



# INDÉPENDANCE !

Congolese Tell Their Stories of 50 Years of Independence

A Royal Museum for Central Africa exhibition

11.06.2010 - 09.01.2011

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

Afijca

TERVUREN

30 June 1960 – Independence of Congo!  
Photo J. Makula, Inforcongo 15/02/1960 © RMCA  
'On a Congolese roadside, the *Commissariat général*  
à l'*information* announces the independence of Congo.'

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**This booklet offers texts selected from the exhibition  
*Indépendance ! Congolese Tell Their Stories of 50 Years of  
Independence*, at the Royal Museum for Central Africa from 11  
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RMCA Director General: Guido Gryseels

Curators: Bambi Ceuppens (RMCA), Joseph Ibango (IMNC) and Jacob  
Sabakinu Kivilu (UNIKIN)

Museology: Christine Bluard (RMCA)

Translation, proofreading and review: Benoît Albinovanus (RMCA),  
Isabelle Gerard (RMCA), Lee Gillette (RMCA), Miriam Tessens (RMCA)

Exhibition Design: Sandra Eelen (RMCA)

Graphic Design: Friederike Kratky (RMCA)

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It is dedicated to all the victims of violence in Congo.

# **DIPANDA !**

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*'Belgium must not see our independence as its gift to us. It is a right that the Congolese people had lost. Our goal is to unite and organize the Congolese masses in the effort to improve the colonial regime and ban human exploitation.'*

*Patrice Lumumba at the 28 December 1958 meeting on his return from the Accra Pan-African Conference.*

On 4 January 1959, riots rock Leopoldville when the colonial government suddenly forbids a meeting of ABAKO, led by Joseph Kasavubu. The same day, a nearby football match ends in dispute, the crowd erupts in anger, and the police intervene. Rioting continues for two days, after which Kasavubu is jailed and then released. Tension mounts throughout 1959. In October, following unrest in Stanleyville, MNC-Lumumba President Patrice Lumumba is jailed. Belgians and Congolese seek in vain to establish a dialogue. The first shouts of 'Dipanda!' ('Independence!') are heard. Soon, in response to Congolese demands, the Belgian government announces that a Round Table will be held in Brussels in mid-January 1960.

## POLITICAL ROUND TABLE

PALAIS DES CONGRÈS, BRUSSELS,  
20 JANUARY TO 20 FEBRUARY 1960

The first Round Table leads rapidly to agreement in principle on Congo's immediate independence, which is scheduled for 30 June. What independence means exactly and what form the future Congolese state will take, however, are left vague. Congolese leaders focus on the economic and social challenges but find no clear way forward. Nevertheless, when they return home, each will say, 'I've brought you independence' – in other words, freedom and wealth.



Marcel Lihau (Association des Étudiants congolais en Belgique), Vervier, Patrice Lumumba (MNC-Lumumba), Jean Ekwe (PNP) RMCA

Discussions take a crucial turn on 27 January 1960. Patrice Lumumba, freed from jail at the request of the Congolese delegation, arrives in Brussels on 26 January and joins the Round Table the next day. The Belgians propose a sovereign king for both countries, Belgium and Congo. The Congolese argue for the creation of a sovereign Congolese republic. Belgium wants to retain the Ministries of Finance, Defence, and Foreign Affairs. The Congolese counter-propose that Belgian civil servants who remain in Congo assume the titles of advisers and technicians,

take on Congolese nationality, and share the same status (including financial) as Congolese. Lumumba asks repeatedly about the future of the two Belgian military bases in Congo: the Belgians reply that the answer will have to wait until after 30 June. In fact, they decide before that, during the Economic Round Table, when the Belgians manage to retain military control.

## ECONOMIC ROUND TABLE

PALAIS DES CONGRÈS,

BRUSSELS, 6 APRIL TO 16 MAY 1960

HAVING AGREED IN PRINCIPLE ON INDEPENDENCE, THE TWO PARTIES ARE SUPPOSED TO CONSIDER FUTURE ECONOMIC TIES AT A SECOND ROUND TABLE. BUT CONGOLESE LEADERS DO NOT ATTEND, AND INSTEAD PREPARE FOR THE 15 MAY ELECTIONS THAT WILL LEAD TO THE FORMATION OF THEIR FUTURE GOVERNMENT.

