and what is their attitude towards this period?

Within (and perhaps because of) the limitations and uniqueness that accompanies this source of information, it is indisputably very interesting to use it in the context of this study. The image of school practices and realities can certainly be supplemented and shown more sharply by listening to the people who experienced it all as pupils. Concerning oral history and the problems of memories in general there is a great deal of scientific literature and in the context of colonial historiography and anthropology (oral) testimony, interview or conversations are sources of information that are being used more and more frequently. My intention here is not to subject the precise nature of all sources to a thorough analysis but I do want to mention a couple of sensible ideas, in my opinion, on the way in which this sort of information can best be dealt with.

Working with memories

Bogumil Jewsiewicki puts what he calls *récits de vie* at the centre of his social and cultural historical research.[ii] He has even published a number of these life stories and on this occasion formulated some considerations about the nature of these stories. He states that this really relates to a mixed form, something in between *social history* and telling a story. He emphasised the shifting meaning of

stories, which change their context continually between 'I' and 'we'. Your own story simultaneously carries that of the family, the village, the people who share the experience with you. Strongly connected with this is the practice of speaking figuratively; this forms a sort of second layer beneath the facts and events used by the people telling the story or those interviewed. The images used really constitute the assignment of meaning given to the facts and events. On a more direct level Jewsiewicki noticed that in the stories of the Congolese a distinction is often made between 'us' and 'them'. The 'them' was primarily the European, the coloniser.

A more personalised implementation of Jewsiewicki's insights into the 'I' and the 'we' may be found in the study by Marie-Bénédicte Dembour, *Recalling the Belgian Congo*.^[iii] Dembour pays a great deal of attention to the process of remembering, which seemed to form a central component of her research into the colonial past. From the start of her research she was confronted by the transforming effect of memories and the fact that people integrate their past into their lives and also adapt it. During her interviews Dembour discovered that the interlocutors often gave generally applicable answers and had difficulty in making a distinction between what they formerly thought and what they now thought: "*Experiences do not get pigeonholed in one's memory in a chronological order; rather they are amalgamated in what already exists, slightly changing the tone, adding a dimension, or completely 'distorting' the images of the past one keeps.*" In the same sense Dembour described a whole series of ways in which memory works: forgetting distasteful things, the incorporation of new facts, striving for coherence and synthesis. Memory continues to modify occurrences with a particular connotation until they get another connotation.

Dembour seems to emphasise the fact that memory works in an active manner, in the sense that memories not only fade but things are also added and modified. In a recent paper (*Forgetful Remembering*) Johannes Fabian emphasised another component.^[iv] In this he defends the concept that both components of memory must be considered, remembrance and forgetting. He considers the telling of tales (*narration*) as a combination of both components, both considered as active transactions of the narrator. Fabian gives some convincing examples of what one must expect concretely. In the article in question he begins from a conversation that he had with a Congolese man. The conversation fitted into source research carried out by Fabian into a document from the colonial period about which he

wanted to know more. At the same time he became interested in the man's life story. Fabian writes: "*We cannot help but notice that the various parts of narrative that Baba Ngoie elected to tell us add up to a remarkably thin story of his life. Despite occasional flashes of the concrete - memories that help us to imagine some of the stations of his life - what he reports is the biography of a strangely abstract colonial subject.*" Besides this his attention was mainly drawn to the fact that the interviewee maintained a conscious distance from certain subjects whenever he is asked about them. That can be seen from the way in which a person talks about something: someone can claim not to remember because of his great age but also sometimes because he had paid no attention to it at the time. Sometimes someone reacted with a brusque 'that could be true' or an uninterested 'maybe'. This is what Fabian is interested in, the finer points of the narrative, including the way in which things are *not* mentioned. This particular manner can therefore tell us something, even if it is only about the reason why someone does not know or do something, but also about the way that someone sees himself in society, in his life.

2. *Interlocutors*[v]

I made extensive interviews with three former pupils of the MSC in the Belgian Congo.[vi] What the three mainly had in common was that they went to school in MSC schools, that they were good students, that they were able to continue their education after primary school and that they finally ended up in Belgium. They had all been living for a considerable time in Belgium now and have settled there. I would like to introduce them briefly because they will speak in detail below. This biographical information was given to me by the interviewees themselves during the conversations I had with them.

Jean Indenge was born in 1935 in the *territoire de Monkoto*, in the southeast Equatorial province. After attending the village school, he went to primary school in Wafanya with the Sisters of Beveren-Waas. After this he continued his education in Coquilhatville and became a nurse. After independence he also worked there for a short period. After this he went to Leopoldville, at first only to work. Later he resumed his studies there. He became *assistant pharmacien* and worked in the provincial medical services. During the sixties he came to Belgium and finally trained in physiotherapy at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. He received his first degree, his bachelor's. He then worked in a clinic in Brussels. In the 1970s he was called back for a short time to give lessons in Zaïre, while his

family remained in Belgium. After this he continued to work in Belgium, in the same hospital, but at the end of the 1980s he had to take early retirement as a consequence of internal restructuring. Papa Indenge is a fairly well known person in the Congolese community in Brussels. At the moment of the interview he was mainly employed in running a café (together with his family), right next to Brussels South station.

Stéphane Boale was born around 1935 in the district of Bokote. He also went to primary school there. Later he studied at the teacher training college with the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Bamanya. He taught for a short time in Bamanya but then did the state examination as a meteorologist. Thanks to that diploma he found employment with the government and was posted to the Equatorial province. In this capacity he also had the opportunity to continue his studies in Belgium, which he did for four years. How long he has lived in Belgium is unclear but probably since the end of the 1970s. He is retired and lives with his wife in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode (Brussels).

Jean Boimbo was born in 1928. Like Indenge he comes from the *territoire de Monkoto*, but from a different village. He also went to school in Wafanya. After this he went to the teacher training college in Bamanya. After working as a probationary teacher for two years in Lombo Lombo (the leper colony founded by the MSC) he began teaching. After getting his diploma, in 1954, he immediately moved to Leopoldville. When Buisseret started lay education, many extra teachers were sought and he took advantage of this. He taught until immediately after independence and then became *directeur adjoint* and after that headmaster of his primary school. In 1965 he began a career in the civil service. He first worked in the personnel department of the central department of education, after this and after a series of promotions he ended up in the highest ranks of the administration, first as *Agent du protocole d'état* (a department which was under the direct authority of the president), later at the *Commissariat général du Plan*.^[vii] From the middle of the 1980s he was promoted to cabinet assistant in the ministry of public works. After a change of cabinet and a short period – following his ex-minister – at the *Belgoloise* bank, where he had the title of *Fondé de pouvoir* (“having power of authority”), he was again appointed to a function in a ministry, that of agriculture. Finally Boimbo and his boss were appointed to the *SNCZ* (the Zairese railway company). In 1993 Boimbo retired from this job but he continued to run his own construction company. He moved to Belgium in 1997.

He lives in Uccle (Brussels) with his family.

I had one or more lengthy conversations with each of these three. With Jean Boimbo I had one conversation of about two hours. With Jean Indenge I had one conversation of two to three hours and a second conversation that was somewhat shorter. With Stéphane Boale I had three conversations, each one a couple of hours long. I always used the same approach in these conversations. However, the conversations showed considerable differences between each other, not only in length but also as far as the style and fluency of communication were concerned. Without drawing any further conclusions out of this, it seems important to me to explain how these conversations proceeded in a rather general way. The way in which the interview was done was always the same (as was also the case for the interviews with the missionaries): a half open interview, in which I worked from a prepared list of questions but allowed the interviewees to expand further and then tried to follow their story insofar as possible. Jean Indenge, whom I interviewed first, had prepared himself carefully for the conversation and had composed a complete list of things that he wanted to say. He expanded considerably on particular topics. Stéphane Boale was the most difficult for me to grasp and I had the most difficulty in communicating with him. He did not stick to a chronologically based story, and often told me memories and stories that had been told to him, which he did not in the first instance explain as such. At first this rather confused me. Finally, Jean Boimbo answered the questions I asked without preparation and very fluently. Of the three he seemed to have the most feeling for chronology and could usually quickly say from memory what he had experienced and done and where and when things exactly had to be situated.

To school[viii]

2.1. The great leap forwards

I spoke in detail with Jean Indenge about his motivation to go to school. Indenge had, like the other two gentlemen from the Equatorial province, first followed lessons in his own village for some years in one of the little bush schools which, in his experience, were relatively widespread: *“You see in each village, there was a basic cell, in each village there were small schools where children of certain age, say 6, 7, 8 years, would enter and spend around two or three years. That was the case for me, almost three years. And when the curricula available there were completed, well it was a question of going to a properly officially recognised school.”* At this village school the children did not learn much: *“They taught*

rudimentary education, reading and writing, you had to know the alphabet, reading and the elements of arithmetic and after three years those that were talented, they would already have exceeded this level of education." Indenge's school was a Protestant school and that had one difference to other schools: *"What I know is that I finished this school and that I was unemployed, so to speak, for a few years, before going to another school. And during this period of unemployment and because it was a Protestant school I had a book, the same as the moniteur."* Indenge did just the same as the *moniteur*, on the basis of his own book: reading and singing. And his knowledge thus was as developed as that of the teacher.

For him going to the mission school meant he had to leave his familiar environment and make a long journey. I asked to what extent the children had been able to build up a background for taking such a far-reaching decision themselves. I said to him that he must have been very motivated to start this. He answered with a few rhetorical questions: *"When one went to the village schools, at that age, is there an understanding of what one will be doing at that school? All the more so at that time, those guys who were in our village, who hunted, who knew how to write or who sang Protestant songs, would that affect young people? That, I do not know!"* For himself he had reasoned that behind school there had to be a sort of vocation, although he clearly still had difficulty in explaining this to himself and still seemed to be looking for an explanation: *"But always I was called by something like a wind that attracts you like that. It was only much later that I understood that there was a vocation from I don't know what, attraction, expectation, I don't know what."* Also significant in his case was the fact that his older brothers also went away to school. He described that as the way in which the vocation received an effective form: *"But, in order for the expectation, this call to be effective, it was necessary to have a few brothers in my family who were at the school, even if they stopped in the second or third year of primary education, it was necessary to have that."*

Indenge remembers being very enthusiastic about learning to write. He was a good pupil and practiced diligently, also in the evenings after school. He described his feeling about going to school as a mixture of compulsion and longing: *"It was at the time that we discovered organised school, there were 300, 400 pupils and more, we were not yet completely marked but still we were there because of obligation on the one hand and as though it was a game on the other."*

Indenge described a sort of indefinite situation in which the children found themselves and in which they were maintained by the disciplinary rules and the things they had to do, which they sometimes found nice and sometimes not. There was no higher purpose. Indenge was clearly also in that situation and compared that with the European context. He conceded that they had no role models, no reference points: *“Because we did not have any points of reference. The points of reference here (in Belgium, JB), today, that means asking the question to a child of 4, 5 years of age: ‘what do you want to be later?’ There are those that would say: ‘I want to be a policeman’, others who say ‘I want to be a doctor’, etc. etc. What does that mean? What these children are doing is looking for people with whom they can identify.”*

He was clearly still thinking about it himself: *“When I ask the question again, it is because it was necessary to have points of references in a person, who works, who has a bicycle or who has ‘l’union fait la force’, etc. etc. From that moment, one says: ‘I, I want to be this ... that occurred then because he was at school.’ While we say: ‘I am going to school to be like him!’”*[ix] That sort of role model was therefore missing and Indenge did not succeed in describing his longing to go to school in more detail. It remained a sort of undefined longing or even something that people just did because it was the established thing. *“But why did one go to school? This desire was due to what? I am still asking that question because I cannot discover it, it was simply a game like that, and: ‘I have to go to school, we are talking about school!’”* His parents were really not convinced that he should leave and it was obviously his older brothers who persuaded them to let their youngest son go to the big school. It can hardly be anything other than that they saw the importance of this, although according to Indenge they could only just read and write: *“They were not very successful in their level of education, eh”*. This witness indicates that speaking of conscious strategies, made in advance, is not completely correct.

In *Naître et mourir au Zaïre* Jewsiewicki collected some statements from Congolese witnesses about their lives during the colonial period. These were mostly life stories of illiterate people who were recorded by family members, except for a few exceptions. Most of the stories only briefly treat the school history of the protagonists but do report – even if summarily– things mentioned by my interviewees. For example the fact that children in the countryside only began primary education at a rather late age: *“At thirteen years of age, I left my parents*

to go to the Catholic mission of Libanda in order to receive my First Communion. After having received First Communion, I registered in the first year of primary school to start my studies. If I had started my studies late, that was because there was no school in the Ngiri.”[x] This is an element that evidently often comes to the fore in people’s memories. That was also the case with Jean Indenge and he referred to the same reasons: “Well, at that time, when we hadn’t received the required age, which was around 12, 13 years of age, it was not possible to go to that school that was many kilometres from the village, as I will explain a little later.”

It is not difficult to place this as a memory; it must after all have been a fundamental moment in the young lives of these people. A great adventure, which the person involved liked to talk about in detail so many years later: *“One left one’s small village with a small suitcase. In my case, I may say that I was privileged, I had a metal case with a few pairs of trousers, some shirts, a few coins. And we left for a long time. Over twelve months we only had two holidays. And just think: leaving my home to arrive at this mission in Wafanya was two days’ walk. On foot, barefoot! And the majority of the time, there were real roads suitable for motor vehicles but we could not follow those because that was too far, we preferred the shortcuts. However, the shortcuts required walking on the tracks where we sometimes would face an elephant before us. Well, so we would leave, very early in the morning from our home and then to spend the night in an unknown village. So just picture that in your head (...) Well. We arrived in the village, a stranger, where we asked for hospitality (accommodation, JB), spent the night if we found hospitable people, or you would borrow mats because there were no mattresses and then, very early in the morning at around four a.m., we would rise to continue the walk through ... the most virgin forest that exists to arrive at the edge of a river. The river had to be crossed to arrive at the mission.”*

Stéphane Boale also confirmed during the conversations I had with him that people waited a long time before sending children to the mission school. He thought it was because it was a dangerous journey: *“Ah yes, but why did you have to wait? It was because of the killings! It was dangerous. Even getting married: you had to marry women you knew. Not more than one kilometre away. And when sending children, there was nothing heard about them. If a person left, no news was received.”* He himself described the journey of over two hundred kilometres as *“une expérience impressionnante”* and he had trouble with homesickness but

recovered from it quickly. Indenge expressed the shock of arrival somewhat pithily by describing his first impression as follows: *"We were no longer in our village, we were somewhere!"* He linked that very expressly to the fact that he was now at a place where whites were continually present: *"Now you would see them, not one, but three and continually."* The presence of female religious workers, too, was a new, alienating experience for him: *"We knew that they existed and that they were called "Sisters". But now we could actually visualise these beings called "Sisters". That clearly had an impact on us* (laughs, JB)."

2.2. Motivation

A completely different question naturally relates to the reasons for continuing education, continuing going to school. In the interviews I conducted that element was never explicitly put forward. In hindsight the gentlemen seemed to consider their continued education the obvious thing to do, although that cannot really have been the case in the given context. Boale implied it to some extent. When he was about seventeen he finished primary school. When I mentioned the junior seminary, he told me spontaneously that he would not have been allowed to go there: *"But I did not have the opportunity to go there. I was prepared but my history was not known. In other words, in order to go to the seminary, the priest had to know your origins. I was the third in the class when I left primary school. But I was not known, my identity was not known."* He certainly suggested that you had to have good connections, be in contact with the right people, to be able to go to the seminary. Obviously he felt obliged to give a few words of explanation: *"And from all those who went to the higher seminary, only one succeeded, all the others were thrown out."* And then to conclude about himself: *"They did not know where to put me really. I was considered too young to be a teacher."*

In contrast, with Jean Boimbo everything seemed very clear. After primary school he simply went straight to the teacher training college. Once he was there, there did seem to be some problems, because there were too many candidates and the classes were too crowded. The Brothers therefore organised a *concours* and only those who scored more than 90% could immediately go on to the higher year (Boimbo was 19 at that time). His ambitions were already clear at the time, he says: *"We had goals, eh! We saw our elders who were working for the State, in a good job, or teachers, who were clean and who taught, and there were guys who were poor and we wanted to work so that we could help our family. We had*

determination, we wanted to become like some (...) we liked school, so that we could become someone later." That partly fits in with what Jean Indenge said about the initial motivation for going to primary school. The example of others played an important role for the children at that time.

This was also true for Josephine Bongondo, who was at school in Kinshasa in the 1950s: *"Each person had their own ideas of what they wanted to do: 'I want to work'; 'I want to get married'; or: 'I want to join a religious order'. But I only had one thought, to work. To work like some friends worked at that time."* In her interview Bongondo agreed that specific expectations existed for the girls at domestic school. Although only a little French was taught, that was still enough to begin to dream of a 'real' job in an office: *"Yes, Ma'am Reine, Ma'am France, Ma'am Rumané... They gave us the hope that as we had started to talk a little French, we would be able to work in offices."* She said that her parents had a typewriter at home. She wrote the letters and digits from the machine down on paper and during playtime at school she wrote them down again in the sand, then she practiced with her friends: *"We even created our own song: 'We are pupils from middle school, we are to be congratulated, we will work in offices (one day). Love and push (the dance)!'"* These were girls at the domestic school, i.e. a middle school. In comparison with most Congolese women they had a special position. Still, this picture of the future was not obvious for them; *Mama Bongondo* very clearly remembers the sharp reaction of the Sisters: *"Our sister came: 'What? You, a black woman, working in an office? A black woman will not work a single day in an office! She will work in her husband's house! In an office, a black woman would never work! Go on! All of you, you are punished! Go! You, Joséphine, you have invented all these stories! You will remain on your knees for a whole week outside class! Hands raised! You will see, you brat!'"*[xi]

The interrelations at the mission

3.1. The relationship with the missionaries, through the eyes of the pupils

How close were the missionaries to the young Congolese? In some stories the Sisters appear a faraway spirit, an apparition with whom the pupils had very little contact. *"Sister Josepha, she passed by in the classroom all the time."* The Sisters, who managed the school, had a purely supervisory function. The moniteurs were supervised closely. This supervision fitted well into the hierarchy of authority at the mission which seemed self-evident to the pupils. The general rule was for the pupils not to speak to or to bother the missionaries unless strictly necessary. If

there were problems with the subject matter to be learnt, if they didn't understand something, they went to the Congolese teaching staff first, who were naturally closest to the pupils. At any rate, that was Boale's experience: *"You get the idea? Because the moniteurs were not like the professors here. They were the framework. They were close-by. In the mission, close-by."*

The Sister only became involved if the teacher did not know either: *"While we only went to the Sisters for major problems, that the moniteur could not solve. But it was possible, for example mathematical problems, say the rule of three, algebra ... if the moniteur was unable to understand it, the Sister headmistress would come and explain the method."* Since there was always a Sister in the neighbourhood, that almost happened automatically: *"The fact that she was present all the time, '24 hours a day', she immediately knew if there was a problem. And consequently she would intervene, either at the time she noticed the problem in the class, she would explain the method, for very complicated problems."* What exactly was meant by "complicated problems"? *"The story of the Holy Trinity, that was a little complicated. Or if the moniteur started to babble, to change the subject abruptly, the Sister would intervene."* As a second example he used the mathematics lesson. Fractions, dividing by a fraction or decimal numbers were experienced as difficult. Such things were experienced by the pupils as a form of superiority: *"It was very uncommon!!! Because when we saw that, we said to ourselves that the moniteur concerned did not measure up. That irritated the moniteur."* However, they did know that this superiority was not only because of the higher intelligence of the Sisters: *"She also had help because she had the 'solutionnaires'."*[xii]

Apart from this, the Sisters seemed to be fairly absent from the mission post. Boale said that they just did their job. Once the work was done, they went back to the convent. At the boys' boarding school it was not the Sisters but the Fathers who supervised. Here too, just as in the school itself, tasks were delegated. The Fathers appointed responsible people from among the boys, the *capitas* (*prefects*). The system was probably similar to those used in European boarding schools. These *capitas* had to organise and supervise the others and to report to the responsible Father. He only came along from time to time to check up or if he knew something was not in order. Punishment followed if the rooms were not orderly enough or not clean enough.

Boimbo voiced quite a different opinion, he looked back on a very satisfactory

relationship that he had maintained with the Sisters. There are a few explanations for this. At the mission post the Sisters were responsible for the school and therefore they were also responsible for the religion or mathematics lesson. Besides this Boimbo had been a *capita*. Then as an older pupil he had been responsible for younger pupils for some years. In this position he had to hold assemblies and be responsible for the maintenance of good order in his group. In this position he very often came into contact with the Sisters, for he belonged to one of the 'chosen' allowed to work on weaving raffia, an activity that was definitely reserved for pupils who, because of their intelligence, diligence or for other reasons, were in the good books of the religious workers. Boimbo obviously had good memories of this and in the way in which he spoke of it there was still some pride there: *"I assisted. There was a Sister in charge of it and I helped the Sister. I watched the guys who made mistakes. I did the rounds or they came and ordered the raffia. You know what raffia is? Carpets were made from the raffia, with rods. The Sister drew the designs in the evening, with me and the others. For example, a square there, a fish there, in yellow, red. Or the design of a river and a boat."*

However, there was also another side to the iron discipline that both Boale and Indenge could still picture very well. Boale related spontaneously that although the pupils had to be 'inside' in the evenings and lying in their beds when curfew rang, they still enjoyed a certain freedom during the day. He remembered the boarding school as a domain that was clearly separated from the village (that can also be seen on photographs and maps). But there was no problem in leaving that domain outside the hours of obligatory presence. That more or less meant the pupils could move freely at midday, at some hours in the evenings and probably also at the weekends: *"For example we were allowed to go out and were let back in if we simply wanted to go and buy something to eat. But a person who was in the boarding school and tried to leave during the hours of supervision, or if he could not be found, risked being punished."* He subsequently changed this statement by saying: *"If he did not have a reason for going, he was not allowed to be absent, no? And then, the pupils were there almost all day. In the morning, lessons, at midday, lunch, in the afternoon, more lessons and afterwards it was often study, or the cinema, prayers, activities."*

Indenge expanded on this aspect much more. He particularly made remarkable statements in the context of food provisions. He complained as much about the

lack of food as about the quality of what the pupils got to eat (his statement about *peau de cochon* has previously been cited). The consequence of this is that the children exerted themselves to get enough food. Indenge did not give the impression that the Fathers had anything against it. Whoever had money, or could think of something else to trade, could go to the village to buy manioc himself *"At midday, we made do, we said: 'You go and find some water, you go and find manioc flour and another looked for nuts'. In thirty minutes we came back together, we started to prepare it and the manioc leaves we ate contained cyanotic acid (sic)? It had to be heated long enough. But we had less than thirty minutes."* The children obviously had a building available, described by Indenge as a large hangar, where they cooked for themselves. There was no supervision by the missionaries, he said: *"What would they have to supervise? They did not give wood, they did not give anything. We had to make do, as simple as that."*

Boimbo's declarations were less detailed but also fit with these: *"Those who were boarders ate at the boarding school. But there was no refectory as such eh. You had to manage on your own. Each person prepared food for himself."* The missionaries did give food but *"it was bad grub"*. He listed the alternatives: *"There was time until eight p.m. to get yourself food. We would go fishing, we were very close to the river. Or we could go and work for somebody to earn money."* Again work had to be done to pay the moniteurs for their extra French lessons. If necessary this involved working for the teacher himself: *"You would look for kindling or wood for the moniteur's wife or you would iron his trousers, his clothes or his wife's clothes."* So leaving the grounds of the boarding school was allowed, as long as one was back before eight o'clock.

