

# When Congo Wants To Go To School - The Educational Climate



Group photo of pupils in Bamanya, 1930. From MSC Archives

## *Moral foundation and worldview*

The clear moralising impact of the curricular was indicated in the previous chapter. This moralising also seems a very good reflection of the climate in which missionary intervention and education took place. This fact was very clearly brought to the fore in the mission periodical of the MSC. It was repeatedly pointed out that, as far as the missionaries were concerned, Christianisation was the most important concern. This remained the same throughout the colonial period, although it levelled off towards the end and was concealed by other, more worldly-oriented educational objectives. In 1926, one of the MSC pioneers, Father Es, wrote about the settlement in Boende: *"We are situated on a small plateau in the middle of the tropical forest, far from the state outpost and every native village, so as to reduce the influence of the heathens and the whites to a minimum. The purer the Christian atmosphere, the better the Christians."*[i] The same Father Es wrote about the lessons themselves: *"Those classes, as dull and monotonous as they are - we know from our own experience of taking them as children - do not bore them. They constantly ask for more. And together with these reading, writing, drawing and maths lessons, the Christian spirit penetrates their heart drop-by-drop. Everything on the mission breathes this exalted spirit which will only make them more human. Our goal is after all not only to form developed Negroes, but also developed Christians."*[ii]

The statements made in the *Annals* sound disarming to contemporary ears, sometimes even shockingly naïve. For this reason they are a good indicator of the state of affairs. The opinions in the metropolis were not so different or more 'elevated' that they needed to mince words. In the end of year edition of the *Annals* in 1931 the following could be read: "*Why mission expansion? Because we need money, our beautiful mission territory around the equator forest, which is six times bigger than Belgium, needs to be provided with more priests, more Brothers, more churches, more schools. Why mission expansion? Because otherwise the Protestants will take advantage! Because otherwise the Protestants, with all their gold, will stack the best part of the harvest in their own stores. (...) Why expansion? Because the need for souls is so great that the waves engulf the ship of the church.*"[iii] That there was a need for souls was obvious to all missionaries and to the home front. That something needed to be done about it was at least as obvious to the missionaries. And the competitive element towards other religious convictions naturally became a part of this.[iv]

Petrus Vertenten, who was an abbot and known as a very cultivated man,[v] wrote in 1930, without mincing his words, that: "*Our principal work is the salvation of souls, and it is going well, very well. Here at the station we regularly have about 500 people who come to the catechetical lessons. They stay here a year and then we have to chase them away to make room for others.*"[vi] Later he also wrote that Congolese children were interested in the mission station: "*To obtain wisdom and knowledge, that is an investment which stays, knowledge to read and write and so many other things and especially to become a Christian.*"[vii] This statement reveals much more about the intentions of the author than of the children. Other missionaries also stated the same motivation: "*It remains noble work, making decent Christians of the black heathen children. That is for a large part the task of the mission Sisters.*"[viii] About the heathens in the bush, in the fifties he wrote: "*Through education and prayer exercises they have more contact with God and they hope to become good Christians.*"[ix]

This was not only propaganda language, reserved for publications intended to promote the missionary cause to the general public. Although some things were worded in attractive language, these sorts of statements are representative of what the missionaries thought. The 'pure Christian culture' element played a big role, which, for example, finds great expression in the writings of Gustaaf Hulstaert. When the influence of the proposed curriculum reform of 1938 filtered

through into the region, he was thoroughly annoyed. In a letter to the governor general he lamented the fact that the primary schools of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Coquilhatville all operated in preparation of secondary education. He was clearly and thoroughly opposed to the proposed 'two track system', under which education had to function both as preparatory and as final education:[x] *"Through the application of your new directives, all the young men from Coq and its surroundings will be isolated because of the broken lives they would lead. Of course, on the one hand you intend an education without any connection with indigenous life which fatally produces semi-intellectuals and classless people; while on the other hand you advocate sending back to the mass of indigenous population, the greater majority of these pupils for whom the education will be completely inappropriate."* Furthermore, Coquilhatville as a centre had a great influence on the surrounding area and the detrimental consequences would have an impact on the whole region. For Hulstaert, *detrimentalisation* was one of the primary consequences of the all too 'Europeanising' education. He compared the situation with that of Europe, where urbanisation was ever increasing together with ethical derailment. In the Congo similar developments would now take place: *"The disastrous effects of the system to which I am protesting are not limited to a certain ridiculous pride, to a snobbism of speaking French and copying the European. The danger is more serious; it attacks the foundations of the indigenous society itself: it is a question of life or death for them."*

Hulstaert was complaining about the general intention of the education. The stimulation of education in and of the French language was an important signal but it was certainly not the only element in the curriculum that was wrong: *"The inappropriateness, the origin of these ills emanates, in my opinion, not solely from the predominant role given to the teaching of French. This is certainly an important element, ... It is mainly the orientation and spirit of the education that should be brought into question. It is futile to expect the neutralisation of the damaging effects through a course in agriculture - that the pupils hate because the curriculum and the orientation of education remove them further from it - and to a few other branches of secondary education, without value in their eyes and without any influence on the aim of the utilitarian school. It will not be these few notions of agriculture, a few intuition lessons, no more than the lessons of the catechism etc. that will result in the adjustment of the personal and social life. By its nature the education remains completely oriented towards preparation for a*

*career which the vast majority shall not experience. Consequently, this school will not train man; it will disseminate a superficial erudition, the damaging consequences of which are not wholly known.”[xi]*

This extensive quote shows in the first place how Hulstaert himself reacted to the changes in education. He was certainly not alone in this, as was indicated in the first chapter. The inherent contradiction in the proposed structure must have already been generally known and criticised. Even so, as far as Hulstaert is concerned, this statement is not only a ‘technical’ or ‘educational’ critique. He clearly also took a position against ‘westernisation’ and argued for ‘adaptation’, adjustment. However, this did not detract from the fact that the Congolese needed to be Christianised. That basic principle remained unaltered. However much Hulstaert considered himself (or was considered) progressive, he was a very conservatively-minded man.[xii] His visions, which probably were partly the result of the training he received during his novitiate, were staunchly anti-modernist. Whenever he spoke about what was good for the Congolese, there was always a clear anti-modern tendency present. This was very clearly apparent in his aversion to city life and his homesickness for the simple country life. Several authors have pointed to the fact that Hulstaert’s ‘indigenistic’ opinions, with those of the MSC, were more anti-western than pro-African.[xiii]

In any case it is clear that indigenism, as a variant of adaptationism, was not essentially different when it came to the religious and moral principles to be learned at school. The following statement by Mgr. Van Goethem shows that Hulstaert was not alone in holding this opinion: *“The natives of Coq, who are developed in the proper sense of the term are rare. The natives in our city are, in general, uprooted, they have turned their backs on their own people, and, with borrowed clothing, follow the whites whom they envy and towards whom they harbour only feelings of revolt. This is an unfortunate situation but not irretrievable. Our natives have not renounced their own people to such an extent that they allow the feeling to develop within them of a revulsion against their own race; they are rather embarrassed of their own because they ignore the beautiful sides of their race and their ambition causes them to follow the white, with whom they want to be an equal but for whom they feel only envy and hate.”[xiv]* The educational agenda of the missionaries immediately followed from this: tradition and attachment to their own descent, order and discipline too. *“Christian life, science, law, industry, cleanliness, medicine, all these emanate from Bamanya”*

was declared proudly in the *Annals*.<sup>[xv]</sup> That the missionaries were considerably proud of the disciplining of young Congolese is also evident from the contributions that appeared. *"I have always admired you for your regularity and seriousness at the school. How hard this discipline must have been for you, you were used to the wild, free life. And yet you managed to bend and force yourself. 'How is it possible?' outsiders often asked me, when they saw you in line for class. You were chatting and quarrelling, shouting and screaming: the last bell toll struck and immediately all noise stopped and you were motionless, in line like drilled soldiers. That was discipline!"*<sup>[xvi]</sup> Quotes like these indicate that this was the result desired by the missionaries, to be proudly presented back at home. *"We, who are used to an ordered life, can hardly imagine what the loss of freedom means to these children of nature."*<sup>[xvii]</sup> The longing for order returned again and again: *"The Montessori school is housed in a brick building. It is a delight to the eye and the mind to see healthy, spotless, shining children, busy freely and orderly, under the maternal vigilance of their teacher and governess, Mama Imelda."*<sup>[xviii]</sup> 'Free' and 'orderly' apparently went together without problems here. From the fact that the Sister also reported a, be it 'maternal', control in the same breath, it can be deduced that this order did not come forth spontaneously out of the freedom of the children and that clearly the freedom was limited and defined from above.

The all-seeing, controlling eye of the missionary was essential to safeguard the purity of the products of missionary education. A general aversion to city life and its influence on the Congolese arose with the MSC.<sup>[xix]</sup> This was not only apparent from the propaganda that was spread but also from the actual policies of the missionaries. Striking examples of both can be found. In one of the 'founding' stories that appeared in the MSC mission periodical in the late twenties, the young protagonist arrives in town, which is described by the author, Father De Knop, as follows: *"Then you went to the city with Father and Mother (Coq), where the black and white people sweat through life side by side. You will admit that the black city is not ideal: such an impossible collection of people, who only have to build a tower of Babel to complete their downfall. (...) Thomas, live by prayer and the sacraments, be proud of yourself. Do not consume the rot of the big city."*<sup>[xx]</sup> When, in 1927, Hulstaert became director of the mission in Bokote, where industrial plantations of the *Huileries du Congo Belge* (HCB) were settled (Flandria), he made sure the schools were situated at a considerable distance from the company grounds because close proximity would only be detrimental to

the education and upbringing of the children.[xxi] The same idea could have been at the basis of the answer he gave the plantation management when asked if specific lessons could be taught for training fruit pickers. Hulstaert answered that at that time (in 1929) the school was not yet equipped but: *“In fact the project is one of the best and in addition to the benefits for the company, this trade, in the sense you give it, is of such a nature as to keep the natives in their own region.”*[xxii] Various developments also need to be linked to the fact that urbanisation was already a known phenomenon during the colonial period.[xxiii] In 1941 Hulstaert wrote in the inspection report on the school in Bamanya: *“The most noticeable thing at the school is the decreasing number of students. Of course the establishment of the school of Mpenjele plays a role; yet in my opinion, this is particularly due to the depopulation of the interior and the attraction of the official school of Coq.”*[xxiv]

The rejection of everything urban generally seemed to fit into a sort of nostalgia for ‘the good old days’, a sentimental mentality in fact. That *“the purity of the Negro”* was only professed in a one-sided way can then be deduced from the fact that not all native customs needed to be respected. A nice example of this is the letter which Hulstaert, still in his role as responsible for the mission of Flandria, wrote to the management of the HBC after he had discovered that on a particular night wild native dances had been performed at the work camp. A Congolese woman, the wife of a native chief who came to be treated for an illness at the mission, had apparently participated in this: *“Now, this woman participated in a dance here in the workers’ camp on Sunday in the evening, a new dance for this region which, according to the serious blacks (neither I nor any of our catechists went, in fact we never go into the camp), is obscene, not because of the words sung but because of the attitudes and gestures and movements of the principal dancer. The dance is called Mongodji or Wetsi.”* That fact was sufficient to complain, even though he only had heard this from somebody else. *“There were very many people at this first representation. The manager of your district of Flandria was also present, accompanied by his wife. They joined the group of accompanying dancers; the lady carried out the esaka (clapping the hands to accompany the singing and the movements of the principal dancer) and both distributed money.”*[xxv]

The reason why this incident certainly had to be reported to the general management of the camp was that the conversion of the native workforces would

be endangered by it: *“It is consequently the second evil dance in the workers’ camp. This does not in itself concern us as these dances are not carried out in public places but because we are already unable to have the required guarantees for the baptism of our catechumens working here in your company, as a result of certain events that occurred previously, in my opinion, the latter aggravates the situation even further.”*[xxvi] This reasoning fitted the strict rules applicable to the ‘catechumenate’. It also indicates how the worldviews clashed, even in the mind of people setting themselves up as defenders of the local population. Van Goethem worded this incompatibility still differently, in his complaint to the governor general about the development of the Congolese in Coquilhatville: *“It is time now to give them their soul, to inspire them to attachment to their environment, to have them appreciate the civility, morality and religiosity of those who gave birth to them. If primary school teaches them all that, they will be enlightened and honest people, better able to understand the white and more capable of helping them.”*[xxvii] The concern for national tradition was thus apparently not the actual foundation of education but was always subordinate to the demands and the needs of the coloniser. In any case, whatever the motivation of those responsible in the field was, the Christian life according to the prescribed rules formed the strong overtone. In an inspection report about the school in Bamanya, Hulstaert wrote: *“The teaching of religious studies is well taken care of. Rev. Brother Director teaches himself in lonkundo, in addition to the lessons by the priests and teachers. Through this he can better help the students to penetrate the great truths and lay the foundation of a proper Christian life.”*[xxviii]

## *Attendance and control of the children*

### *2.1. Attendance*

What were the material circumstances, the *real life* context with which the missionaries were confronted in the field? The first assertion which must be made is that it was not compulsory to go to school. It was not the case anywhere in the colony and it elicited the complaint from one missionary that it was difficult work: *“Because here in Congo, where there is not yet any compulsory education law, one is never sure of one’s children. Today you have them, tomorrow you don’t.”*[xxix] For that matter, this compulsory education would never be introduced. In 1930 the inspection report for the school in Mondombe reported: *“The irregularity in these two divisions of the preparatory education is large, the order and discipline leave much to be desired, absences are numerous, it must be*

*remedied energetically: unjustified absences shall be punished by small but effective punishments, the pupils have the choice of accepting these or leaving.*"[xxx] Reports of similar situations are legion.