With the election campaign in full swing, Patrice Lumumba (MNC), Joseph Kasavubu (ABAKO) and other leaders send students to represent them at the Economic Round Table. Some say that they're too young and inexperienced. But for Kasavubu, the meeting's sole purpose is 'to look at records', and he will ask for further explanation via a press conference. Yet these records include the central bank's reserves – in other words, the colony's holdings, estimated to be 35 to 37 billion Belgian francs. The Belgians are ready for the meeting and will recover the equivalent of what they gave up politically when they were caught unprepared at the first Round Table, including the maintenance of Belgian civil servants, their two military bases, and the significant 'portfolio' that is the root of Belgo-Congolese disagreement. At the end of this second Round Table, the Belgians fulfil their wish for a politically decolonized, economically subservient Congo.



Inauguration at Palais des Congrès  
20/01/1960  
photo R. Stalin, Inforcongo  
© RMCA

## INDÉPENDANCE CHA CHA!

'In 1959, politicians were invited to negotiate independence at the Brussels Round Table. Thomas Kanza had the great idea of sending a telegram to his brother Philippe Kanza, asking him to form a band comprised of musicians from OK Jazz and African Jazz. We accepted the offer, me and Vicky Longomba, and from African Jazz Nico, Déchaud, his brother and Izeidi and of course the man himself Kabasele. The seven of us went to the Round Table.'

*Excerpt from interview with Armand Brazzos in Kinshasa in spring 2009.*



African Jazz at the Plaza  
Thomas Kanza (at the back), Brazzos,  
Petit Pierre, Déchaud, Izeidi, Longomba, Kabasele, Dr Nico (from left to right)  
Brussels, April 1960  
Coll. Charles Hénault

## **INDÉPENDANCE CHA CHA ! - THE BAND**

Thomas Kanza, Congo's first university graduate, and his brother Philippe are the sons of Daniel Kanza, vice-president of ABAKO.

There are several versions of the story: some think the creation of a national band was Patrice Lumumba's idea; others say a Belgian publisher financed the presence of a Congolese band in Belgium to accompany the Congolese delegation to the Round Table and liven up the evenings.



Whatever the case, the band brings together seven musicians from Leopoldville's two most popular groups: Kabasele's African Jazz and Franco's OK Jazz. Some say that Kabasele invited Franco, who turned it down, either because of Kabasele's presence or because Franco didn't want to go to Europe when Congo was fighting for its independence. This back-and-forth is common when forming bands – in music, as in politics, groups come and go.

## **INDÉPENDANCE CHA CHA ! - THE SONG**

In the songs 'Indépendance Cha Cha' and 'Table Ronde', the musicians tell the story as it's happening. 'Indépendance Cha Cha' cites the names of the most important Congolese delegates and their parties; 'Table Ronde' mentions Belgian delegates. 'Indépendance Cha Cha' is probably the most famous Congolese song. It soon becomes the independence anthem of other African countries. The Congolese song is an instrument of communication; the political song, in particular, plays an important role in Congolese society.

Joseph Athanase  
Kabasele (Grand  
Kalle), Déchaud and  
Charles Hénault of  
African Jazz on  
tour returning from  
Hilversum  
April 1960  
Coll. Charles Hénault

## INDÉPENDANCE CHA CHA

*Indépendance cha cha tozui e  
O Kimpwanza cha cha tubakidi  
O Table Ronde cha cha ba gagner o  
O Dipanda cha cha tozui e*

*ASSORECO na ABAKO baykani moto moko  
Na CONAKAT na CARTEL balingani na front commun  
Bolikango, Kasavubu  
Mpe Lumumba na Kalonji  
Bolya, Tshombe, Kamitatu  
O Essandja, Mbuta Kanza*

*Na MNC na UJEKO  
ABAZI na PNP  
Na African Jazz na Table Ronde  
Mpe ba gagner*

Independence cha cha we gained it  
O freedom cha cha gained  
At the Round Table cha cha they won  
Independence cha cha we gained it

ASSORECO and ABAKO agree as though they're the same man  
CONAKAT and CARTEL are united in a common front  
Bolikango, Kasavubu  
And Lumumba with Kalonji  
Bolya, Tshombe, Kamitatu  
O Essandja, honourable Kanza

From the MNC to the UJEKO  
From ABAZI to the PNP  
From African Jazz to the Round Table,  
we won everything

*Indépendance cha cha* - Joseph Kabasele and African Jazz,  
from the CD *Les Merveilles du Passé*, 3'02, Sonodisc édition, France

## **INDEPENDENCE!**

During the 100th anniversary of the main Museum building and the 50th anniversary of the independence of the DRC, the exhibition *Indépendance !* tells how the Congolese anticipated and experienced independence and how they remember it 50 years later. By interviewing Congolese who lived through this period and drawing on artistic and popular representations, the exhibition takes a fresh look at a formative period of the Congolese nation.