Consequently, there seemed to be a certain amount of freedom for the pupils in a number of areas and there were gaps in the timetables and in the supervision and discipline by the missionaries. However, those were exceptions and in the memories of those concerned the strict and regulated life is retained. That is apparent from the statements of all three. For example in the already quoted statement from Boale that there was always something to do. But Boimbo also said: *"The days ran to time, eh. We had our occupations, there were no empty hours."* And Indenge described the typical course of the days in some detail, from early morning through the curfew to awakening the next morning and concluded with: *"And then the chain continued! Every day!"*

3.2. Authority and how to handle it

3.2.1. Authority

Stéphane Boale explained the general atmosphere between the teaching staff and the pupils in detail: *“In the army, if you are told: ‘Go there’, you go there even if there are insects there. The total submission to a superior. You have to show that you have respect for your superiors. Even if you want to ask a question or pursue it in greater depth because you did not understand something. Or when the teacher wrote a mistake on the board, you were not allowed immediately to say ‘You have made a mistake’, you had to be much more careful. With submission and denunciation, in a normal degree. You were never allowed to say to a teacher or to the Sister headmistress or a person more authorised than you: ‘You know nothing, you do not know any French!’ or something similar. In your time, that is possible, democracy allows you to say such things. But not for us, that was not done!”*

Although his use of language does not always allow a clear interpretation, a number of remarks between the meanderings of the conversation make it clear that the interaction in class proceeded very strictly and authoritatively: *“Or, the teacher would feel that there were children who were disturbing him and he would say that they had to leave, as a punishment. You, you did not talk, but you knew who was talking. But you would still accept it. So you were punished, even though you had not done anything. (It was like that at school?) Yes, yes, complete submission. And when you wanted to put things in order, it was with a lot of courtesy.”* The relationship between pupils and Sisters (and by extension all missionaries) was one of military discipline, according to Boale. I called the Sisters at one point *“patronnes de l’école”*, which he obviously found very funny. He asked me if I had ever been in the army. He compared the situation in the class with that of the army. Strangely enough he changed straight over to the moniteurs, although the question was about the Sisters. The authority obviously passed over from the one to the other in particular circumstances.

Authority was everywhere, and penetrated all parts of the lives of the pupils. Everything was being observed. The girls who were at school in Kinshasa referred repeatedly to interference by the Sisters in their lives. Mama Bongondo had had to endure a great deal of criticism: *“And then you know that the religious workers and the priests were very strict people. They did not allow their affairs to be taken jokingly. But I also liked to put on a lot of powder. Also liked being elegant. When we went to Mass, I took Mama’s jewellery, the largest, I wore them in my ears.*

Ma'am France, Ma'am Romane, Ma'am Gertrie Kanda, all those ma'ams... Eh! They did not joke. Because they were members of a religious order, they also wanted you to be like them: 'You cannot enter the Sanctuary! If you want to enter, you must wash your face as it should be, well, well, well. Remove all the Joli Soir you used to powder yourself! Remove all the gold you have put around your neck, put it in your pocket and then you may 'enter the Sanctuary!'"[xiii]

This same pupil was repeatedly confronted by the Sisters with the fact that she was relatively well off (she was an only child and got many material advantages from her mother). She must for example explain why she came to school by bicycle (unmistakably an expression of luxury). She also remembered how one of the local missionaries made the claim one day that certain pupils were intelligent because they took part in fetishism. Clearly the Father was looking at her, for he asked her - accusingly - for an explanation: *"I was there, not daring to say a single word. I have never in my life been to a fetishist! And well! You understand how much we were misused! During our time, if you (always) dressed well, if you were a person who claimed her rights, you really had a lot of problems."*

This same Mama Bongondo remembered how she had originally ended up in education. The Sisters had decided that for her: *"We were returning from Mass as we were entering into the enclosure of Saint Petre, our Mother Superior held me back. She said to me: 'Joséphine, from today, you will teach.' I said: 'Eh! Mother superior! What are you telling me?' 'I am telling you, from today, you will be a teacher.' I had to teach in the third year primary. It was subject matter I had never seen. I did not know how to do it but I went anyway."* Intervention in the business of the pupils, both in school and outside, have obviously remained in the memory.

This contrasts with the experiences of their male colleagues in the Equatorial province, who referred much less to that sort of interference. That may naturally also relate to the fact that they went to school in a different sort of environment, an environment which was, if anything, much more controlled by the missionaries. The girls in Kinshasa were confronted daily with two different worlds to live in whenever they went from home to school and back. For the boys 'in the provinces' it was quite different. They were at boarding school and the organisation of their days was ruled by the missionaries. The grip of the missionaries on their daily life could certainly not be less comprehensive than in the city. Still, there was certain interference that the former pupils remembered

noticeably well and about which they still got excited. Both Indenge and Boimbo related that with the MSC at the primary school they were not allowed to wear footwear; long trousers were also forbidden: *"We wore our trousers during the holidays. We were only allowed to do so then."* When asked why these rules were imposed Boimbo said that it had something to do with relations with the opposite sex: *"They said, if you had shoes, slippers, if you wore trousers, you would go and seduce the girls."*

3.2.2. Punishments

I asked each one of the three whether the teachers and/or the missionaries were strict and to what extent punishment was imposed. All three went into detail about the grounds for the punishments that were imposed. Boale mentioned physical punishment but said that it was rare. Indenge remembered that some missionaries, and also teachers, possibly on their own initiative and possibly not, would hit the pupils with a hand or a stick. Boimbo reported *peines corporelles* very briefly. According to him a few missionaries, directors or *capitas* could impose corporal punishment or physical work as a punishment, the teachers had to keep to lighter forms of punishment. None of the interviewees seemed to find this subject interesting, they did not seem to have been personally confronted with it themselves. Boale remarked that this sort of punishment was normal and he asked me "if I had never had to kneel down in the class?"

But they were more vague about the strictness of the missionaries and the teachers. Jean Boimbo remembered strict interventions but these were certainly not common: *"There were only some missionaries who were ... Others kept a little more distance. Like Father Albert, he was not in contact with us, Father Jacques, he was the priest at the mission, he was ... no. Like Father Eugène, he was mean! Sometimes, you would say good day he would lash out. You are a man of God and when people say good day to you, you lash out. That is not a man of God! And when he had trees heavy with fruit, when they fell and we went to gather them from the ground, we were expelled from the school. It was better to let them rot! (...) The moniteurs, that depended, there were some very strict ones, there were also less strict ones, eh. There were mean ones and kind ones."*

3.2.3. Resistance

In the literature on this subject there exists quite a considerable discussion in terms of resistance (whether symbolic or not) by the colonised against the colonisers. It is natural that some forms of resistance were provoked, after all the

missionaries exercised strong control over their pupils and they decided what would happen and with whom. Finding expressions of resistance in the testimonies of those involved is another matter. Jean Boimbo referred to it expressly when he talked about the secret organisation of French lessons by the moniteurs: *"We wanted to talk French. We agreed with the masters and were against the priests. Because they did not want to teach us French. We were impatient. We even gave the masters the books. In order to learn conversations. 'Bonjour monsieur', 'Où vas-tu?', 'Où est-tu?'. They did that on condition of payment, a phraseology, some kind of dialogue with a gentleman. 'Où vas-tu?', 'Comment allez-vous?', 'Tu es malade?'. So, we would have our book and would recite it with a friend."*

From the fact that the missionaries imposed punishment, one can automatically deduce that disobedience occurred among the ranks of the pupils. Indenge spoke about the boarding school: *"At 8 p.m. the bell for bed. And then the head moniteur would call assembly in case somebody was missing - and occasionally somebody was missing! - The eldest boys slipped out for two reasons, i.e. one of two reasons. Either they had gone night fishing. But nobody would tell them that. Or the head moniteur would perhaps believe they had gone to the city, to look for women. Because we were 12, 13 years old, it was not our problem. But there were some boys there who were 18. And then they had to be watched! An absence like that would naturally mean suspension. Not having spent the night inside."*

Of course, not everything punished can be qualified as conscious resistance. Such a thing depends naturally on very concrete circumstances and the individual disposition of people. That is also clear from the answers that the interviewees gave when they were asked about it. To the question of whether there was a good understanding between the teachers and pupils Boimbo's convinced answer was: *"Yes. We plotted. There was an alliance. We got on together very well!"* After this he confirmed the hypothesis that the picture of the always obedient pupil was not correct but that a great deal happened that was not supposed to, mainly behind the backs of the missionaries.

By her own admission, Mama Julienne Aboli was also a good, though difficult, pupil. She loved to use make-up, something that the Sisters forbade at school. She liked to wear a *pagne* instead of the school uniform. That was not allowed at school but on their way to school the girls did this anyway; it was probably a sort of rebellious deed against "the authorities". That was a risky undertaking, for if

they were caught they got into difficulties on two fronts: at school for wearing the clothes and at home because it was confiscated. But they also had to take responsibility for other business: *“One of my fellow students was called H  l  ne Adokozima and she gave birth. Nevertheless, she was a clever girl. And there she gave birth! And I was a bad girl! Well, when she gave birth, we went to visit her. During Mass, I was called: ‘Why did you go to visit Adokozima? Why?’ I was given punishment. I was suspended from school: ‘You went to visit a person who gave birth in mortal sin.’ ‘The person who has sinned is not her! It is me!’” And this reply (by me) caused the suspension.*”

An answer such as this must indeed be seen as a conscious act of resistance, insofar as Aboli must have known that this answer was much too frank. This resistance really did not go very far, which is obvious from the outcome of the incident. *“Then we had a religious Sister who taught us dressmaking, her name was Reine Karl. She came to the house. She said: ‘Come! You are almost finished. Simply come and ask for pardon.’ I went there - what else could I have done? - I asked for pardon so that I could do the exams.”*[xiv] Aboli had no choice. Taking the examinations, and thus being able to progress in the school system and keep the chance of a diploma and a future, played a strong part. She had to ask forgiveness for a deed that she supported. It is difficult not to see this as a technique to break possible resistance. Both in the interviews with missionaries and correspondence in the MSC archives a great many references to the expulsion of pupils as a punishment can be found. The schoolgirl’s reaction shows that the school exercised real power.

In the presence of this power factor in the lives of the pupils, different sorts of reactions were possible. Someone like Boale presented an image of himself as a well-behaved pupil. That was given in an unconscious way but this only made it clearer. When our conversation came to the point of learning French, I asked him what opinion the pupils had about it. I then asked him if they also demonstrated in favour of this to the teachers or missionaries. To this he answered, somewhat piqued, as if I had said something very stupid, and the following conversation ensued:

Boale: *But yes, but I am going to return the question: When you were under the Dutch authority, were there laws that could be contested? Congo has been colonised by the Belgians. Just as once, they should prepare food to eat for the prisoners. Can the prisoners claim the right of eating sufficiently? Just like*

Europeans do? No! It's to show you that the curriculum had to be followed to the letter. It never disappeared. We said to each other: What will we do with Mongo (Lomongo, JB), but anyway.

JB: But you thought about it anyway?

Boale: The thought was not expressed!

JB: But there was anyway...

Boale: Yes! Just like you think about your future now and later. We thought about that. It exists inside all of us.

JB: But you didn't talk about it?

Boale: No no! If you talk about it, you go to prison or you get expelled. Sister Josepha or Father Superior, it's not they who made the curriculum! The curriculum was made here!

Boale had completely accepted the omnipresent authority and control and considered it to be a normal fact of his life. That actually was true for each of the three gentlemen I interviewed: they hadn't found the authority so difficult or in any case did not let that be seen.

Specific memories of school and school times

4.1. School lessons

In general it was easier to get the interviewees to talk about the circumstances under which they went to school, and the context in which that happened, than about what happened in the classroom. This observation is also true for the people who were interviewed in Kinshasa, although that can partly be explained by the more brief and general character of the conversations. In fact, I was already conscious of the difficulty of getting detailed descriptions of classroom behaviour before the interviews began. Simply thinking about some possible questions and applying them to my own time at school was sufficient to realise this.

Boale talked about the curriculum and considered what was presented to him at school as similar to the Belgian curriculum. He thought the two ran in parallel, although that was in fact impossible. The fact that he had to learn much about Belgium convinced him that this was really the case: *"The curriculum implemented at that time was completely the same as in Belgium. It only differed in the language because of the geography ... we studied the geography of Belgium. When I was at primary school in Bokote, I already knew the 9 provinces of Belgium! And the Schelde and the Meuse and things like that!"* He was at

primary school from the end of the Second World War, so the changes that followed from the reforms of 1948 can hardly have affected him.

Not many memories surfaced about the subject matter to be learnt. After some questions about the *causeries* Boale did remember that fables were told: *“For example La Fontaine (sic) and also Victor Hugo.”* When I referred, in my conversation with Indenge, to the remark frequently made that the history lessons were mainly about Belgian history, he originally answered that there had in fact been a start with Congolese history. I asked him what the content of that was and he referred to the division of the colony into territories, the evolution of the administrative divisions, the travels of Stanley and Livingstone, the exploration travels of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century and the struggle against the slave trade. Indeed, nothing was said at all about ‘pre-colonial’ history. He also insisted on mentioning lessons in physical education, for he remembered those very well: *“There was athletics. There was no swimming because we did not have a swimming pool and there was football, which in my opinion was as much a part of physical education as leisure (...) There was consequently athletics that consisted of long jump, high jump and then, how do you say, sprinting, what else? There was no gymnastics on the horse and all that, no. There was also wrestling.”*

Besides this, I mainly tried to reconstruct the techniques the teachers used when teaching. Repetition also came to the fore as a leading principle in the interviews. The master began a lesson with the repetition of the material from the previous lesson. He tried to find out if everything had been understood by questioning a few pupils. This could not take too long, for often a lesson was only half an hour: *“And if the pupils truly hadn’t understood, we mixed yesterday’s lesson with today’s.”* According to Jean Indenge that was also one of the most important elements. *“When teaching, because teaching really was better than that of today... we could not proceed to the next lesson without repeating what had already been seen.”* In addition he emphasised that repetition during the lesson was in fact a necessary element for the pupils: *“We did not have any parents to stand behind (us, JB) we always repeated, it was not possible to progress without having understood what had been done. And naturally there were some slowcoaches, who either had limited intellectual capacity due to their age or had been born like that but they did not understand or they understood late!”*

Indenge was also convinced that this was a good method. It was what the pupils needed at that time. *“It was not possible to go too fast like that. It was something*

entirely new that had to be put into the head of a person, so it had to be exact and certain so that he had sufficient comprehension, so that there was more or less complete assimilation." Indenge did not seem to want to say that the requirement for repetition was a logical consequence of the lower intelligence of the Congolese, in comparison with others. He even compared it with how it is done now in schools and drew the conclusion from this that much repetition was certainly better, although he implicitly conceded that the subject matter to be learned was not very broad. But that was exactly an additional reason to have a better grasp of the little that they got: *"What we notice today is that we are always running behind. (...) And the number of courses, just see what there is today, there is a plethora, there are a lot of subjects the young people learn today! So they have to run after time. But there, there was something very precise, we taught such and such a thing for the future. So it was essential to master the little we learnt absolutely, there was nothing else for it."*

4.2. Religiosity

Something that seemed obvious at that time and consequently was probably perceived in a rather unconscious way, is the religious character of the life as set up in the school and, by extension, at the mission. It is, again, not very explicitly present in the stories that the people tell about it afterwards but it *is* there. It often creeps into particular expressions they use or the way in which they refer to particular things. It is also dependent on the career they have had since. Mama Bongondo recounted the story of the beginning of her professional career as a teacher. After she had mentioned the - for her totally unexpected - decision by the Sisters to put her in front of the class, she said the following: *"I was given a timetable. That was not too complicated for us with the Catholics, we started school with the catechism, you see? As I was also taught the Catechism."* At another point she just wanted to make clear to the interviewer where she had got to in the chronology of her story and to make it clear that she was talking about the 1950s: *"Then we have passed 1950... The Holy Year was 1950"*.

In fact, I hardly talked about religious aspects with Stéphane Boale. Still, it was very obvious from different details that he was very religious. On my first visit to him, he suddenly suggested praying before we started the interview. Later he repeated the following message a few times: *"In relation to the teachings of Jesus Christ, we are deaf and dumb. We had to be talked to through signs."* At a certain moment we were talking about the possibilities of relaxation at the boarding

school. Because he was talking about *the cinema*, I asked him if anything was organised by the missionaries to keep the boys busy after school, too: *"No, at the primary school level, no, cinema was rather at the teacher training college level. But if not distractions, there were prayers, that was checked; there were the scouts."* Boale was the only one who said anything about the youth movement; the other two had not been involved in it or did not mention it. In contrast he told me that he had been in the scouts movement and in the "crusades". He was not in fact able to describe what the crusaders did exactly. *"It formed character"*. And at the scouts civic values and Christian charity were learned.

Indenge and Boimbo, whom in the meantime had clearly distanced themselves from their religious upbringing, still recounted stories about the obligatory attendance of mass. At five or six o'clock in the morning the boys had to go to mass before they had anything to eat. Even the ones who lived in the neighbourhood and could sleep in at home had to get up at that early hour for assembly and to go to mass. Their presence was checked by the *moniteurs*, who were also obliged to take part in the church service: *"If you were not there, you were asked why you had not come and if there was no reason, you were punished."* They also talked about religion lessons, catechetics, religious history. It was again very clear from these stories how important the religious aspect was in the curriculum but they did not seem to be very concerned about it. For each of them religious education was pretty much a practical concern. Neither of them had been baptised as a Catholic, considering that they had spent their early youth in a Protestant environment. They therefore had to know their bible story perfectly (*"the Gospels"*), to be baptised: *"And well, you must reply, knowing religion perfectly, the gospels, each gospel that was given, we repeated."*

Indenge came back to this later in the conversation. I asked him what he thought at that time about the important place that religion played in the curriculum. According to him the boys were not concerned about it: *"We did not think about it. We followed and succeeded. If you did not succeed you would not be baptised. If you were not baptised, you were not a son of God!"* I remarked that he therefore, perhaps unconsciously, must have had a certain desire to be a part of 'God's World'. He did not agree with that. Boys of 12, 13 years old did not think about that, he replied. Baptism much more signified entry to further studies: *"We went to school where we left with a certificate that allowed you a kind of ascendancy... You wanted to finish because in that way you would reach a certain*

class. That is all! So, in order to succeed, everything you were given, you were obliged to learn whether you wanted to or not and to pass the exam." That would open doors in the world and allow the pupils to be like others. A second element also surfaced: the appreciation of the people at home, in their original environment, where quite often there was nobody who had a certificate or diploma. It was therefore just as much a symbol of social prestige.

4.3. French

French was the 'subject' most talked about by everyone. Boale was the most cautious in his comments. He suspected that back then the pupils were already reflecting on what they were going to do later with the Lomongo they had to learn at the MSC school. It was difficult to get him to say that because he did not seem to understand properly what I was getting at. Afterwards, everyone found it natural that they had not had enough French at school, he said. He assumed that the pupils also thought that, but he swore to me that nobody could ever talk about it. Clearly, the fear of punishment was too great for that.

Indenge immediately described the special significance that French had for the children at that time: *"After the second year, we knew the grammar of our native language perfectly, we knew religious history, we had been baptised. In the third year we already felt slightly different because that was when the French lessons started. There were French lessons from the beginning of the third year."* The content of most subjects was repeated, at least in part, each year, but the difference was, Indenge said, that as from the third year school books in French were used instead of the books in the mother tongue. He also explained the way in which French was taught: *"Eh, there was that, explanations that such and such meant that. That is what you would call French-Lomongo. The introduction, and after that, we only spoke in French. And from time to time, when we had a reading book, on such and such a lesson, we would read and sometimes there were things that were unpronounceable for their level. Well that, they were things they explained to us, pronunciation and what it meant. We were asked the question. Because to some extent we dropped our mother tongue and entered into French but we had to know what these words meant in our own language! Consequently, it was not possible simply to read 'Je suis, j'ai été, etc. etc.' to the end, like that, no! We were asked for explanations. We had to explain in Lomongo!"* It is clear from this that they were trying to reach a form of direct method, without really abandoning Lomongo as the language of education.

It has already been shown that Boimbo was yet more interested in French as a medium for social promotion. He raised the question of the 'forbidden' French lessons himself and immediately made the connection with the intention of the MSC to educate the children as much as possible in Lomongo and to put the study of French off as long as possible. I asked him explicitly again if he had thought the same about it at that time. He was formal: *"We wanted to speak French. We agreed with the masters and were against the priests. Because they did not want us to learn French."* Only afterwards, looking at the matter from a distance, he adopted these insights. It is not at all certain that the Fathers had shared their arguments for their choice of Lomongo with the pupils at that time, but in any event Boimbo had only recognised the value of it afterwards: *"But when you think about it, in the long term, it was not bad. But they should have combined the two. When you combine the two you would learn better than those who only learn French. Because they do not know their own language. And we can see the effects of that here, the Congolese born here, they do not have a culture. They are different. They do not know the language, our proverbs, our mechanisms. The respect of the old. They do not have any African and Congolese culture."*

The pupils considered French an important motor for social promotion. That was also apparent from the story of Mama Bongondo. It was just at the time that the first words of French were taught to them that she began to dream of a real job. With her, just as with Boimbo, the attitude of the missionaries on that subject was very important in the judgement they pronounced on them. Bongondo declared in her interview that the girls from her school were only satisfied with the education given by the Sisters when they began to learn French. In one of the other interviews the interviewee considered the question of whether the education that he had received at the primary school should be considered inferior. He preferred to describe it as an education that was adapted to the needs of the coloniser and mentioned as a first criterion: 'knowing good French'. In comparisons between pupils, language returned as the criterion: *"x writes French better than y, although he only did two years beyond primary school"*. Finally it surfaced in the evaluation of girls' education: *"Our mothers and even our spouses had not learned to hold a conversation in French. They were made to stay in the kitchen."*[xv] French was a world language, Lomongo was much more for the back rooms of civilisation.

The long-term effects: what has been retained?

Edward Berman already wrote in the 1970s about African reactions to the missionaries.[xvi] He collected a number of stories spread over the whole continent of Africa. Most testimonies in his book came from English-speaking colonies but there was also one from the Congo. This told the story of an Angolese-Congolese man who went to a school in the south of the Congo, run by the Franciscans. He concluded his story with a general evaluation about the time with the missionaries: *“In retrospect I feel that the missionaries have done a great deal for me; without them I certainly would not be where I am today. They taught me self-discipline; their insistence on defining and reaching stated goals has been very helpful. The philosophy behind missionary education, at least in my case, was to make me a Roman Catholic priest so that one day I could ‘save’ Angolans for the Church. But it was never clear what I should save them for, or from.”* It is obvious that the narrator had profited from his time at school and the knowledge he had acquired and had later been able to use. Furthermore, afterwards he declared explicitly that this had been a conscious choice: *“The missionaries had certain aims and goals for me: they wanted me to be a good Catholic, to go to church everyday and to live their version of a Christian life. (...) While they used me for their purposes, I used the missionaries for my purposes. I think this is a fairly common pattern.”*

The narrator then makes it apparent that he was actually never planning to become a priest and had originally wanted to follow a completely different course of education. He was then forced by circumstances to follow secondary education with the priests at the seminary because his family wanted him to do so: *“My uncle had the support of my father, who felt that several years at the seminary would provide a very strong background for other, non-priestly endeavours. After all, he and his brother studied at a minor seminary for several years, with no intention of becoming priests. For them Catholic education at the secondary level was the best available.”* This claim makes one suspect that there was a sort of distance between the external behaviour and the internal aims of the youths attending school and that this was true even from the previous generation. It sounds as if they conformed outwardly but rebelled internally. That is very clearly apparent in the huge contradiction between two statements in the last paragraph of this story. On the one hand the person concerned states that the missionaries had done a great deal for him: *“Without them I certainly would not be where I am today.”* On the other, he concluded: *“During my schooldays there was, and remains today, a strong resentment towards the missionaries.”*

In this testimony two important characteristics of the attitude of the colonised towards the colonisers come to the fore. Firstly: wrath and anger. In spite of the fact that the missionaries had provided an upbringing by which they had made particular skills their own and through these had been able to achieve some things in their lives, the Congolese were certainly not unqualifiedly positive towards their schoolmasters. Secondly, and following from this: the *quid pro quo*, or to put it another way, the fact that the colonised themselves also made strategic use of the coloniser and not just the opposite. These two elements also came to the fore in the conversations that I had myself.

5.1. "Resentment": the paper by minister "Renquin"

Jean Indenge was very well prepared for the interview. After our first conversation, which lasted about three hours, we made another appointment because he was very interested and because I wanted to look again at a number of subjects with him. During this meeting, which took place in his café, he brought "the document" up in conversation at a certain point. Indenge's friends, who had come to sit with us, obviously knew what it was about. "The document" turned out to be a speech, which according to Indenge had been given by the first Belgian minister of the colonies, Renkin.[xvii] The text contained so-called guidelines from the minister to the first missionaries who came to the Congo. In extremely explicit language it was made clear to them how they must behave towards the Congolese. In summary it seems from this text that the missionaries had to function as an auxiliary of the colonial administration and in this capacity to teach the Congolese to be docile, to turn their attention away from the economic exploitation of the land and try to enrol them as a workforce. The text was, in short, a direct insult to the Congolese and was perceived as such by Indenge and his friends.