Some examples: the MSC established a small school in Mpenjele, a settlement dating from the time of the Trappists, located between Mbandaka and Bikoro. A number of inspection reports are available for the school. In 1935 there was apparently considerable doubt as to the viability of a school in that location because of a lack of children. The inspector further reported: "*Passing through the village (...) the Father could find almost no pupils. When questioned, the teaching assistants replied that of the 35 pupils registered in February only 22 remained.*"[xxxi] The school was then closed, the report concluded: "*The closure of the school in Mpenjele, an inevitability, was consequently brought forward by 8 months.*"[xxxii] Oddly enough it seems a new school was then opened because there is also a report for 1941, which, however, indicates similar problems. It reported that for every class, there were about thirty pupils enrolled on the register, of which more than ten had not attended class for a few months. For the neighbouring Beambo the inspector reported in 1934: "*The next inspection shall have to decide whether it is worth continuing a school amongst such a small population so little interested in the regular functioning of this school.*"[xxxiii] In Injole, another village in the area, the Fathers found the school deserted in July because the children had all gone to work with their parents, harvesting copal.[xxxiv] It caused the missionaries great concern because in the mission periodical they also asserted that colonial industry was largely responsible for the absence of the people and the disruption of daily life in the countryside. Paul Jans complained about these situations in 1936:[xxxv] "*If everything goes well, you'll find your people at home. But often you won't. Then they are fishing; spread along the river for weeks and months. Or they are out for copal. And as long as the European war industry or others call for copal and the managers fight over it here - in a few months the prices rose from 0.18 Fr. to 1.25 Fr. a kilo and more, irrespective of the quality - so long will your villages run empty. But not only that, the blacks will lay out no more gardens, there will be no pupils in your schools and the roads and villages will become dirty; their health will continue to be ruined.*"[xxxvi]

Negligence concerning school performance was also reported in Bamanya in the early thirties. The village youth at the missions were in general much more



obedient and regular in their school attendance but there was clearly far more difficulty with the children from the surrounding inland villages: *"Of the children of the foreign villages, of the tribes of Ngombe and Balumbe, there are still real children of nature, who cannot stand a day on the school benches, especially in the fishing and caterpillar season."*[xxxvii] In Mondombe, Vertenten remarked that it was very difficult to get girls into school and subsequently to keep them there, especially in the first years of school.[xxxviii] In Flandria a school was run under the permanent direction of missionaries and there also a relatively steep decline was reported at first. The headmaster (Hulstaert) stated in his reports to the management of the local HCB settlement that no great results had been achieved with regard to the number of pupils. He also mentioned multiple *"désertations"*. [xxxix] Even in Coquilhatville the large number of absentees at the girls' school was noticed: *"Everyday a large number are absent. Only about twenty could be said to be regular."*[xl]

Absences continued to be a problem in rural schools in the forties and fifties, as far as can be ascertained from the inspection reports. It remained difficult to induce girls, in particular, to attend school consistently and diligently. The missionaries themselves reported this frequently in their publications. Father Van Gorp explained it as follows in 1953: *"The most obvious, the easiest explanation is this: boys often fight free at home. In the eyes of their parents, who are often egoists, they do not lose so much to see their boys leave them temporarily and go to school. Often the opposite is true: now the boys mostly have to pay their state taxes very early, which is largely an expense for the parents themselves. Boys do not make a lot of money. Girls, in contrast, are looked on far more kindly, better cared for and...better fed. For parents, having daughters means richness, or at least a source of income, which they will exploit as early and as tight-fistedly as possible. Furthermore, providing the daily bread or rather, the daily packet of kwanga (cassava), is almost solely the responsibility of the women."*[xli] The interference from the daily affairs of Congolese families was great and the missionaries could not control this easily. In a letter about the condition of the schools in Bamanya in 1947, it was observed that the attendance of girls at primary school left much to be desired, *"And (that, JB) will not improve unless either the Mission or the State intervenes in one way or another."*[xlii] One of the consequences, as was suggested, was the fact that during the 'fishing season' all the girls systematically absented. In 1954 in Wafanya it was also stated that it was very difficult to get the girls to come to school. In Coquilhatville, on the other

hand, there was clearly a different development. Education boomed there in the fifties, both for girls and boys. Father De Gols, who was parish priest of the 'black' district of Coquilhatville, remarked in an interview in the mission paper that it was striking that girls, who had previously not or only reluctantly come to school, now also seemed 'gripped by general eagerness to learn'.[xliiii]

## 2.2. *In the bush*

It is important to realise that the general context in which education took place was very different depending on whether one was in Coquilhatville, in a mission post or in a village in the bush. From the internal reports of the MSC it is apparent that by the mid-thirties, the missionaries were showing a great deal of activity, and that they tried fairly actively to involve the Congolese population in Christian community life as the missionaries imagined it. In the report to his superiors in Rome, Van Goethem naturally did his best to emphasise as much as possible the dedication of his troops. In 1934 he reported the establishment of a new parish, the construction of a printing office, primarily to facilitate evangelisation and the publication of schoolbooks. Active work for the Congolese was done through the *Cercle Excelsior*, a kind of club centre which functioned as the starting point for all kinds of social activities like football, cinema, French lessons, bookkeeping and of course also religious *conférences* and *retraites*. As far as the situation in the interior was concerned, however, Van Goethem painted a very different picture. He based his commentary on the reports from his missionaries, who travelled around their assigned territory several times a year. The image sketched in the reports is very heterogeneous. In certain areas there was good contact between the local population and the missions, in other areas there was a strong influence from the Protestant missionaries or there was just less willingness on the part of the people to consort with the MSC. Many areas were plagued by high mortality rates, caused, according to Van Goethem, by venereal diseases. The colonial government imposed considerable burdens: copal needed to be found, the roads needed to be maintained and new roads needed to be laid.

It was apparent from the report that evangelisation and education were at that time strongly interrelated. The chapter devoted to evangelisation is by far the largest, which of course is not illogical, considering the destination of the report. And yet the chapter mentions education almost as much as in its own chapter "*enseignement*". Most travelling Fathers inspected schools during their tours

through the hinterland of the mission posts. Among other things, it was reported that Jean Cortebeeck, who was responsible for the region of Mondombe, supplied all the catechists with blackboards, chalk, slates and slate pencils. The majority of the catechists also functioned as teachers but had to make do without school buildings and with inadequate equipment.[xliv] In other places, the teaching was considered not good enough. Also in this report, it was determined that school attendance was not regular enough.[xlv]

The report by Mgr. Van Goethem, which is quoted here, is an important source because it is one of the few documents that offer a more detailed view of the condition of rural schools. The report contains a memorandum, requested by the Bishop and written by Father Paul Trigalet, who worked in the area around Flandria. From this it is also apparent that the school is considered the most important aid for evangelisation - in a two-fold way. Firstly, the school was the proverbial carrot (*l'appât*) through which children were enticed into the Kingdom of God. The fact that the catechists could act as wise men in the school context raised their prestige, which also had an impact on the success of evangelisation. Trigalet further described, in a somewhat cryptic way, how the establishment of rural schools was handled. They started with the training of a number of *moniteurs* [teaching assistants] at the mission post of Flandria. A number of boys, who had been taught for some years at the central mission post, were chosen to go and teach in the mission schools themselves, *“under the vigilant eye of an older catechist”*. [xlvi] That last addition indicates that in many cases very young people were involved, both concerning the catechists as well as the prospective *moniteurs*. It had to be ensured that there was a minimal question of authority between catechist and *moniteur*, which was of course easier if there was an age difference. Indeed, most new teachers came straight from primary school.

At school, age was always a relative concept in itself. There were not really any rules in this regard. Young and old often sat beside one another: *“A father sits beside his son, married men next to boys of thirteen or fourteen years old.”* [xlvii] In an inspection report of 1930 about the Mondombe school, Vertenten stated that: *“Due to the considerable differences between the pupils, their large number, considering the rooms available and the shortage of the teaching assistants we have made five divisions.”* [xlviii] This was also the case in the rural school of Beambo: *“In addition we have noted an excessive difference in age. Some*

*children are truly too young.*”[xlix] Elsewhere it was said that: “*The pupils are a little eclectic, there are some very young pupils and others that almost appear too old to me; hence the considerable difficulty for the teacher.*”[l] After all, it was often difficult to determine the exact age of the children. When the education administration tried to set age limits for entrance to the school at the beginning of the 1950s this met with a lack of understanding by the MSC. In Flanders Frans Maes even developed a method for determining the children’s age in a ‘scientifically responsible’ way. This method calculated age using observation and comparison of the builds of a large number of pupils. He wrote a ‘scientific’ article on this in the *Annalen*. In a report on his school in 1954 he gave a table showing the average height per class. He stated that he had been trying to get the oldest pupils out of the classes since 1948 but that he could not discover their age and so he made the selection based on how tall they were[li]

When it came to actually founding rural schools Trigalet clearly had more difficulty giving correct and exact information, even though Van Goethem introduced his memorandum with this purpose. In the first instance he referred back to the vicariate’s *rappports annuels*. Apparently, a few things had gone wrong after an encouraging start. The reasons he gave for the problems with rural schools could be explained for the most part by a lack of control. It can be suspected that there is another reality hidden behind these words. Trigalet lifted up a corner of the veil in his concluding remarks, in which he spoke of the advantages and disadvantages of the reform of the rural schools as provided for by Van Goethem. The bishop wanted to close a number of small bush schools and so strengthen the existing schools and also give them a complete curriculum, conforming to the guidelines of the *Brochure Jaune*. Trigalet pointed out that this solution would indeed require less manpower and increase control. On top of this less pay would have to be spent on the *moniteurs*. However, opposed to this there was the fact that larger buildings would need to be erected and that the food transports for the children would be problematic: “*Regular contributions should be expected from them (the pupils, JB), we have not achieved that yet. Regular attendance cannot be obtained except through making the pupils pay and - let us say - manu militari. I am talking from experience.*”[lii] It points to the fact that at that moment there was quite a bit of resistance in the interior to what the missionaries desired from the local population.

Trigalet also blamed the lack of success of the Bush schools on the Congolese

themselves: “*Fundamentally we have achieved that which we could have expected from the black left to himself. Except for very rare exceptions, the majority were not capable of working seriously, moved by zeal, love of work or noble ambition. These sub-causes were burdened by a lack of supervision.*”[liii] Another good example in this context is an incident discussed in the 1950 *Annalen*. A travelling priest arrived in a remote *chefferie*, found the school in total silence, and concluded: “*The teaching assistant is up to date with everything: the class register, the list of absences and attendance has already been filled in two weeks in advance.*” In the same article the author further concluded that in the village schools it was usually the teacher who gave the example of “*haagschool houden*” [=playing truant].[liv] The sanction considered in such a case was to transfer the teaching assistant in question to another post, where it would be easier to keep an eye on him. This again tells us more about the way the missionaries experienced things than about the real motives of the Congolese. Nevertheless, it looks very much like a reaction against an overly imposed way of life in general. School attendance was a part of that. The missionaries interpreted a negative reaction or even hesitation to embrace this way of life on the part of the Congolese as an intrinsic weakness on their part. This caused an even greater tendency towards ‘education’ and/or control. What made the difference between the mission post and the rural schools was, of course, the fact that there were by definition always one or more missionaries present who exercised direct control over the teaching assistants and the students and organised the daily time schedule of both groups. This time schedule will be considered later in more detail.

### *2.3. Escape from the country/urbanisation*

Besides this external control element there was another, broader phenomenon in which the absence at school was situated, namely urbanisation. The question arises whether this was caused by a dislike of the missionaries and schools in the mission posts or from a (Congolese) desire for the city. Another possible reason could be the difference between the congregations in the city and in the country. This should be placed in the context of the differences in opinion between the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and the Brothers of the Christian Schools. There was certainly a great appeal to city life, probably for the same reasons the MSC judged and disapproved of it. These reasons can be summarised under the headings ‘opportunities’ and ‘social promotion’. The Brothers must have started from a fundamentally different attitude since they had a far more neutral stance

towards the city. Apart from this they also took a much more neutral stance to the educational landscape *in globo* as a consequence of the fact that they always worked 'as subcontractors', be it for the state (in official schools), or for other congregations such as the MSC.[lv]

Van Goethem already stated in a letter to the provincial governor that a lot of children dropped out of the mission school and then appeared to be attending school in Coquilhatville without the local missionaries knowledge. In itself this already shows that the MSC, and probably the missionaries in general, took on a rather controlling attitude to their students. In the letter cited, Van Goethem suggests that he wanted to put up a strong fight against the phenomenon. He felt that people had given the governor the wrong impression that it was the missionaries who sent the children to the city. "*If this had been the case, we would have been wrong to express our wish to the Government of keeping the indigenous pupils in their natural environment and our desire to allow pupils from the interior to attend courses at the central school of the mission serving their place of origin.*"[lvi] This clearly shows that it was the MSC who, from their intrinsic motivation, wanted to keep the youth in the villages. Rules were created and agreements were made in that respect between urban schools and rural schools.

This also closely fitted with the general restriction on free movement that was in force for all the Congolese. For example, Van Goethem wondered in the same letter how it was possible that the children concerned had all acquired a domicile and consequently residency right in the city. In his opinion it certainly meant that one of the admission rules of the *Groupe Scolaire* was not applied strictly, specifically the requirement that the parents had to live in the *cit  indig ne*. As a matter of fact, a lot of effort was put into keeping children out of the city. From a letter of October 1942, from the head of the *Groupe Scolaire*, it is apparent that all possible administrative weapons were implemented. He listed the documents a pupil had to submit in order to be accepted: "*1. the identity documents of their parents; 2. their own if they are old enough to have them; 3. their medical card; 4. the transfer permit, issued by the administrator of the region from which they are coming, 5. the residence permit from the CEC or the Coquilhatville region; 6. the personal certificates and letters of recommendation from R. Fathers of the mission and the school from which they come.*" The letter was a reply to a letter from the governor, who had apparently asked the director to indicate how the

admission could be more strictly monitored: *“What should be done to strengthen the decisions taken? In my humble opinion it does not appear possible to mend the holes in the net that prohibits access to the Groupe Scolaire to children from the hinterland who want to pursue their studies unless each presenting pupil must provide a certificate from the missionary authority of the place of origin or of Coq/belge stating that the parents of the interested party (either father or mother) are resident in Coquilhatville for supervising and caring for them.”*[lvii] There were three enclosures with the letter with overviews of pupils, their place of origin and the person who send them to the city. The writer concluded with the following statement, which unmistakably represented how he felt about this avalanche of ceremonies: *“Finally, in order to reply to your wish for numeric accuracy, I have drawn up the attached table, Appendix II. I hope it is to your satisfaction.”*

A letter from Hulstaert from 1943 summarises the entire situation well. In the letter, sent to the Brother Director of the school in Coquilhatville, he said: *“With regard to the acceptance of pupils to the Brothers’ school in Coq, rules have been established by the government. The principle is: no boys are accepted from the interior; only those whose parents (father or mother) live in Coq may attend lessons there. However, a few exception are allowed; e.g. for boys who were sent by the Fathers or by the regional manager, as well as a few special cases.”* That keeping pupils in their own region was truly considered a rule to be complied with is apparent from the following statement from the same letter: *“Sometimes pupils are sent by the Fathers. It is not possible to cut off the path to the official school for all pupils from the country. However, the necessary leave is rarely given. However, if it is considered useful to grant such leave, the following precautions must be taken: 1. One ensures that the boy has permission from his own parents. 2. The pupil is given a personal, individual letter addressed to the Br. Director of the Groupe Scolaire, in which a request is made for the acceptance of the pupil. 3. The pupil is given the certificate of primary school education completed (the boys must initially attend the school at the post that runs in their region); and add the necessary information concerning their behaviour, character, etc. As well as: the place of origin, the parents (and their current residence). The pupils must also have their certificate of baptism with them and everything must be in order with the Regional manager and Medical Department. 4. One will ensure that only good students will be sent. 5. Account will particularly be taken of the fact that the pupils in Coq will enter a very dangerous environment; that they must*