The DRC is a vast country, as large as Western Europe. Time and transport constraints prevented conducting interviews in the countryside, but individuals in the three largest cities – Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Kisangani – receive ample attention. Other interviews were conducted in Belgium.

In addition to interviews that evoke the era, objects illustrate the evolution of Congolese public opinion from the colonial era to the present day. This material and immaterial heritage, which is the product of Congo's colonial and poscolonial modern urban consumer culture, has helped the Congolese nation to develop, and helps us understand contrasts between memories and the history of Congolese society.

Most exhibition interviewees experienced independence first-hand. In 1960, they were between 10 and 30 years old. Cleaning women, academics, workers, musicians, journalists, Christians and Muslims, of Congolese, Angolan, Belgian or other origin, they all found themselves subject to colonial authority. Together, these individuals are not representative of the entire Congolese population. They speak only for themselves, providing subjective, and thus sometimes diverging, points of view.

Note: French was the Belgian Congo's de facto official language and remains the DRC's sole official language, which explains its predominance in exhibition accounts and sources.



Bambi Ceuppens, Victorine Ndjoli  
Interviews DRC  
Spring 2010  
Photo Simon Tshiamala

## MAJOR EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF CONGO'S INDEPENDENCE

Proclaimed on 30 June 1960, the independence of Congo was the fundamental step of a long process that exerted profound and far-reaching effects and gradually led to the creation of Congolese nationhood and identity. In other words, the process began long before 30 June 1960 and continued long after the signing of Congo's independence law. From the interwar period to the 2006 elections, this chronology outlines more than 80 years of Congo's turbulent history of emancipation.

### 1920-1959: DESIRE FOR INDEPENDENCE

1. The 'colour bar': a system of legal inequality
2. Resistance and repression: Kimbanguism, strikes, mutinies, revolts, Anito (leopard men) and crocodile men
3. War efforts and War debts (1939-1945)
4. The model colony, the Ten Year Plan (1949-1959): economic and social development and suppressed political aspiration
5. Towards independence: the manifesto of *Conscience Africaine*, first elections, formation of political parties

### RUPTURE: THE LEOPOLDVILLE RIOTS OF 4 JANUARY 1959

### ACCELERATION

6. The Political Round Table (20 January-20 February 1960) – The Financial, Economic and Social Round Table (26 April-16 May 1960)
7. Independence signing (30 June 1960)

## **INDEPENDENCE**

### **1960-1965: UNREST**

8. Mutinies, secessions and rebellions: the period of unrest that followed 30 June 1960 left an indelible mark on Congolese memories

### **1965-1997: THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL IDENTITY: THE MOBUTU YEARS**

9. The campaign for authenticity and Zaireanization

## **TRANSITION**

10. Confusion and disorder (1990-1997)

11. The Congolese Wars (1996-1997; 1998-2003)

## **DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS**

12. The 30 July and 29 October 2006 elections

## **THE 'COLOUR BAR'**

**The colonial system is one of legal inequalities between colonizers and colonized, based on 'racial' differentiation.**

Unlike the Belgian Constitution, its equivalent in the colony, the Colonial Charter, recognizes the existence of different 'races'. The colonial administration categorizes the Congolese population by distinguishing 'races' and ethnic groups and further classifies individual Congolese according to their level of 'civilization'. Congolese hold Belgian nationality with colonial status: being subjects, they can never attain citizenship or enjoy the same rights as Belgians. Colonial society is very diverse: Belgians, Congolese, and many nationalities and lines of descent – African, Asian and European. Greeks, Portuguese and European Jews are not considered Europeans but make up an intermediate class. A 1918 decree imposes the separation of the 'races' in cities: this segregation is most evident in Katanga, an industrial region whose economy depends on the copper belt that stretches to South Africa. Maintaining segregation involves banning sexual relations between Africans and Europeans. Marriage isn't forbidden but it is rare, limited to unions between European men and African women, as the administration doesn't even consider the possibility of an African man marrying a European woman.

## **CONGOLESE BY CONGOLESE: PHOTOGRAPHS, 1958-1960**

These photographs, which are very different from propaganda photographs, reveal an aspect of colonialism rarely shown at the time: portraits of Congolese among themselves. Most of these photographs are taken by detectives or trustworthy Congolese agents posing as travelling photographers, as it allows them to easily approach villagers. They number only a few and work for Kivu Security, which provides them with basic training. They operate mainly between 1958 and 1960, some in Bukavu, Kindu and Goma, others in isolated villages in the deep forest and near the Ugandan border, where they monitor illicit trade. Inhabitants trust them because they're African – a European photographer would be immediately suspect.