As the discussion of this text threatened to steer our conversation in the wrong direction, I did not go any further into it at that point. It was only much later, when I studied the text in detail, that it became clear to me that the text was completely unsound. The name of the minister was not only misspelled ("Renquin"), the source that was noted there referred to a Congolese newspaper, *L'Avenir Colonial Belge*, of October 1920. At that time Renkin had not been minister of the colonies for almost two years. There is no doubt that the text is a historical forgery. Anyway, it is possible to find different versions of this text and these are discussed on Congolese websites and forums on the internet. Each of

these texts seems to contain more flagrant historical faults than the last: on one of the websites I found Renkin was introduced as governor of Kinshasa in 1883. If that had been true, the subsequent prime minister would have begun his career very young: he was then only 21 years old.[xviii] However, all versions naturally emphasise the injustice of the colonial order: *“The following is an extract from his welcome speech, also serving as directives and regulations to be followed in the colony. The Belgian minister of the colonies talked to the missionaries who had just arrived in the Congo in order to evangelise it. You can find lies, cynicism, mixed with the policy of exploitation and racism in the head of the Belgians in relation to the Congolese citizens, our grandparents. It is that, the troubled heritage of the Congolese on the part of the Belgian colonists (sic). Alas! We should read and realise from where we come and assume an attitude that defies this past and we should inform our children: the best way to prepare for the future of our people, our race and our culture. (Franklin Katunda)”*[xix]

The way in which Indenge laid the document in front of me fitted in well with the position he had previously assumed. He was very interested, had thought out what he wanted to say well and had clearly also prepared himself in writing. He was happy that someone was coming to listen to his story. During the interview I noticed that on different subjects he formulated very negative criticism of the missionaries. The living conditions, in terms of food and lodging, the heavy work the boys had to carry out and the sometimes unreasonable strictness of the missionaries (the fact that they were not even allowed to pick up fruit that had fallen from the Fathers’ trees, in particular) were still painful memories for him. He still got angry about these subjects. When I asked him at the end of the first conversation (and thus before he put the famous document in front of me) what had stayed with him the most, looking back on the period, he gave me a rather neutral answer: *“The aim of the education was to help the colonial authorities to administer this large, extensive territory that is the Congo.”* As an answer, it sounded rather strange; it was somewhat general and sounded much less personal than I had expected. However, he stuck by his comment and repeated again: *“The aim of education was generally to relieve the colonial authorities of some work in all areas.”* Teachers first, just because there was a general need for education and subsequently *auxiliaires* for office work, *assistants* for agriculture and for doctors and so forth.

Although the comment was put in rather neutral terms, it could indeed be

interpreted as critical. On the question of the degree to which he had been conscious of it at that time, he conceded that he had found this situation normal. I then asked him when he had begun to take a critical position towards the education he had enjoyed. That was much later, he said. In his answer he went on immediately to the fact that the education had been 'too slow'. By this he meant that the evolution to a fully-fledged educational system had progressed much too slowly: *"When did we notice that we were late, that we should go faster? That was when we started to be put together with the Europeans and to demand the same advantages. Then we were told 'Ah, but you haven't seen that, and that...'. So, we thought to ourselves: 'But whose fault is that?' so that is why I say that the Catholics were the cause of the slowness and that the liberals had to come to improve everything."* During the interview, Indenge consequently did not so much speak out critically about the fact that the pupils were used in the colonial system but more about the attitude of the colonisers, particularly the Catholics, who had curbed the development of education too much. Indirectly there is a criticism of the coloniser 'keeping down' the population but that had to be inferred, it was not explicitly present on the surface.

Jean Boimbo was much more explicit. Mention was already made of the importance that he attached to learning French and the consequences or the judgements he associated with that. Boimbo later said that the missionaries were partially right in their preference for the local languages. The fact that he and his contemporaries had seen that differently at the time was because of their haste to make progress. Nevertheless, the only time he became at all excited during the interview was when he was talking about the missionaries and their manoeuvres to slow down the development of the Congolese. What he said then was especially revealing: *"They were the colonisers! They participated in the colonisation! All the administrators, before coming to the Congo, went to the colonial school in Antwerp. There they were taught how to live with the blacks. And I do not know whether Indenge gave you a photocopy of the speeches there. And the missionaries they were also in on it! They were security agents! And they kept us back, they kept us back..."* Boimbo therefore makes an explicit connection between the curbing attitude of the missionaries and the allegations in the document from Indenge.

The tenor of this document is, of course, very explicit. It contains a summing up of all that could be imputed to the colonial system and its collaborators, written in a

very critical and even reproachful tone. According to the text there could be no doubt that the missions and the administration had made very definite agreements about the strategy they would use against the colonised people. The fact that both Indenge and Boimbo referred to this text shows that they still cherish the fundamental distrust towards the role the missionaries played in the Belgian Congo. The fact that this text also circulates on the Internet makes one also suspect that it is a relatively well-known text. What significance must be ascribed to this, apart from the more than enormous question marks about the authenticity of this document as a source of historical research? It is certain that some Congolese (including the interviewees) agree eagerly with the interpretation of colonisation that is made in it. According to this interpretation evangelisation was not the most important task of the missionaries: *“Your role essentially consists of facilitating the duties of the administrators and the industrialists”*, the text states literally. The Good News was mainly supposed to serve to prevent the Congolese from acquiring material wealth. It was therefore not so much about what the missionaries taught or the principles they proclaimed, but about their complicity with the administration. This was experienced negatively in any case, as an oppressor. Ceuppens suggested in her book about colonisation in the memory of the Congolese that this complicity recurs regularly in the imagery and often takes the form of a conspiracy theory. She added: *“On the other hand some Congolese do in fact retain good memories of specific colonial Belgians, especially missionaries.”*[xx] That also came out in the three conversations that I had, although in a different manner.

5.2. “Strategic” pupils?

Indenge had very clear memories of Father Pattheeuws, who arrived at the mission post in the 1950s.[xxi] According to Indenge the Father was considered *“rather unruly”* but on closer acquaintance seemed to be a very good man. The fact that he did his best to provide the boys with decent food was particularly appreciated by Indenge: *“Well, I still remember that I was in the group responsible for preparing the food. And that like usual we were given the pig’s skin. He arrived, he asked “what is that?” we explained to him that it was the food that we were given to eat. He got angry and threw it, he went to look for anything with the Sisters, real meat and from that day on we ate real meat!”* Besides, the new Father made sure the boys got soap to wash themselves, which was novel at that time. The fact that he could get shockingly angry or kick the boys did not outweigh the positive impression that Indenge had of him.

Jean Boimbo was also more outspoken on strategic thinking. Probably the difference between the two men has a lot to do with temperament or character traits. From the stories that Boimbo had told me about former times I got the idea that he already knew well what he wanted. He conspired with the *moniteurs*, behind the missionaries' backs. He was also one of those who made a quick career after independence. That he was a person who knew how to deal with problems was obvious from his achievements at school. He made it, as Indenge also did, to *capita (prefect)*. But in contrast to Indenge he seemed to attach much more importance to it and above all remembered the advantages that the position had brought him. As head of a team of raffia workers he had a rather luxurious position, for he was exempt from the heavy work that the other boys had to do. Later, too, in the teacher training college, he reached the level of *serveur* of the Brothers, which undoubtedly again allowed him to live in relatively comfortable circumstances.

Boimbo made very negative comments about the MSC and he did that very explicitly and spontaneously: *"I must tell you something about the MSC: The Sacred Hearts were not made for teaching. And then, the majority of the priests sent to us were not interested in education. And there were a lot of Flemings, who did not speak French well."* Taking this position was very clearly directed against the MSC, for he even made a comparison with other congregations: the Brothers of the Christian Schools were, like the Jesuits, certainly intelligent and suited to education. He did mention one MSC member to whom he attributed positive characteristics. Father Cuypers was also one of the Fathers of the new generation:[xxii] *"There was a new parish priest (sic), who had been to the university and he did not agree with the policies of the old priests because we were not taught French. He came and gave French lessons himself in the fourth and fifth years. The moniteurs were seated and he gave the lesson. Grammatical analysis, logical analysis, French expressions, yes, yes."*

Both Indenge and Boimbo certainly referred once to a missionary or a Sister of whom they had good memories. In both of those cases that seemed to have a lot, if not all, to do with material advantages. The suggestion of the strategic 'use' of the coloniser by the colonised, here placed in the context of education and upbringing, must really be taken with a pinch of salt for another reason. It looks strongly like an interpretation that those concerned gave to their own life history in retrospect. At least we get this impression if we go by the testimonies that I

collected. It does not look as if there were any conscious tactics or strategies put into effect by the pupils. Certainly, Indenge often let it be known during the conversation that he had only later become conscious of many mechanisms and processes which were going on at school. Boimbo, in contrast, made it appear that he had the reins in his hands from the start. He not only created that image by the way in which he told his tale, to my explicit question about whether he was already conscious of the importance of his actions, he answered without blinking: *"For my part I was always a very ambitious person."* He also stated that it was thanks to his ambition that he was able to go to teacher training college. Still, it remains difficult to evaluate how consciously someone acted at the time or whether, on the other hand, he had rationalised it *post hoc* and cast it into his story.

5.3. History according to Boale

My third 'crown witness' seemed to approach it all in a different way. He seemed, in contrast to the two others, not to be concerned with a critical analysis of the colonial occurrences in general or colonial education in particular. I referred earlier to the problems that we had, or that I had, while talking to each other. Particularly typical was his reaction when I asked specific questions about occurrences or facts that he told me. He repeatedly reacted very defensively or with rhetorical questions, in the sense of "would you have done it differently?" For example, when I asked him whether he had found it normal as a pupil that he had to learn certain things: *"Well yes, for example, would you contradict your parents, when they discussed the food they were going to prepare? Well no, you would accept it! Exactly! And we, we were colonised by those people and at that time no black would go and say that the Congolese should not study Belgian geography."* Or he tried to make the things that he told me plausible, by highlighting the difference between Congolese and Belgian circumstances: *"You see, it is different from here. Here people live very close together and they are a lot younger when they start education."* That in doing this he often unconsciously did make a point is not the question here. From these and other ways of reacting I could deduce that he had internalised his upbringing very strongly and did not question it to this day. He often gave the impression that he preferred the course of affairs then to the present one.

On another occasion we got into a discussion about the way in which he told me about certain occurrences. I corrected him a number of times, from the point of

view that I must be able to make a distinction between what he himself had experienced and what he had 'heard said'. At these times it was clear that we started from different views of what was 'true'. The verifiability of facts and data was not at all as important to him as it was to me. At a certain moment I made a summary of facts that he had told me about his father at our first meeting. At this he told me that these were really about occurrences that he had learnt by being told and probably through his own reading, too. I understood that they did not necessarily have anything to do with his father. I reacted with irritation and told him that he had therefore really told me wrong things. To which he answered: *"Well ok, that is why I tell you: we need to be together to correct it, History is something one tells you."* He thought it was quite normal to gather historical knowledge out of stories that he had heard and saw no problems in the knowledge being modified as a function of what other people added or changed.

At my second visit to Boale he passed me a paper on which he had written a text with the title *"Création des écoles du village"*. He was probably wrongly convinced that I wanted general information from him about education in the area. I had nevertheless made it clear why I had come and had specified that it was about his personal testimony, about what he had himself experienced. In the story that he had written down there was not a word about conspiracies against the Congolese. The classical role was attributed to the missionaries in his text: *"They came to evangelise the Belgian Congo in order to allow all the Congolese men and women to be baptised according to their mission entrusted by His Majesty King Leopold II."* The schools were set up for evangelisation because writing was necessary to spread the word of God. After a time, the catechists had convinced their superiors of the necessity of expanding the schools further. The superiors had then informed the administration and this had then begun to award subsidies. That was the start of education that was given following a set curriculum, in contrast to the first rural schools of the catechists.

Boale's text is only two pages long and is a very summary and concise description of the occurrences. In any case the text helped me to better situate his person. What he writes fits in perfectly with the way of writing history at the time of colonisation and the text also contains marked reminders of the style of old school books. It reinforces my interpretation of Boale's attitude towards his school history. He did not feel the need to treat it critically. During my conversations with him that seemed to be very difficult. A good example of this is the moment,

during our third conversation, when we talked about the food at the boarding school. Boale's wife was in the room with us at that point and followed the conversation from a distance. I had heard from Jean Indenge that the pupils got too little to eat and wanted to check what he thought of that. He answered that enough food was given in the boarding school but that the pupils could certainly go out to buy food for themselves if they wanted to. Considering the earlier misunderstandings in our conversation and remembering the remarks of Indenge, I did not find that a satisfactory answer. I remarked laughing that Indenge probably had a larger appetite than Boale. At that moment a discussion started between Boale and his wife, of which I only understood fragments. She seemed not to agree with him. When I again asked if the boarders in general got enough to eat, he said to me: "*Eh, if there was no money, how could we make a substantial meal?*"

From reactions such as this I deduced that he showed an inclination to approach the occurrences of the past uncritically, not to call them into question or to see them in rosier colours than they really were. As was stated in the introduction to this chapter, distortions can arise in the reminiscences that someone tells about their past on many grounds. Still, I got the impression that Boale had just had good experiences with school and the missionaries, that he had simply internalised many things and was therefore simply a good product of his upbringing: obedient and with a great deal of admiration and understanding for the missionaries and other masters.

Conclusion

From the stories told by the eyewitnesses about the past it is primarily obvious that it is not only the past for them but also that it has stayed with them throughout their lives. That can be seen above all in the way they talk about it. It would be difficult, and in this case not very sensible, to draw general conclusions on the basis of these interviews about the way in which the colonial school brought up the people involved. It is even difficult to work out how much the education they enjoyed influenced them in later life, in a positive or negative sense. It seems evident that it did play a role but even between these three people great differences can be seen in the way that this has happened. We cannot even state that all three have come to Belgium thanks to their education. What they do have in common is the awareness that the school could bring them something. It is clear that each dealt with it in their way. One was an obedient pupil, one was a

dedicated disciple, and the third a cunning strategist.

That certainly does not prevent these conversations providing useful information in the context of this research. It shows after all that, quite apart from all the problems as experienced and stated by the *évolués* in the 1950s, the school represented an element of great value in the lives of the young Congolese. They did not always appreciate why but Western education exercised a great power of attraction on them. They were drawn, as it were, into that education. As soon as they came to school they were taken up in the unique, internal logic of that education, in which performance was demanded. The school, education, presented itself as the key to the future, although that future was not always clearly perceived.

Separate from all this, the testimonies from these people confirm that the school was a very structured, disciplined and disciplining machine. Again, in the memories of the Congolese, order, discipline and good manners are at the forefront as the central concepts of education. The stories also give more colour to the factual data, such as the existence of resistance, the importance of the knowledge of languages. Above all, a portrait of the opposing players, the missionaries, is shown in a way it could not and would not be done by themselves. That portrait is certainly one of remote but constantly present controllers. The former pupils also still appear to cherish mixed feelings with respect to their masters. They sometimes appear thankful for the chances missionary education gave them but at other times angry because of the feeling of restriction and suppression they retain from their interaction with the missionaries.

NOTES

[i] Jean Indenge on the time he left the village of his birth on the way to the mission school. [original quotation in French]

[ii] Jewsiewicki, B. (1993). *Naître et mourir au Zaïre. Un demi-siècle d'histoire au quotidien*. Paris: Karthala; Jewsiewicki, B. & Montal, F. (ed.) (1988). *Récits de vie et mémoires; vers une anthropologie historique du souvenir*. Paris-Québec: L'Harmattan-Safi.

[iii] Dembour, M.B. (2000). *Recalling the Belgian Congo: conversations and introspection*. London: Berghahn Books.

[iv] Fabian, J. (2003). Forgetful Remembering: A colonial life in the Congo. In *Africa*, LXXIII, 4, p. 489-505.

[v] These conversations have already been referred to but because they form the

main source of this chapter, I give the full references again. The main subject matter is the conversations I had with Jean Indenge (in Brussels, on 14 July and 14 October 2003), with Stéphane Boale (in St.Joost-ten-Noode, on 18 and 22 September and 24 October 2003) and with Jean Boimbo (in Ukkel, on 25 September 2003). Besides this I have, insofar as possible, also referred to and made use of the material collected by Filip De Boeck and Césarine Bolya, at interviews in Kinshasa, taken during September 2003.

[vi] I was brought into contact with these gentlemen through Césarine Bolya. She was also good enough to introduce me to Jean Indenge.

[vii] The “Plans” referred to were *Plans de développement*, plans for the economic and social development of the country, in the spirit of the ten-year plans of the colonial times.

[viii] The extensive quotations from the interviews that I use here are the result of transcriptions that I made myself. I reproduce the text as literally as possible, in principle, including grammatically incorrect constructions, in order to leave the atmosphere and content of the story of those concerned as intact as possible. I have tried to add a few indications to the text (punctuation, adjectives, changes to the tenses of verbs) where that was really necessary for the comprehension of the written text.

[ix] A “*l’union fait la force*” refers in this context to civil servants or the military, who wore a uniform with a hat on which the Belgian national arms were inscribed.

[x] “Autobiographie d’Ekoko Munzenga”. In Jewsiewicki, B. (1993). *Naître et mourir au Zaïre. Un demi-siècle d’histoire au quotidien*. Paris: Karthala, p. 155-184.

[xi] Interview by Césarine Bolia with Mama Joséphine Nana Bongondo, at Mama Victorine Ndjoli’s place - rue Itaga - Kinshasa - 29 September 2003. [original quotation in French]

[xii] By *solutionnaires* Boale meant teachers’ answer books that included the solutions to the questions, these were probably just textbooks.

[xiii] Originally in French: “Entrer au Salut”, translated into Dutch as “Naar het Lof gaan” or “go to mass” (“religious afternoon or evening practice”).

[xiv] Interview by Césarine Bolia with Mama Julienne Aboli, 29 September 2003, at Mama Victorine Ndjoli Elonga’s place - rue Itaga - Kinshasa.

[xv] Interview by Césarine Bolya with Bernard Kasusula Djuma Lokali, Kinshasa, 29 September 2003. Strangely enough the opposite system also occurred: in the testimony of another man, who had been to school with the Marist Brothers in the

Eastern province, it was related that French was obliged to be spoken and that it was forbidden to speak Swahili. Interview by Césarine Bolya with Donat Salehe Kimbulu, Kinshasa, 16 September 2003.

[xvi] Berman, E.H. (1975). *African reactions to missionary education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

[xvii] The complete text is in Appendix 12.

[xviii] See the biographical note in Dellicour, F. (1954). Renkin (Jules-Laurent-Jean-Louis). In *Bibliographie Belge d'Outre-Mer*. kol. 747-753.

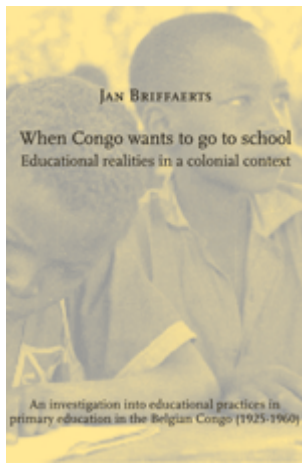
[xix] Commentary with the text of the 'speech' to be found on www.congoboston.com, a *community* website for Congolese and Africans in the United States.

[xx] Ceuppens, B. (2003). *Onze Congo? Congolezen over de kolonisatie*. Leuven: Davidsfonds.

[xxi] Karel Pattheeuws (1912-1981). Worked from 1946 in Bokuma, after that as a travelling Father in the area of Bokote. From 1951 he was responsible for the schools in Wafanya. Vereecken, J. (1992). Wij gedenken. Derde reeks biografische schetsen van MSC van de Belgische Provincie. Borgerhout: MSC. p. 53.

[xxii] Louis Cuypers (1916-1999) worked in Coquilhatville between 1946 and 1957 and was at that time baccalaureus in religion. Later, in 1961, he received the degree of Doctor of Canon Law and from 1967 he was a special lecturer in the faculty of Canon Law at the University of Leuven. De Rop, A. & Vlaminck, J. (1971). *Bibliografie van de Missionarissen van het H. Hart Belgische Provincie 1921-1971*. Borgerhout: MSC. p. 50; *MSC Jaarboek van de Belgische Provincie 2001*.

When Congo Wants To Go To School - As Justification And Conclusion



“It puzzled me that colonialism belonged to our recent past. Its legacy was bound to mark our present. I was eager to join in the current research on colonialism that was developing in anthropology. Having completed the study, I remain convinced the Congo was worthy of scholarly attention, although perhaps for different reasons. What strikes me now is that my research illuminates general human processes. I would say that its major significance lies less with either an understanding of the thoughts of Belgian former colonial officers (however these may be needed) or an implicit critique of the literature of the colonial discourse than with an acute perception of the difficulty of attaining knowledge in anthropology. In turn this should make us, as human beings, morally humble and wary of any claim whose legitimacy derives from an easy brand of political correctness. Such a conclusion is not specific of colonialism; it applies to all walks of life.”[i]

I have already tried to summarise the main points arising from the “descriptive” chapters in parts II and III in the considerations concluding these chapters. There is consequently little cause to do so again. Rather than repeating these conclusions in this section I would like to consider a number of elements that struck me while studying those realities and practices, and which seem important to me for a proper understanding of the past. It should allow me to formulate a number of considerations or questions concerning the meaning of that image and that past: what does it mean and how should we deal with it?

Colonial education: made in Belgium.

The image of the interaction between the missionaries and the pupils, the method of teaching used or which should have been used in the classroom, the material used - all this points in the same direction: the North. In the Belgian Congo a system was established that was not only loosely based on that implemented in the homeland but that was a very similar copy of it. It is true that a number of differences arose in the quantity of material taught and that a selection of that material was being made, ‘adapted’ to the local circumstances. That does not detract from the essential conclusion that in this case a western educational system was transplanted to the colony. With all its components: the framework, the buildings, the setting, the administrative body, the daily timetable, the teaching method and naturally also the discipline. The first reaction to this was

undoubtedly: “But could it have been any different?” The fact that we find it hard to imagine anything else perhaps precisely indicates the importance of this conclusion. In any event it puts matters in the right perspective. In keeping with the quotation by Fabian which I cited in the introduction: we are used to looking back at colonial history and consequently also at the history of Belgian colonisation of the Congo from the perspective of the results achieved. As a result we often forget that it did not have to be like that. Our frameworks of reference restrict us and that is not any different with regard to colonial education.

Two major conclusions follow from this with regard to this study. Firstly, the discussion of the difference between adaptationism and assimilationism must first be brought back to its true proportions: discussions about differences in styles, about the way matters had to be approached. Both movements operated within a framework that remained western in essence. The question of whether indigenism, as a local variant of adaptationism, was also truly more progressive than assimilationism must be answered rather negatively. In the beliefs of the people who gave indigenism its name and who applied it themselves (Hulstaert, Boelaert and other MSC members) it may have been “progressive”. They wanted to defend the Congolese. That belief by Hulstaert and his followers may seem logical, insofar as they compared themselves to other people or groups of colonisers who were much less interested in the welfare of the Congolese. At the same time that is precisely where the shoe doesn’t fit. Hulstaert and his followers seem to act from a genuine conviction, often a type of moral indignation. However, in many cases that moral indignation of the MSC was aimed against modernity. They were truly concerned with the welfare of the Congolese but that primarily meant that they wanted to protect them from themselves and the modern world. However, the fact that at some times their assumptions contrasted sharply with those of the authorities or other players within colonial society gave the MSC an “alternative” aura. It is perhaps better not to say “progressive” because if we associate that with “emancipatory” we must conclude that the actions of the MSC show clear indications of the opposite. The way in which they handled the pupils in practice rather gives an image of a very paternalistic attitude.