*consequently be well trained to be able to face the risks with sufficient confidence, risks both to their Christian life and to the knowledge that was given to them at school; this knowledge presupposes a thorough intellectual training to be accepted without damage. The Fathers must be held personally liable before God and only allow those to go that they judge in conscience to be capable of entering into the danger.”[lviii]*

Naturally, it was easier to have this type of control on children at the mission post, in the presence of the missionaries, but it was often hard to maintain with regard to children from the bush. Hulstaert concluded that himself in the letter cited here. Yet the missionaries also tried to monitor the activities of children attending school in the village schools. Not only reports were given, the teaching assistants or *moniteurs* were also expected to keep the register (appel list), and a class diary if possible. These were then inspected by the travelling Father on duty, who tried to make a trip to the interior every few months and to visit as many schools as possible, of which a report could then be submitted to the mission superiors. In principle the missionary inspector (one per religious description) had to draw up an inspection report and pass it on to the state inspectors. In the case of the MSC these missionary inspectors were Vertenten (1928-1936) and Hulstaert (1936-1946), Cobbaut (1947-1950)[lix] and Moentjens (1950-1959). Moentjens said in an interview that it was in fact impossible to inspect the entire region himself: “- *Father Gaston, I think that you must have a lot of work to be able to inspect all those schools! - If those 364 classrooms were together on a few square metres (...) but the Vicariate is immensely large with an area 4.5 times that of Belgium. To reach the mission post Wafanya on the Momboyo river I have to travel around 600 km on a river boat that moves at 5 km per hour.*”[lx]

However there are also a lot of other reports in the archives, drawn up by the school heads themselves or by the so-called travelling Fathers. For example Father Pattheeuws, who wrote stories about his travels in the interior in expressive terms in the mission periodical: “*I pretend I allow myself to be convinced by those promises. It would be a great pity for the village if I have to close the school (oh certainly, Fafa). I show him Rosalie with her big eye (his motorbike, JB), which will in future come through the villages at great speed to see where the lofundo mongo are, the Christian ones, and the children or the teaching assistant or all of them at once. I add that I will come and test the boys*



soon. You may be certain that they will cram hard from today and tomorrow and repeat everything the entire day to perform well at the competition. Although those promises don't mean much, that has at least been gained.”[lxi] Usually there was a travelling Father for each central mission post. He could also report on specific posts. This created an entire chain of information. One example of this are the reports of Jos Moeyens, travelling Father at the Bamanya post, who reported to the superior, Paul Jans, who sent the reports on to the missionary inspector Vertenten, who, as already mentioned, had to report to the state inspection.

### *Further education*

#### *3.1. Who was allowed to go to Bamanya?*

It is clear that a rather restrictive policy was also enforced with regard to the training of *teaching assistants*. From the correspondence of the Fathers in the interior with the Father rector of Bamanya it appears that there was an explicit request to send as few people as possible from the interior to the teaching assistant training there.[lxii] The local missionary in Mondombe apologised profusely in 1948 when he sent a number of his pupils to Bamanya for the teacher training college: *“I hope you will excuse me for sending a few more than the quota allocated to me because there is hardly anyone from Mondombe in Bamanya and because I did not send any last year.”*[lxiii] From Bokela a similar quotation: *“Dear Father Wouters, I received your letter of 2/11/47 concerning the limitation of children a few days ago. Bokela will probably send 3 new pupils to you. We have no certified teachers in our region. Those from the south will not come here or do not stay: especially when they see that they will be employed elsewhere anyway when they leave here. The Sister in the school would still like a certified teacher for the highest class. I am talking of 3 here but one may drop out as happened last year.”*[lxiv]

Innumerable extracts may be found in the Aequatoria of what must have been an impressive correspondence, solely concerning sending pupils from the various mission posts in the interior to the mission post of Bamanya, with a view to further studies at the teacher training college. It was a fixed custom that pupils had to be recommended for this by the local supervisor. Consequently, careful attention was paid to the pupils' points, their character and whether they were suited in the missionaries' opinion to achieve anything. That the *Groupe Scolaire* in Coquilhatville increasingly became a reinforced stronghold as the years went

by, has already been shown. But there was also considerable selection in progress at the teacher training college in Bamanya. In any event the missionaries corresponded extensively in that regard. The pupils were put on the boat, which then took them to Bamanya over the Congo river and with which the supervising Father gave a short note with the pupils concerned, in the style of “*Imbonga 30-1-48. Reverend Father Rector, Nkolongo Jean, originating from Bolukowafumba (?) will be coming as a pupil (new) to the Bamanya teacher training college. He has the prescribed 100 frs. for purchasing the mosquito net.*” Or: “*Bokela 6-1-1948. Dear Father Rector. I have sent 3 good pupils for the teacher training college. We need teachers here. I hope you will be satisfied with them.*”[lxv] Sometimes the accompanying reference was a little more extensive and some Fathers used the opportunity to write about the young people being sent, like Hulstaert in the following example:

*Beste P. Jans,*

Beste P. Jans,  
Theresita onverwachts hier en lijk altijd ongeduldig om te vertrekken. Hierbij de jongens terug: we voorzien geen andere gelegenheid later. Dus ...  
Bolongo Jos nog niet terug van huis.  
De nieuwe:  
[4 namen]  
4 kristenen  
4 catechisten reeds op school vanaf oktober '29, behalve Nsinga reeds vanaf '28.  
Lokose en Kolongo hebben 't 3<sup>e</sup> jaar begonnen.  
De anderen hebben 't 1<sup>e</sup> jaar af en 't 2<sup>e</sup>. Ons schooljaar begint na O.V. Hirschwart d'ijls in België.  
Oms karakter etc. zult u zelf wel gauw ingedicht zijn.  
Lokose is nog al een achtzeker.  
Banso is wat rauw, maar rustdoker. Maakt graag glimol, maar is nu schat van de vent.  
Ik maak er een stad van. Oms tijd naar. Hoop dat de 't goed zullen stellen en u zover tevreden zult zijn. Er zijn hier niet veel liefhebbers voor Bamanya!  
Vele groeten van Marcel.  
Hartelijk gegroet,  
Gustaaf Hulstaert.  
[Dear P. Jans,  
Theresita unexpectedly here and is always impatient to leave. Here are the boys back again: no later opportunity is expected. So ...  
Bolongo Jos is still not back from home.  
The new ones:  
[4 names]  
4 Christians  
4 catechists already at school since October '29, except Nsinga already since '28.  
Lokose and Kolongo started the 3rd year.  
The others have completed the first year and are now in the second. Our academic year starts after Assumption (as in Belgium).  
Concerning character etc. you will yourself quickly draw a conclusion.  
Lokose is rather shy.  
Banso is rather coarse but straight. Likes to have fun but is a wonderful guy.  
I will think here as I am out of town. I hope they will do well and that you will be satisfied with them. There are not many enthusiasts for Bamanya here!  
Give my regards to Marcel.  
Yours sincerely,  
Gustaaf Hulstaert]

Extract 1 – Example of an accompanying reference letter when 'sending' new pupils to Bamanya. Source: Aepostola Archives.

*Theresita onverwachts hier en lijk altijd ongeduldig om te vertrekken. Hierbij de jongens terug: we voorzien geen andere gelegenheid later. Dus ...*

*Bolongo Jos nog niet terug van huis.*

*De nieuwe:*

*[4 namen]*

*4 kristenen*

*[4 namen]*

*4 catechisten reeds op school vanaf oktober '29, behalve Nsinga reeds vanaf '28.*

*Lokose en Kolongo hebben 't 3<sup>e</sup> jaar begonnen. De anderen hebben 1<sup>e</sup> jaar af en*

*zijn nu in 2<sup>e</sup>. Ons schooljaar begint na OLV Hemelvaart (lijk in België)  
Over karakter etc. zult u zelf wel gauw ingelicht zijn. Lokosa is nog al een  
achterbakse. Baosso is wat ruw, maar rechtdoor. Maakt graag plezier, maar is ne  
schat van ne vent.*

*Ik maak er een eind aan. Geen tijd meer. Hoop dat ze 't goed zullen stellen en u  
erover tevreden zult zijn. Er zijn hier niet veel liefhebbers voor Bamania!*

*Vele groeten aan Marcel.*

*Hartelijk gegroet, Gustaaf Hulstaert.*

*[Dear P. Jans,*

*Theresita unexpectedly here and as always impatient to leave. Here are the boys  
back again: no later opportunity is expected. So...*

*Bolongo Jos is still not back from home.*

*The new ones:*

*[4 names]*

*4 Christians*

*[4 names]*

*4 catechists already at school since October '29, except Nsinga already from '28.*

*Lokose and Kolongo started the 3rd year. The others have completed the first  
year and are now in the second. Our academic year starts after Assumption (as in  
Belgium). Concerning character etc. you will yourself quickly draw a conclusion.*

*Lokosa is rather sly. Baosso is rather coarse but straight. Likes to have fun but is  
a wonderful guy.*

*I will finish here as I am out of time. I hope they will do well and that you will be  
satisfied with them. There are not many enthusiasts for Bamanya here!*

*Give my regards to Marcel.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Gustaaf Hulstaert]*

*Extract 1 - Example of an accompanying reference letter when 'sending' new  
pupils to Bamanya. Source: Aequatoria Archives.*

It is apparent from these letters that the directors of the teacher training college  
in Bamanya implemented a more reticent policy with regard to accepting new  
pupils. They probably wanted to avoid too many students starting the studies at

once and thought that the infrastructure would not be capable of coping with the number of interested parties. In any event, administrative steps were also taken to allow the transition to Bamanya (and the same was true *a fortiori* for the large city Coquilhatville) to proceed smoothly. The pupils sent were not only given an accompanying reference from the Fathers, but also had to be able to prove to the government authority why they were moving from one place to another. They were given a special pass for this.

In the vast majority of cases the intention was that the pupils would return to their village of origin after completing their studies at the teacher training college. Hulstaert was a strong supporter of that principle and not loathe to admit it: *“I have a few boys at school here who would like to become teachers. Could I send them to you and when? I trust your promise that those boys will later return here. You probably are thinking: chapel mentality. Of course but if you do not care for your own chapel, not much can be expected from others. Insofar as this should be believed - if you do not provide support it will cave in and ultimately who has to cope with the trouble then?”*[lxvi]

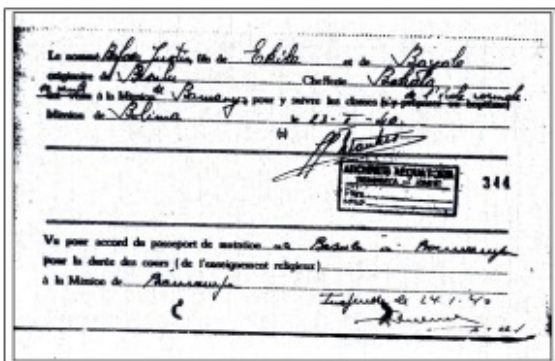


Image 1 - “Passeport de mutation”, a special pass for moving from one place to another. From the Aequatoria Archives.

The students for the teacher training college could also return home sooner. They were assessed on their behaviour and attitude while at school. If they did not fulfil the expectations or went too far in the missionaries’ opinion, they were sent back. A lot of testimonies can also be found in that regard. The missionaries interfered extensively in the lives of their students. A lot of letters consequently also consider the behaviour, and more particularly the social life, of the young

students. That correspondence between the Fathers also shows clearly that morality did weigh heavily in practice. Everyday life was saturated with a number of moral rules and principles which everyone had internalized well. Being good and avoiding gossip were the clearest expressions of this. Again from Hulstaert: *“On the issue of little Bakutu, I have already written to you that I believe there is no question of searching for Loisa Bokeo’s sister. He has an eye on a girl here, although Antoine Esale had advised him to take that Bokeo. I believe that it is more an issue of going eating there in the family. But of course that does not mean that it might not be a good thing to prohibit him from going there; and I will also write to him in that regard, even if just to avoid gossip.”*[lxvii]

### 3.2. Practical examples

However it is clear from the following story that took place in 1931 that things did not always go to plan for the missionaries. One of the students, Jean Itoko, was apparently shown the door by Father Jans, but did not want to return to his village. After a few failed attempts to get him on board of one of the riverboats to send him back to his village, the man went underground, apparently in the premises of the provincial medical department, where he got in as a member of the workforce via friends or relatives. The Fathers talked to the provincial doctor (Strada) and one of the officers of the department (Verfaillie). Jans sent a letter to Verfaillie. He answered Jans: *“Very Reverend Father Paul, the man Itoko Jean came to the office this morning. As the Provincial Doctor has informed me that he has to be returned to you and that he did not leave on board of the Theresita, I will return him for all useful ends.”*[lxviii]

The person involved tried to explain his case himself in a letter, written in the school French he had learned: *“Mr Director, Mr A.V. I would like to take advantage of my time today to ask you whether I could return to my work? I am asking this because I have not left for the village. I told the Father at Bamanya that I would not return to my village without a diploma because if I return I would be disgraced. I do not want to leave, I want to continue my studies with the Doctor. And also he told me ‘as you want, my child’. Now I am asking you whether it is possible to continue. I remain yours faithfully, Your servant, Jean Ikolo.”*[lxix]

On 10 October Jans sent a letter to the district director, Requile. He explicitly appealed to his competence in tracing Itoko and ensuring that he returned to his village of origin. Even if the person concerned was against it, the Fathers used every means at their disposal to make him do what they thought he should do.