## COLONIAL 'ROMANCE'

Europeans usually take Congolese mistresses – 'housekeepers', the sole Congolese women to play a public role in colonial society. After the Second World War, the colonial administration encourages Belgians to marry before going to Congo or to move with their families, in an attempt to put a stop to public liaisons between European men and African women. 'Housekeepers' disappear from public view. Colonial society construes a relationship between a European man and an African woman as one between the dominator and the dominated.

A relationship between a European woman and an African man is inconceivable in the colonial mindset. Both Europeans and Africans recognize the reality of these relationships but interpret them differently: Europeans see the sexual dynamism of Africans, whereas Africans see unequal power relations. Europeans in general and Belgians in particular rarely recognize children they have with African women: most of these children are raised by their mothers alone. In fact, their number doesn't matter; it's the symbolic power of the child that disturbs. Indeed, these births reveal the weaknesses and dead ends of the colonial system, which doesn't manage to classify them in its 'racial' order. These children show that the separation of 'races' is illusory: in the long-term, maintaining segregation is impossible.



Untitled, Paul Mampinda  
RMCA

## THE WAR EFFORT

During the Second World War, Congolese soldiers of the Force Publique's Expeditionary Force are sent to fight side-by-side with European soldiers in Burma, Egypt, Ethiopia, Madagascar and the Middle East. This transforms their understanding of relations between Africans and Europeans, and could threaten colonial order. As for Congolese in Congo, they question the war repeatedly and receive few answers. Rumours spread – such as the existence of European ‘cannibals’ – and Messianic movements challenging the colonial order multiply. The colonial administration resorts to forced labour: each man becomes a civilian ‘recruit’. This war effort exhausts the population and plunges civil society into social unrest: strikes, mutinies and rebellions proliferate, and the harsh response of Belgian authorities worsens relations between the colonists and the colonized. The violent, radical protests of the masses contrast with the more subdued protests of ‘évolués’ (‘civilized Congolese’).



## WAR DEBTS

The colonial administration recognizes that it owes a debt to the Congolese: they contributed to the war effort and suffered more than Belgians in Congo did. They deserve to be repaid. After the war, it launches *'La Voix du Congolais'* ('The Congolese Voice'), a review for 'évolués'. By doing this, the Belgian administration is favouring the Congolese elite, whose protests were more moderate than those of the masses. Fomenting this division among the Congolese people prevents the creation of a popular movement that could push the colonial administration to recognize the rights of all Congolese.

## RESISTANCE

From the interwar period to the eve of Congo's independence, the colonial system meets with resistance. During all this time, the memory of the regime of King Leopold II and the violence associated with the rubber plantations remains vivid. In rural areas and industrial centres, the population rises up against racial segregation, forced labour, obligatory cash crop cultivation and harsh industrial working conditions. These protests sometimes involve leaders and educated men but are more often reactions of the masses. To oppose colonial practices, some people lean on Christianity, while others reject all things associated with colonial power, including Western clothing. These actions are not necessarily aimed at achieving political independence but are considered subversive by the colonial administration, all the more so because they are poorly understood. However, the actions of Simon Kimbangu, the crocodile men, the leopard men and others take place at the margins of society and remain too isolated to threaten colonial order. Nevertheless, they create fear and draw strong government reprisals.

Belgian colonial  
troops: the  
Expeditionary  
Force in the  
Middle East

Bicycle troops  
© Inforcongo  
RMCA

Simon Kimbangu is born in 1887 in Bas-Congo, where the Portuguese introduced Catholicism in the 15th century and the slave trade scarred the region. Baptized in 1915, Kimbangu becomes a Protestant catechist and opens his ministry of preaching and healing in 1921. His Messianism combines Christian and pre-colonial religious elements; his message is religious and social rather than political, but in 1921 a military tribunal condemns him to death. King Albert I commutes his sentence to life in prison, where he dies in 1951, in Elisabethville, far from his home. His 30 years in prison infuriates the population, who see Kimbangu as a martyr. His sons Joseph Diangienda and Charles Kisilokele, two 'évolués' employed by the colonial administration, fight for the recognition of the Kimbanguist Church, which is achieved on 24 December 1959 just before independence.