A second conclusion is that there was a very great gap between the general, theoretical and fundamental beliefs on the one hand and the practice in the field on the other. At first sight this conclusion seems to fit well with the principle of

the *grammar of schooling*, as formulated and explained by Depaepe and others. Expressed concisely, that principle claims that classroom practice is resistant to innovation to a relatively far-reaching extent. It claims that practice comprises a set of rules, habits, traditions, in which changes are imposed from above but are very hard to implement. The school practices in the Belgian Congo illustrate this very well but not necessarily because so many attempts at innovation were undertaken. This distance between theory and practice may be explained in more detail as a combination of a number of factors. Firstly, the existing (western) *grammar* had taken root to such an extent with the missionaries that it could literally be imported into an entirely different environment. The consequence thereof was that the missionaries automatically applied personal experiences in the new colonial context. That naturally also had a lot to do with the fact that the majority of missionaries also had a very limited, in some cases non-existent, theoretical *background* with regard to educational theory. The basis of colonial education was low on theory. Gustaaf Hulstaert is a telling example of this in the given context, precisely because he felt a need to improve his theoretical knowledge or at least to brush it up in the framework of the discussions (and the power struggle) he entered into with the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

The grammar of schooling also fitted well in the missionary context because it was embedded here in a strongly ideologically coloured environment. Evangelisation had to work from a strong moral mobilisation. Sending people to far-off regions, unaware exactly what was waiting for them, even if they were often driven by a desire for the unknown and adventure, could only succeed if those people were given solid support. In the documents concerning the missionary training it is clear that this support was offered to them through a strong religious experience. People who were imbued with faith were more able to cope with their mission. That this faith was given a traditional, conservative character, especially during the interbellum but also for a long time after that, was also shown clearly. Clearly this must also have influenced school life and the ideas about education. In other words innovative, modern ideas could only be given a chance in the colonial schools if they were adequately adapted to the religious, Catholic principles.

Concretely, the actual influence and moral authority of Gustaaf Hulstaert at the MSC and the aura of scientific study that he had built about around him was so overwhelming that it was hardly possible to do something innovative without him

contradicting it. And he did so to a considerable extent. Both in his position as inspector and as a researcher he had very clear opinions that regularly brought him into conflict with other players. In his wake other MSC members also regularly came to blows about the education the Congolese should receive or the methods they wanted to implement in education. The fact that some subjects were heavily argued over did not however mean that others assumed an essentially different attitude with regard to the Congolese pupils. The other congregations active in the region under the supervision of the MSC should be placed predominately along the same line. The Brothers of the Christian Schools, who also specialised in education, did not differ essentially from others in this and fitted nicely into the colonial canvas. Even the fact that they argued for further Gallicising of education changes little, even if that allowed them to make a better show with the pupils, who considered French as one of the most important instruments for social promotion.

The players

In hindsight it is naturally easy to see the “larger picture” and to put a finger on it. I have already referred to the difficulty of always finding the correct balance and nuance in the assessment of the colonial system of power on the one hand and the players in that system on the other. Naturally, this relates to a problem that arises more often in scientific historical work. With the *plea for modesty* from the introduction in the back of one’s mind, I would still like to defend the claim that this study contributed to finding that balance and nuance and consequently is also situated in a historical critical movement. This does not relate to the discovery of striking new facts or data; it relates more to shifts in interpretations. Those interpretations relate to the image of the two groups that meet each other in the framework of colonial education. I would like to try here to describe these two groups better with regard to those interpretations.

The missionaries

The contemporary image of missionaries is clearly not the same as that thirty or forty years ago. I have the impression that today the traditional image of mission heroes that was naturally carefully cultivated by the church and the missionaries themselves over many years does not hold up to the same extent. Naturally, that is only my impression, which I have not based on any scientific research in that regard (which does not exist to my knowledge). Yet I still suspect that the presence and work of the missionaries in the colonial context is still mainly

considered in so-called 'evolutionary' terms (today this is more likely called "development"). With that I mean that, to use a popular expression, it is still assumed that the missionaries went to the Congo to help people there. That aid is perhaps not always the same as "civilising" in the meaning given to it in the past. However, if that is not the case it does in any event still have the connotation of "helping people out of their misery", ensuring an "improvement" in their situation.

Naturally, that is logical because missionary activity is also always considered in those terms and because during the decolonisation period the discourse of the Catholic church in Africa and the Congo almost seamlessly switched from evangelisation to development cooperation or aid. In addition the missionaries themselves undoubtedly left for Africa with the idea that they would "bring light into darkness". In the sources researched in this study the testimonies and reactions of the missionaries in the field reflect that they were often dedicated to disciplining, training and educating young Congolese people. However, a number of convictions lay at the basis of that activity which are perhaps forgotten now or that have disappeared somewhat in the mists of time. If it is true that these missionaries carried out their work from a strong conviction, then it is surely necessary to situate and explain those convictions clearly here. Those convictions were primarily aimed at making the Africans, and more specifically young Africans, "good people" in the most Christian meaning of the word. The "mechanical" salvation of souls may have been a phenomenon for the Catholic Church that was part of the initial days of the colonisation, in essence the aims of the missions and evangelisation clearly remained geared to the expansion of the ecclesiastical sphere of influence.

Obviously the intention is not to judge and condemn the missionaries and their work *in general*. That was never my aim. That would be as pointless as the idolisation and even literal "canonisation" that was the case in the past. Firstly, the missionaries were obviously people of their time. Colonisation and even the economic exploitation of the Congolese territory, its riches and its inhabitants, was normal, acceptable or at least justified, depending on the source and the period. Secondly, the correspondence between "ordinary" missionaries clearly shows in a very different way that they were not at all heroes in practice and that the certainty or assertions of their convictions could sometimes waver. One of the MSC members I spoke to in the framework of this research told me that at some

point while out there everybody experienced a moment of uncertainty when they asked themselves “what am I doing here?”. If the impression should appear from all the quotations and descriptions cited that I want to represent the missionaries in a negative light I would formally like to deny that here.

However what has become strikingly obvious to me from this research is precisely the contradiction between the very humane inspiration, the good intentions of the people who worked in practice (the missionaries) and the exploitative and oppressive nature of the colonial regime. That is visible in a great many different areas: The contradiction between the love for and simultaneously the deeply racist human conceptions about other people; the strictness, discipline, the often traumatising working conditions that were imposed on the basis of the conviction that it was for the greater good of the children; the conviction that it was better for the Congolese to reside in the countryside to develop a future in their own region and on the basis of their own traditional roots, while simultaneously trying with all their might to pull up those roots by combating typical institutions (family, balance of power, religion). The reactions of the Congolese in relation to the missionaries probably illustrate that contradiction even more clearly.

The Congolese

Parallel to what has been said of the image of the missionaries, our image of the Congo, and of the Congolese themselves, must also be adjusted to some extent. The image that is still overwhelming and almost ineradicable in Flanders is that of a country that should have been happy with our presence and help despite everything. “They only have tribal disputes now the unifying factor has disappeared from there, now there is no longer anyone to keep it all under control” Or “Since we left they have not managed to make much of it, have they?” This image is stronger than ourselves and is absolutely not contradicted in modern conceptualisation, particularly as it is shown us in the media. However, it is very uncommon to ask why that is the case and whether colonial history has something to do with it. In response to this claim it will undoubtedly be said that the way things have gone wrong cannot be blamed on the Belgians forty years after the events. It is a remark that is also made by many intellectual Congolese today.

Without considering the complex amalgam of power factors influencing the contemporary political situation of the country and the social malaise it is experiencing, I still think that historical research into colonial education can

provide part of the explanation. A number of characteristics of colonial education have exercised an essential influence and probably still do so in some way. I would also like to refrain from any moral judgements or issues of guilt in this regard and rather try to remain with the mechanisms in force. The colonial regime had an educational component that served the general social and economic aims that the regime had set itself. However, it is certain that the education given by the missionaries willingly or unwillingly fitted into an economical logic. It contributed as a factor in the differences which arose in the Congo between town and country and as such also to the dislocation of the economy.

The MSC saw that. Their laments about the uprooted were mainly aimed at the derailment of the conservative morality they stood for and which they tried to inculcate thoroughly in the Congolese youth (those young people did not differ from the Flemish young people in Catholic schools). However, they also warned against another form of uprooting that arose as a result of the young people breaking their ties with their traditional environment and falling between two worlds as a result. Ironically enough they played an important role in that themselves. Education in itself did lead to emancipation but that emancipation was incomplete. The image of a derailing locomotive, used by Marc Depaepe in the conclusion of *In het teken van de bevoogding* was also entirely correct in that sense. The colonial educational system was the embodiment of the *contradictio in terminis* that resulted in the creation of the évolués. The concept of the évolué and the identification of the elite as a group was, separate from the legal affirmation of it, mainly linked to the values given in the education and subjects considered in the classroom.

In addition, as an essentially western system, that education was a mechanism in which young people were placed and in which they were taught to strive for a number of things which were presented as morally defensible or morally good. The seeds of meritocratic ideas were taught at school as the aim was to get somewhere. The selection mechanisms that were built in and primarily intended to set boundaries to prevent overload to the system and only allow the necessary elements to proceed clearly had perverse effects. At the same time values like modesty, obedience and docility were considered of paramount importance and literally imposed on the young people. Young Congolese children were absolutely not allowed to think they were better than they were. They remained inferior to

the whites, no matter how much the discourse also turned to a “cooperation” and the “Belgian-Congolese community”. The *évolués* also sensed that at the time, undoubtedly often rather subconsciously, but could not or did not dare to mention the problem directly. They looked for explanations but it took a rather long time before they truly dared to conclude that it was their ‘half’ or incomplete emancipation that was the problem.

However, the testimonies from people who were at the mission school during the 1950s suggest another important mechanism. The school was generally considered as an instrument to secure a place in the new society. However, that did not necessarily correspond with the inherent characteristics of mission education, in other words with its contribution with regard to content or the skills that it was expected to teach. Language was generally solely perceived by the pupils as something they had to know and master in order to succeed. In addition, the main concern seemed to be obtaining the diploma that was experienced as a kind of cheque that could be exchanged for an attractive social position, a *poste de bureau* [office job]. That direct link can be found remarkably often in the testimonies recorded. In any event the school itself formed a strong attraction, simply because young Congolese citizens had realised that it could assure them a better life. That was realised “notwithstanding” the fact that attending school and enduring a series of less enjoyable things were necessary. Undoubtedly, further and more detailed research will give a better insight into this but, in any event, it is telling that the people who proved ambitious later on and cleared themselves a path to the top also already used both legal and illegal routes required to achieve a better material or social position at school. Could it be that this defines the foundations of a social mechanism or social practice that has developed fully in the modern Congo in the form of buying diplomas? I am unable to answer this question with the affirmative because according to Pierre Kita this would be precisely one of the things that only pervaded after the influence of the Catholic Church had been short-winged by Mobutu.[\[ii\]](#)

Further research

The fact that documents still circulate today or stories are still told in which the missionaries are depicted without any nuance as the “henchmen” of the colonial regime shows that mutual understanding is still very difficult, even forty years after the events. The need for critical but nuanced studies about the missionaries themselves and their experiences and memories of the colonial period is big

because there is still too little non-hagiographical material. The large quantity of material that is currently still available in communities all over Flanders must be catalogued and stories must be told with it. The time has also come to collect the testimonies from the people who experienced this period and are still surviving today. The majority of missionaries who actively worked in the colonial period are now very elderly and it is consequently high time to realise this. It could only contribute to a more realistic conceptualisation of the activities of a large group of Belgians and the Flemish in particular. My argument for adjusting the image is perhaps even more pressing with regard to the Congo and the Congolese because I think that the historian truly has an important role to play here. The need for differentiation is extremely great because it is so much easier to cast what we know of this colonial history in contradictions or to summarise it in clichés rather than representing it with attention for uniqueness, peculiarity, and detail. In other words critical history can find a huge work area here. In that regard I feel strengthened in my scientific task as a researcher. Trying to study the daily life of the various players in a rather intense and important episode from our collective past and then also bring these to the attention of the public is perhaps a rather ungrateful, sometimes not so evident but definitely useful occupation. It is one of the many elements in a larger complex that must contribute to a more contextual approach to history, a less polarised world view and ultimately also to a more respectful interaction with the “other”, in a society in which this is sometimes poignantly lacking.

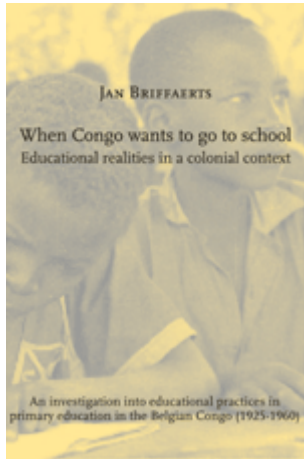
NOTES

[i] Dembour, M.B. (2000). Recalling the Belgian Congo. p. 11-12.

[ii] Briffaerts, J. (2002). ‘De last van het verleden’ Een bevoorrecht getuige aan het woord over onderwijs in Kongo. In *Basis / Christene School*, CIX, 14 September 2002, p. 27-30.

When Congo Wants To Go To

School - Appendices & Bibliography



APPENDICES

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missionaries to the Belgian Congo”

Appendix 1 - Quantitative data concerning education in the Belgian Congo, 1930-1940

The situation in 1930

A report drawn up on request of the Permanent Committee of the Colonial Congress and which appeared in the records of the third National Colonial Congress offers a number of indications concerning the quantitative development of education at that time. However, the figures stated were not given any further clarification. A distinction was already made at that point between state education, independent subsidised education and independent non-subsidised education. 11 “groupes scolaires” were referred to in the document. These were probably the official (state) schools. They accounted for 12 760 pupils. According to this document, **131 250** pupils were in independent subsidised education, divided among 2 377 schools. Apparently, no figures were available for independent non-subsidised schools: it was stated that they were “*légion*” and that the number grew each year.

However a far more detailed report on education from the same period does exist, namely the report drawn up by Edouard De Jonghe for the meeting of the *Institut Colonial International* in Paris in 1931. According to the author the figures cited were representative for the situation on 31 December 1929. De Jonghe did not give any general figures for the whole colony but gave very detailed data per region and per school. Based on the figures in this report, there would have been **131 534** pupils in primary Catholic subsidised education.[i] De Jonghe also gave figures for non-subsidised education, more specifically for the Protestant schools, which around a total of 160 000 pupils supposedly attended. These figures were to be taken with a pinch of salt according to De Jonghe because “*ces chiffres n’ont pas été contrôlés*” and as far as the rural schools were concerned, the figure was of all the pupils enrolled at the schools, not only those who attended school regularly. Thus subtly insinuating that as opposed to this, the figures for the Catholic schools were actually “clean” (i.e. regarding only the pupils that really attended school) .[ii] As far as the Catholic non-subsidised schools were concerned, De Jonghe could only give an example: in the Kwango district there were 52 schools, with 8 057 pupils, which were subsidised in 1929. On the other hand, there were 2 658 non-subsidised schools, with 44 980 pupils.[iii] It seems out of the question that this figure should only be accounted to the Protestant

missions. It probably also relates to the fact that many Catholic schools were not yet 'subsidy ripe' at this stage.

The situation in 1934

For this year there are data brought together in the *Annaires des missions catholiques* by Corman. There are no general data on the quantitative development of education in the 1924 edition. However, there are in the second edition, from 1935. The division of the subsidised schools into rural and central schools was used when creating the overview statistics. That gave 284 central schools with 50 333 pupils and 9 652 rural schools with 289 456 pupils for the Belgian Congo alone (without Ruanda-Urundi). This means the total number of pupils in primary education had to be estimated at around **350 000** (the 13 "official" schools were mentioned separately). Again, the data do not seem very "clean": there are hiatuses in the statistics and no data were published for some regions. Moreover, the publishers of the *Annuaire* seemed aware that it was difficult to obtain correct quantitative data. As the total result of his own data, Corman gives 10 291 primary schools with 477 004 pupils (for both the Belgian Congo and Rwanda-Urundi). Elsewhere the same publication also gives figures from the Apostolic Delegation: 8 152 primary schools with 440 778 pupils. Both series of figures were supposed to reflect the situation on 30 June 1934 but although Corman's results were higher, it was admitted that the data from the Apostolic Delegation were more reliable.[iv]

The situation in 1936

Depaepe and Van Rompaey give an overview table per vicariate and educational level, also based on data published by the Apostolic Delegation in the Congo from 1936. They mention 11 145 schools with 444 082 pupils. If these figures are corrected (and the figures for Rwanda-Urundi filtered out) this gives slightly over 10 000 schools with approximately **380 000** pupils.

The situation in 1938

The figures of the N.I.S. for 1938 are limited to the number of schools and number of pupils *in general* for two different types of education: the official schools and the independent schools. 7 official schools for the Congolese are mentioned.[v] Together they accounted for slightly more than 4 000 pupils. Consequently, this probably relates to a number of school groups. In addition, this statistic gives 4 268 subsidised schools, which together numbered 222 369 pupils. No distinction is made on the basis of the level of education.[vi]

In his article from 1940, Oswald Liesenborghs gave a whole series of figures on colonial education which reflect the development of the number of schools and pupils from 1929 to 1938.[vii] He did not mention any sources for this data. These figures are shown in the table below:

	1929	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
official education									
schools	11	12	12	11	11	11	10	8	7
pupils	3618	5182	5380	5649	5567	5691	5337	4589	4122
subsidised education									
schools									
1° gr.	2532	2773	3579	3780	4326	4217	3740	3720	3635
2° gr.	163	201	241	273	284	394	473	492	577
pupils									
1° gr.	119563	144150	164313	180522	167339	184902	168573	168493	177004
2° gr.	8162	12229	16090	19862	21832	27013	31615	35478	42426

These figures may be supplemented with the data cited by the Dominican Steenberghen in his master's thesis. He stated that, according to the Apostolic Delegation in Congo, in 1939 there were about 13 000 non-subsidised Catholic schools with approximately half a million pupils and 9 000 Protestant schools with approximately 300 000 pupils.[viii]

The situation in 1940

Julien Van Hove, who was an official at the Ministry for Colonies for many years, gave a fairly extensive and detailed overview of the whole colony in an article from 1953, *L'oeuvre d'éducation au Congo Belge et au Ruanda-Urundi*. [ix] The following table summarises the most important figures from it. This only relates to the figures for primary education and only for the Belgian Congo. The statistics were gathered over a longer period but can be used here as a supplement to the previous data for the thirties. The number of schools followed by the number of pupils is shown each time:

	1.1.1930	1.1.1940	1.1.1945[x]	1.1.1948[xi]
--	----------	----------	-------------	--------------

official schools	92 968	73 624	63 624	53 464
subsidised 1 ^e grade	2 532119 563	4 446195 401	5 020243 918	6 966320 591
subsidised 2 ^e grade	1638 162	65047 980	83965 840	98384 311
total subsidised	2 699127 725	5 096243 381	5 859309 758	7 949404 902
independent schools	--	17 910463 950	19 193483 253	19 072513 049
total primary education	--	23 013710 955	25 302798 265	27 078923 165

The division of these statistics seems to fit better with the previous data from Liesenborghs. The difference to the two figures given previously (from the Apostolic Delegation, for 1934 and 1936), in my opinion, lies in the fact that they relate to all Catholic education, both subsidised and non-subsidised. In the two following series (those of Liesenborghs and Van Hove), a distinction is made between these two types, and “independent schools” must be understood as both Protestant and non-subsidised Catholic education.

NOTES

[i] This figure corresponds surprisingly well with the figure given in the report from the Permanent Committee and is therefore probably based on the same sources.

[ii] One difference between the figures cited here for the Catholic and Protestant schools should be mentioned: The figure for the Protestant schools is the total figure and includes all possible types of school whereas the figure for Catholic education only relates to primary schools or departments.

[iii] De Jonghe, E. (1931). *L'enseignement des indigènes au Congo Belge. Rapport présenté à la XXIe session de l'I.C.I., à Paris, mai 1931.* p. 39-93.

[iv] Corman, A. (1935). *Annuaire des missions catholiques au Congo Belge.*

Bruxelles: Edition Universelle. p. 380 & 392-393.

[v] This must therefore be understood as: schools founded by the state and run by missionaries.

[vi] See data and source references in the overview table in appendix 2.

[vii] Liesenborghs, O. (1940). L'instruction publique des indigènes du Congo Belge. In *Congo: Revue générale de la Colonie Belge*. XXI. n°3. p. 267. In another article that was published at around the same time, Liesenborghs gives other indications with much less detail and also presented with the necessary reserve: "It should firstly be stated that the figures shown here differ somewhat, but only insignificantly, from indications in other publications. It is not always possible to find all the information required in the official annual reports and other sources."

[original quotation in Dutch] The figures relate to the situation in **1938**. In his article he mentioned 1 official boys' school with 3 368 pupils (!) and 1 girls' school with 180 pupils. In independent education no distinction was made with regard to gender: in subsidised education he mentioned 4 212 schools with **219 430** pupils and in non-subsidised education 18 257 schools with **501 852** pupils. No sources were given for these figures. Liesenborghs, O. (1940). Het Belgisch koloniaal onderwijswezen. In *Vlaamsch Opvoedkundig Tijdschrift*. 1940. XXI, 7

[viii] Steenberghen, R. (1944). *Les programmes de l'école primaire indigène rurale au Congo Belge*. Leuven: unpublished Master's thesis.

[ix] Van Hove, J. (1953). L'oeuvre d'éducation au Congo Belge et au Ruanda-Urundi. In *Encyclopédie du Congo Belge*. Bruxelles, dl. 3, p. 749-789. Van Hove was the successor to Edouard De Jonghe within the colonial administration.

[x] The total differs from the sum of the various categories because a number of "6 preparatory" years have to be added. In this year this relates to 44 schools and 1 630 pupils.

[xi] The same as for footnote 10: this relates to 52 schools and 1 750 pupils.

Appendix 2 - Quantitative development of education in the Belgian Congo between 1938-1958, figures from N.I.S. (Briffaerts, 1995)

RECAPITULAIRES AUCUN DANS LE DOMAINE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT ETANT LE 14/09.

Tableau n° 26

	Av 14-28	Av 14-28	Av 14-43	Av 14-48
ECOLLES OFFICIELLES				
1. Nombre d'élèves :				
primaires	4	3	4	3
secondaires	4	4	3	4
professionnelles	3	4	3	3
TOTAL :	11	11	10	10
2. Nombre d'élèves :				
primaires	2.865	3.028	3.024	3.054
secondaires	72	202	271	323
professionnelles	474	302	276	288
TOTAL :	3.411	3.532	3.571	3.665
3. Diplômes des Sections secondaires				
	143	382	86	89
ECOLLES SUBSIDIÉES				
1. Nombre d'élèves :				
primaires 1 ^{er} degré	3.022	4.445	5.026	6.068
primaires 2 nd degré	322	480	528	602
4 th préparatoire	—	—	44	52
secondaires	36	34	37	39
supérieures	3	6	11	12
professionnelles	3	3	3	3
mixtes	4	11	28	25
TOTAL :	3.771	5.119	5.680	6.807
2. Nombre d'élèves :				
primaires 1 ^{er} degré	110.583	185.481	243.914	329.881
primaires 2 nd degré	8.162	47.569	63.869	84.211
4 th préparatoire	—	—	1.028	1.264
secondaires	481	3.026	3.174	3.471
supérieures	48	282	426	509
professionnelles	133	181	268	304
mixtes	153	473	728	824
TOTAL :	120.560	238.932	317.387	417.474
3. Diplômes des sections secondaires primaires et professionnelles				
	179	800	249	728
Diplômes des sections secondaires officielles et subsidiaires				
	318	606	613	813
TOTAL :	497	1.406	862	1.541
ECOLLES LIBRES				
1. Nombre d'élèves :				
primaires		17.810	18.083	36.052
secondaires		57	60	86
TOTAL :		17.867	18.143	36.138

Tableau N° 19 (suite).