Jans played on the feelings of (in)security of the territorial official: *“The boy does not want to return to his home at any cost. On the other hand, we have been informed that in order to make him complete his studies, we are morally obliged to return him to his home where he belongs. But having no means of coercion for this (sic) I would like to ask your assistance, convinced that you would not in any way wish to see the number of unemployed people increase in the Belge.”*[lxx]

The reply took some time, apparently Itoko had truly succeeded in hiding well. On 2 December, Jans wrote again to the director to make his further action clear: he had somehow managed to get an acquaintance of Itoko to report him to the police. The wording in the letter made it apparent that this type of intervention was not unusual: *“Mr director, I have the honour of sending the said ... Joseph, with whom, according to your statement, the said Itoko Jean is lodging. I would remind you that this same Itoko Jean, a former pupil at Bamanya, was the subject of one of my previous letters in which I requested he be forcefully repatriated, the boy having had to be expelled from the school and originally coming from the territory of Bokote. Since that date I have not seen the concerned person again. It may be that ... Joseph may be able to give you more detailed information about the location where he is hiding or the person with whom he is working.”*[lxxi] On that same day the addressee wrote his reply to Jans. Itoko Jean was found in the *Belge*, the interior district of Coquilhatville. He was immediately brought before the magistrates' court and judged. After two months the missionaries had managed to find the recalcitrant student and got their own back. The student was punished with imprisonment and a large fine and was obliged to return home.[lxxii] The reasons he gave apparently did not convince anyone. The example indicates that there was a case of 'transgressive cooperation' in the sense of good contacts between the missionaries on the one hand and the government departments on the other.[lxxiii]

The strange thing is that the missionaries reacted very differently in the opposite case in which a person refused to continue his studies. They left the matter alone or at least were not so worried about it: *“I would also like to inform you that A. LIANJA and NKOI do not want to return to Bamanya: they have given the excuse that they become ill there and receive injuries and they then do not have anyone from the family to help them. As they no longer want to go, there is little more that can be done. I received the message from Bokuma that boys would be coming here who have also left Bamanya, and they have also come: the reason given: their family no longer wants them to go to Bamanya. Consequently, I have*

registered them here for the time being, they are ISENGE Antoine and BONGANDA Jos.”[lxxiv] Naturally, it did fit the general tendency of Hulstaert to keep young people in the villages. In 1929 he again wrote to Jans: “it is sincerely true that we need good teaching assistants everywhere, we even more than others, as the inspection proved. Moreover, this has been known for a long time. I do not doubt the matter at all. But firstly may I encourage boys to go to Bamanya? Does that not constitute acting against the work of this school here, for which we are also ex-justitia responsible?” [lxxv]

Father De Knop reacted in a similar way in a similar situation: “While the boys are on holiday, we are obliged to give you some bad news about Bonsenge Maurits. He used to be a fantastic student; last year he had a distinction. At the beginning of this academic year he was also very good and had the best results, was at the front of the class. That has gradually declined and he is now at the tail end, although he is still satisfactory. Something must be wrong with that boy; and we suspect - we will just say it frankly then you will know what the matter is - serious moral errors. There is also the greatest risk that he will not come through it and even that he would have to be sent on. Would it not be more desirable in that case for him to stay at home? As long as he is still satisfactory for his studies and he has not been blamed for any specific lack of morality we do not want to oblige him to stay at home. We would like to leave the decision up to your good judgement.”[lxxvi]

statistics for the school year 1932	Fathers	Brothers	Sisters	Teaching assistants
Coquilhatville	1	4	3	6
Bamanya	1	4	3	9
Bokama	2		2	5
Flandria HCB	2	1		7
Flandria mission	1		2	2
Wafaryn	1		1	3
Bokote	1		3	5
Boende	1		4	2
Mondombe	1		2	2
Total	11	9	20	41

Table 1 - Statistics of teaching staff at the vicariate of Coquilhatville 1932.

### *The position of teachers*

Reference has already been made to the Congolese teachers. It is clear that the education system of the missionaries relied on their dedication and work. One of the witnesses interviewed in the framework of this research said: “If a pupil had not understood something after the class, he needed information. If this was not

from his friends, it would be from the teaching assistant, who lived in the district. He would be accessible for this type of demand. And in their absence, from the Sister? No!”[lxxvii] It is difficult to assess the quantitative proportion of the *moniteurs* in colonial education correctly. Nevertheless, it may be stated on the basis of the available data that they bore the greater part of the actual workload. Just to cite one telling example: according to the statistics of the MSC themselves there were 3883 pupils at school in the vicariate Coquilhatville, in 1932, at the various mission posts (account must be taken of the fact that very little information can be found on rural schools in the statistics concerned, it may nevertheless be assumed that this more or less relates to an overview of those places where the various congregations were effectively present). Apparently, the staff of these schools consisted for 50% of Congolese teachers, as is shown from the following excerpt from those statistics.[lxxviii] That was the situation at a time that the actual educational organisation had just been established, the first educational curriculum had only been announced three years previously.

#### 4.1. Kolokote

Which position did the *moniteurs* and *monitrices* hold? How did they see their position? How were they seen by the missionaries? It will have become clear in the meantime: what was true for the pupils and students was also true for the Congolese teachers. The missionaries kept an eye on them. Reference has already been made in this chapter to descriptions of inspections and the attitude towards the teacher in the small bush schools, far from the central mission post. Reference has also already been made to the lack of direct testimonies. Consequently, the case of the teaching assistant Pierre Kolokoto, whose correspondence with the missionaries in French has been preserved, is extremely rare. Kolokoto was a teaching assistant in a small bush school in Beambo. A few letters of his have been copied in the ‘Scholen’ Fund of the Aequatoria archives. These are interesting material because they may contribute to giving an image of the position of a person who acted as a link between the missionaries and the children. For these reasons I thought it worth citing the five letters as faithfully as possible.[lxxix]

The letters were all written in the period between October 1935 and February 1936. In essence they relate to a dispute involving the *moniteur*, the village catechist and the missionaries. The dispute centred on the relationship and particularly the cohabitation of the teacher with a girl from the village. That was



not tolerated by the catechist, which caused problems in the village community and towards the MSC. The teacher repeatedly wrote to Father Vertenten, whom he probably knew from his visit as the travelling Father and inspector. He wanted to pay the dowry for his betrothed as quickly as possible because then he would also be allowed to cohabit with her in accordance with the principles in force then. However, the dowry was much too expensive for him. He consequently asked the missionaries if they would grant him a loan. Vertenten asked for advice from Mgr. Van Goethem. The missionary's interpretation can be seen clearly in his letter. The *moniteur* had "*caused public scandal*". The hierarchical relationships were clearly sketched in the letter. Kolokote had not obeyed either the catechist or Vertenten himself. The school for which the *moniteur* was responsible did not attract many pupils and their number was apparently decreasing too much for the Father's liking because he would not pay his wage and threatened to close the school. That the missionaries sometimes had to calculate very carefully is also clear from the fact that Vertenten remarked in his letter that he still hoped to be able to obtain subsidies for the last school year. He finally asked Van Goethem whether he should dismiss the *moniteur* or allow him to stay, which would then probably cost the missionaries the payment of the *dot*. [lxxx] "*Mgr. replied*", is stated rather laconically at the bottom of the letter: "*Continue to employ him but do not give an advance loan.*" [lxxxii]

This correspondence is an illustration of the balance of powers in the villages. There was clearly a distinction between catechists and *moniteurs*, even if an attempt was sometimes made to have the two go together, as already shown for Flandria. It is clear from the letters that the *moniteur* had a difficult time due to the fact that the catechist did not approve of his love life. As is apparent from Vertenten's reaction, the missionaries initially accepted the catechist's judgement. Stéphane Boale also stated that the teacher was conscious of the fact that there was a person in the vicinity who kept an eye on him. If that was not a missionary, Father or Sister, then it was the catechist, under whose authority he fell, "(...) *despite the fact that he was educated, a man who knew many things. (...) If that happened to a moniteur, who did not obey the rules, who hit children and punished them badly, he would be given a bad report from the catechist who operated as a supervisor. He would be subject to a warning, and he would have money docked.*" [lxxxiii] In any event that seems to correspond well with the case referred to in the letters cited and the approach apparent from it.

#### *4.2. Professional status and wage*

It has already been shown from the above that the *moniteur* was generally in a subordinate position to the missionaries, at least in his or her professional situation. Concretely, the MSC concluded an agreement with the *moniteurs* which stipulated that these were bound to work for the missionaries for three years. These contracts also stipulated that, in addition to the cases explicitly legislated, *“the prefecture reserves the right to terminate this contract under the following conditions:*

- due to any court judgement whatsoever;*
- due to inability as a result of serious illness or prolonged infirmity;*
- due to notable inability, laziness, intemperance or insubordination.”*[lxxxiii]

The contract was not the first engagement that the *moniteur* had to undertake to the missionaries. Already at the commencement of studies the new student had to sign a contract with the school in which he or she undertook to complete the studies and to remain at the mission until completion of the studies.[lxxxiv] Moreover, it is striking how the MSC explicitly appeal to state authority in this model contract. The question is whether the sanctions stipulated in the event of a breach of contract were truly imposed by the State. This indicates that it was necessary for the missionaries to keep this type of big stick available, probably because forcing compensation to be paid for contractual damage was not efficient enough. In the example of the Jean Itoko case it is clearly apparent that the missions were themselves powerless in the face of a pupil who ran away but they could appeal to the cooperation of the colonial upholders of order without any problems.

*Je, Bertin Ngoi, soussigné,  
fils de Gregorie Ngoi et de ...  
originaire de Bongilambengi,  
Chefferie des Waya,*

*Territoire des Ekonda,  
demeurant actuellement à Flandria,*

*déclare vouloir suivre les cours de l'Ecole normale Libre de Bamania-Mission,  
et m'engage à y rester jusque après obtention du diplôme de sortie.*

*Je déclare savoir que le présent contrat est protégé par l'Etat, qui peut me forcer de l'exécuter et n'admet la rupture dudit contrat que pour des raisons de santé, d'incapacité ou d'indignité, établies par les personnes, préposées à la Direction de*

*ladite Ecole Normale Libre de Bamania.*

*Fait à Flandria, le 3 février 1930.*

*L'élève de l'école normale libre,  
Bertin Ngoi.*

*I, Bertin Ngoi, the undersigned,  
Son of Gregorie Ngoi and ...  
Originating from Bongilambengi,  
Chefferie des Waya,  
Territoire des Ekonda,  
Currently resident in Flandria,*

*declare my intention to attend courses at the independent teacher training  
college at Bamanya Mission,*

*and I undertake to remain there until I have obtained the final diploma.*

*I declare that I am aware that this contract is protected by the State, which may  
force me to fulfil it and does not admit any breach of the said contract except on  
grounds of health, inability or unsuitability, established by persons appointed by  
the Direction of the said Independent Teacher Training College of Bamanya.*

*Drawn up in Flandria, on 3 February 1930.*

*The pupil of the independent teacher training college,*

*Bertin Ngoi.*

*Extract 2 - Example of an undertaking that the pupils had to enter into with the  
missionaries. From Aequatoria Archives.*

The position of the native staff was in general subject to the decree of 16 March 1922 (*decree relating to employment contracts*) that regulated the employment contracts between "*travailleurs indigènes*" and "*maîtres civilisés*".[lxxxv] That decree also established that wages could be docked ("*implement fines*") in the event of infringements of the working discipline. That right was also often effectively used by the missionaries. This was also expressed in the correspondence cited concerning Pierre Kolokote. In the letter Vertenten wrote in that regard to Van Goethem, he wondered: "*Is a penalty of 70 fr. enough? Or should we close the school and not employ him for the moment?*"[lxxxvi]

There is not very much general information available relating to the remuneration

of the *moniteurs*. This was only considered insofar as it constituted a part of (or contributed to) the social position of the *moniteurs*. A few indications can be found of this. The subsidies for teaching staff were listed in a document from 1936, implemented by the Daughters of the Precious Blood who were active in three mission posts at that time. It gives an idea of the relationship between the missionaries and the native teachers. An annual salary of 5 000 francs was provided for a European teacher, 600 francs for a *moniteur* or *monitrice*. Naturally, this relates to subsidies and not wages. From the correspondence with Pierre Kolokoto (from 1935), cited above, it may be deduced that a teacher's wage could indeed amount to 70 francs a month. Naturally these things related to seniority. Moreover, the 1929 curriculum did not provide for any minimum wages but only regulated the subsidies for the missionaries. In 1948 Cobbaut, who was an inspector at that time, informed the Father rectors at the mission posts of new salary scales for the *moniteurs*: "*Some rectors, seeing that the previous salary scales were truly too low, have already increased them themselves; of which I approve. We must attempt to keep our moniteurs as long as possible for the correct running of the school but as a result we must also provide them with a worthy wage.*"[lxxxvii] In any event a distinction was made between certified and non-certified teachers. The basis salary of a certified teacher was 40% higher than that of a non-certified teacher (350 compared to 250 francs a year in 1948). The *moniteur* could receive a higher wage through seniority and particularly through bonuses related to his family status (having a spouse and children). Towards the end of the fifties the difference in the treatment of certified and non-certified teachers, which existed throughout the colony, would cause annoyance and union action.[lxxxviii]

The statement by Cobbaut indicates that there was a problem with the wages for teachers, particularly when compared to other occupations. The topic was considered at the bishops' conference in Leopoldstad in 1945. Edouard Van Goethem, MSC, was the observer: "*Progress places increasing demands on our education and requires an increasingly qualified native staff. (...) These efforts will however remain ineffective to a great extent if the government, which is responsible together with the missions for the progress of the natives, does not decide to grant our school work an adequate financial contribution, principally to allow us to fairly pay all the native teaching staff.*" From the information cited by Van Goethem in his report a number of conclusions may be drawn for his own vicariate. Generally speaking there was excessive financial pressure on the

missions, which prevented them from being able to pay their staff properly. Generally, state subsidies only covered half the expenses of the MSC in their vicariate. *Moniteurs* in the rural schools were particularly expensive because the state paid less subsidies there (60% as opposed to 90% for central schools).