## A NEW MODERN CULTURE

The colonial administration and Christian churches sometimes find it difficult to establish their authority; some groups resist more than others. However, by 1950, much of the population has integrated Christianity and consumer culture into their daily lives, without Westernizing themselves completely. Obviously, it's in the colonizers' interest to maintain the difference in 'level of civilization' between Belgians and Congolese, which justifies their domination; moreover, they have neither the means nor the desire to control strictly all aspects of Congolese cultural life. These constraints and opportunities favour the development of a culture that is both modern and uniquely Congolese. People develop a taste for foreign products such as 'guaranteed Dutch wax' fabric imported by West Africans and preferred by Congolese women. Whether in the city or in the countryside, some products, including Western clothes and bicycles, become objects of prestige; city-dwellers and villagers love football, lager and the new Congolese urban music. Greek traders and Belgian musicians play an essential role in the development and exportation of this music that spread throughout sub-Saharan Africa. In this new culture, the role of African women diminishes gradually to that of consumers.



Poster 50th anniversary of Belgian Congo  
1908-1958  
RMCA

## A MIDDLE CLASS: THE 'ÉVOLUÉS'

The word 'évolué' is a poorly defined term that applies to Congolese deemed 'civilized'. Some say that on the eve of independence only 1% of the population claims to be 'évolué'. Indeed, the colonial administration impedes the development of a middle class – 'no elite, no problems'. It prefers to educate as many children as possible at the primary school level. After the Second World War, the administration creates the civic merit card. Born colonial subjects, Congolese are excluded from enjoying the same rights as Belgian citizens. The education of girls is neglected, relative to the education of boys. The colonial system deprives Congolese women of political rights and economic independence: their place is the home and their professional opportunities are limited. Their role is ambiguous: they must simultaneously 'civilize' themselves and be the custodians of precolonial traditions. On the eve of independence, no Congolese woman possesses a university degree.



'Plan décennal pour le développement économique et social du Congo belge, Tome I-II'  
Brussels, Les Éditions de Visscher, 1949  
RMCA

## THE CONGOLESE PRESS

Well before the 1950s, Christian missions, major private companies like the Union Minière du Haut Katanga and institutions such as the Force Publique create magazines and newspapers for the Congolese, headed by Europeans – the first Congolese journalists don't appear on editorial staffs until after the war. In 1934 and 1935, 'évolués' can express themselves in the first non-confessional journal, *Ngonga*, which meets with opposition from the colonial administration.

Beginning in 1954, ABAKO publishes the periodicals *Kongo dia Ngunga* and *Congo pratique*; in 1959, they are replaced by *Kongo Dieto* and *Notre Congo*. Some colonial newspapers intended for Europeans open their columns to African collaborators, such as the liberal newspaper *Avenir*, which beginning in 1956 invites Congolese such as Philippe Kanza and Joseph-Désiré Mobutu. Most newspapers created by and for the Congolese have a Catholic tendency: *La voix du Congolais* (1945-1959) and *La Croix du Congo* (1945), renamed *Horizons* in 1957. That same year the social Christian *Présence congolaise* is launched, as is the nationalist *Congo*, which considers itself the first independent weekly managed by Congolese. But the colonial authorities put an end to it before the year is out and put together a team of more moderate Congolese journalists who are given the means to launch the weekly *Quinze*. In 1958, the MNC-Lumumba's *Independence* appears for the first time.

## A 'MODEL COLONY'

After the Second World War, the Ten Year Plan (Plan décennal pour le développement économique et social du Congo belge), published in June 1949, emphasizes the colony's economic and social development. The same year, the colonial administration creates Inforcongo (Centre d'Information et de Documentation du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi). Images distributed by Inforcongo, which shape perceptions of the colony to this day, analogize life in Belgian Congo to 'a long, calm river': they reflect a 'model' colony where colonized peoples are smiling, happy and safe. Yet the reality is more complex and nuanced: the effects of economic development are unequal; rural areas are neglected; obligatory cash crop cultivation, forced labour and difficult living conditions induce a rural exodus, which causes problems in cities. Workers in cities and industrial centres complain of insufficient salaries and housing ill-adapted to their needs; the 'évolués' call for equal pay for equal work; in Kasai, Bena Lulua reproach the colonial administration for favouring Baluba; in Leopoldville and in Katanga's industrial centres, those who consider themselves 'natives' feel threatened by the presence of 'immigrants'. To reinforce Belgian domination, the colonial elite reformulates its vision based on the model of a Belgo-Congolese community. But too often it reduces colonial problems to interpersonal ones between 'whites' and 'blacks', neglecting the juridical and administrative inequalities that structure their relationships.