2. Nombre d'élèves :					
primaires		463.950	483.253	513.049	
secondaires		2.192	1.805	1.925	
TOTAL :		466.142	485.058	514.974	
TOTAUX GENERAUX					
1. Nombre d'écoles :					
primaires		25.613	25.202	27.978	
secondaires		159	154	152	
TOTAL :		25.772	25.356	28.130	
2. Nombre d'élèves :					
primaires		710.935	708.265	923.165	
secondaires		5.779	6.212	7.351	
TOTAL :		716.714	804.477	930.516	
— Quant au personnel enseignant, en voici le décompte :					
		Personnel européen		Personnel indigène	
		Au 1-1-59	Au 1-1-48	Au 1-1-59	Au 1-1-48
Ecoles officielles		43	48	87	89
Enseignement subsidie		961	965	5.977	13.369
Enseignement libre		546	650	20.825	23.326
TOTAUX :		1.550	1.663	26.689	36.784

Appendix 4 - Figures relating to the state of education immediately after independence, in Congo and Coquilhatville (figures from BEC, 1963)

1. Congo - primary education (BEC 1963, p. 19)

school year	network				
	official	Catholic	Protestant	other	total

first	23161	534375	119150	1608	681294
second	19088	301511	69420	1275	391294
third	15114	216031	50661	659	282465
fourth	12075	162461	38948	327	213811
fifth	11319	123141	30915	223	165598
sixth	10568	78941	24362	399	114270
total	94325	1416460	333457	4491	1843733

2. Congo - secondary education (BEC 1963, p. 19)

school year	network				
	official	Catholic	Protestant	other	total
first	10090	16744	2379	1647	30860
second	7762	10151	1210	696	19819
third	2726	6124	535	315	9700
fourth	1520	3692	315	109	5636
fifth	511	961	46	77	1595
sixth	198	448	34	59	739
total	22807	38120	4519	2903	68349

3. Congo - number of schools ("estimations raisonnables", BEC 1963, p. 21)

	boys	girls	mixed	total
complete primary education	668	336	353	1357
incomplete primary education	1468	135	5613	7212
number of classes	14106	5552	13895	33787

4. Total school population in Catholic primary education at the beginning of the school year 1962-63 in the Coquilhatville diocese (approximately corresponds to the vicariate of the MSC) (BEC 1963, p. 24)

year	total		boys		girls	
	diocese	province	diocese	province	diocese	province
préparatoire	110	160				
1^e	5149	41879	3291	30306	1858	11573
2^e	2958	26174	1920	19601	1038	6573
3^e	2277	20932	1520	16242	757	4690
4^e	1793	16967	1229	13631	564	3336
5^e	1334	12497	948	10314	386	2183
6^e	898	7161	724	6247	174	914
7^e	24	166	24	143		24
total	14432	125776	9656	96483	4777	29293

5. Congo - secondary and post-primary education (BEC 1963, p. 31)

Division of the schools by church province

province	post-primary (pp) schools		secondary (sec)schools		schools with pp or sec sections	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls
Léopoldville	32	34	33	37	3	11
Coquilhatville	6	13	27	3	1	1
Stanleyville	16	16	33	10	2	5
Bukavu	5	4	29	11	0	3
Elisabethville	7	10	26	13	1	6
Luluabourg	7	13	30	10	3	3
total	73	90	228	84	10	29

6. Secondary education in detail: comparison of Coquilhatville (province) and Congo

A. Number of classes from 1st October 1962 (BEC 1963, pp. 33-35, 40-42, 47-49)

	Coquilhatville			Congo		
	totaux	garçons	filles	totaux	garçons	filles
cycle d'orientation	68	60	8	729	545	184
moyennes générales	4	4	-	11	10	1
moy. hum. pédag.	21	16	5	247	156	91
moyennes familiales	1	.	1	7	.	7
moyennes ménagères	-	.	-	4	.	4
human. latin-grec	15	15	-	178	160	18
human. latin-math	5	5	.	18	18	.
humanités modernes	3	3	-	110	81	29
scientifiques A	3	3	-	46	46	-
scientifiques B	-	-	-	19	16	3
Economiques	2	2	-	34	28	6
prof. tech. agricoles	5	5	.	27	27	.
autres techniques	1	1	-	62	47	15
autres prof.	10	9	1	113	103	10
artistiques	-	-	.	14	14	.
médicales	-	-	-	15	4	11
totaux secondaire	138	123	15	1634	1255	379

apprentissage pédag.	5	3	2	22	14	8
artisanal, apprentissage	12	12		191	189	2
ménagères post-prim	8	.	8	64	.	64
ménagères pédagog	25	.	25	216	.	216
médicales	-	-	-	2	-	2
totaux post- primaires	50	15	35	495	203	292
totaux généraux	188	138	50	2129	1458	671

B. Number of pupils per 1 October 1962 (BEC 1963, p. 55-57, 62-64, 69-71)

	Coquilhatville			Congo		
	totaux	garçons	filles	totaux	garçons	filles
cycle d'orientation	2111	1892	219	26686	21115	5571
moyennes générales	55	55	-	71	68	3
moy. hum. pédag.	399	327	72	5858	4038	1850
moyennes familiales	8	.	8	112	.	112
moyennes ménagères	-	.	-	47	.	47
human. latin- grec	203	203	-	3054	2821	233
human. latin- math	49	49	.	110	110	.

humanités modernes	81	81	-	3263	2878	385
scientifiques A	33	33	-	772	771	1
scientifiques B	-	-	-	348	329	19
Economiques	21	21	-	444	382	62
prof. tech. agricoles	69	69		380	380	.
autres techniques	23	23	-	1204	1074	130
autres prof.	87	87	-	2271	1894	377
artistiques	-	-	.	99	99	.
médicales	-	-	-	127	-	127
totaux secondaire	3139	2840	299	44846	35959	8887
apprentissage pédag.	146	112	34	660	488	172
artisanal apprentissage	251	231	20	3926	3830	96
ménagères post-prim	132	.	132	1566	.	1566
ménagères pédagog	598	.	598	5112	.	5112
médicales	-	-	-	-	-	-
totaux post-primaires	1127	343	784	11264	4318	6946
totaux généraux	4226	3183	1083	56110	40277	15833

Appendix 5 - Development of educational spending in the colony and the proportion of educational spending in the total budget 1912-1940 (Liesenborghs, 1940)

STATISTIQUES

I. — Dépenses budgétaires pour l'enseignement (Budget ordinaire).
(en francs)

Année	Total des dépenses	Dépenses cubot	Dépenses enseignement	Subsidés scolaires aux ministres	% (1)
1912...	47.164.785	606.068	492.300	58.888	8,82
1914...	51.936.888	783.868	593.756	51.888	1,34
1915...	51.836.888	783.868	593.756	51.888	1,34
1916...	54.739.812	783.868	562.770	51.888	1,81
1917...	59.570.727	786.555	584.281	51.888	0,86
1918...	64.908.527	793.606	648.580	51.888	1,31
1919...	66.818.358	867.168	696.570	72.158	2,81
1920...	66.533.874	887.100	1.397.889	72.500	2,12
1921...	82.318.525	1.871.180	1.728.688	115.000	2,11
1922...	83.363.933	2.863.889	1.923.213	115.000	2,38
1923...	88.611.258	2.883.600	2.144.513	145.000	2,44
1924...	106.234.290	2.117.889	3.432.788	220.500	2,82
1925...	212.361.562	2.477.889	4.955.168	1.852.300	2,33
1926...	273.298.990	2.137.192	8.397.788	3.843.508	3,38
1928...	521.241.915	2.188.692	12.662.168	7.283.908	3,22
1929...	576.810.492	2.622.842	18.949.881	8.565.166	3,28
1930...	688.383.121	3.862.682	25.024.862	9.463.166	3,62
1931...	704.648.678	3.862.692	23.879.843	9.663.166	3,36
1932...	624.113.383	3.555.568	21.246.794	9.184.588	3,44
1933...	723.737.848	3.555.568	19.431.493	9.184.588	2,67
1934...	723.428.767	2.547.408	16.889.281	8.392.888	2,34
1935...	649.563.116	2.862.800	15.871.635	8.488.373	2,33
1936...	677.729.384	3.239.508	16.688.892	9.314.788	2,47
1937...	663.467.287	3.674.368	18.887.722	10.268.788	2,83
1938...	766.981.088	3.767.380	20.419.288	12.244.608	2,79
1939...	729.354.500	3.788.580	22.319.388	13.200.000	3,30

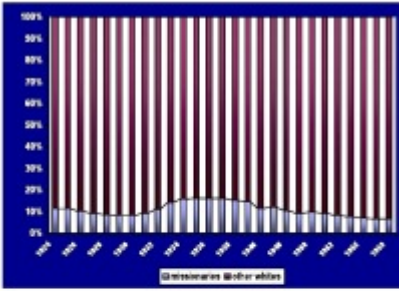
(1) Pourcentage des dépenses pour enseignement par rapport aux dépenses totales.

Appendix 6 - Diagrams of the organisation of education according to the "Dispositions Générales" 1948 (Plan Décennal, 1949)

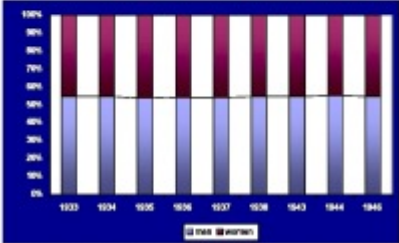
A. ENSEIGNEMENT DE SÉLECTION.

Enseignement général.	Enseignement spécial
2 ^e degré primaire sélectionné (4 ans)	
Enseignement secondaire	
École moyenne (4 ans)	école de maîtres (section d'instituteurs agricoles) ou école de gardes-santiers ou école de télégraphistes ou école de téléphones ou école de cartographie (3 ou 4 ans)
École secondaire générale latine moderne (6 ans)	école secondaire spéciale section administrative et commerciale section d'arpentage section normale section de sciences (6 ans)
Enseignement supérieur.	
Centre universitaire avec instituts (4 ans)	de médecine vétérinaire agronomique administratif et commercial pédagogique

Appendix 7 - Some quantitative data relating to the missionary presence in the Belgian Congo (source: Statistical Yearbook N.I.S.)



Graph 1. Proportion of missionaries in total white population.



Graph 2. Ratio of male to female religious workers

The following table shows the ratios from graph 2 with a more detailed division according to the origin of the missionaries (this only relates to the so-called “white” population):

	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1943	1944	1946
Belg. male	1130	1181	1255	1338	1477	1584	1675	1694	1828
Belg. female	933	981	1071	1137	1253	1318	1389	1381	1530
Belg. total	2063	2162	2326	2475	2730	2902	3064	3075	3358
Foreign male	334	322	309	312	356	346	331	301	319
Foreign female	426	419	409	413	458	484	478	451	473
Foreign total	760	741	718	725	814	830	809	752	792
Total	2823	2903	3044	3200	3544	3732	3873	3827	4150

Table 1 - Religious workers in the Congo - ratios according to gender and nationality, 1933-1946

The “Katoliek Jaarboek” from 1961 gives the following figures with regard to the composition of the group of religious workers for 1959, although this is for the Belgian Congo and Rwanda-Urundi together. The various categories are given the same names as they were in the publication. “Foreign” is used for predominantly white, non-Belgian religious workers, as in the previous table.

Belgian missionaries	2 070
Belgian brothers	696
Belgian sisters	2 450
Total Belgian religious workers	5 216
Diocesan priests	586
Local brothers	514
Local sisters	1 184
Total Congolese religious workers	2 284

Foreign missionaries	576
Secular priests from other countries	61
Foreign brothers	225
Foreign sisters	755
Total foreign religious workers	1 617

Table 2 - Religious workers in the Congo - ratios according to gender and nationality, 1961

Appendix 8 - Primary school program - Extract from the Brochure Jaune

Programmes et Méthode [i]

ECOLE PRIMAIRE DU PREMIER DEGRE

PREMIERE ANNEE D'ETUDES.

Religion: programme à déterminer par les autorités religieuses.

Lecture: étude des lettres et de leurs combinaisons. En première année d'études, la lecture, l'écriture et l'orthographe doivent s'enseigner en même temps. L'étude d'une lettre comprendra donc: la recherche et l'étude du son, sa représentation, l'écriture de la lettre par les élèves, la combinaison de la lettre avec d'autres lettres étudiées précédemment, des exercices de lecture, d'écriture et de dictées; comme il faut empêcher que les élèves ne prennent l'habitude de lire sans se rendre compte de ce qu'ils lisent, tous les mots nouveaux seront soigneusement expliqués et le maître vérifiera fréquemment si les élèves comprennent bien le texte lu.

Calcul: notion concrète des cinq premiers nombres, additions et soustractions concrètes sur ces nombres; étude des cinq premiers chiffres, additions et soustractions; étude simultanée des nombres et des chiffres de 5 à 10, additions et soustractions sur les 10 premiers nombres, ensuite multiplications et divisions sur les mêmes nombres; petits problèmes oraux. En 1re et en 2e année d'études, il est désirable d'adopter pour la division la forme de "la 1/2 de...", "le 1/3 de...", "le 1/4 de...", "le 1/5 de...".

Système métrique: notion intuitive du mètre, du litre, du franc, du kilogramme, du demi-litre, du double-litre, du poids d'un demi-kilogramme, de deux kilogrammes; nombreux exercices de mesurages-longueurs, liquides, matières sèches de pesage, de paiement; petits problèmes oraux.

Leçons d'intuition: parties du corps, vêtements, classe, objets de la classe, fleurs, fruits, plantes, animaux. Pour les leçons d'intuition l'on suivra généralement la marche suivante: analyse libre de l'objet, analyse dirigée, comparaison, dans la mesure du possible, avec des objets de même nature, synthèse rappelant les caractères essentiels de l'objet étudié.

Pour l'analyse dirigée et la synthèse, le maître, au début de l'année, introduira dans ses questions les principaux termes de la réponse; dans la suite, les questions ne renfermeront plus qu'un terme de la réponse et finalement, elles ne renfermeront plus aucun élément de la réponse.

Causeries générales: tenue en classe, à l'église, à la rue, au village, relations avec les compagnons, règlement scolaire, personnes, choses, scènes du milieu immédiat; premières notions de politesse.

Hygiène: propreté du corps et des vêtements, propreté de la classe, de la cour, de l'habitation et de ses environs, soins à donner aux organes des sens, précautions à prendre et choses à éviter en ce qui les concerne.

Les causeries et les leçons d'hygiène seront traitées comme des leçons d'élocution. En règle générale, le maître commencera par un exposé concrétisé et dramatisé. Il choisira l'exemple d'un enfant, qui deviendra le héros de tous ses récits et qui constatera et fera ce qu'il veut que les élèves constatent et fassent. Il multipliera les péripéties de façon à donner à ses récits un intérêt toujours nouveau. Après le récit, il procédera à l'analyse et à la synthèse en graduant ses questions comme pour les leçons d'intuition.

Dessin: Point; ligne droite, horizontale, verticale, oblique, combinaisons diverses; dessin simplifié et d'après nature d'objets divers: barrière, table, chaise, lance, couteau, drapeau, machette, etc...

Chants: petits chants appris par audition.

Gymnastique: marche rythmées avec ou sans chant, jeux.

Français: (cours facultatif) noms des objets de la classe, d'objets usuels, verbes les plus communément employés, conjugaison de ces verbes à l'indicatif présent. Pendant les leçons de français, il est désirable de ne pas recourir aux traductions; le maître doit montrer, agir et parler, faire montrer, faire agir et faire parler.

Travaux manuels: cultures, élevage, métiers indigènes, constructions et réparations exécutées avec le concours d'élèves.

DEUXIEME ANNEE D'ETUDES.

Religion: programme à déterminer par les autorités religieuses.

Lecture: lecture courante. Comme en 1re année d'études, les exercices de lecture sont combinés avec des exercices d'écriture et l'étude de l'orthographe.

Langue maternelle: notion du nom, du verbe, de l'adjectif.

Calcul: étude des nombres de 1 à 20; additions, soustractions multiplications, divisions; la douzaine; petits problèmes oraux et écrits, chiffres romains.

Système métrique: litre, franc, kilogramme, décamètre, décalitre, billets de 5 et de 20 frs; décimètre, décilitre; décime nombreux exercices pratiques: mesurages, pesages, paiements; petits problèmes oraux et écrits.

Leçons d'intuition: plantes, fleurs, fruits, animaux, outillage et produits indigènes. La marche à suivre pour ces leçons est la même que celle indiquée dans le programme de la 1re année d'études; au cours de la synthèse, un petit résumé est écrit au tableau. Ce petit résumé est copié par le et peut servir de base à une série d'exercices.

Causeries générales: politesse: respect dû aux autorités civiles et religieuses; aide à donner aux vieillards et aux infirmes; douceur envers les animaux; accidents géographiques de la région, phénomènes naturels: jour, nuit, vent, pluie, éclair, tonnerre, etc.

Hygiène: habitation; aliments et boissons; précautions à prendre contre le soleil, contre le froid, avec le feu; notions générales sur les maladies tropicales les plus répandues dans la région; précautions à prendre pour les éviter.

Les causeries générales et les leçons d'hygiène se donnent de la même façon

qu'en première année d'études. La synthèse de la leçon est écrite au tableau. Celle-ci se présentera sous forme d'un petit récit terminé par une conclusion pratique renfermant la notion que le maître a voulu enseigner.

Pour les accidents géographiques déjà connus des enfants et l'explication des phénomènes naturels, le maître peut aborder directement l'analyse. Au cours de celle-ci il rectifiera et complètera les connaissances des enfants. La synthèse de la leçon est également écrite au tableau.

Dessin: notion intuitive du carré et du rectangle; dessin d'après nature d'objets renfermant ces éléments: pavés, cadres, encadrements de portes, de volets, élévation d'une boîte, d'une armoire, etc.; dessin d'ornements simples dérivant du carré et du rectangle.

Chants: chants simples appris par audition.

Gymnastique: marches rythmées avec ou sans chant, jeux.

Français: (cours facultatif). Causeries sur des objets qui ont été analysés pendant les leçons d'intuition ou d'après tableaux. Les causeries sont suivies d'un résumé au tableau fait avec l'aide des élèves. Il faut profiter de ces résumés pour faire l'étude progressive de l'alphabet français: u, e, é, è, c, ç, g doux, j, q, gn, ai, ou, ou, om, an, am, in, un, um, au, eau, ent, ais, et, er, ez, ei, ail, euil, eil. Conjugaison des verbes à l'indicatif présent, au passé indéfini et au futur simple. Il convient généralement de faire conjuguer les verbes avec un ou plusieurs compléments d'après le degré d'avancement des élèves.

Travaux manuels: Développer le programme de la 1re année.

ECOLE PRIMAIRE DU DEUXIEME DEGRE

PREMIERE ANNEE D'ETUDES.

Religion: programme à déterminer par les autorités religieuses.

Lecture: lecture courante. Il est utile de faire précéder les leçons de lecture d'une petite causerie sur le texte à lire.

Langue maternelle: notion du nom, de l'adjectif, du pronom, du verbe, conjugaison des verbes.

Calcul: récapitulation des 20 premiers nombres; étude des nombres de 20 à 100; table de multiplication et division des 100 premiers nombres par les 10 premiers nombres; la centaine, le dixième, le centième; nombreux exercices et problèmes. Système métrique: mètre, décamètre, décimètre, hectomètre, centimètre, litre, décalitre, décilitre, hectolitre, centilitre; gramme, décagramme, décigramme, hectogramme, centigramme; franc, décime, centime, billets de 5, 20 et 100 frs: nombreux exercices pratiques mesurages, paiements; problèmes écrits et oraux.

Leçons d'intuition: outils de fabrication indigène et de fabrication européenne en usage dans le pays, métiers indigènes, causeries d'après tableaux. Pour les leçons d'intuition, la marche à suivre est la même que celle suivie à la deuxième année de l'école primaire du 1er degré. Le résumé peut être fait par les élèves au moyen de questions écrites au tableau au cours de la synthèse. Pour ces questions, on suivra la même gradation que celle qui a été adoptée pour les questions orales en 1re année d'études de l'école primaire du 1er degré.

Causeries générales: rôle des européens dans le pays, coutumes et pratiques du pays; politesse.

Hygiène: eau, qualités de l'eau potable, endroits où il faut la puiser, purification de l'eau; notions pratiques aussi complètes que le développement intellectuel des élèves sur la malaria, la maladie du sommeil, le pian, la variole, la fièvre récurrente.

Les causeries générales et les leçons d'hygiène se donnent comme à l'école primaire du 1ère degré, 2e année d'études. L'exposé concrétisé et dramatisé peut être accompagné d'expériences analogues aux constatations faites par le héros du récit: purification de l'eau; éclosion de moustiques, etc....

Les causeries sur les coutumes et les pratiques du pays supposent que le maître connaisse à fond la mentalité des indigènes de la région, leurs usages et toutes les pratiques superstitieuses et autres auxquelles ils se livrent. Le récit fera ressortir la valeur des coutumes et des pratiques utiles et le ridicule, l'inefficacité et éventuellement la nuisance des autres. Le résumé de ces leçons sera préparé de la même façon que les résumés des leçons d'intuition.

Géographie: classe, quatre points cardinaux, orientation de la classe, de l'école; environs de l'école; étude sommaire mais méthodique du territoire; croquis et

cartes; histoire du territoire.

Agriculture: différentes espèces de terrains; caractéristiques, qualités, défauts, moyens à employer pour les améliorer; engrais verts et autres; préparation du terrain pour les semis et les plantations: disposition des parcelles.

Dessin: notion intuitive du carré, du rectangle, du triangle du losange; dessin d'après nature d'objets renfermant ces éléments; dessin d'ornements simples dérivant des éléments étudiés; frises décoratives.

Calligraphie: étude méthodique des minuscules.

Chants: chants simples appris par audition. Eventuellement quelques notions musicales théoriques: la gamme, l'accord parfait et son renversement tons, demi-tons, degrés; exercices de lecture sans et avec mesure, de solfège; dictées musicales; exercices de vocalise et d'adaptation de paroles.

Gymnastique: exercice choisis d'ordre et dérivatifs, extension et suspension, exercices d'équilibre, exercices pour la nuque, le dos, l'abdomen, exercices latéraux, marches, sauts, courses, exercices respiratoires et calmants.

Français: (cours obligatoire dans les centres dans les centres urbains, facultatif dans les autres centres) causeries d'après tableaux suivies de résumés faits avec les élèves. Notions de grammaire.

Travaux manuels: culture, élevage: métiers indigènes perfectionnés, collaboration aux travaux de construction et de réparation.

DEUXIEME ANNEE D'ETUDES.

Religion: programme à déterminer par les autorités religieuses.

Lecture: lecture expressive. Les textes à lire font l'objet d'une analyse sommaire très simple avant d'être lus.

Langue maternelle: étude du nom, de l'adjectif, du pronom, de l'adverbe, du verbe, études des préfixes, infixes et suffixes.

Rédaction: exercices de comparaison entre deux choses concrètes, petits récits

puisés dans la vie des enfants ou dans l'actualité locale.

Calcul: les quatre opérations sur les 1.000 premiers nombres, recherches des $\frac{2}{3}$, des $\frac{3}{4}$, etc. d'un nombre; le millième; problèmes écrits et oraux, achats, ventes, gains, pertes.

Système métrique: récapitulation du programme de la 1re année du 2e degré; le kilomètre, le millimètre, le kilogramme; mesures de surface; périmètre et surface du carré et du rectangles.

Leçon d'intuition: produits de la culture, de la cueillette, de l'industrie locale; même marche que pour les leçons d'intuition en 1re année du 2e degré. Le résumé à faire par les élèves peut être préparé au moyen d'un canevas.

Causeries générales: les usages et les pratiques du pays: croyances superstitieuses; rôle néfaste des féticheurs; phénomènes naturels: foudre, grêle, tremblements de terre, éclipses; dangers que présentent la consommation de l'alcool, l'usage du chanvre et d'autres plantes stupéfiantes.

Hygiène: maladies de la peau, maladies du ventre, maladies de la poitrine; symptômes, causes, propagation, précautions, soins.

Pour les causeries et les leçons d'hygiène, on suit a même marche qu'en 1re année du 2e degré. Au cours de la synthèse, un canevas à développer par les élèves est écrit au tableau.

Géographie: révision du cours de 1re année; le globe terrestre, le soleil, la lune, les étoiles, le jour, la nuit, les cinq parties du monde, les grands océans, quelques grands voyages sur la sphère le Congo Belge; situation, limites, chefs-lieux; description du cours du fleuve Congo. Histoire de l'occupation du Congo par la Belgique.

Agriculture: cultures du pays, variétés à choisir, plantation, semis, soins des plantations, récolte. Choix des boutures ou des graines pour les cultures de l'année suivante; conservation et transformation des produits; culture des arbres fruitiers: variétés à choisir, greffage, soins; oiseaux utiles, oiseaux nuisibles; insectes nuisibles et leur destruction; culture des arbres et des plantes donnant les produits d'exportation; destruction des insectes et des animaux nuisibles.