The *moniteurs* in the rural schools naturally constituted the largest group, precisely because establishing mass education was the goal and consequently required a broad presence. Van Goethem explicitly supported this in his report. This situation resulted in a relatively large staff turnover. A lot of *moniteurs* found other jobs that paid better and left education. The MSC tried to pay their *moniteurs* the same wage as an average labourer. Van Goethem stated that this average was an amount of 175 francs a month, while it should really be 400 or 500 francs.[lxxxix] In an anonymous memo from 1944 located in the Aequatoria archives, which contained very many arguments that are also mentioned in the report by Van Goethem, matters were stated even more candidly. In a comparison of the minimum monthly wage of a labourer (130 francs) and the subsidy that was provided monthly for a teacher, it was apparent that the latter only received half of that minimum wage (62 francs). In practice this meant that the missions had to find sufficient funds to adjust the difference.[xc]

Jans and Hulstaert were already confronted by this type of problem in 1932. Hulstaert wrote in a letter to Jans that there were teachers who told him “(...) *that their contract for the mission states payment of 700 fr. per month. Consequently, everyone knows that they are important people; they earn at least 700 fr. a month, not small fry and they were apparently told in Bamanya that they would receive here in Flandria, as a special exception, 750 fr.*”[xci] Jans replied rather laconically: “*I believe that further comment on the initial wage is unnecessary. I have already told you not to overreact as the company makes it possible for you to go far above the minimum. That Botuli and Co. have not understood it differently but have explained it differently to their companions is not my fault. They have signed for three years, in the hope of a gradual increase and the freedom to try their fortunes elsewhere after three years if they are then able to earn and receive the monthly 700 or 750 they now already dream of.*”[xcii]

Another striking point is the way in which the women were included in the salary scales. There was clearly less money available for them. Still as late as 1952 that was confirmed by the missionary inspector Moentjens: “*I have the honour of informing you, and this in accordance with Monseigneur, that in future the*

*monitrices will also receive the legally prescribed minimum wage of the region per month.*”[xciii] Whereas a complicated calculation was required in 1953 to calculate the correct wage for the *moniteurs* in Bamanya, for the *monitrices* it was sufficient to state “*legal minimum wage of Coq-Bamanya*”.[xciv] Consequently, there were no supplements for them. That fitted in with a wider logic that assumed that a woman would no longer work once she had started a family. That was true for the entire colony (and undoubtedly also to a great extent in the motherland). It was also a generally accepted idea with the *évolués*. The following quotation from an inspection report from 1948 is very representative thereof: “*That training for monitrices is very important. It is rather irritating that you must always start again because the teachers leave to get married. However, this is the natural and good state of affairs, the school will only improve to such an extent when we will have native Sisters.*”[xcv]

The first articles about women starting a professional career did not appear in *La Voix du Congolais* until the second half of the fifties. From 1956 onwards, the periodical did publish a whole series of mini-portraits of women who worked, as though they were a curiosity. This usually concerned very young, newly graduated girls, who were obviously also still unmarried even though they sometimes said “*that they would certainly continue to work once they were married.*” The simple fact that such statements were made and certainly in the context of a publication like *La Voix*, was very revealing. The editorial team at *La Voix*, which assumed a progressive attitude in relation to social development, almost always wanted to give the reader a message. This clearly indicates that the actual situation was *de facto* not developed to such an extent. It is also striking how many of the girls who were mentioned had first been a *monitrice*.[xcvi]

#### 4.3. Appreciation by the missionaries

In the report already cited, Mgr. Van Goethem explained why the problem of financing the *moniteurs* was so important: “*It is a problem for which we must understand the importance. If we fail in our cooperation, others will take our place. It is not fear of competition that must inspire and support our activity, but our love of the Church and the native populations who must stimulate our enthusiasm. The évolués set the tone for the entire population and this will become and remain Catholic insofar as the leaders are.*”[xcvii] He compared the situation of the teachers with those of the working class in Europe, which was oppressed for many centuries until they stood up for their own rights. It is not

surprising that he particularly emphasised the role of the *moniteur* in the bush, considering the social visions the MSC adhered to. However the contribution by Van Goethem is particularly interesting because it gives a good description of what the MSC particularly expected from their native teachers: *“Consider the work which the educator fulfils in the village, amongst the populations in the bush. In this backward environment he replaces the Family, the Church and the Government (...) The educator not only educates children to become good Christians and good citizens, he is also the friend of the adults and provides information and advice to the village. He is the person from whom the illiterates in the village are told about news and the explanation of all the events which they do not understand.”* Obviously account must be taken of the fact that Van Goethem had a specific aim in mind when writing this report, namely arguing for an increase in the subsidies: *“This important, essential role fulfilled by the educator with the natives in the bush must be appreciated properly and fairly supported by the Government.”*

The apostolic vicar consequently did see the importance of teachers in the mission project. The fact that he used exaggeration in this to be able to acquire more subsidies in fact only emphasises this. The attitude of the missionaries in relation to the teachers partially corresponded with that. Naturally, the work of the *moniteurs* was greatly supervised. However, this supervision was often coloured by mistrust and sometimes even contempt. Following on what Van Goethem wrote in his report, it could be stated that the missionaries in the field did see the importance of the *moniteurs*, but primarily from need. Frans Maes stated in 1955: *“The pupils did 2 to 3 small tests in Arithmetic, French and Geography each week which were corrected by myself. They only did examinations for the moniteurs at the end of the school year. In this way their results were only influenced very little by the often overly partial judgement of the moniteurs.”*[xcviii]

Casually subtle differences were noted between Congolese and white teachers: *“Yes, native teachers had occasionally fiddled with the examinations and they also sometimes accepted bribes: it is impossible for H.B. Director to correct all those papers personally, so he has to rely on his colleagues in education. And that the native teachers have the boys in their class work for them and pay small fines is probably a general occurrence in the Congo.”*[xcix] This statement is naturally hard to confirm or contradict from a contemporary perspective. However, in the

context of the mission periodical in which it was published, account must be taken of the fact that it was considered completely normal at all the mission posts to have the children work the land or to work in other ways. The proceeds from that work were specifically to the benefit of the missionaries.

The missionaries' opinion of their *moniteurs* was certainly not unanimously judgemental, far from it in fact. In numerous inspection reports good impressions were given of the native teachers, although this did fit within a generally dominant and paternalistically tinged triumphalism: "*The moniteurs are good and giving courses according to the method. This does not detract from the fact that they still have a lot of progress to make. But it is clearly obvious that perfection cannot be obtained in just a few years.*"[c] And at another time: "*Nevertheless, it always remains necessary to supervise the native moniteurs closely. In effect they easily forget to implement during their courses the method that was taught them and which they are continually reminded of by the Reverend Fr. Director.*"[ci] There was a fundamental lack of confidence in the moniteur, the sources are unanimous in that regard: "*(...) two black teachers who try to do their best pretty well as long as the Sister continually checks on them and keeps an eye on them.*"[cii] Or again: "*It is right to say to the moniteurs that they must follow the curriculum they have been given but I do not believe that the moniteurs are themselves able to determine properly what is part of the curriculum and what is not because they find it so very difficult to resist their inclination to teach things outside the curriculum. In any event, more effective supervision is required.*"[ciii] Moreover, the missionaries continued to do so, certainly until the end of the colonial period. The priest from the black parish in Coquilhatville still said in 1957: "*Every morning the Fathers go around the classes for an hour to supervise the religion lesson. The supervision of the other lessons is carried out by the Brothers and Sisters.*"[civ]

The private correspondence between the missionaries was perhaps more telling than what was stated in the inspection reports or mission periodicals. The level of confidentiality was evidently much higher. In that regard, reference should be made to a number of letters from the later vicar and bishop, Hilaire Vermeiren,[cv] sent to his colleague and friend Paul Jans. Both were pioneers of the Congo mission. Therefore, account should certainly be taken of the fact that they possessed a lot of the typical mission heroism and strongly identified with the traditional image of courageous missionaries. On the other hand, that heroism



must to some extent “really” have been experienced by the people involved. They were often isolated and had to rely on themselves. They shared their life with a very limited number of acquaintances originating from the same environment and culture as themselves. Nevertheless, it is surprising to note a number of statements from a person like Vermeiren that did not particularly indicate much humanity or understanding in relation to the Congolese. Vermeiren wrote a number of letters to Jans in which he particularly talked about pupils who were difficult or with whom he was having problems.[cvi]

These letters indicate that corporal punishment was apparently commonly used to inflict punishment on the Congolese pupils or even the trainee teachers. The relationship with students and *moniteurs* was characterised according to these statements by the use of coarse vocabulary and actions. Moreover, a kind of condescending attitude existed in relation to the abilities of the Congolese in general, which was accepted when talking to other missionaries about them. The *moniteurs* were no exception. Naturally, it is difficult to establish whether this simply relates to literary exaggeration, to a kind of mission-machismo, or whether there truly was a case of rough treatment, cursing and corporal punishment of the students and *moniteurs*. A comparison of these statements with later actions by Vermeiren is also difficult and could quickly lead to *Hineininterpretierung*. In his capacity as apostolic vicar he did not write about these matters. The fact that this does to some extent relate to a character trait or habit can also be deduced from other statements about other Europeans. Vermeiren wrote the following about Van Goethem, his predecessor as vicar: “*Although I sometimes feel like fighting with him I still do not know anybody with such great thoughts and broad vision.*”[cvii] And about the mission Sisters in Bokote: “*I am really in the pits here with those stupid nuns. Sister Berta cannot even be touched with a bargepole: aren’t women evil creations when they get going, my goodness!*”[cviii] In the *Annalen* he wrote, in the 1920s, in an article about a Congolese catechist: “*Occasionally his eyes will flash and he will give a distracted listener a wallop on his naked back. Nobody blames him for that; the sore place is rubbed and the spirit is then more ready to understand the truths: don’t the blacks call chastisement: ‘boté ea wanya’, medicine for the mind?*”[cix]

However, it was rather exceptional that physical violence was spoken of so openly in the sources. It is also difficult to deduce from this type of source whether physical violence was used against the Congolese or whether it was justified. It is

easier to draw conclusions about the missionary estimation of the service personnel. Consciously, but also often subconsciously, a distance was created between the European missionary and the Congolese *moniteur*. An additional distinction must also be made here depending on whether it relates to the estimation of men or women. The *moniteurs* did not really have a special position in relation to other Congolese, although the expectations of them with regard to intelligence or assimilation may have been slightly higher. It is consequently also useful to situate the image the missionaries had of the *moniteurs* and *monitrices* within the more general context of the image the missionaries had of the black man and woman. This characterisation is clearly mainly drawn from the descriptions given by the missionaries and in particular the MSC in their periodicals and elsewhere. Moreover, the image shown in the various types of documents does not differ fundamentally. Depending on the author, different nuances may be noted but in general the descriptions correspond quite well.

### *The missionary image of man*

It is striking that some people were occasionally tempted to make condescending - or even racist - statements. As 'racism' is in itself a rather charged term, it is perhaps advisable to precisely define what is meant by it beforehand. Here, I would first like to refer back to what Bambi Ceuppens wrote in this regard in her very extensive study *Congo made in Belgium*. In fact, it is hard not to refer to this book as it considers the theme in a very extensive and detailed way and also dedicates a chapter to Hulstaert and Boelaert,[cx] the two elements of so-called 'adaptionist' or 'scientific' thinking of the MSC. Those trends did play a role in the image the modern reader tries to form of the position of the Congolese. The important thing in the construction she tries to make in her book is that it is based on a clear and defined idea of what racism is. Ceuppens refers to recent historical research into the concept of race in the Flemish press during the interbellum. In the articles by Marnix Beyen, to which she refers, it was stated that the association of 'blacks' with physicality did not *necessarily* result in negative judgements in broad social discourse.[cxi]

Ceuppens then stated with emphasis that racism is not defined by systematically representing others as negative or inferior but by representing them as 'different', by creating differences that cannot be objectified. Unconnected to the concrete context in which this statement was made, and without connecting a moral assessment to that statement, this does make her aim clear. On the other

hand it should be noted that what was stated in the passage concerned with Beyen fits remarkably well with the vision of man that may be established for the missionaries and certainly the MSC: *“However, statements of the retarded nature of the blacks were mainly made in a cultural civilising discourse.”*[cxii] A distinction was made between the positive and negative characteristics of the ‘blacks’, in which the more positive traits did however correspond rather with things that were considered valuable in the observer’s own culture or hierarchy of values. A balanced approach of these two points of view appears essential to make it possible to correctly evaluate the sources considered here. Like Ceuppens I would like to give the necessary reserves: my aim is not at all to show whether this or that person was a ‘racist’ and then to point to this or judge that. My aim is primarily to show that the characterisation of the Congolese by the missionaries illustrates the relationship they had with them and consequently (hopefully) this can throw some light on the relationships that constituted ‘colonial practice’ and, more specifically, teaching practice.

### *5.1. The Congolese*

It is probably useful to start by returning to an interview I made with three mission Sisters from Beveren-Waas.[cxiii] The main interviewee, Sister Rafaëlle, had worked in education at the mission post in Bolima since 1949 and then at Wafanya. When asked what her idea of the Congolese was before she left for the missions, the following rather odd conversation occurred:

*R: People told us: are you going to the negroes, and they will eat you and so on... We sometimes laughed at that, these were made up accounts.*

*J: Did this turn out well, did what you thought beforehand fit with what you experienced when you got there?*

*R: I will tell you: a black person stays a black, inside and out. And on the other hand I can say that I learned an awful lot from the blacks.*

*J: Did you not have the idea that they were barbarians yourself?*

*R: That is completely untrue!*

*J: But they did tell you that ...*

*R: But that is not true!*

A little later the Sister explained her statement *“a black person stays a black”*. She meant that although the missionaries came to teach religion to the Congolese, the Congolese continued to practice their own customs (*“superstitions”*). The anecdote is illustrative for the way in which these people

interacted with the Congolese. They wanted the best for them and tried to do everything they thought necessary (and that fitted with their task, as described to them). They did not even doubt the personal qualities of the other and recognised them extensively. However, they did not succeed completely in disconnecting themselves from the relationships imposed upon them, partly as a result of the eurocentrism of the society they represented and partly as a result of the way colonial society was constructed. Sister Rafaëlle again: *"You know, a black person has no initiative, he has to have someone standing behind him egging him on but they will do it in their own way."*

With the benefit of hindsight it naturally becomes safer to interpret events and situations. However, it is not unimportant here that this relates to people making statements about people they were often in contact with for thirty or even forty years or more. The Sister quoted here had, despite her great age, only been back in Belgium for seven years. Reactions in the same vein were gathered from the other interviewees. During the colonial period itself pronounced opinions were also given about the Congolese. Father Vertenten wrote a remarkable article in 1934 in the *Annalen* in which he wanted to uncover the soul of the Congolese for the readers at home. At first sight the article was a succession of clichés about the nature of the "negro". The author placed great emphasis on eating habits.[cxiv] In doing so the gluttony of the African was emphasised but also a kind of beastliness. Whether the food was fresh or not, the black person didn't care, as long as he could eat. *"Flowers aren't edible, consequently they are less valued than mushrooms, they have no interest in them at all"* it was claimed. The main motivation for the African, Vertenten claimed, was the immediately practical, the utilitarian. Eloquence was important because you could achieve what you wanted with it. People called "intelligent" were very influential people. The black person had no skill or interest in 'higher' matters (i.e. the beauty of nature). *"The negro is not poetically talented, they are all suitable to be salesmen."*[cxv] The emphasis in this article, and in a lot of others, was very much on the 'difference' of the Congolese. To some extent this was probably done consciously by the authors. After all they wanted to introduce the people at home to that strange, foreign world and consequently mainly showed the exotic, strange sides - everything that was different from home.

The image drawn by Vertenten was consequently certainly not unequivocally negative. The characteristics listed in the article were probably not interpreted as

such. Vertenten wrote that the African certainly also prized skills other than the purely utilitarian: *“Other characteristics should not be disdained: patience, compassion, goodness, generosity, self-sacrifice, but ‘intelligence’ is the best.”*[cxvi] Nevertheless, it may be stated that Vertenten was in se already an adaptionist: *“If a negro can read and write, if he can do arithmetic and has notions of French, then he rises at least a head above the others in their consideration and a head and shoulders in self-confidence. If we do not fulfil that urge they will go elsewhere and we should use that zeal for development, also to encourage the people morally.”*[cxvii] This statement is a strange mixture of eurocentrism, paternalism and religious competition. Vertenten apparently already sensed at the time that a number of social developments would arise that did not fulfil the vision of the MSC but which they would have to cope with anyway.