Elation during the visit of King Baudouin to Kamina  
RMCA

## THE 'BILLS'

In Leopoldville's 'indigenous' township, some youths aspire to modernity without wanting or being able to become 'évolués'. They develop a counterculture, subversive and marginal, but in the long-run very influential. The 'Bills' (from Buffalo Bill) model themselves on the cowboys in American westerns and create their own cultural codes through fashion, slang and music. This urban youth culture is absent from Inforcongo's images, which emphasize 'primitive' Congolese of the countryside, 'évolués' of the city and workers of the industrial centres. Many Bills, however, are captured in the photographs of Depara, who becomes the photographer of the singer Franco of OK Jazz, a band whose popularity in Leopoldville's township bars and clubs will begin to grow in 1956.



The Kongo Bar, one of the nightclubs in the 'indigenous quarter' of Leopoldville  
Photo A. Da Cruz, 1946  
RMCA

## **LEO: THE JEWEL OF THE COLONY**

Leopoldville is the jewel of the colony and the capital of the emerging Congolese popular culture. Patrice Lumumba, hired in 1956 as the commercial director of Bracongo Brewery, becomes a popular figure in the capital's African bars and dance halls. But not everything is going well in the 'indigenous' township. The majority Bakongo feel threatened by the presence of immigrants, especially the Bangala of Haut-Congo. The capital is home to many squatters: villagers who want to settle but to whom the administration refuses the necessary permit; they find it difficult to find housing, work and a school for their children.

## **A TIME BOMB**

Muissa-Camus, member of *Conscience Africaine*, and other Congolese journalists expose the difficult living conditions of 'indigenous' township residents. At the time, Leopoldville is experiencing most of the problems associated with today's Kinshasa: housing shortages, unemployment, gangs, street children, drugs – to all of these problems the Congolese respond with 'débrouillardise' ('resourcefulness'). Colonial authorities neglect the young, who make up the majority of the capital's population: all seems calm but Leopoldville is a time bomb that will explode on 4 January 1959.

## POLITICAL EMANCIPATION

Political freedom does not exist in Belgian Congo. In the absence of political parties, the 'évolués' organize themselves into cultural or ethnic associations, often with the support of Catholic missionaries. While the Catholic Church is one of the pillars of the colonial structure, it is nevertheless sensitive to the demands of the 'évolués' and will distance itself from the colonial administration. In 1959, Bishop Joseph Malula declares his support for a Congolese Church. The 'évolués' claim their rights first through channels to which the Church provides access: the press and unions.

## THE 1957 ELECTIONS AND THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Beginning in 1956, the political pace quickens. Originally written in Dutch, Jef van Bilsen's *Plan de trente ans pour l'émancipation de l'Afrique belge* ('Thirty Year Plan for the Emancipation of Belgian

Congo') is published, which inspires Catholic members of *Conscience africaine* to call for independence in the long-term. ABAKO counters with a call for immediate independence. In 1957, the first elections take place in Leopoldville, Elisabethville and Jadotville: African districts elect their own mayors. The right to vote is limited to men 21 and over. ABAKO wins the elections in Leopoldville. Joseph Kasavubu becomes mayor of Dendale Township. Many people in Bas-



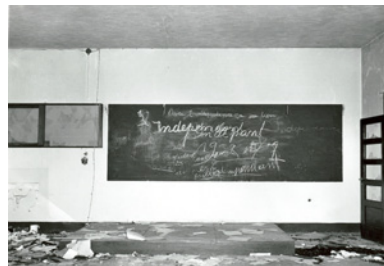
'La Belgique tient ses promesses'  
(Belgium keeps her promises)  
RMCA

Congo see him as Simon Kimbangu's successor and their liberator. Beginning in 1958, Belgian political parties are introduced to Congo and the first Congolese political parties are created. The colonial administration subdivides the Congolese population into races and

ethnic groups, based on a European model that ties ethnic group to language. Yet the precolonial Congolese realities are more complex. Nevertheless, constrained by the colonial system, the majority of the first political parties are based on ethnic or local identity.

### **BOYCOTT OF DECEMBER 1959 ELECTIONS, AND THE MAY 1960 ELECTIONS.**

After the riots of 4 January 1959, King Baudouin addresses the Congolese to announce that Belgium will lead the country to independence: he announces local elections for December 1959, which are boycotted by ABAKO and members of the Cartel. Meanwhile, the political situation worsens in the colony: the Baluba and the Lulua clash in Kasai, unrest rocks Stanleyville and the colonial administration loses control of Bas-Congo. In May 1960, the first national elections are held. The right to vote is limited to men 21 and over. The Belgians hope for a victory by federalist parties, but the 'Congolese gamble' fails: the Mouvement National Congolais of Patrice Lumumba wins.