Dessin: Le carré, le rectangle, le losange, l'hexagone, le cercle; dessin d'après

nature d'objets renfermant les éléments étudiés; dessin d'après nature, de feuilles, de fleurs et de fruits; stylisation de ces éléments; frises ornementales.

Calligraphie: révision du cours de la 1^{re} année, étude méthodique des majuscules.

Chants: quelques chants appris par audition à 1 et à 2 voix. Eventuellement continuation de la théorie musicale donnée en 1¹, année: tons, demi-tons, degrés de la gamme, etc., manière de prendre le ton à l'aide de formules; exercices de solfège, dictées musicales, exercices de vocalise et d'adaptation de paroles à la musique.

Gymnastique: mêmes exercices qu'en 1^{re} année.

Français: (cours obligatoire dans les centres dans les centres urbains, facultatif dans les autres centres), causeries d'après tableau ou sur les objets analysés dans les leçons d'intuition suivies de résumés faits au tableau avec l'aide des élèves. Exercices sur notions de grammaire.

Travaux manuels: Programme de la première année à développer.

TROISIEME ANNEE D'ETUDES.

Religion: Programme à déterminer par les autorités religieuses.

Lecture: lecture expressive comme en 2^e année d'études. Les analyses doivent être plus complètes qu'en 2^e année.

Langue maternelle: Etude complète des parties du discours, compléments, analyse grammaticale. Rédactions: comparaisons entre deux choses concrètes, deux choses abstraites, petites descriptions, petits récits, lettres.

Calcul: les quatre opérations sur les nombres entiers et décimaux jusqu'au nombre 10.000: règle de trois simple et directe; recherche de l'intérêt: nombreux problèmes.

Système métrique: mesures de longueur, de capacité, de poids, monnaies; mesures de surface, mesures agraires; périmètre et surface du carré, du rectangle, du triangle; diamètre, circonférence et surface du cercle; nombreux

exercices pratiques; nombreux problèmes.

Causeries générales: Principales stipulations du décret sur les chefferies; obligations des indigènes en matière de recensement, d'impôts, de milice; principales dispositions législatives sur les armes à feu, la chasse, l'alcool, le chanvre, les jeux de hasard.

Hygiène: révision des notions enseignées dans les quatre premières années; premiers soins en cas d'accident - asphyxie, hémorragie, brûlure, empoisonnement, syncope, morsure de serpent, foulure, fracture; quelques notions d'asepsie et d'antisepsie; soins des plaies; maladies vénériennes.

Les causeries générales et les leçons d'hygiène sont résumées au tableau. Ce résumé est transcrit par les élèves dans un cahier spécial et doit être étudié de mémoire.

Géographie: révision des matières enseignées dans les cours inférieurs; étude méthodique du district: cours d'eau, production, centres, voies de communication, industrie, commerce, grandes tribus, divisions administratives, missions; quelques notions sur la Belgique: situation, quelques villes, fleuves, chemins de fer (longueur) quelques indications sur la richesse et l'activité du peuple belge la famille royale de Belgique.

Agriculture: révision du cours donné dans les deux années précédentes; petit bétail, éventuellement gros bétail, animaux et oiseaux de basse-cour; soins, maladies, remèdes, nourriture, choix des reproducteurs; conditions que doivent réunir les étables, les clapiers, les poulaillers, les pigeonniers; traitement des produits.

Dessin: plan-détaillé d'une case modèle, d'une porte, d'une fenêtre, d'une table, d'une chaise, d'un banc, d'un lit, d'une armoire; matières colorantes existant dans la région et pouvant servir à la décoration de la case.

Calligraphie: minuscules et majuscules; écriture grande, moyenne et petite.

Chant: chants à une et à deux voix appris par audition. Eventuellement développement du cours théorique donné en 2e année.

Gymnastique: leçons comme en 11e année d'études.

Français: (cours obligatoire dans les centres dans les centres urbains, facultatif dans les autres centres): causeries d'après tableaux ou sur des choses concrètes, petites rédactions. Exercices écrits portant spécialement sur les notions de grammaire et sur l'orthographe.

Travaux manuels: Programme de la deuxième année à développer.

Dans les écoles de filles l'on peut suivre le même programme que dans les écoles de garçons. L'on y ajoutera toutefois des notions aussi complètes que possible de puériculture à donner en 3e année du 2e degré, ainsi que les travaux à l'aiguille.

Le programme suivant pourrait être adopté pour ces travaux:

1re année du 1er degré: points devant, de piqûre, de cordonnet, à la croix sur gros tissus en tirant un fil; quelques travaux en raphia et tricot à 2 aiguilles: montage du tricot, mailles à l'endroit, à l'envers, etc.

2e année du 1er degré: points devant, de piqûre, de cordonnet, à la croix sur tissus moins gros que ceux employés en 1re année et sans tirer un fil; quelques travaux en raphia et tricot à 2 aiguilles.

1re année du 2e degré: points de piqûre, devant et de côté sur plis rentrés; tricot à 4 aiguilles: étude de la chaussette; travaux d'agrément.

2e année du 2e degré: points de surjet, de feston, de flanelle; travaux d'agrément; tricot à 4 aiguilles: études du bas, ravaudage et manière de renforcer le tricot.

3e année du 2e degré: point de boutonnière, fixation des boutons, oeillets, agrafes, pressions; tracé, coupe et confection de vêtements simples; tricot; rempiétage du bas, ravaudage, remmaillage, tricot d'une brassière, de chaussons de bébés etc.

NOTE

[i] Conçus comme ils le sont, les programmes paraissent applicables dans toutes les écoles. En cas de nécessité, il sera néanmoins permis de s'en écarter. Us inspecteur du Gouvernement, d'accord avec les missionnaires-inspecteurs, décideront des changements à apporter éventuellement au Programme. Ils veilleront toutefois à ce que les modifications n'aillent pas jusqu'à faire disparaître certaines branches du programme ou à diminuer notablement

l'ensemble des matières à enseigner.

Appendix 9 - Letters from Pierre Kolokoto to Paul Jans, from the Aequatoria Archive Transcribed from the microfilms.

Beambo le 8 octobre 1935

Très R. Père Paul Jans

J'ai l'honneur de vous faire connaître que tous les gens de Bofidji ont déjà payé l'impôt. Mais exceptez moi, donc tâchez de m'envoyer 70 frs. de mon salaire.

Je vous envoie mon livret du travail parce que je n'ai pas encore touché le moi de septembre à cause que je suis très éloigné. Je vous demande aussi 20 frs. que vous avez promis à mes élèves pour leurs nourritures. Alors il ne faut pas oublier de m'envoyer la couverture que vous m'avez promise de l'année 1935, parce que vous n'avez pas donné.

Donc envoyez moi aussi un rideau pour la classe, un paquet de craies, un paquet de touches aussi que qq cahiers pour les journaux de classe.

Veillez agréer très R. P. Paul, les salutations très cordiales de votre serviteur,

Kolokoto Pierre, moniteur de l'école rurale Beambo.

—

2.

Beambo le 29 octobre 1935

J'ai l'honneur de vous faire savoir que je suis en bonne santé ainsi que mes élèves, mais quelques uns ont des plaies donc ils manquent seulement des médicaments. J'ai bien reçue la lettre dont vous m'avez envoyée par mes élèves avec 1 paquet de craies, 1 paquet de touches, 5 cahiers comme journal de classe ainsi que mon salaire 70 frs.

Excepter un rideau pour la classe - ainsi que la couverture promise par le R. Père Paul Jans, parce que la première est morte depuis 1934.

Très Révérend Père Supérieur, voilà une chose que je me regrette maintenant; j'ai engagé une femme puis j'ai donné à ses parents trois cents frs. et maintenant elle est à son village on demande encore quatre cents ou cinq cents frs pour compléter huit cents frs. donc je vous prie s'il vous plaît prêtez moi cinq cents ou quatre cents frs. donc vous retiendrez 50 frs. de ma salaire chaque fois car j'envoie mon livret ainsi vous ferez comme bon-pour dans mon livret.

Ne me refusez pas de me prêter parce que le moniteur de Indjolo avait prêté cinq cents frs chez le Père Paul Jans donc nous sommes aussi des moniteurs alors car j'ai une affaire s'il vous plaît aidez moi. Moi je recevrai seulement 20 frs. puis 50 frs. pour bon-pour jusque le bon-pour sera terminé. Donc je vous envoie mes élèves avec mon livret ainsi que 17 ardoises qui ne sont pas bonnes pour vous montrer. N'oubliez pas un rideau de la classe chez les Soeurs.

Donc quant à ma classe. Ca va bien, nous avons un grand jardin, très propre et bien arrangé. Nous avons planté des bananiers, des maniocs doux, des ananas, des arrachides d'avec des palmiers. Donc dès que vous serez ici, vous verrez tout ça.

Veuillez agréer, très R. Père Supérieur, les salutations cordiales de votre seriteur.

Kolokoto Pierre, moniteur de l'école rurale de Beambo Bofidji Ouest

—

Beambo, le 4 décembre 1935

Très R. Père Supérieur

J'ai l'honneur de vous faire cette petite lettre.

Quant à la fiancée elle n'est pas dans ma maison. Mais elle est toujours au village natal, je n'ai pas assez de l'argent pour qu'elle vienne dans ma maison, ses parents me demandent 1000 frs donc j'ai remis seulement 250 frs la dotte pas encore assez, comme je vous ai écrit de vous m'envoyer 400 frs ce pour compléter la dotte, alors comment le catéchiste parle que moi je montre le mauvais exemple. Est-ce qu'elle dans ma maison? Si j'avais au moins 7000 frs la femme serait dans ma maison puis je l'enverrais au même instant à la mission, parce que nous avons l'obligation qu'un moniteur ne peut pas rester avec une femme car il ne pas encore marié avec.

Aussi nous ne pouvons pas envoyer une femme à la mission car la dotte pas encore terminée, sinon nous aurons toujours des difficultés contre ses parents, on me dira aussi que je suis un voleur.

Quant au catéchiste il n'est pas content de moi. Un jour il m'a demandé: comment les missionnaires ne donnent pas de l'argent aux catéchistes alors ils donnent seulement aux moniteurs. Donc pour cela il n'enseigne pas encore comme avant. deux semaines à la forêt pour chercher des copals copaux. trois semaines à la forêt pour la chasse puis les chrétiens prient seulement eux-mêmes quand il vient de la forêt seulement pour fabriquer des lirièques. il dit où aurais-je de l'argent

pour donner aux massons? je fréquenterai à la forêt pour chercher du copal. Maintenant il a un fils donc son fils en ai une femme. le catechiste même qui a remsi la dotte puis ils sont dans sa maison même est-ce qu'ils sont mariés ils sont restés pendant 8 mois. Pourquoi il ne l'envoie pas à la mission tous les chrétiens de Beambo ne sont pas content de lui à cause qu'il ne reste pas au village toujours à la forêt. La chapelle que le Père Moeyens avait laissé la (?), pas encore finit depuis 11 mois on prie seulement à sa maison. Sa femme dispute toujours contre les élèves, à cause de le jardin des élèves même; elle avait coupé un régime de banane puis les élèves sont encore contre moi donc moi je dis je dirai au père Supérieur.

Maintenant j'ai déjà commencé l'examen malgré s'il n'avais pas l'examen je serais à Bamanya immédiatement donc je viendrai après l'examen. Je serai à Bamanya 22 décembre.

Je vous envoie aussi mon livret pour le mois de novembre.

les salutations cordiales

le votre serviteur

Kolokoto Pierre

—

4.

Beambo, le 16 février 1936

J'ai l'honneur de vous faire connaître que je suis en bonne santé ainsi que mes élèves. Pour la classe les élèves sont très contents ainsi que leurs parents, parce que j'ai resté encore ici avec leurs fils, mais les élèves de deuxième année d'études nous demandent des livres (2e partie) pour chaque élève, ainsi que des cahiers de devoir, un livre de manuel français pour les apprendre un peu le français (lecture).

Quant au moniteur > Quant à moi. envoyez moi un paquet des craies, un paquet des touches, un carnet pour la liste d'appel pour cette année. Mais n'oubliez pas un rideau pour couvrir le tablau, parce que comme j'enseigne 2 classes il faut un rideau 2,5 m de largeur et 1,5 m de hauteur.

Mais avant tout cherchez mon livret de travail que le Père Paul m'a donné. J'ai diplômé en 1934 donc le Père Paul m'avait donné 60 frs. par mois, puis en 1935 il m'a donné 70 frs par mois parce que nous avons l'augmentation de 10 frs. par ans

jusqu'à la fin de notre contrat, mais si vous doutez regarder dans mon livret que le Père Paul m'a donné, il vous montrera tous. Donc pour cette année 1936 vous m'avais donné 35 frs. donc il reste 45 frs. pour compléter 80 frs. du mois de janvier.

Je vous demande aussi l'argent du mois de février parce qu'il me reste 13 jours puis je suis très éloigné donc il faut que vous m'envoyez aussi. Je vous envoie mon livret par le fils du catéchiste. Maintenant moi et le catéchiste nous sommes d'accord pour le moment depuis la fête jusqu'à maintenant.

Donc pour les deux mois que vous avez retenu, envoyez moi l'argent d'un mois parce que nous voulons payer l'impôt. Tous les gens de Bofidji sont allés à la forêt pour chercher le copal mais tâchez de m'envoyer l'argent pour l'impôt 55 frs. On paye 55 frs. pour tous les gens de Bofidji.

Votre serviteur

Kol.

Appendix 10 - Letters from Hilaire Vermeiren to Paul Jans, from the Aequatoria Archive Transcribed from the microfilms.

1.

Bokote, 19/1/1930

Beste Paul,

Zooals ik aan broeder Medard geschreven heb, houd ik Hilario achter. Ik had er wat moeite mee na het ontvangen van de magnifieke papieren van dit heerken, maar nu kan ik het met gerusten harte doen. Dat heerken heeft hier de revolutie gestookt. Ten anderen ik ben niets tevreden over die kornuiten. Zij hebben hier mijn schoolkolonie opgemaakt, dat het een schande is. Zij vertelden niets anders dan dat ze hier veel te veel moesten werken, geen eten kregen, en dat onze moniteurs stommerikken waren, waar niets bij te leren viel. Dat laatste is wel waar, maar dat moeten die snotneuzen toch niet komen vertellen. Ik heb er dan ook met de zweep nogal opgezeten en als ze nog ooit op vakantie komen dan zullen ze de varkenskoten mogen schoon maken en als ze roespeteren kunt ge ze den volgenden keer zonder billen verwachten. ...

Paul, jongen, ik beschouw dat als een gebrek in de opvoeding; de jongens hier in Bokote zijn uiterlijk minder gedisciplineerd, dat geloof ik wel, maar innerlijk zijn ze beter, ze hebben het niet achter de mouw, steken ze schavuitenstreken uit, ik

rammel ze ne keer op hun gat en zij en ik zijn content. Dat systeem van band honderij (sic) is de pest van al onze opvoedingsscholen in België en ik zie dat ze dat vervloekte systeem naar Congo overbrengen. Daar is maar één man die het heeft aangedurfd aan ons klein liefdewerk daar verandering in te brengen, namelijk de dikke Piet en die heeft het ook moeten bekoopen, die zetelt nu als surveillant perpetuel in de studie. Gij hebt dat willen veranderen en ik ook en we zitten in de Congo; sans rancune voor die wijze en vroede vaders, maar ik citeer de feiten zoals ze zijn. Als ge er iets aan kunt doen, Paul, laat van deze mannekens geen muilezels maken.

2.

Bokote, 10/5/31

Beste Paul,

In de gauwe gauwte enkele woordjes. Ik stuur u vier jongens. ... van een heiden, Joannes Yembe. Deze laatste is hier zoowat moniteur geweest. Misschien kan hij wat meer ... (?) bijkrijgen in Bamanian; Niettegenstaande zijn rotte plakpooten is de man toch nog al met hart en ziel de zwakke sexe toegedaan. Voldoet hij niet, stuur hem dan maar als postcolle naar zijn dorp. Ik geef hem hierbij nog een kans. Verder J. Bolenge blijft hier. Nauwelijks aangekomen had hij het al verkorven. Een jonge meid kreeg drie armbanden, oorbellen, ... Belangeloze vriendschap. Bomandeke Jean en Ifaso Hilario heb ik ne keer de les gelezen. Als ze nog zoo doen een volgende maal dan kunnen ze hier ook blijven. Dat is zoo wat alles, Paul, ik zit tot over mijn oren in het werk. Binnen enkele dagen zijn hier 110 doopsels.

Hilaire.

3.

Bokote, 6/6/31,

Beste Paul,

Brief wel ontvangen. Ik had gedacht met het lange wegblijven van de boot gelegenheid te hebben om een flink antwoord te sturen. Helaas; ik heb zo wat gesukkeld en dan is het er bij gebleven. Ik denk dat al de jonge heerkens van Bokuma terug naar Bamanian gaan. Heer Yembi kan u gerust zonder

gewetenswroeging ontslaan van verdere ontwikkeling zijner geestesvermogens: ik heb hem een laatste kans willen geven; indien hij niet voldoet volgend trimester, geef hem dan den bons, maar zend hem bid ik u naar de regionen van Wafanya, dat is de plaats waar zijn wiege stond. Dat de jongens van Bokuma erg ingebeeld zijn, concedo, maar ze hebben het potver hier niet gekregen: waar ze het gehaald hebben, weet ik niet, maar ze hebben het van hier naar ginder niet meegebracht. ... Ik heb ze hier aan het potten van den oven gezet; werk dat hun nobele handen zeker lang niet meer verricht hadden. Kon het zijn dat die heerkens hier nooit meer kwamen onder de vacantie, ik zou mij en onzen missiepost gelukkig achten. De twee exemplaren die hier gebleven zijn moet ik minstens om de maand afranselen. ... Enfin, zooals ge zegt het is een crisis en heel de Congo zal die crisis wel meemaken vooral omdat een neger van nature al erg ingebeeld en met zijn eigen zich zelve gauw tevreden is.

Appendix 11 - Contextual analysis of “La Voix du Congolais”

A short explanation of the method used in the analysis of La Voix du Congolais.

The collection I consulted is almost complete, with only seven issues missing. Only three of the six issues were available from the first year (so the period March-August 1945 is missing). Issue 13 from 1947 and issue 26 from 1948 are also missing. No other issues are missing from the following years, although some numbers are not stated in the summary tables I made because there was no information of interest to us in those issues. Issues 159 and 162 from 1959 are also missing.

During the first reading of these issues a record was taken of the articles, references, photographs, opinions, etc. that fulfilled our selection criteria. These selection criteria can be summarised relatively clearly and simply: anything, in the broadest sense, relating to education, the Equateur province and/or the congregations active in the vicariate of the MSC. This first selection resulted in approximately 450 references.

In a second phase these references were copied, in which another verification was carried out with regard to the subject and the extent to which it complied with the criteria. After this, over 400 references remained and the corresponding documents were copied. The remaining documents were marked with an X.

In a third phase the copies taken were subdivided into four main groups. This

division was based on the type of text. The division consists of the following four themes:

A: Illustrations (photographs)

B: Descriptive (or mostly descriptive) contributions, in which the emphasis was on the representation of situations, places, conditions, rather than on the representation of an opinion on that subject.

F: Factual information, not descriptive or narrative documents but those contributions that gave statistical or factual information.

O: Opinion. Those contributions in which the author put forward a particular opinion.

Naturally, all the documents cannot be simply allocated to one of these groups. If they overlapped I opted to only allocate them to a single group on the basis of the predominant element. With regard to the first group, it then relates to those documents that were only kept for the illustrations or which are only made up of an illustration. This is also the smallest group.

On this basis we obtained the following subdivision:

A: 14

B: 96

F: 114

O: 179

These four groups were then subdivided again into five thematic groups. The following themes were defined in this:

1: Education and Equateur

2: Equateur

3: Education

4: Gender

5: Miscellaneous

Quantitatively this gives the following:

Group 1: 19 documents

Group 2: 102 documents

Group 3: 161 documents

Group 4: 32 documents

Group 5: 89 documents

Juxtaposing these two divisions gives the following total representation:

Juxtaposing these two divisions gives the following total representation:

	A illustrations	B descriptions	F facts	O opinions	total
1 education Equateur	1	3	12	3	19
2 Equateur	1	33	99	9	102
3 education	5	33	29	94	161
4 gender	0	10	0	22	32
5 miscellaneous	7	17	14	51	89
Total	14	96	114	179	403

A few very general remarks have to be made: firstly the group “illustrations” is the smallest group. However, a large number of illustrations were also in the other categories, which were then not explicitly counted. A number of subjects presented to the reader over numerous issues are included in categories B and O. Each issue was maintained as such and counted as a single item. The largest subcategory was that of the opinion documents on education (general). This indicates that it was worth using the source. Naturally, the smallest of the contextual groups is that on education in the Equateur province. That is not illogical as it relates to a theme that was delineated following multiple criteria, and the periodical had to consider a lot of themes for the entire colony.

The category “miscellaneous” should perhaps be clarified: this still relates to subjects relating to education and Equateur but those that are broader or related but situated within the context of the research. With illustrations this mainly relates to school photographs or photographs of specific people. In opinion articles it may, for example, relate to “évolués”. In the factual information it may relate to a contribution on authority or a speech by the governor general. I really only distilled the fourth category in the second instance from this miscellaneous category because it proved to be a relatively large body of material (particularly opinion documents) on the education / civilisation / development of woman in Congolese society.

In the final phase each document was given a concise commentary at the very least (both regarding the photographs and the longer documents) and in a number of cases literal information was also copied from them. All references were copied into an Excel file at that point, with a short reference to the title, subject and, if given, the author. Every contribution was given its own coding, which consisted of the year, page number and category codes to which the

contribution belonged. In a small number of cases there were some documents with exactly the same code. The starting page was then used to distinguish between these.

Appendix 12 - The history of the emergence of schools in the Equator province, by Stephane Boale (The text has been copied word-for-word from the written document.)

Création des écoles de village

L'origine des écoles dites de village se situe vers 1880. C'était fait par les premiers missionnaires Trappistes chez les Mongo du tribu Mbole, Bosaka, Nkole, Bolukutu et Bakutu, lesquels se trouvent sur les 5 rivières Luafa, Lomela, Busira, Salonga et Momboyo (voir la carte de la province de l'Equateur), autrement appelé la région de l'Equateur Sud.

L'esquisse de cette historique rempli d'enseignements, nous l'avons reçue grâce à monsieur Boale Stéphane du village de Momboyo monEnE, secteur Dzera, du territoire de Boende, district de la Tshupa, province de l'Equateur Sud. L'intéressé est diplômé de l'école normale de Bamanya, ancien commis de l'Etat au service de la météorologie du Congo Belge, pour lequel il a effectué beaucoup de stages à l'étranger, ce qui lui a fourni une bagage de formation solide. Et compte tenu de ce qui vient de nous être révélé, l'intéressé veut nous livrer ses impressions sur l'histoire de l'école de village, lui léguées par ses ancêtres et les vieux du village qui y vécurent dès l'arrivée des blancs, missionnaires trappistes vers les années 1890. Ils étaient venus pour l'évangélisation du Congo Belge, afin que tous les Congolais, hommes et femmes, pourraient être baptisés, selon la mission leur confiée par S.M. le Roi Léopold II.

Ce qui fut fait. C'est ainsi que les prêtres de la congrégation des Trappistes ont répondu vivement à l'appel lancé par le Roi Léopold II à desservir le bassin du Congo, particulièrement la sous-région de l'Equateur, pour ainsi collaborer à l'évangélisation de ce peuplade.