Less disguised (or subtle) words were used in other contributions. Vertenten himself wrote about their attitude to money: *“The more a Negro earns, the greater his debts.”*[cxviii] The comment by Gustaaf Wauters fits with that: *“Negroes are exceptionally motivated to exploit their neighbours, although they are not capitalists.”*[cxix] In the fifties this type of comment continued to appear. About city dwellers: *“They speak Pidgin French. They sing our Latin songs the entire day, from the requiem to ‘Adesto Fideles’, they serve Mass well and prefer nothing so much as posing.”*[cxx] Or country dwellers: *“Black Christians easily think that they are already far above simple heathens purely by being Christian.”*[cxxi] So-called ‘black’ character traits were easily attributed to the Congolese. They had an unstable character: *“We do not hold any illusions: the constancy of the Negro is very relative, especially when they are back in their old environment, so much tempts them onto side roads.”* [cxxii] They had no perseverance (and were consequently lazy): *“A lot of Negroes will take a first step but they tire quickly. They all feel called to sit at a typewriter once but only few of them have the patience to attend school for a few years. They all stand in awe of a black mechanic who can disassemble an engine and reassemble it but there are few who will want to start the craft by cleaning a machine.”*[cxxiii] Father Pattheeuws stated in the *Annalen*: *“There is no greater sluggard than an unsupervised black man.”*[cxxiv] The MSC certainly was not an exception from other religious orders in their approach to the Congolese. In one of the publications by the Daughters of Charity the same terms were used to say: *“The Sisters in Europe quickly think that the Blacks do all the dirty work here, but that*

*is not true. You always have to stay with them. If our Sisters move away, they laze around. They love eating and resting between meals. According to them that is the best use they can make of their time.*"[cxxv]

'Adaptionism' is linked closely to the Sacred Heart missionaries in scientific literature. That position then primarily refers to two members of the MSC, Edmond Boelaert and Gustaaf Hulstaert, who were self-declared 'indigenists'. [cxxvi] Adaptionism then refers to a pair of concepts in which assimilation and adaptation are opposed. Assimilationists would, roughly speaking, assume that the colonised population should assimilate with the coloniser's culture. Adaptionists however assumed that the coloniser had to adapt the colonisation methods to the nature and characteristics of the colonised population. The contradiction is illustrated by another, namely that between a vertical (authoritarian) and a horizontal evangelisation relationship in which equality was central.

Here we would like to consider the opinion of the people who were already to a great extent 'indigenistic' at that time. In addition to Boelaert and Hulstaert there are a few more MSC names to be cited. They were (and are) considered, at least within their own ranks, as people who were greatly interested in the local culture and local morality and customs. Often the conclusion is naturally drawn that they were also convinced of the equality of peoples, 'races' and more specifically the equality of Belgians and Congolese. Paul Jans and Alfons Walschap were such people who were thought to have studied native culture and society intensively (even if they were not necessarily scientists in the true sense of the word). According to their obituaries, they specifically carried out "ground-breaking" work in the area of songcraft. [cxxvii] This indicates the dangerous terrain that is embarked upon when interpreting such attitudes. Father Moyens recounted in the *Annalen* about putting on theatrical performances, in which the roles were played by local pupils. They were directed in this by a Sister Auxilia, assisted by Father Jans and Father Walschap. The fact that these people were pioneers with regard to respect for local culture was emphasised greatly by their colleagues: "*Long before a few people who had serious intentions for civilisation drew attention to the 'natural beauty' within the Negro civilisation, Sister Auxilia was already very busy with her girls in practising the native art of singing and dancing.*" The author of the article, which was only written in the fifties, was consequently considering events which had taken place twenty years previously, then

completed his pro-indigenistic position as follows: "*Sister Auxilia understood all too well that no European play could simply be imposed and taught. The black people understood little of our talking theatre, in which emotions are expressed more in words and reasoning than through action. For our blacks, theatre is primarily a play. This play develops very naturally, so also very naturally leans to dancing as a representation of every emotion.*"[cxxviii] Here the use of natural and playful characteristics threaten to take on a 'belittling' function, no matter how much they are represented as 'authentic' and 'defensible'. A sharp duality can be detected hidden within statements such as this one. What seems at first sight to be a respectful attitude could equally be considered a paternalistic, patronising approach.

## 5.2. Woman

What the missionaries thought about women must certainly have been largely coloured by the attitudes taught to them in Belgium. A good example of the connection between the two is given by Vertenten, who concluded in 1929 that more and more European families were coming to live in the colony: "*It is a gratifying phenomenon for the colony that increasingly more brave, physically and morally healthy young women are coming to the Congo. Here more than anywhere in the world young energetic men, facing a heavy duty, need the love, help and support of a woman. In all the colonies the uplifting and strengthening influence of good women has been experienced, the rest are as welcome as cold porridge; they do more damage here than in Europe.*"[cxxix] The MSC did not consider the presence of white women as universally positive in a colonial context. They had to prove that they were good and were judged strictly in relation to the man's well-being. It seems to be an attitude that was based strongly on what was taught in the mission seminary in Belgium.[cxxx] It also appeared to be a general conviction. The mission superiors in the Congo also occasionally stated, "*For each young Christian man, a female Christian companion should be prepared.*"[cxxxii] An argument that is moreover only one step removed from that of the *évolués*, who would demand in *La Voix du Congolais* more and better education for women after the war because they desired an equal marriage partner.

One member of the MSC, Jan Caudron, had written an article in the *Annalen* about the boys at school in Bokote. Later on he also wrote one about the girls. He was very negative about their behaviour. Girls stole excessively, were always too

late for church and stank because they did not bathe as well and as cleanly as the boys. According to Caudron they also performed inadequately in the classroom: *“I saw you, girls, in the classroom almost every day. What a difference to the boys! They have a desire to learn, they want to advance, they love reading and arithmetic and writing; but our girls ...ah! They could sometimes sit there lazily. And when I questioned them: they could not answer or you had to drag the answer out of them. Still I must confess that there were a couple that were a pleasure to have in the class. However the majority were so lacklustre, without any motivation, without attention, without a desire to learn.”*[cxxxii] Indeed, the Fathers preferred not to teach the girls but had Sisters come over for that. Father Es stated in 1926 that he just left the girls aside while awaiting the coming of the female mission staff: *“(...) I have just written my number 37 for the boys; we can't do anything with the girls as yet as long as there are no Sisters.”*[cxxxiii] The Sisters were also less enthusiastic about the girls: *“Johanna, a 15 year old Negress, was good in class, an exception to our spoiled, giddy girls.”*[cxxxiv] Their intelligence, interest and ability to concentrate were sometimes judged as exceptionally low by male and female religious workers: *“You can already hear the girls singing; they are allowed to do so relatively frequently because a serious lesson is rather difficult for them as their attention cannot be maintained for too long in one stretch.”*[cxxxv]

Alfons Van Gorp, one of the missionaries of the post-war generation also shared that opinion in the *Annalen* of 1953: *“Perhaps more dedication and certainly more psychology is asked of the Sister teaching in the girls' school.”*[cxxxvi] In the same article he also gave his vision of the problem of the low number of girls attending school, already cited in this chapter. In the jubilee issue of the MSC for the 50-year anniversary of the foundation of the missions in 1954 the problem of the school attendance of girls was also on the agenda.[cxxxvii] Neither the Fathers nor the Sisters gave serious criticism of the policy on the education of girls. It is hard to expect any different from the Sisters because their own role was also strongly characterised by traditional practices, imported from Europe. In 1935 Mgr. Van Goethem stated in his report on the Sisters from Beveren-Waas: *“As in all our posts, the reverend Sisters are entrusted with the housekeeping in each post. They deal with caring for the schoolchildren and the Fathers and missionary Brothers. They prepare the provisions for the missionaries for use during their travels. They do the cooking for the missionary Fathers and also for the children in the school. They wash and mend the clothes for the missionaries*



*and schoolchildren. They care for the church linen and decorate the church on feast days. They take care of the kitchen garden.*”[cxxxviii] This state of affairs continued until after independence and was, as indicated in the quotation, also applicable in general.[cxxxix] Consequently, it should not be surprising that the attitude of the Sisters and Fathers with regard to girls’ education could not be described as particularly progressive or revolutionary.

It is interesting to place this besides the official discourse, as used in the minutes of the bishops’ conferences in The Belgian Congo. After their first main conference, held in Leopoldville in October 1932, it was stated that due to christianisation, and specifically in order to be able to form Christian families, girls’ schools also had to be founded in the countryside. However, great difficulties were expected in the realisation of this aim. Firstly, it was difficult to find girls who could have a career in education as the majority married very young. From then on they would be unavailable for the employment market because they would have too many commitments as mothers and housewives. Secondly, it was claimed: *“The female gender, hardly liberated and still very imperfectly in a type of servitude which has chained or dulled the will of the black woman over centuries to make them appear little able to practice the position of teacher in an environment in which she will not be under close supervision and in which she will miss guidance and frequent advice.”*[cxl] The Congolese woman had consequently been oppressed by the Congolese man and that was the reason she was “not yet” suited to teach herself. The argument was that the Congolese woman was used to a lot of control and strict guidance from her spouse and family. If this should disappear she would no longer be able to function.

Whether that then meant that the future for Congolese women was seen differently, e.g. without control and guidance? Of course not - and that was true at all levels. The missionaries’ vision of the role of women within a Christian family (and consequently in a Christian marriage) naturally did not deviate from the Western tradition in that regard. That at first sight implied a kind of independence and freedom in comparison to African tradition and in that sense also an improvement in the social situation of women.[cxli] However, it also included the moral duty to bring children into the world and to fulfil household duties: *“Also for that reason - if we want to ensure numerous Catholic descendants in the future - we must now dedicate ourselves to the formation of good Catholic mothers.”*[cxlii] According to the conclusions of Mgr. Six, at the

bishops' conference in the Congo, that also fitted within the logical political responsibilities that the State had in relation to the happiness of its citizens. Amongst others this included a policy for the benefit of "numerous families," the payment of child allowances and the prohibition of married women working.[cxliii]

The following advice given at the *Plenary Bishops' Conference* in 1936 is more significant, for example. When considering the subject "*The press in our missions*" the possibility was also mentioned of publications aimed at a specifically female target audience. "*It is necessary to provide varied reading matter in the girls' classrooms, for edification, that interests them, that inculcates notions of respect, true modesty, sincere docility, etc. etc.: that also reveals the women's faults to them: fickleness, chattering, gossiping, etc. etc.: so that they are taught about true Christian women through well-chosen models.*"[cxliv] It is clear that the Congolese woman was considered in a category of her own. She had to bear the shortcomings unique to woman in addition to the shortcomings of her 'race'. Hulstaert's view also fitted with this. It was rather harsh for women and the indigenous people in general. In an article published in 1951 in *Aequatoria*, he primarily tried to refute the criticism towards the missions. From the *milieux évolués* an increasing demand for more and better education for girls was heard. Hulstaert primarily indicated the responsibility in this regard of the other parties involved: the government, the parents, but also the girls themselves. Finally he blamed the relative failure of education for girls on the total indifference assigned to it by the local people. A gradual improvement could occur but then only for the following reasons: "*Either they'll hope for a direct benefit (teaching assistants, midwives, nurses), or they'll expect that girls will find more profitable parties to marry, who are of more interest financially.*"[cxlv]

Concretely it remained difficult to get girls into school. Hulstaert explained in an inspection report from 1942 that as a result of the inability to obtain a good, enduring atmosphere in the school: "*The number of children always remained low in this school. It is a very difficult obstacle because the teaching staff easily lose heart as a result and the children themselves learn less enthusiastically if there is no life or competition in the classroom. Moreover, the girls' school also has a few smaller boys attending lessons there before going to the Brother's school.*"[cxlvi] The last remark clearly shows the hierarchical relationship between boys' and girls' education: a boy that was too young to go to the boys' school, could already

'be prepared' at the girls' school because it was considered less difficult. In any event the issue of the girls' school was handled very carefully. Hulstaert even makes an exception to his strict attitude in relation to selective access to the school because he felt the morality of the girls was at too great a risk if they did not attend school. In an inspection report from 1930 about the girls' school in Coquilhatville, he wrote: *"One tries to influence the parents so that they send their children to school more regularly. The considerable distance from the native village remains a major obstacle. The issue of morality - at such risk - of young girls, leads to an indulgence that could otherwise not be tolerated. In future we can and must be stricter."*[cxlvii]

Nevertheless the attention requested for girls' education was often sincere. In Flandria, where the *Huileries du Congo Belge* were situated, the establishment of girls' education was mentioned during the negotiations between the MSC and the company in 1930. Hulstaert drew up a report of the negotiations ("Memorandum") and tackled the issue in it. He seemed to feel a little awkward about the issue himself but did give the impression of being in favour of the establishment of a girls' school. The general director of the company had apparently already made it clear two years previously that he would be in favour of having a female congregation in the vicinity that could concentrate on help in the dispensarium, in the hospital and also in the education of the girls. Hulstaert had then remained uncommitted and had passed the question on to Van Goethem, who promptly went in search of a congregation prepared to reside in Flandria. Once it had been found, however, the management of the company became recalcitrant because there would not be enough work for the Sisters due to the lack of girls in the school. Hulstaert did state that he had not insisted but then devoted another half page to listing the reasons for there being a sufficient number of girls in the vicinity of the H.C.B. who would be prepared to attend school.[cxlviii]

A more explicit plea for girls' education can be found in an inspection report about the school in Bokote, in which reference was made to the bad characteristics of the girls but also in which a workable solution was sought. The report of the missionary inspector Vertenten nevertheless started from the traditional conclusions relating to the nature of the girls: *"They are less interested in education, are more capricious, less assiduous, less zealous, less capable of intellectual activity, flightier and often recalcitrant. It is work that*

*requires great patience. I believe that the cause for this difference should predominately be sought in the education of a young girl, she is surrounded by every care, she represents an asset for her parents, she is conscious of her worth, she is spoiled while the boys are not paid much attention. This will only change very slowly. Good results could perhaps be achieved in stimulating the competitiveness between the boys and girls. The more difficult the task, the more meritorious. This inferiority precisely proves the necessity of education and instruction for young indigenous girls.*"[cxlix] It is one of the few references in which the inequality between women and men is not used as an explanation for a difference in treatment but in which an insistence is made from the conclusion of the inequality to the removal thereof. Exactly what Vertenten then considered to be concrete equality is not known, however.

### *Summary*

The general atmosphere, the climate within which mission education took place was strongly defined by the assumptions of the missionaries with regard to social questions in general and to the nature of the Africans and the Congolese in particular. The missionaries were and remained tributary to their evangelisation task and the way in which it was informed and taught to them. "Gaining souls for the kingdom of God" always remained somewhere at the foundation of their actions, even if it was articulated differently over the years and connected more with a genuine social concern.