After the riots  
01/1959  
Coll. KADOC-K.U.Leuven

## **INDEPENDENCE CHRONOLOGY**

**FROM 4 JANUARY 1959 RIOTS AT THE END OF THE FIRST REPUBLIC  
TO MOBUTU'S SECOND COUP D'ÉTAT**

### **1959**

- > Local strikes in Leopoldville, Kwango, Kwilu, Lukula, Elisabethville, Yaligimba, Gwaka, Albertville and Eastern Province.
- > The Force Publique intervenes in Elisabethville, Lukula and Albertville.

### **JANUARY**

#### **04/01**

- > Riots in Leopoldville.

#### **13/01**

- > King Baudouin vows to lead the Congolese to independence and announces local elections with universal suffrage for December 1960, and the establishment of local councils in all urban centres

### **MARCH**

- > The trial of three ABAKO leaders, including Kasavubu, follows the 4 January riots.
- > Joseph Malula declares support for the creation of a Congolese Church.
- > Malula is ordained a bishop.

### **APRIL**

- > Congress of Congolese political parties in Luluabourg.
- > Founding of the Parti solidaire africain (PSA).

### **JUNE**

- > Joseph Kasavubu, president of ABAKO, calls for the creation of a republic Kongo in the west of the country.

### **JULY**

- > Founding of CONAKAT (Katanga Tribal Association Confederation).
- > The MNC splits into the MNC-Lumumba and the MNC-Kalonji.
- > All youth associations are banned.

### **AUGUST**

- > Decree on the exercise of fundamental liberties in Belgian Congo.
- > Founding of the Parti du Peuple.
- > Confrontations between the Baluba and the Lulua peoples in Kasai.

## **OCTOBER**

- > Unrest in Stanleyville.

## **NOVEMBER**

- > Lumumba is arrested.
- > Creation of the Parti national du Progrès (PNP).

## > **DECEMBER**

- > Martial law is imposed in southern Kasai to stop the confrontations between Lulua and Luba.
- > ABAKO, the MNC-Kalonji and their allies boycott local and regional elections.
- > A coalition comprised of ABAKO, the PSA and the MNC-Kalonji calls for a Round Table in Brussels.
- > Minister of Colonies Maurice De Schryver announces plans for the Round Table in Brussels.
- > The colonial administration recognizes the Kimbanguist Church.

# **1960**

## **JANUARY**

- 19101 Founding of Front commun congolais pour la Table ronde.
- 20101 Official opening of the Political Round Table.
- 21101 Lumumba is sentenced to six months in prison.
- 25101 Lumumba is freed.
- 26101 Lumumba arrives in Brussels.  
The Political Round Table establishes 30 June as the date for independence.

## **FEBRUARY**

- 20102 The Political Round Table closes.

## MARCH

10103 Appointment of members to the General Executive College, Provincial Colleges and the Congolese Political Commission in Brussels.

## APRIL

02104 Simon Kimbangu's remains are returned from Elisabethville to Bas-Congo.

26104 Belgo-Congolese Financial, Economic and Social Round Table in Brussels

## MAY

10105 The Belgian Parliament passes the Basic Law of the Future Congolese State.

11105 Elections, won by the MNC-Lumumba.

19105 Constitution Proclamation.  
Lumumba demands the right to form a government.

## JUNE

10106 Protocol agreement between the MNC-Lumumba, the PSA, CERECA (Centre de Regroupement africain) and BALUBAKAT (General Association of the Baluba of Katanga).

13106 Lumumba is asked to explore the possibilities of a future coalition government.

15106 Belgian Parliament changes unilaterally Congo's provisional constitution.

17106 A Belgian law offers Belgian firms in Congo the choice between being subject to Congolese or Belgian law. Most firms choose the latter option.  
Kasavubu is appointed to form a coalition government.

21106 Election of the president, vice-presidents and House members.  
Lumumba is appointed to form a coalition government.