Dès leur arrivée à l'Equateur (Mbandaka) les premiers missionnaires ont fondé leur première mission à Mpaku, en amont plus ou moins trois kilomètres de la ville de Mbandaka. Malheureusement, à cause de l'état malsain du lieu, ils ont du se déplacer pour fonder une nouvelle mission à Boloko wa Nsimba, plus près de la ville de Mbandaka, et vers la mission protestante de Bolenge. Et ensuite le

fondement de missions ne devrait pas se limiter qu'au centre de la ville de Mbandaka, mais a été transféré à travers les 5 rivières cités ci-haut. Voici la liste des missions catholiques fondées par les prêtres Trappistes:

Boloko wa Nsimba

Bamanya

Bokuma

Boteka

Imbonga

Wafanya

Bolima

Bokote

Bokela

Boende

Bokungu

Ikela

Comment devaient-ils évangéliser un peuple dont ils ne connaissaient ni la langue, ni la culture, ni les moeurs? Autant de questions furent posées à qui veut l'entendre. Mais sachez que Jésus Christ avait dit à ses disciples que "je ne vous laisserai pas orphélins, je serai avec vous tout le temps (par l'esprit)". A ce dire, les missionnaires Trappistes étaient convainçus que tout irait selon les paroles du Christ. La meilleure méthode de communication employée par les Trappistes auprès du peuple Mongo était celle de la pédagogie appliquée avec persuasion, car il n'y avait pas seulement l'enseignement de la parole de Dieu, mais aussi celui de l'écriture (alphabet) lesquelles devaient aller de pair pour une bonne compréhension et une réussite totale des enseignements donnés. "Les paroles s'envolent, mais l'écriture reste" dit-on. D'où est né l'école du village. L'école du village créé par les missionnaires Trappistes n'était pas une école en soi, mais un système inventé par eux-mêmes afin de permettre aux catéchumènes que la combinaison de l'Évangile enseigné et l'écriture apprise pourraient leur donner des bons fruits à la récolte, suite à la qualité de l'enseignement donné et son appréciation par ceux qui l'écoutaient. Connaissance de la langue Lomongo (ou Lonkundo): c'est la seule que tout le peuple Mongo parle, de la mission Boloko wa Nsimba, passant par toutes les missions citées ci-haut. Elle est parlé dans son ensemble par les Mongo du Sud de l'Équateur.

Les prêtres Trappistes se sont efforcés, graduellement, et peu à peu, avec

assurance à l'étude de la langue Mongo, et sont arrivés à balbutier l'Évangile dans cette langue, dont le recrutement des catéchistes et quelques jeunes de bonne volonté dépendait, car le nombre de pères Trappistes n'était pas suffisant pour ainsi affluer dans toutes les missions. C'est ainsi qu'il faut repartir tous sortants de l'école du village pour ainsi suppléer à la pénurie des prêtres et les épauler dans cette noble mission, en attendant l'arrivée, de l'Europe, d'autres prêtres. Lorsque l'enseignement de l'écriture a été reconnu par son importance et sa viabilité auprès de la jeunesse montante, il a permis à tout le monde sans exception, de se faire instruire et baptiser, pour ainsi tirer les bénéfiques colossaux de la connaissance de l'écriture. C'est ainsi qu'il y avait beaucoup de croyants qui ont abandonné leurs coutumes afin de servir Dieu qui incarne l'écriture (magie), qui a permis une communication facile avec ceux qui sont loin de nous.

Prise de l'école du village par l'Etat.

Par les rapports que les catéchistes adressent auprès des curés de chaque mission, parlant de leurs activités dans la mission, spécialement tous les activités de l'école de village, celles-ci ont retenu l'attention des responsables des missions. Alors ces derniers ont instruit l'autorité de l'Etat de cette situation préoccupante et promettante pour l'avenir du Congo Belge. Il a été décidé par l'autorité compétente la création des écoles rurales et primaires subsidiées par l'autorité de l'Etat, en engageant les moniteurs, lesquels seront sous l'autorité des missionnaires. Ainsi est né les écoles rurales et primaires avec un programme imposé par l'Etat et non comme était l'école du village sans programme. L'Etat devait à peine s'occuper de l'enseignement, lequel devait être suivi par les inspecteurs sur toutes les normes dictées par l'Etat.

(transcription du document rédigé par Stéphane Boale, rendu à l'auteur le 27 Octobre 2003.)

Appendix 13 - "Extrait de la causerie du Ministre des Colonies, M. Jules Renquin avec les premiers missionnaires catholiques du Congo-Belge" [Extract from a talk given by the Minister for the Colonies, Mr Jules Renquin, to the first Belgian Catholic missionaries to the Belgian Congo]. The text was acquired from Jean Indenge, Brussels, November 2003

« EXTRAIT DE LA CAUSERIE DU MINISTRE DES COLONIES, M. JULES

RENQUIN EN 1920 AVEC LES PREMIERS MISSIONNAIRES CATHOLIQUES DU CONGO-BELGE.

Les devoirs des Missionnaires dans notre Colonie

Révérands Pères et Chers Compatriotes,

Soyez les bienvenus dans notre seconde patrie, le Congo-Belge.

La tâche que vous êtes conviés à y accomplir est très délicate et demande beaucoup de tact. Prêtres, vous venez certes pour évangéliser. Mais cette évangélisation doit s'inspirer de notre grand principe: tout avant tout pour les intérêts de la métropole (Belgique).

Le but essentiel de votre mission n'est donc point d'apprendre aux noirs à connaître DIEU. Ils le connaissent déjà. Ils parlent et se soumettent à un NZAMBE ou un MVIDI-MUKULU, et que sais-je encore. Ils savent que tuer, voler, calomnier, injurier ... est mauvais.

Ayant le courage de l'avouer, vous ne venez donc pas leur apprendre ce qu'ils savent déjà. Votre rôle consiste essentiellement à faciliter la tâche aux administratifs et aux industriels. C'est donc dire que vous interpréterez l'évangile de la façon qui sert le mieux nos intérêts dans cette partie du monde.

Pour ce faire, vous veillez entre autre à:

1° Désintéresser nos "sauvages" des richesses matérielles dont regorgent leur sol et sous-sol, pour éviter que s'intéressant, ils ne nous fassent une concurrence meurtrière et rêvent un jour à nous déloger. Votre connaissance de l'évangile vous permettra de trouver facilement des textes qui recommandent et font aimer la pauvreté. Exemple: "Heureux sont les pauvres, car le royaume des cieux est à eux" et "il est plus difficile à un riche d'entrer au ciel qu'à un chameau d'entrer par le trou d'une aiguille". Vous ferez donc tout pour que ces Nègres aient peur de s'enrichir pour mériter le ciel.

2° Les contenir pour éviter qu'ils ne se révoltent. Les Administratifs ainsi que les industriels se verront obligés de temps en temps, pour se faire craindre, de recourir à la violence (injurier, battre ...) Il ne faut pas que les Nègres ripostent ou nourrissent des sentiments de vengeance. Pour cela, vous leur enseignerez de tout supporter. Vous commenterez et les inviterez à suivre l'exemple de tous les saints qui ont tendu la deuxième joue, qui ont pardonné les offenses, qui ont reçu sans tressaillir les crachats et les insultes.

3° Les détacher et les faire mépriser tout ce qui pourrait leur donner le courage de nous affronter. Je songe ici spécialement à leurs nombreux fétiches de guerre qu'ils prétendent les rendre invulnérables. Etant donné que les vieux n'entendraient point les abandonner, car ils vont bientôt disparaître: votre action doit porter essentiellement sur les jeunes.

4° Insister particulièrement sur la soumission et l'obéissance aveugles. Cette vertu se pratique mieux quand il y a absence d'esprit critique. Donc évitez de développer l'esprit critique dans vos écoles. Apprenez-leur à croire et non à raisonner. Instituez pour eux un système de confession qui fera de vous de bons détectives pour dénoncer tout noir ayant une prise de conscience et qui revendiquerait l'indépendance nationale.

5° Enseignez-leur une doctrine dont vous ne mettez pas vous-même les principes en pratique. Et s'ils vous demandaient pourquoi vous vous comportez contrairement à ce que vous prêchez, répondez-leur que "vous les noirs, suivez ce que nous vous disons et non ce que nous faisons". Et s'ils répliquaient en vous faisant remarquer qu'une foi sans pratique est une foi morte, fâchez-vous et répondez: "heureux ceux qui croient sans protester".

6° Dites-leur que leurs statuettes sont l'oeuvre de Satan. Confisquez-les et allez remplir nos musées: de Tervurene, du Vatican. Faites oublier aux noirs leurs ancêtres.

7° Ne présentez jamais une chaise à un noir qui vient vous voir. Donnez-lui tout au plus une cigarette. Ne l'invitez jamais à dîner même s'il vous tue une poule chaque fois que vous arrivez chez lui.

8° Considérez tous les noirs comme de petits enfants que vous devez continuer à tromper. Exigez qu'ils vous appellent tous "mon père".

9° Criez au communisme et à la persécution quand ils vous demandent de cesser de les tromper et de les exploiter.

Ce sont là chers Compatriotes, quelques-uns des principes que vous appliquerez sans faille. Vous en trouverez beaucoup d'autres dans des livres et textes qui vous seront remis à la fin de cette séance.

Le Roi attache beaucoup d'importance à votre mission. Aussi a-t-il décidé de faire tout pour vous la faciliter. Vous jouirez de la très grande protection des Administratifs.

Vous aurez de l'argent pour vos oeuvres Evangéliques et vos déplacements.

Vous recevrez gratuitement des terrains de construction pour leur mise en valeur, vous pourrez disposer d'une main d'oeuvre gratuite.

Voilà donc Révérends Pères et Chers Compatriotes, ce que j'ai été prié de vous faire savoir en ce jour.

Main dans la main, travaillons donc pour la grandeur de notre Chère Patrie.

Vive le Souverain,

Vive la Belgique.

Source: Avenir colonial Belge, 30 octobre 1920, Bruxelles.

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SOURCES

A. Archive collections

1. Aequatoria archives (catalogue may be consulted via www.aequatoria.be)

I had every facility and material available to me thanks to the care and enthusiastic assistance of Father Honoré Vinck, the director of the Aequatoria research centre.

The "Ecoles" collection, one of the main sections of the archives, provided the foundation material for our research. Other collections (the Hulstaert collection and Boelaert collection) were also consulted, albeit sporadically. The "Ecoles" collection was available to us on microfilm. The other collections could always be consulted with Honoré Vinck in Lovenjoel.

In addition Honoré Vinck was also an irreplaceable help in finding all kinds of individual documents and information and always kept his own library in Lovenjoel open to us.

2. Archives of the Sacred Heart Missionaries in Boelaerlei, Borgerhout.

The personal archives and library of the Sacred Heart Missionaries in their community in Borgerhout are also under the direction of Honoré Vinck. These were also consulted, specifically for reading the periodicals of the MSC aspirants, *De Vloed* and *De Toekomst*, the reports of the mission club, for searching all kinds of specific information and for finding visual material (maps and photographs).

3. Africa Archives, Belgian Foreign Ministry, Karmelietenstraat 15, 1000 Brussels. The "Missions" collection was consulted. More specifically the following file numbers were consulted in detail:

no. 604: period before 1914, includes the correspondence from / with the Trappists / Redemptorists

no. 635: contains information on the Trappists in the Coquilhatville region in the 1914-1940 period.

no. 647: "Inspection - statistiques / écoles libres"; contains correspondence over the years 1925-1927 (according to the inventory), including a file on Coquilhatville.

no. 649: continuation of 647, year 1928.

The archives contained a large quantity of material still in the inventory stage. Electronic processing of the data was in progress during our consultations (May-August 2001). A section of the electronic inventory is accessible. A number of portfolios were consulted from there, specifically the numbers:

10.776 "Congo Belge Année 1933"

12.432 "Inspection MEU CBM BMS"

12.452 "Inspection VA Coq 1949 à 1953"

16.484 "Rapports d'inspection écoles primaires"

19.289 "Rapports mensuels hopital des noirs / groupe scolaire Coq."

4. Catholic documentation and research centre for religion, culture and society (Katholiek documentatie- en onderzoekscentrum voor religie, cultuur en samenleving) (KADOC), Vlamingenstraat 39, 3000 Leuven.

In addition to a number of individual documents and sources, I was also able to consult a few collections at the KADOC. The most important of these was certainly the "De Cleene - De Jonghe Papers" of which file numbers 13, 26, 58, 66, 70, 89, 95, 107, 109, 136, 143, 169, 193, 198, 211, 221-222, 230, 247-249,

251, 253 and 256 were consulted in detail. In addition, earlier archival research in the “Brys Papers” was also used.

5. University archives K.U.Leuven, Ladeuzeplein, 3000 Leuven.

A few files were specifically consulted in the Archives of rector Paulin Ladeuze, namely the file “centre infirmiers-missionnaires” and the file “école commerciale”.

6. Other archive collections

- Archives of the Lazarist Fathers, Kardinaalstraat 2, 3000 Leuven.

Individual documents relating to the activity of the Sisters of Charity; Mission periodicals.

- Jules Cornet Papers (Brothers of the Christian Schools), Fexhe-Glin.

Documentation, collected by Brother Cornet, amongst others on the basis of his own research in the archives of the parent house of the Brothers in Rome.

- Lies Van Rompaey Notes

The notes and documentation made and collected during the research project that resulted in the publication of “In het teken van de bevoogding” were made available to us, very methodically ordered, by Lies Van Rompaey. This documentation contains a large number of articles or summaries thereof and extensive notes and transcriptions of documents from archive collections of a number of Catholic congregations in Rome, active over the entire territory of the Belgian Congo. Specifically the notes relating to the Brothers of the Christian Schools were very useful to us.

B. Periodicals consulted

1. Mission periodicals

Annalen van Onze Lieve Vrouw van het Heilig Hart.

Borgerhout: Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

Volumes 37 (1926) - 71 (1960).

Annales de la congrégation de la mission et de la compagnie des Filles de la Charité.

Volumes 90 (1925) - 125 (1960).

Bulletin des Ecoles Chrétiennes.

Volumes 1 (1907) - 41 (1960).

De kleine bode van de H. Vincentius a Paulo en van de gelukzalige Louise de Marillac.

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Volumes 1 (1939) - 17 (1960).

2. Other periodicals

La Voix du Congolais.

Léopoldville: La Voix du Congolais.

Numbers. 1 (1945) - 165 (1959).

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Bamanya: Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

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The Igbo Concept Of Mother Musicianship



Mgba tuned drum row

Music is a 'woman', and intuitive creative management of life is more of a feminine attribute. Music is a communion, a social communion that nourishes spirituality, and manages socialisation during public events. These are some of the philosophical and concrete rationalizations that guided the indigenous categorization of an extraordinary performance-composer irrespective of gender or age as a mother musician as per indigenous terminological evidence in Africa. A composer gestates and gives birth to sonic phenomena.

Musical meaning has been discussed from the indigenous perspective as being based on the factors of musical sense, psychical tolerance and musical intention. The practice of performance-composition has also been identified as processing the realisation and approval of musical meaning as per context. Central to the philosophy of musical meaning as a society's conceptualization of creative genius are the creative personalities who interpret and extend the musical factors as well as the musical facts of a culture. Such specialists are sensitive to the socio-musical factors contingent on a musical context at the same time as they are the repositories of the theory of composition in a musical arts tradition. Socio-musical factors here categorize those non-musical circumstances of a music-making situation that inform the architecture of a performance-composition; while musical facts are the essential elements of creative configurations that furnish musical arts theory.

The concept of mother musicianship, where found, no doubt varies from one indigenous musical arts culture area to another, and will be defined according to how a society values, utilizes and regulates the musical arts as a cultural institution. Although reference will be made to concepts of musicianship in a few related culture areas, the main purpose here is to examine the concept in the Igbo context.

Qualities of mother musicianship

The Igbo mother musician must be cognizant of, and acknowledged in the organization and execution of the art of contextual composition. This definition

hinges on four key terms: Cognizance, Acknowledgement, Organization and Execution in the musical management of life and events.

Cognizance

Cognizance defines the ability to formulate and communicate musical sense in a culture's medium of musical expression subject to the society's cultural sonic references and psychical tolerance. Such a performer is then a specialized musical artiste. The Igbo theory of practical musicianship recognizes the following levels of expertise that qualify categories of practitioners:

- *Onye egwu* for any artist who is competently engaged in any of the indigenous creative and performance arts *Onye isi egwu*, for a leader of a performing group.

When exceptional capability is being assessed, specifically descriptive metaphors are used to denote:

- *Onye nwe egwu* - a star, the 'owner', the embodiment of expertise in a particular musical arts type under consideration;

- *Di egwu* - the 'husband', maestro of a music or dance type;

- *Onye ji nkpu egwu* - the 'mystifying wizard', the ultimate reference in expertise and knowledge.

Much of the literature on African music and musicality tend to imply that everybody in African, south of the Sahara is a dancer and a musician; and that Africans, generally, are exceptionally rhythmic. Without intending to hold brief for all Africa, it is pertinent to observe that everybody with African genetic instincts has a latent capability to dance or play music, and has a secure sense of rhythm. These are cultural rather than automatic African biological phenomena. Experiences deriving from many years of teaching music in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria, reveal that an Igbo person could be as baffled by the configurations of Igbo music and dance rhythms as anybody from any other culture marooned in the Igbo music complexity. But such student-cases are usually Igbo students who are born and brought up in the contemporary urban Igbo environment. Such an environment of upbringing does not expose them to the peculiar rhythms of the Igbo cultural activities. Their introduction to structured rhythmic activities starts with Western church hymn tunes, modern popular music and simple Western classical music that lack indigenous rhythmic

sensitization of mind and body. As a result, they arrive at the University to start grappling with the realities of Igbo indigenous music and rhythm for the first time as performers. I discovered that apart from boasting Igbo nationality and language, I was dealing with foreigners to Igbo sense of rhythm. Some eventually achieve progress because of awakened genetic consciousness after a period of adult enculturation in the university. This is equally true of Yoruba, Efik and other music students from other Nigerian societies with similar backgrounds, as one cannot really talk of Igbo-specific rhythmic configurations. The patterns of deploying the body in ordinary activities of normal living inculcate the basic rhythmic instincts that become systematically structured into music and dance activities.

The phenomenon of African innate sense of rhythm as a specific cultural factor could be discussed as accruing from the distinctive patterns of movement naturally adopted for performing the habitual cultural activities of the indigenous life style that marks an African culture group.

Cultural rhythm

It is necessary to examine some cultural foundations for Igbo musical arts expressions. A child of, maybe, five years carries on her, or his, back a toddler of about one year. With her load she executes rhythmically organized steps and turns. At the same time she is gently jogging her/his body with its load, up and down in a different time-space motion. The exercise is expected to soothe a crying child to keep quite or maybe rocking a child to sleep. At other times the toddler clings to the back of the carrier without additional support while the carrier may be engaged in a dancing quiz-game that requires her to use her legs and hands in other intricate movements while the toddler is balanced and bobbed about on her [the carrier's] torso. Thus there are three rhythmically poly-linear, but coordinated applications of the body parts of the carrier: the legs, the torso, and the hands.

Igbo boys and girls carry pots, baskets, firewood etc. on the head in indigenous societies. From the age of four or five when a child starts being useful around the house, she begins to carry loads appropriate to her size. The technique of carrying loads emphasizes balance and body symmetry. At the same time the style is intentionally an artistic-aesthetic exercise for children, although on rare occasions accidents may occur. The load is balanced on a soft pad on the head; and it is an artistic game to walk without holding the precious pot of water, for

instance. To do this requires subtle adjustments of the parts of the body while 'walk-dancing' at a regular pace that could be faster than normal. The body is divided into four dimensions of coordinated but independent rhythmic planes: the legs, torso, hands and head. Even though the load should ordinarily be carried on the head supported with one or two hands, children prefer the game of keeping the hands off it, and balancing it with no other support than the rhythmic counterpoint of various parts of the body, the sight of which is quite supple and graceful.

When there are a number of children moving with loads on their heads it becomes a comparative game. If the load falls off by any fortuitous chance and breaks, you could cry to show that you are sorry, although that may not mitigate the scolding due to you when you arrive home with wet cheeks and a head-pad without load.

When cutting firewood, pounding, sweeping the compound, stamping mud for building a house etc., it is the same contrapuntal application and manipulation of multiple body rhythm. You do not have to sing unless you are in the mood. If you sing, it does not have to be a 'pounding' song or a 'sweeping' song. It could be a song from your dance group repertory, or a folk tale song, or any song selected from your entire culture's repertory, or a spontaneous original composition to express your mood. If you sing, it is not necessarily because it promotes the activity of pounding, or that you are culturally required to supply a melody to the rhythm of pounding. It would be a contemplative celebration at a psychical level while executing the mechanical motions of pounding, for instance, at a physically coordinated level.

During the Second World War when Igbo men, women and children were commandeered to provide either the manpower or the economy that would help Britain, the colonial masters, win their 'private' war, Igbo women were most enthusiastic about the win-the-war economic exploitation of their time and energy. There was a drive for palm nut-cracking activity involving the women. For this exercise, they were organized as work gangs, although each person had to work independently and contribute the fruits of her labour to the common pool.

Palm Kernel Song

Example 1a

Prisoners' Work (or Dance?) Song

Example 1b

Example 1a -Palm Kernel Song
/ 1b - Prisoners' Work

A propaganda song (Ex. 1a) was composed to promote, not necessarily the physical activity of cracking palm nut, rather, the psychological propaganda that they should deprive themselves in order that Britain should win the war. Although I was small at the time, we got involved, age notwithstanding, in the palm nut-cracking assignment. The so-called palm nut-cracking song, despite the appropriateness of the text, inhibited rather than promoted the physical activity. What is worse, it was in the character of a hymn tune, and could not be said to be an Igbo song, apart from the text. The text and melody of the song make the point:

Kpam! Kpam! Kpam! Kányi néti aku

(Kpam! Kpam! Kpam! We are cracking palm nuts)

Anyi néti nke anyi ga ele

(We are shelling so that we can sell)

Anyi etinugoli aku

(Even if we have shelled previously)

Anyi ga etiwanye ozo

(We will continue to contribute)

Ka'nyi welu dinu n'otu melie agha

(So that we will be united in order to win the war).

This is obviously a typical case of 'work song' that was introduced in the 1940's probably in the belief that the African cannot work without song. It was not

structured to the pulse and rhythm of the palm nut cracking routine, so it did not enhance the execution of the physical activity. It was, therefore, more useful for campaigns and for moving about in the house, or making clothes on a sewing machine.

Another 'typical' work song is that by the prisoners while cutting grass (Ex. 1b). In this instance the physical activity was structured to the song and its pulse and rhythm flow. But because it is not necessarily conceived to promote labour, it ensured that the prisoners spent more time dancing to the music, a healthy exercise, than in producing any impressive outcome from the manual labour. The grass-cutting motion occurs on the first beat of an eight-beat song cycle:

Onye suba achala onye suba

(Everybody cuts grass like every other person)

Onye akpona ibe ya onye ikoli

(Let nobody call his fellow a prisoner)

This 'typical' work song that has many versions, was probably intended to prompt the prisoners to cut grass to rhythm. The song is as old as the modern prisons in Igbo society, and is exclusive to prisoners although the Nigerian police band waxed a highlife dance music derivation of it.

The incidence of music in labour activities has so far been categorized as work music/song in ethnomusicological literature. Cultural terminologies as well as explanations by the music owners and users, at least in the culture area used as the model for this study, do not support such assumptions and classification. Hence there is the need to re-examine the concept of work music/song as well as the nature and utilitarian intentions of the corpus of indigenous music hitherto categorized as work music. There are music types associated with organized trade or labour groups. Such associational music may or may not be featured during the process and mechanics of production distinguishing a trade or labour specialisation. Rather, the music identifies the trade group or labour team as a social and common interest group (*otu*) without necessarily being of productive or structural significance if featured in labour situations. In other words the music is not necessarily 'action or labour-facilitating music' suited to the physical motions of production. It could be a mood music background affective at the psychological

level of inspiration or anguish. It becomes inspirational music or song of suffering in its social or musical classification. The music corpus so far classified as work music/songs are distinctive of occupational groups/teams, and are, therefore associational, *otu*, music categories that give the groups/teams social identity. They are used and enjoyed primarily in celebrative or recreational contexts or otherwise as inspirational music incidental to other in-group interactions that could include the activities of production. The rhythm and texture of the music are not necessarily appropriate to the characteristic motions of labour that are, therefore, of little relevance in the conception, creation and making of the music. Work music, implying music conceived to enable the execution of the physical process of an activity, would thus seem to be a misperception of the social intentions as well as the utilitarian and creative dynamics of such music types. In fact some music items incidental to work situations, and which are thus classified as work music/songs, are music types conceived, created and performed for other social-cultural contexts. It is more appropriate to categorize trade/associational music, *egwu otu*, and inspirational music, which as such could be incidental to the labour activities of the owners and users of the music. Further sub-classifications would specify hunters' music, farmers' music, fishermen's music, etc.