Socially the MSC, and Hulstaert in particular, were rather defensive and conservatively minded. They stood for maintaining the status quo in which they had been educated and trained themselves and in which they believed strongly. They wanted to bring this across to the Congo and also maintain it there. That was expressed in their concern for the language in which the lessons were given and the hostility towards the modern urban environment. The reactions of the missionaries towards the Congolese showed it: Congolese searching for levers to gain further access to the new colonial society were considered negatively unless they were explicitly on the side of the missionaries.

The missionaries consequently considered they had an essential role in colonial society. The controlling of the Congolese was more than necessary to prevent derailment. Beneath this lay the deep gap that existed according to the missionaries between their own culture and that of their pupils. The Congolese were intrinsically inferior. Reading between the lines this is apparent in their

official discourse and it is certainly and more explicitly apparent from their more personal communication.

Supervision was consequently an important factor in the education the MSC wanted to organise in their mission area. A great problem in this was the difficulty to get children to school and to keep them there, specifically at schools in the interior. There was no compulsory education and children were often not sent to school willingly in the villages. There were numerous reasons for this but often the children had to help their parents to provide for sustenance for the family. The missionaries were never completely in control of the situation, despite a certain level of authority they had towards some part of the population.

In the same context urbanisation was considered a phenomenon to be combated by the MSC. They tried to keep the children in the villages insofar as possible or at least to bring them back there after their studies. Access to the city schools was dissuaded or made difficult insofar as possible. Strict entry conditions and a complicated registration duty for the village teachers contributed to this but were unsuccessful.

The restrictive attitude of the MSC was noticeable in relation to ordinary transfers of pupils in primary school but also to those who wanted to continue their education. In this region this usually related to people who wanted to attend the teacher training college in Bamanya. Those that did get so far were followed closely in their daily activities. The missionaries did not hesitate to intervene and no distinction was made between life at school or outside school in these matters. Some missionaries did not hesitate to involve the state authorities to make their pupils toe the line.

The Congolese teachers or teaching assistants formed an essential link in the educational organisation of the MSC. They were also supervised carefully and assessed by the missionaries. They were obliged contractually to work for the school for a minimum period. The relationship between the teaching assistants and missionaries did evolve over the years from a strict hierarchical authoritarian relationship to a situation in which economic necessities and developments gradually gave the Congolese a position for negotiation and consequently obliged the missionaries to be more flexible.

Still, it must be said that the MSC generally considered the native teachers as a

necessary link in the evangelisation project rather than as a partner with whom good cooperation was possible. That also fitted into the image the missionaries had of the Congolese. The combination of racial prejudices and traditionalist views meant that the Congolese women, in particular, bore the consequences of this.

## NOTES

[i] Es, M. (1926). Letter from Pater Marcel Es, Boende. In *Annalen*, 6, p. 153. The bold passages for emphasis in the quotations are by the author. [original quotation in Dutch]

[ii] Es, M. (1927). Mijn kleine schoolkolonie. In *Annalen*, 11, p. 246.

[iii] “Onze missie-begrooting voor 1932” In *Annalen*, 1931, 12, p. 268. [original quotation in Dutch]

[iv] The pro-catholic and anti-protestant sentiment was consequently very present in the Belgian colonial milieus, for example also in the attitude of Edouard De Jonghe, as previously discussed.

[v] Petrus Vertenten (1884-1946) was ordained as a priest in 1909 and initially went to the missions in New Guinea, where he was active from 1910 to 1925. From 1927 to 1939 he lived and worked in the Belgian Congo. Over almost that entire period he was also the missionary inspector of the Vicariate Coquilhatville. Vertenten was also known for his skills as a writer and had a number of friends in the artistic world, including Henriette Roland-Holst-Van der Schalk and August Van Cauwelaert. He was also an accomplished painter; a number of his paintings have been preserved and are exhibited at the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen [Royal Institute for the Tropics] in Amsterdam (KIT). See [www.aequatoria.be](http://www.aequatoria.be) (under “bio-bibliographies”) and Vlaminck, J. (1985). *Wij gedenken. Tweede reeks biografische schetsen van M.S.C. van de Belgische provincie*. Borgerhout, p. 8.

[vi] Smolders, J. (1931). Veel werk te Boende. In *Annalen*, 2, p. 29. [original quotation in Dutch]

[vii] Vertenten, P. (1935). Een blijvend loofhuttenfeest. In *Annalen*, 10, p. 222. [original quotation in Dutch]

[viii] Imelda, Zr. (1935). Uit een brief van E. Zr. M. Imelda. In *Annalen*, 3, p. 60. [original quotation in Dutch]

[ix] Heyde, S. (1954). Regen en zon over Nkembe. In *Annalen*, July - August, p. 100. [original quotation in Dutch]

[x] There were overlaps in that criticism with the attitude of the scheidist Maus, whose analysis of the 1938 curriculum has been discussed at length in the first

chapter. See p.46 et seq.

[xi] AAFE 30.3.1-4. Letter from G. Hulstaert to the governor general. Bokoma, 19 March 1942. My emphasis. [original quotation in French]

[xii] Honoré Vinck, who knew him personally, described him as a rather obedient but humanist Catholic who became a cultural pessimist, particularly in the thirties (a trend which was not alien to the zeitgeist) and developed into an ultra-right wing conservative Catholic in later life. See “Dimension et inspiration de l’Oeuvre de Gustaaf Hulstaert” at [www.aequatoria.be/BiblioHulstaertFrameSet.html](http://www.aequatoria.be/BiblioHulstaertFrameSet.html)

[xiii] See also Ceuppens, B. (2003), *Congo Made in Belgium?* p. 449 et seq. She does indicate that there was a difference between the scientific “tenors” of the MSC, Boelaert and Hulstaert. Boelaert, who is less known but was equally respected in scientific circles, was a stalwart opponent to any form of biological racism and in that sense much more consistent in his anti-colonialism and indigenism.

[xiv] AAFE 30.3.5-7. Letter from Mgr. Van Goethem to the governor general. Coquilhatville, 25 March 1942. [original quotation in French]

[xv] Vertenten, P. (1932). Nieuws uit Bamanja bij Coquilhatstad. In *Annalen*, 4, p. 78. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[xvi] Caudron, J. (1935). Ik denk aan mijn jongens te Bokote. In *Annalen*, 12, p. 269. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[xvii] Wauters, G. (1934). Ngonji’s doopsel en eerste H.Kommunie. In *Annalen*, 4, p. 78. [original quotation in Dutch]

[xviii] Cortebeeck, J. (1932). De houtskool-teekenaar (continued). In *Annalen*, 8, p. 176. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[xix] Briffaerts, J. & Dhondt, P. (2003). The dangers of urban development. In *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, LIX, p. 81-102.

[xx] De Knop, J. (1939). Een liefdeshistorie. In *Annalen*, 9, p. 205. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[xxi] AAFE 32.3.11-4.2. Memorandum sur les pourparlers entre la S.A. des Huileries du Congo Belge et la préfecture apostolique de Coquilhatville à Flandria en date du 5 avril 1930.

[xxii] AAFE 34.4.13. Letter from Gustaaf Hulstaert to the Managing Director of the S.A. des Huileries du Congo Belge [H.C.B.]. Flandria, 17 March 1929. [original quotation in French]

[xxiii] Cf. in an article for the missiological weeks in Leuven: Planquaert, P. (1946). L’exode des populations vers les centres et l’ébranlement de la famille

rurale. In *La Famille Noire en Afrique. Compte Rendu de la 17<sup>e</sup> semaine de missiologie de Louvain*. Museum Lessianum - section missiologique 27 bis. p. 66-74. The same theme was also dealt with at the Congo bishops' conference in 1945. Zie Briffaerts, J. & Dhondt, P. (2003). The dangers of urban development. In *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, LIX, p. 81-102.

[xxiv] AAFE 1.5.6. Report on the inspection of the boys' primary school in Bamanya, October 1941. G. Hulstaert, Bamanya, October 1941. The official school in Coquilhatville here also means a congregational school, also run by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[xxv] AAFE 36.1.7-8. Letter from G. Hulstaert to the Managing Director of the H.C.B. Flandria, 12 June 1928. [Original quotation in French]

[xxvi] Ibidem.

[xxvii] AAFE 30.3.5-7. Letter from Mgr. Van Goethem to the governor general. Coquilhatville, 25 March 1942. [Original quotation in French]

[xxviii] AAFE 1.5.6. Report on the inspection of the boys' primary school in Bamanya, October 1941. G. Hulstaert, Bamanya, October 1941. [Original in Dutch]

[xxix] "Het vorsteljik bezoek aan onze missie in Congo". In *Annalen*, 1928, 11, p. 244. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[xxx] AAFE15.3.4-8. Rapport sur le fonctionnement de l'école primaire à Mondombe, 1930. P. Vertenten, Mondombe, 24 December 1930. The school was under the direction of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart (See chapter 3). [Original quotation in French]

[xxxi] AAFE 25.3.3. Inspection d'avril 1935, Mpenjele. P. Jans. [Original quotation in French]

[xxxii] AAFE 25.3.3. Inspection d'avril 1935, Mpenjele. P. Jans. [Original quotation in French]

[xxxiii] AAFE 25.3.4. Inspection de l'Ecole Rurale de Beambo. Inspection de Juin. P. Jans. [Original quotation in French]

[xxxiv] AAFE 25.3.4. Inspection de l'Ecole Rurale des Injole, 8 avril 1935. P. Jans. The academic year in the Belgian Congo coincided with the civil year until the fifties, i.e. it began in January and ended with the prize-giving at the end of December.

[xxxv] Paul Jans (1886-1962), was ordained as a priest in 1909. He first became a teacher at the mission seminary of the MSC in Asse but left for Italy in 1920. He was one of the first MSC to go to the Congo in 1926. He was predominately active



there as the head of the mission post in Bamanya and from 1930 as parish priest in Coquilhatville. He was also the driving force there behind the organisation of religious and cultural activities. He also dedicated himself to composing liturgical music based on native elements. Vereecken, J. (1985). *Wij gedenken. Tweede reeks biografische schetsen van MSC van de Belgische provincie*. Borgerhout: MSC. p. 47.

[xxxvi] Jans, P. (1936). Hoe ver staan we in Congo? (vervolg). In *Annalen*, 5, p. 104. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[xxxvii] AAFE 15.1.3-7. Bamanya. Report on the girls' school. Academic year 1934. Sister Auxilia, Bamanya, s.d. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[xxxviii] Afrika Archief Brussel, electronic inventory, no. 12490. Letter from P. Vertenten to the provincial inspector. 1931.

[xxxix] AAFE 33.2.6. Ecole professionnelle H.C.B. Flandria. Rapport sur l'école. Flandria, 31 December 1929. s.n.

[xl] Paters Lazaristen Archives, Leuven. Rapport sur le fonctionnement des Ecoles des Révérendes Soeurs de Saint Vincent de Paul à Coquilhatville. P. Vertenten, February 1930. [Original quotation in French]

[xli] Van Gorp, A. (1953). Bokela. In *Annalen*, October, p. 137. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[xlii] AAFE 11.5.10-11. Schoolrapport 1947. Handwritten, probably by Sister Auxilia, 31 December 1947. Includes a report of the situation of the girls' school in Bamanya. [original quotation in Dutch]

[xliii] "Pastoor van een zwarte parochie: interview met Pater De Gols, pastoor van de eerste zwarte parochie van Coquilhatstad". In *Annalen*, May 1957, p. 68. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[xliv] AAVSB, Rapport général sur l'activité du Vicariat de Coquilhatville de 1934-1935, Mgr. Van Goethem, 1 March 1935, p. 11.

[xlv] Ibidem, p. 8.

[xlvi] AAVSB, Note additionnelle sur les écoles rurales, par P. Trigalet, in the previously mentioned Rapport Général 1934-1935, p. 33.

[xlvii] "Uit brieven van Z.E.P. Vertenten aan de studenten der apostolische school in Assche". In *Annalen*, 1928, 10, p. 219. [original quotation in Dutch]

[xlviii] AAFE 15.3.4-8. Rapport sur le fonctionnement de l'école primaire à Mondombe, 1930. P. Vertenten, Mondombe, 24 December 1930. [Original quotation in French]

[xlix] AAFE 25.3.7. Ecoles Rurales. Beambo. Inspection du 16 octobre 1934, par le P. Jans. [Original quotation in French]

- [l] AAFE 25.4.8. Ecole rurale de Beambo. Inspection du 12 mars 1934. P. Jans. [Original quotation in French]
- [li] AAFE 96.1.9-10. Rapport Annuel 1954-1955 Ecole H.C.B. Dist. Flandria. F. Maes, Flandria, 10 April 1955.
- [lii] AAVSB, Note additionnelle sur les écoles rurales, par P. Trigalet, in Rapport Général 1934-1935, p. 37-38. [Original quotation in French]
- [liii] AAVSB, Note additionnelle sur les écoles rurales, par P. Trigalet, in Rapport Général 1934-1935, p. 38. [Original quotation in French]
- [liv] Pattheeuws, K. (1950). Rosalie on an inspection trip. In *Annalen*, September, p. 121. [Original quotation in Dutch]
- [lv] On this see Briffaerts, J. & Dhondt, P. (2003). The dangers of urban development.
- [lvi] AAFE 30.2.6-7. Letter from Mgr. Van Goethem to the provincial governor. Coquilhatville, 3 March 1942.
- [lvii] AAFE 30.3.11. Letter from P. Warnotte, Directeur Groupe Scolaire Coquilhatville to the provincial governor. Coquilhatville, 22 October 1942.
- [lviii] AAFE 30.5.2. Letter from G. Hulstaert to Brother Director of the *Groupe Scolaire* in Coquilhatville. Coquilhatville, 10 March 1943. [original quotation in Dutch]
- [lix] AAFE 84.5.13. Letter from the substitute apostolic vicar (J. De Schepper) to the provincial governor. Coquilhatville, 22 October 1947.
- [lx] “Als Kongo op de schoolbank wil: interview met Pater Gaston Moentjes” In *Annalen*, February 1957, p. 20. [original quotation in Dutch]
- [lxi] Pattheeuws, K. (1950). Rosalie op inspectiereis. In *Annalen*, September, p. 121. [original quotation in dutch]
- [lxii] AAFE 12.2.11. Letter J. Yernaux. Boende, 22 January 1947; AAFE 12.2.14. Letter F. Van Linden. Bokote, 27 January 1947; AAFE 12.2.13. Letter P. Smolders. Bokela, 26 December 1946.
- [lxiii] AAFE 11.2.8. Letter T. De Ryck, Mondombe, 5 February 1948.
- [lxiv] AAFE 11.5.12. Letter from P. Smolders to G. Wauters. Bokela, 24 November 1947.
- [lxv] AAFE 11.2.11. Note of P. Smolders. Bokela, 6 January 1948.
- [lxvi] AAFE 21.4.2. Letter from G. Hulstaert to Pater Rector in Bamanya (Paul Jans). Flandria, 11 April 1930.
- [lxvii] AAFE 21.2.10-11. Letter from G. Hulstaert to Father Rector in Bamanya (Paul Jans). Flandria, 23 August 1932
- [lxviii] AAFE 22.4.4. Letter from P. Jans to Mr Verfaillie. Bamanya, 6 October

1931.