It is possible that other cultures may have what could be analyzed as music intended to aid manual labour. The Igbo, traditionally, have music while they work and not necessarily work music. A woman could sing the same song while she is cutting vegetables, pounding food, fetching water, washing dresses or dishes, breast-feeding a baby etc. The tune could be original or could be a popular ballad. The rhythms of pounding, sweeping, mud-stamping, grinding, etc., are work rhythms, often intrinsically irregular and not specifically structured to musical rhythms. An inspired person could superimpose a tune on work-rhythms to suit the mood or feelings in the same way as a person could sing while taking a bath without categorizing the music as bath music.

The few examples discussed distinguish cultural rhythm from 'work' music, and illustrate what I mean by the fundamental patterns of rhythmic cognition needed to accomplish the cultural normal activities of the Igbo life style. In other words the character of Igbo work-rhythms inform the Igbo rhythm sensibility, which is not exclusively musical, and may exhibit cultural peculiarity. In a music-making and dancing situation every Igbo person has the cultural sensitization to coordinate multi-dimensional body rhythms, which Kauffman (1980:402) has

alluded to, when interpreting a given action-rhythm intention of a style/type of music. Given a chance, he could also perform, with sustained regularity, basic rhythmic patterns on a music instrument. These are extensions of innate sense of motion, and additionally, an acquired cultural sense of rhythm or cultural motor behaviour, which are notionally musical without necessarily being a phenomenon exclusive to music making. This capability cannot, and should not, be interpreted to mean that everybody is a competent dancer or a musician. In other words, every Igbo, by virtue of acquiring Igbo cultural rhythm, can demonstrate the fundamental rhythm-sense ordinarily expected of what is peculiarly Igbo in music and dance. But to become what could be categorized as a competent Igbo dancer or musician requires a level of expertise much beyond the common advantages of cultural rhythm.

Cross-cultural references

Every human person is naturally, even if not culturally, musical. Some writers contend, albeit vaguely, that every African is a musician, while others are a bit more cautious. Thus Alakija (1993) proposes that every African is gifted to be a composer. A logical extension of the proposal would make everybody in the world a possibly, gifted composer by virtue of being a notionally musical human. Messenger (1958:22) credits the Anang culture group of Cross River State in Nigeria, who are ethnic neighbours of the Igbo, with claiming that 'every one can dance and sing well'. In another publication Messenger also reports that the Anang

... assume that under ordinary circumstances any person can learn to sing, dance act, weave, carve, play musical instruments, and recite folklore in a manner considered exceptional by unbiased Western aestheticians, and Anang culture rewards in numerous ways the acquisition of these abilities (Messenger 1973: 125)

Messenger's report can be accepted only on the basis of discussing standard capabilities although there are problems with his view that the assessment of 'a manner considered exceptional' has to be from the perspective of 'unbiased Western aestheticians'. He poses the paradoxical situation in which 'culture rewards in numerous ways the acquisition of these [artistic] abilities' in a culture where everybody is able and free to achieve 'exceptional' artistic excellence.

I conducted fieldwork in Anang in 1967, and I learned from observations and

interviews in Abak that everyone can no longer dance and sing well probably for reasons of disabled cultural upbringing. I was specifically directed to meet three musicians the villagers recommended highly. One of them, Umo, satisfied the concept of a mother musician as already discussed in this study. He was an expert performer on the xylophone. He was an exceptional performer on *Ekong* music. And he performed on the row of open-ended tuned membrane drums, four in a row, used in *Ekpo* music. He was accompanied by a group of young percussionists whom he conducted with body signs as well as musical cues. The percussionists played open-ended membrane drums hung on poles, two or three players to one drum, each playing with two drums sticks, and all combining to produce a barrage of mono-toned patterns. In addition to conducting the ensemble, Umo directed, through his tuned drums, the dance-drama acts of every *ekpo* spirit manifest artist. The spirit manifest, mis-perceptually termed masquerades, acted their danced-drama anecdotes in turns, one after the other. Umo was open to spontaneous criticism by the cultural audience, but was such a confident artist that he did not mind bluffing occasionally.

During a second field trip to Anang in 1967, I took along a class of music students from the Music Department of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to meet Umo and observe him direct the *ekpo* danced-drama from his music stand. Umo was so happy at seeing us that he drank himself tipsy before the performance. He was so tipsy that he got careless and was not marshalling the actions of the spirit manifests properly. The traditional ruler of the community who was in our company cautioned him. But Umo retorted by challenging the traditional ruler, or any other person present who felt competent, to come and take over. Nobody felt up to taking over, and I doubt that anybody present could have because *ekong* is a specialist instrumental music style. But the spirit manifest actors were most disappointed with Umo as he made them limp through their acts. If they made signs of disapproval Umo would merely snicker. An anticlimax was reached when the principal actor, *eka ekpo*, (mother *ekpo*) who usually climaxes and concludes a performance session, came out and had to protest vigorously, in mime, against the discomfiture Umo was occasioning the masked actors. The mother *ekpo* was so offended that, to the disappointment of all of us, she merely took a turn of dance-mime to indicate her skill, and then stalked back in anger into the *ekpo* grove from where each actor emerged.

Umo took all the criticisms unruffled. But later he confided that they could

reprimand him but would not really dislodge him because there was no one good enough to play and communicate as effectively with the actors. He apologized for having taken more wine than he ought to, before a show. But the incident does demonstrate that even though everybody is capably musical in Anang society, not everybody does achieve exceptional musical ability required of a mother. It further makes points about standards of cultural artistic expression, criticism and aesthetic.

Nketia (1954: 39) points out that the art of a mother drummer role is inheritable and learned in the Akan society of Ghana, and that it is believed a person could be a born drummer. Gadzekpo (1952: 621), reports about the Ewe of Ghana that inheritance is a factor, but adds that a person from a non-drumming family could also learn and mother the art of drumming. In effect, the ability to become a mother drummer in both Ghanaian societies could be ascribed or achieved. Either way it has to be developed through a process of learning and dedicated practice. Blacking states, concerning the Venda, South Africa that musical ability is not a matter of special talent, rather a matter of opportunity and encouragement. From his various published accounts about Venda music and cultural practices, we learn that specialists such as the mother drummer, *matsige*, are recognized, and that his presence in a district inspires young admirers to practice to attain his level of expertise. In other circumstances, especially with respect to dancing ability, Blacking informs that exceptional capability could be suggested to individuals from the ruling class who thereby 'perform better because they have devoted more time and energy to it' (Blacking 1965; 1976).

Merriam (1964: 68) reports that the Basongye of the Congo recognise that some individuals lack musical abilities for reasons associated with heritage. So there is a concept of a 'gifted' musician 'whose talents come through inheritance'. Basden (1921: 120) notes about the Igbo that talent is recognized and that musicians 'are treated with great respect'.

When at the age of nine I spent one year in my mother's community in Nnewi, Igboland, attending school, I belonged to a children's music (mask and dance) group in the community. My grandmother, with whom I lived, was a devout Christian convert with strict Christian attitudes that condemned indigenous musical arts practices, she could not effectively prevent me from playing with my mates. So we struck a compromise that restrained me from 'entering the children's mask' (*ibu mmanwu*) myself. It was not every child in the community

that belonged to the popular children's masking practice type called *nwabuja*. But many would troop after us whenever we performed along the streets and in the playgrounds. Also during the early years of my life, which I spent in the southern Igbo towns with my father, we still managed to evade surveillance and form children's musical arts groups. It was only a few of the children in the community around where we lived that participated. Within the group we made fun of those who could neither play nor dance well. And they never took such ridicules without trying to save face by provoking scuffles that often ended our performances.

In effect then, by virtue of acquired cultural rhythm, every Igbo should be capable of interpreting fundamental Igbo dance rhythms, and play music. When it is a matter of singing and playing simple tunes with syncopations, probably anybody could play. But when it comes to the level of ability to spontaneously compose extensions of melodies or melorhythms to interpret a context, experts emerge from a group of average practitioners because, in the first instance, they are gifted, and have also applied their faculties to acquiring specialist knowledge through practice. The general observation that so far credits every African with a capability to participate in the music and dance of her/his community is therefore informed by cultural factors other than automatic African musicality. But the fact that there are knowledgeable experts within a generality of participants commands probing beyond the cultural fundamentals to consider the factors of the developed artistic acumen, *agugu isi*. The acumen, and its development according to cultural norms, accrues exceptional knowledgeable in any aspect of musical arts specialisation.

Acknowledgement

Public acknowledgement of competence validates general cognizance of a culture's standards creativity and performance. This presupposes an audience that is conversant with, and critical of the ramifications of musical sense in a culture. Acknowledgement has two aspects: the social personality of the musician, and the artistic quality or suitability of a performance informed by the markers of style and content.

Social aspect

The musician must be seen as a person in society. The society assesses a person primarily on the basis of social personality and the circumstances of human achievement and lifestyle. In some societies musicians tend to exhibit peculiar,

often ascribed, behavioural traits, and are consequently classified as a social category, especially highly stratified societies.

Ames and King (1971) observe in the stratified socio-political system of the Hausa of Nigeria that musicians are treated as a class. Within that class, musicians further distinguish themselves according to classes. Ames (1973) further indicates that the Hausa have no single generic word for the various categories of musicians. In the categories listed by Ames and King, the Hausa have *marok'an saarakuna*, for instance, as praise musicians attached to patrons. To this category belongs 'anybody who acclaims another, whether solicited or not, in the hope of obtaining reward as a means of livelihood'. But they could earn additional income during naming and marriage ceremonies. They classified the range of Hausa musicians into:

- Court musicians and acclaimers with official status in courts;
- Performers tied to distinct class of patrons like farmers;
- Hunters and blacksmiths but who have no titles;
- Free lancers and semi-professionals and non-professionals who are not considered by themselves or their audience to be *marak'a* (Ames and King 1971).

Here, therefore, we find musicians being acknowledged on the basis of their social attributes in a class society, and not on the basis of their musical arts ability. Thus a Hausa musician is born into a class and recognized as such, irrespective of his level of expertise.

Ames' (1973) view is that the Hausa musician is a 'social specialist' as well as a professional in the sense that his social reference is as a musician, and he earns his living through making music as a trade. Within the class there is a distinction between a performer with ordinary technical skill and one with originality, inventiveness, and the ability to improve. According to Ames these qualities are assessed by how the music affects the audience. There is, therefore, recognition of outstanding musicians. We also find that although the Hausa may admire the art of a musician, he has little respect for a musician, socially. It could be deduced from these accounts that the Hausa musician of any classification or categorization has no direct organisational responsibility for the way an event for which he performs is enacted. His music also appears to be peripheral to its social

context.

Merriam (1973: 257) argues that the musician is a 'specialist' in whatever culture he is found, and further qualifies his use of the term as 'economic specialist'. His qualification applies to the Hausa example as perceived by Ames, and also the Basongye. In the indigenous Igbo society the musician is not an 'economic specialist' unless we could regard a university professor in Economics who gets an allowance for playing the organ during Sunday services in his parish church as an economic specialist. Merriam further argues that 'the "true" specialist is a social specialist; he must be acknowledged as a musician by the members of the society of which he is a part' (Merriam 1964: 125), and that the ultimate criterion for professionalism hinges on this. In the Igbo society the ultimate criterion for musicianhip hinges only partly on social acknowledgement.

Fances Bebey (1975) cautions that it would be a mistake to assume that all Africans are necessarily musicians, in a brief study of a class of professional musicians fairly well distributed over the northern areas of West Africa and generally identified as 'griots'. Griots have local names in various West African societies where they are found. In Gambia they are known as the *jali* (Knight 1974). Griots are found in the Fali of Guinea and the Bambara of Mali (Gorer 1949). They belong to a menial social class, and the accounts about them indicate that they are not buried in the ground so that their corpses would not desecrate it. They were rather buried in hollow tree-trunks so that their bodies would not bring a curse such as barrenness of the earth. The griots were indigenously treated as the lowest group in the class or social hierarchy of their various class societies. And from all accounts they apparently did everything to exploit their derogated status to economic advantage. On the other hand, according to Bebey's account, they are feared because as genealogy singers and satiric minstrels, they ferret out many social secrets: 'They know everything that is going on and ... can recall events that are no longer within living memory' (Bebey 1975: 24). They are treated with 'contempt' because of their interaction traits that include insulting a patron who did not reward them sufficiently for praise. At the same time

... the virtuoso of the griot command universal admiration. This virtuosity is the culmination of long years of study and hard work (Bebey 1975: 24). [Griots] are extraordinary musicians with outstanding talent who play an extremely important role in their respective societies. Their knowledge of the customs of the people and courtly life in all countries where they exercise their art gives them definite

advantages; for the whole life of the people, its monarch, and ministers, is preserved intact in the infallible memory of the griots (27-8).

As such the griots could be argued as evoking ambivalent social acknowledgement: derogated and feared, lowly but powerful, socially-politically indispensable but discriminated. Gorer (1949) reports that they could be very rich, and exercise great influence over the life and activities of those whom they serve. The griots' model presents a paradoxical situation where a group in a society is respected and admired as knowledgeable, full time professional musicians, but is, at the same time, held in low esteem because of the social status ascribed to them. Bebey also infers that they are extreme individualists; a self centred and self-seeking group whose music is not necessarily conceived as an indispensable factor in social institutions other than articulating social classes. Their music, it would seem, is a luxury in the art of living. A griot plays for what he could get, and uses the art to insult for what he is not given.

Mvet players of southern Cameroon and Gabon are itinerant professional entertainers like the griots, but they do not ply their trade on the same terms. *Mvet* players use the harp either to accompany mythical tales, and are highly regarded by their audiences (Bebey 1975). What the *Mvet* players have in common with the griot is that their music is in the music-event category, that is, for social entertainment (Nzewi 1977).

In some societies that are organised as monarchies there are musician-families, many of which are attached to the court, and are maintained as professionals by the ruler. Nketia's (1954: 40-1) report recommends that the Akan court drummers belong to this category, although the situation has been changing, and they are no longer content to be solely dependent on the courts. He distinguishes between mother drummers and secondary drummers. The former 'conducts' the performance of the whole orchestra. The secondary drummer requires just enough expertise to provide persistent, accompanying 'contrasting' themes, or those themes that underline the basic beats, or provide the ground bass for the music. The mother drummers are those that give the music its fullness, and quite often its distinctive character. A drummer is required to know his art as well as the duties required of him, including the 'conventions and routines of dances and matters of procedure' (*ibid* . : 36). Among the Yoruba of Nigeria there are also drum families some of whom are attached to the courts as in the example of the Timi of Ede's court.

Social acknowledgement is, as such, not necessarily synonymous with social respect in the indigenous African reckoning of specialist musicianship. The specialist or subsistence professional musician could be accorded recognition on the merits of artistic expertise without attracting much social prestige thereby. There would, therefore, be a tendency for such musicians not to be too particular about personal integrity except probably in the case of court drummers, for instance, where lack of integrity could affect the image of the ruler or the conduct of court events. Some societies have terminologies with which to recognise musicians as a distinctive group of specialists whose social status is primarily dependent on other social factors, such as the ascribed class of birth that is not necessarily informed or determined by their skill or specialization as musicians. They could be seen as trade-professionals in a sense that would not automatically implicate artistic expertise.

Proficient musical arts practitioners in the Igbo society enjoy the same status and opportunities, by right of birth and extra-musical achievements, as every other member of the society. They could achieve any height in the social hierarchy, and perform without any compelling social ascriptions. The specialist musical arts practitioner performs in order to avail the society of the exceptional skill acquired, and is compensated with appropriate societal acknowledgement. Such extraordinary attainment accrues the musical arts specialist additional social distinctions. When she is performing within her society she is not necessarily paid for her artistic expertise. But her music group could be engaged on a customary token fee, to make special performance-appearances. A musician is required to have a normal subsistence occupation. She could then charge fees for engagements on the principle of making up for the workdays lost in fulfilling a privately contracted musical arts engagement. She is acknowledged as a person in society first on the basis of what she does for a living apart from playing music; and also on her social integrity: how she conforms to the norms of behaviour and discipline of her society without reference to the additional specialization or stature as a musician. The special factor of being a musician becomes additional recommendation that boosts rather than detracts from extra-musically attained social stature. And her music making is conceived and programmed as an input factor in the organisation and enactment of Igbo social systems and institutions.

Artistic aspect

With reference to artistic proficiency, expertise has been argued as an innate

capability that is exceptionally developed, and not an automatic endowment by the advantage of being born into an Igbo culture. The debate on whether there is such a phenomenon as talent as opposed to environment, opportunity, and encouragement, remains unresolved, and continues to engage the attention of scholars. I argue that normative cognitive skill in the musical arts is the birth potentiality of everybody in the society, and could be developed through practical engagement during in-cultural upbringing. Whereas not everybody is an expert musical arts performer, everybody could be a cognitive critical audience. Hence Blacking (1976: 46) argues about the Venda: 'Judgement is based on the performer's display of technical brilliance and originality, and the vigour and confidence of his execution'. The society has criteria for evaluating standards of musical arts creativity and criticism. In such a situation the gifted musician has freedom to create within such ethnic criteria while her audience respects the creative freedom but checks any tendency towards unrestrained individualism. At other times the structure and expectations of the social context in which the musical arts is operational, and/or the musical arts style itself, model and control the scope of creative freedom in certain musical arts types.

Specialization in instrumental performance commands instruments that demand special skills. These have been referred to in the literature as master (mother) instruments. Although the opportunity and ability to become proficient on such instruments is the advantage of a few in the community, everybody in the society by reason of exposure or cultural assimilation could develop the cognitive intellect to evaluate the standard of performances on the instruments. So that while a few are skilful in the art of specialized musical arts, recognition of mother status proves the musical perspicacity of the audience. In the final analyses, therefore, it is the audience that acknowledges the exceptional musical genius of a few in the community who have achieved extraordinary expertise - both technical and creative - that mark specialist musicians and dancers and dramatists. The principle of rating expertise based on acknowledgement of skill warrants that an Igbo celebrant who is organising a prestigious event could ignore practitioners in own patrilineage or community, and search farther afield to engage practitioners reputed for outstanding merit in the particular musical arts type needed.

Organization

Cognizance and acknowledgement require further qualifications before the

attribution of expertise to a degree that would make an Igbo refer to an artist as 'attaining the ultimate degree of its essence' as different from 'leader of a music type'. Organization is taken into account. The importance of organization is stressed because it is in the contextual organization of the musical arts production and presentation that musical meaning emerges and becomes validated. Organization here has two levels: the personal, and the event itself.

Personal organization

A knowledgeable musical arts expert is conscious of her esteem in the Igbo society where good reputation is assiduously built up in order to elevate one's social stature in any field of human endeavour. In such a comparative achievement milieu as marks the Igbo society every person strives to excel in any trade or artistic engagement, in order to emerge as the icon of achievement in a field of expertise. So, to achieve eminence is one thing, and to maintain it is another. If a person's social reputation drops to a low rating, the artistic reputation would not guarantee her continued top public acknowledgement. The Igbo would ask: 'Is he the indispensable that would prevent an event from taking place?' And recognition would pass on to a more responsible artist who may be less accomplished.

The leader of a music group is responsible for the organization and discipline of the group, and ensures a high standard of social and artistic reputation for the group. The type of licenses and peculiar social irresponsibility allowable to expert musicians in some other societies does not obtain in the Igbo society. Merriam (1964: 123-44) offers an extensive sampling based on the reports of many field researchers, on the social behaviour of musicians in various world societies. It would appear from the reports recorded in Merriam's book that the social regard accorded musicians within a society goes a long way towards determining how they organise themselves as social personalities in the society.

Event organization

The mother musician is the maker of a musical event, i.e., the stimulator of musical intention. The musician's ability to understand and interpret with cognitive insight a musical arts type instituted for an event and its observance in the Igbo society is probably more important, therefore, than her personal organization. The expert musician is here required not only to be knowledgeable about what makes musical meaning in a given context, but more so, to be knowledgeable about the structure and the customary procedure for the event in

which her music is involved, especially if it is an event-music (Nzewi, 1977). Mother instruments are more commonly found associated with specific events of high institutional hierarchy in the Igbo society. In such instances the musical arts serves as the frame of reference on which the scenario, as well as the interpretative scope of the event, depends for a satisfactory realisation. The mother musician has the task to coordinate the music in a manner that would underscore the event-mood, interpret the scenic activities, and generally promote the fulfilment of the objective of an event. She has, in addition, to be sensitive to the reactions of the actors and the audience in order to sustain action and interest. She has to compose and arrange at every event-occasion according to the structural eventualities of the particular occasion, as what transpires during every occasion of an event is a variant elaboration of the prescribed standard expectations typifying such an event. If she should fail to generate the mood as well as sustain the interest of the audience and actors, the event would not be a success and the event-musician would lose acclaim.

Thus, the role of the mother musician does not end with being a mother of her music (that is, making musical sense). Rather, it begins with that, and ends with applying the skill to capably transacting the meaning of the musical arts type in event context. It is especially in the context of being the organizer of the structural-contextual intentions of the music that the term mother musician has relevance and application in the Igbo society. A dextrous performer on a finger piano (*ubo aka*) could be acknowledged as an expert musician (*onye egwu*), but not as a mother musician, 'without whose role there would be no event' (*afugh n'ejegh*); that is to say, who is the maker and marker of an event.

Execution

In performing the role of the organizer of an event the mother musician's integrity in executing the musical arts type as a phenomenon that transcends its institutional use is highly cherished. Artistic integrity and sensitivity in execution, that is, performance-composition that communicates effectively the conceived musical meaning, complete the qualifications of a mother musician. She must possess talent as a matter of creative flair; skill as a matter of technical proficiency; and timing as a matter of social responsibility and dramatic or event sensitivity.

It is necessary to make a distinction between skilful conformity, and creative originality. That some good musicians die and live on through their musical

legacies, while others live acknowledged but die forgotten, is not necessarily because they were competent within a given tradition, but rather because within conformity they extended the artistic range of a tradition. Quite often this dimension of creative-flair in reckoning musicianship is explained at the level of supernatural endowment. Israel Anyahuru and Nwosu Anyahuru, both of whom are mother musicians in Ngwa, discussed their creative genius on the plane that: 'No man is a creator. Only the Supreme Deity is the creator, and man, the instrument through which He creates'. This is not an echo of Merriam's report about the Bala musicians of Zaire who 'do not admit to composition, holding rather that music comes from *Efile Mukulu* (God) who will it so at that instant'. Merriam interprets the explanation as an apparent absence of any 'purposeful intent to create something aesthetic' among the Bala (Merriam 1973: 179). By their dictum Israel and Nwosu attribute creative capability (talent) and inspiration to the supernatural, while the creative experience within a cultural matrix, is consciously pursued by them as mothers of music. Hence an Ngwa mother musician is always proud to claim that he is the author of a musical creation, or the stylistic adaptation of an extant number. However, the matter of creative originality is merely an extra distinction that marks a mother musician. It should also be borne in mind that the relative importance of a mother musician in a community could be determined by the artistic medium and style of creative expression, as well as the rating of the musical arts type in the community's criteria for hierarchical classification of its musical arts inventory.

Igbo mother musicianship

A mother musician is not, to begin with, necessarily a subsistence professional musician if we take cognizance of the arguments so far adduced from the Igbo situation vis-à-vis the reports about some other societies that have been cited. On the other hand, a professional musician could be, but is not always, a mother musician as in the Hausa example. A professional musician could be a skilled specialist recognized at the level of expertise and sentiment that includes talent. The professional musician who engages in music making or musical arts creativity as a matter of livelihood belongs to a social class in some societies. The Igbo mother musician is committed to music making and musical arts creativity as primarily a matter of artistic integrity, and also because she fulfils a specialized role that makes the musical arts a societal institution, and the practitioner a person of stature in the organization and explication of the other institutions in a society.

To have mother musicians in a society, therefore, the society needs to be cognizant of the concept of the musical arts as a contemplative art because of its intrinsic artistic-aesthetic aspirations, as well as a public utility that effectuates the functioning of other non-musical institutions. Compensations as well as distinctive social recognition accrue to those practitioners central to the fulfilment of such utilitarian intentions.

Mother musicianship is a social-cultural concept of the music-maker and music making as much as it defines creative-artistic expertise. This is the frame of reference in which the term is used in this study that models the Igbo society. The social and musicological portraits of five mother musicians with whom I studied will, it is hoped, bring into clear perspective, the Igbo concept of mother musicianship as well as the Igbo philosophy and theory of the musical arts as illustrative of the indigenous philosophy and epistemology that mark musical arts creativity and practice in Africa.

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