[lxix] AAFE 22.4.5. Letter from J. Ikolo to the *territorial director*. Coquilhatville, s.d.

[lxx] AAFE 22.4.6. Letter from P. Jans to F. Requile. Bamanya, 10 October 1931.

[lxxi] AAFE 22.4.8. Letter from P. Jans to F. Requile. Bamanya, 2 December 1931.

[lxxii] AAFE 22.4.7. Letter from F. Requile, *administrateur territorial*, to P. Jans. Coquilhatville, 2 December 1931.

[lxxiii] This type of occurrence undoubtedly also contributed to the image among the Congolese that the missionaries were ‘accomplices’ of the government. See chapter 9 in that regard.

[lxxiv] AAFE 213.4. Letter from G. Hulstaert to Father Rector of Bamanya. Flandria, 19 January 1932.

[lxxv] AAFE 21.4.4. Letter from G. Hulstaert to Pater Rector of Bamanya. Flandria, 5 August 1929.

[lxxvi] AAFE 3.3.11. Letter from J. De Knop, rector ad interim Bamanya, to Father Rector in Bolima, 13 July 1937.

[lxxvii] Stéphane Boale, a pupil at the primary school in Bokote in the forties. Interviews taken in September-November 2003, St Joost ten Node.

[lxxviii] AAFE 84.1.1-2. Table “Statistiques enseignement année scolaire 1932”.

[lxxix] This series of letters can be found in AAFE 25. They have been included as appendix 9.

[lxxx] The dowry.

[lxxxi] AAFE 25.2.7-8. Letter from P. Vertenten to Mgr. Van Goethem. Bamanya, 26 December 1935.

[lxxxii] Interview with Stéphane Boale in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, November 2003.

[lxxxiii] AAFE 9.2. includes a number of copies of employment contracts concluded with moniteurs, dated 1931.

[lxxxiv] Example from AAFE 21.2.1.

[lxxxv] Similar agreements between non-natives were regulated by other legal texts. Léonard, H. (1936). Le contrat de travail au Congo Belge et au Ruanda-Urundi. In *Les Nouvelles. Droit colonial, tome II*. Bruxelles: Larquier. p. 357-384.

[lxxxvi] AAFE 25.2.7-8. Letter from P. Vertenten to Mgr. Van Goethem. Bamanya, 26 December 1935.

[lxxxvii] AAFE 11.2.7. Letter from F. Cobbaut to the rectors of the mission posts. Boende, 1 June 1948.

[lxxxviii] The *Centrale des Enseignants Chrétiens* (C.E.C.) considered the issue in November 1958 in a specially themed issue of its union paper “Notre Droit”: “Le

statut pécuniaire des moniteurs non-diplômés”. AAFE 39.3.4-4.9.

[lxxxix] Van Goethem, E. [Mgr.] (1945). Charges budgétaires de l’enseignement et traitement des moniteurs. In *Compte-Rendu de la troisième conférence plénière des Ordinaires du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi*. Leopoldstad. p. 163-183.

[xc] AAFE 48.3.10-4.1. Rapport 1944. La condition sociale et le salariat des instituteurs. En général, et spécialement au Congo Belge. s.n.

[xci] AAFE 21.3.7. Letter from G. Hulstaert to P. Jans. Flandria, 30 December 1931. The emphasis is Hulstaert’s own.

[xcii] AAFE 21.3.6. Letter from P. Jans to G. Hulstaert. Bamanya, 1 January 1932.

[xciii] AAFE 9.3.1. Circular from Gaston Moentjens to the rectors and school directors of girls’ schools. Coquilhatville, 7 January 1952.

[xciv] AAFE 9.1.3-4. Memo “lonen voor 1953”. s.n.

[xcv] AAFE 12.5.7. Report on the inspection in the sisters’ school in Bamanya 1944. G. Hulstaert, Bamanya, 17 November 1944.

[xcvi] As an example: Colin, M. (1956). Trois femmes Congolaises. In *La Voix du Congolais*, XII, p. 125-132.

[xcvii] Van Goethem, E. [Mgr.] (1945). Charges budgétaires de l’enseignement et traitement des moniteurs. In *Compte-Rendu de la troisième conférence plénière des Ordinaires du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi*. Leopoldstad. p. 163-183.

[original quotation in French]

[xcviii] AAFE 96.1.9-10. Rapport Annuel 1954-1955 Ecole H.C.B. Dist. Flandria. F. Maes, Flandria, 10 April 1955. My emphasis. [original quotation in French]

[xcix] *Annalen*, May 1951. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[c] AAFE 4.3.12-4.1. Rapport sur l’inspection de l’école primaire de Bamanya, 1937. G. Hulstaert, Bamanya, 18 June 1937. [original quotation in French]

[ci] AAFE 4.4.5-9. Report on the inspeciton of the boys’ primary school in Bamanya, 1936. G. Hulstaert, Coquilhatville, 23 October 1936. [Original quotation in French]

[cii] Maria Godfrieda, Zr. (1934). Wat ze zool te doen hebben. In *Annalen*, 5, p. 108. My emphasis. [original quotation in Dutch].

[ciii] AAFE 9.3.4-4.1. Rapport d’inspection de l’école primaire et de l’école de moniteurs à Bamanya, 1952. G. Moentjens, Coquilhatville, 11 September 1952. My emphasis. [original quotation in French]

[civ] “Pastoor van een zwarte parochie”. In *Annalen*, May 1957, p. 68. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cv] Hilaire Vermeiren (1889-1967) was ordained as a priest in 1912 and taught at the mission seminary of the MSC in Asse from 1913 to 1925. In 1925 he was

employed in Bokote, where he became the rector of the mission post after a few years. From 1925 he was part of the bishop's council and in 1947 he was appointed as the successor to his fellow villager Edouard Van Goethem, the apostolic vicar. At the end of the fifties he also became the first archbishop of the new archbishopric Mbandaka. Hulstaert, G. (1983). Vermeiren (Hilaire). In *Belgische koloniale biografie*, VII, A. 365-369.

[cvi] These letters, from which a number of longer quotations have been brought together here, can be found in AAFE 22. See appendix 10.

[cvii] AAFE 22.3.5. Letter from H. Vermeiren to P. Jans. Bokote, 29 May 1932. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cviii] AAFE 22.4.2-3. Letter from H. Vermeiren to P. Jans. Bokote, 3 August 1929. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cix] Vermeiren, H. (1926). Tata Paulus en tata Bernard. In *Annalen*, p. 175. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cx] Edmond Boelaert (1899-1966) was ordained as a priest in 1924. He did not have a higher diploma except a certificate from the University Centre for Missionaries. In the biographical notes on him he is being described as a very good student and an autodidact. After his ordination he was appointed as the person responsible for mission propaganda in Belgium. He left for the Belgian Congo in 1930 and would work there until 1954 in various places and positions. As a teacher and head of the seminary in Bokuma he also began publishing scientific texts on the language and culture of the Mongo population. He was the co-founder in 1938 of the periodical *Aequatoria*. In addition to a very extensive bibliography (articles and publications), he particularly left an extensive collection of documentation, which is integrated in the *Aequatoria Archives* (in a separate fund "Boelaert"). Vereecken, J. (1992). *Wij gedenken. Derde reeks biografische schetsen van MSC van de Belgische provincie*. Borgerhout: MSC. p. 11; Hulstaert, G. (1970). Boelaert (Edmond, Eloï). In *Belgische Overzeese Biografie*, VII A, 53-58.

[cxi] Ceuppens, B. (2003). o.c. XLVI; Beyen, M. (1998). "Vlaamsch zijn in het bloed en niet alleen in de hersenen" Het Vlaamse volk tussen ras en cultuur (1919-1939). In Beyen, M. & Vanpaemel G. (Eds.). *Rasechte wetenschap? Het rasbegrip tussen wetenschap en politiek vóór de Tweede Wereldoorlog*. Leuven: Acco.

[cxii] Beyen, M. (1998). l.c. p. 184. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxiii] Interview with Sister Rafaëlle, Sister Innocentia and Sister Hilde, in Beveren-Waas, 13 September 2002.

[cxiv] With regard to eating habits as an instrument of the representation of other cultures and as a “creator” of difference: Ceuppens, B. (2003). *Onze Congo? Congolezen over de kolonisatie*. Leuven: Davidsfonds, p. 19-28.

[cxv] Vertenten, P. (1934). Welsprekend of brutaal? In *Annalen*, 11, p. 247. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxvi] Ibidem. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxvii] “Uit brieven van Z.E.P. Vertenten aan de studenten der apostolische school te Assche”. In *Annalen*, 1928, 10, p. 219.

[cxviii] Vertenten, P. (1938). Mengelingen uit Flandria. In *Annalen*, 10, p. 224. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxix] Wauters, G. (1951). Makasa. In *Annalen*, May , p. 72. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxx] Carle, J. (1954). Uit Coq. In *Annalen*, January , p. 5. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxi] Van Gorp, A. (1954). Bokela (vervolg). In *Annalen*, February, p. 20. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxii] Vertenten, P. (1932). Nieuws uit Bamanian bij Coquilhatstad. In *Annalen*, 4, p. 78. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxiii] Pattheeuws, K. (1950). Rosalie op inspectiereis (vervolg). In *Annalen*, October, p. 139. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxiv] Ibidem.

[cxxv] “Brief van Zuster Baptizet, visitatrice.” In *De kleine bode van den H. Vincentius à Paulo en van de gelukzalige Louise de Marillac*, 1931, 2, p. 44. [original in Dutch]

[cxxvi] Depaepe, M. & Van Rompaey, L. (1995). *In het teken van de bevoogding*. p. 85 et seq.

[cxxvii] Alfons Walschap (1903-1938). The younger brother of the author Gerard. He was ordained as a priest in 1930 and left for the Congo mission in 1932. He is said to have composed numerous songs and also a complete Mass in the African style (“Bantu mass”). Vereecken, J. (1982). *Wij gedenken. Eerste reeks biografische schetsen van MSC van de Belgische provincie*. Borgerhout: MSC. p. 38. For Paul Jans, see footnote 35, p. 170.

[cxxviii] Moyens, J. (1955). Mama Auxilia Maria en Martha. In *Annalen*, April, p. 73. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxix] Vertenten, P. (1929). Van Coquilhatstad naar de boven-Tschuapa (vervolg). In *Annalen*, 3, p. 55. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxx] See the references in chapter two to the worldview of the MSC.

[cxxxix] Six, G. [Mgr.] (1936). L'Action sociale au Congo. In *Compte-Rendu de la troisième conférence plénière des Ordinaires du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi*. p. 155. The quotation is attributed in this article to the Governor general Ryckmans. [Original quotation in French]

[cxxxix] Caudron. J. (1936). Zijn er ook meisjes op de school in Bokote? In *Annalen*, 9, p. 197. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxxix] Es, M. (1927). Uit een schrijven van eerwaarde Pater Marcel Es. In *Annalen*, 1, p. 11. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxxix] Maria Jozefa, Zr. (1935). Brokkelbrieven. In *Annalen*, 1, p. 11. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxxix] Maria Godfrieda, Zr. (1934). Wat ze zoal te doen hebben. In *Annalen*, 5, p. 108. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxxix] Van Gorp, A. (1953). Bokela. In *Annalen*, October, p. 140. [Original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxxix] "Onze Scholen". In *Annalen*, December 1954 (jubilee issue), p. 184.

[cxxxix] AAVSB, Rapport sur l'activité missionnaire des Soeurs de St Vincent de Wafanya de 1934-1935. Mgr. Van Goethem. [original quotation in French]

[cxxxix] Interview with Sister Rafaëlle, Sister Innocentia and Sister Hilde, in Beveren-Waas, 13 September 2002.

[cxxxix] De Clercq, A. [Mgr.]. (1932). Question Scolaire. In *Compte-rendu de la première conférence plénière des ordinaires de missions du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi*. p. 77. [original quotation in French]

[cxxxix] Eggermont, B. (1994). Se marier chrétiennement au Congo Belge. Les stratégies appliquées par les Missionnaires de Scheut (CICM) au Kasai, 1919-1935. In *Missionering en inculturatie, Bulletin van het Belgisch Historisch Instituut te Rome*, LXIV, p. 113-147.

[cxxxix] "De Lazaristen in Congo". In *Sint Vincentius a Paulo. Driemaandelijks tijdschrift van de Lazaristen en de Dochters der Liefde*, 1946, 1, p. 10. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxxxix] Moreover, this fitted completely within the general assumptions of Six and presumably also the majority of bishops and religious workers. Sociale Actie (social action) was defined by Six as: "*organised action intended to restore and re-establish the social order, and in a more strict area the economic order, on the basis of natural law and evangelical doctrine.*" Six, G. [Mgr.] (1936). L'Action sociale au Congo. In *Compte-Rendu de la troisième conférence plénière des Ordinaires du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi*. p. 155. [original quotation in French]

[cxliv] De Clercq, A. [Mgr.]. (1936). La presse dans nos missions. In *Compte-rendu de la troisième conférence plénière des Ordinaires des missions du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi*. p. 15. [original quotation in French]

[cxlv] Hulstaert, G. (1951). L'instruction des filles. In *Aequatoria*, XIV, p. 129-130. [original quotation in French]

[cxlvi] AAFE 1.1.4. Verslag over de inspectie in de meisjesschool te Bamanya, 1942. G. Hulstaert, Bamanya, 12 November 1942. [original quotation in Dutch]

[cxlvii] AAFE 15.4.2-5. Rapport sur le fonctionnement des écoles des Révérendes Soeurs de Saint Vincent de Paul à Coquilhatville, 1930. P. Vertenten, Coquilhatville, 8 November 1930. [original quotation in French]

[cxlviii] AAFE 32.3.11-4.2. Memorandum sur les pourparlers entre la S.A. des Huileries du Congo Belge et la préfecture apostolique de Coquilhatville à Flandria en date du 5 avril 1930.

[cxlix] AAFE 15.5.4-6. Rapport sur le fonctionnement de l'école primaire à Bokote. P. Vertenten, Bokote, juillet-août 1930. [original quotation in French]