- 24/06 Lumumba wins the confidence of the House and Senate.  
Kasavubu is elected president by the House and Senate.
- 30/06 Independence Day. Congo renamed Congo-Leopoldville.
- JULY**
- 01/07 General amnesty.  
Congo asks to become a member of the UN.
- 04/07 Leopoldville and Thysville servicemen petition to Africanize the Force Publique officer corps.
- 05/07 First mutinies directed against Lumumba and General Emile Janssens, commander of the Force Publique.
- 06/07 Lumumba dismisses General Janssens.
- 07/07 The European exodus begins.
- 08/07 Victor Lundula replaces Janssens. Joseph-Désiré Mobutu is named Army Chief of Staff and Africanizes the officer corps. Mutinies in Katanga, Luluabourg, Goma, Congole and Matadi.
- 10/07 Mutiny in Elisabethville.  
Belgian army intervenes.
- 11/07 Moïse Tshombe proclaims the secession of the mining province of Katanga.  
In Luluabourg, Kasavubu and Lumumba sign an accord opposing the presence of Belgian troops in Congo.
- 12/07 New wave of mutinies in Thysville and Matadi.
- 13/07 Belgian military intervenes in Leopoldville, where they take Njili Airport.
- 12/07 Lumumba and Kasavubu call for armed intervention by the UN.
- 14/07 Lumumba appeals to the UN and the Soviet Union and

breaks off diplomatic relations with Belgium.

The UN Security Council passes a resolution calling for Belgium to withdraw its troops and for UN peacekeepers to replace them.

16/07 UN peacekeepers replace Belgian troops in Leopoldville.

17/07 Kasavubu and Lumumba inform the UN representative in Leopoldville that if the organization does not see to the withdrawal of Belgian troops by 19 July, they will appeal to the Soviet Union.

20/07 The Congolese government appeals to the Soviet Union.

21/07 The UN calls for the rapid withdrawal of Belgian forces.

23/07 The last Belgian soldiers leave Leopoldville.

28/07 UN representative Dag Hammarskjöld arrives in Leopoldville and meets Kasavubu.

#### AUGUST

08/08 Albert Kalonji (MNC-Kalonji) proclaims the establishment of the Autonomous State of South Kasai, supported by Western countries.

Lumumba returns to Congo after stops in Tunis, Conakry, Accra and Rabat, where he obtains promises of direct assistance should the UN fail to help the legal government recover Katanga.

09/08 First civil war begins, and includes foreign mercenary intervention. A massive operation to maintain order is launched under the aegis of the UN.

13/08 A UN-Katanga agreement severely limits the role of peacekeepers in the province.

14/08 Lumumba protests the UN-Katanga agreement and com-

mands the UN to negate Katanga's secession at all costs.

16/08 Lumumba orders the Force Publique, now the Congolese National Army (ANC), to retake secessionist territories.

17/08 The ANC mutinies.

20/08 Lumumba complains to the UN of the lack of support for his government.

31/08 The last Belgian troops withdraw from the country.

#### SEPTEMBER

05/09 Lumumba and Kasavubu dismiss each other.

07/09 Lumumba wins the support of Parliament, which recommends a reconciliation between the prime minister and the president.

12/09 Kasavubu establishes a new government led by Joseph Ileo (MNC-Kalonji).  
Lumumba is arrested by the ANC and freed by Lundula.

13/09 New Parliamentary resolution in support of reconciliation. The two assemblies grant power to Lumumba.

14/09 Mobutu foments a military coup d'etat. He neutralizes Lumumba and Kasavubu.

19/09 Mobutu establishes the Delegation of General Commissioners, which replaces the organs of power.

20/09 The Republic of Congo, a sovereign state, becomes a UN member.

#### OCTOBER

01/10 Six MNC-Lumumba Parliamentary members accuse Lumumba of being a communist and responsible for the chaos.

10|10 The ANC attempts in vain to arrest Lumumba, who withdraws to his residence, protected by UN peacekeepers.

#### **DECEMBER**

01|12 Mobutu's troops arrest Lumumba as he attempts to reach Stanleyville and bring him back to Leopoldville.

12|12 Gizenga (PSA) proclaims the Free Republic of Congo in Stanleyville, which becomes the country's provisional capital.

#### **1961**

- > Mutiny in Thysville.
- > Letter from Tshombe announcing he accepts Lumumba's transfer to Katanga.
- > Transfer of Lumumba and two ministers, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito, to Elisabethville, where they are assassinated on arrival.
- > A provisional government led by Ileo (MNC-Kalonji) replaces the Delegation of General Commissioners.
- > Announcement of the deaths of Lumumba, Mpolo and Okito.
- > Parliamentary meeting that entrusts the government to Cyrille Adula (MNC-Lumumba), with Gizenga (PSA) as vice-prime minister.

#### **1962**

- > The army and UN forces put an end to the Gizenga government in Stanleyville.
- > The ANC reconquers South Kasai.

#### **1963**

- > The army and UN forces seize Elisabethville and put an end to Katanga's secession.
- > President Kasavubu suspends Parliament. The opposition goes into hiding immediately.

### 1964-65

- > A massive rebellion, led by unionist-inspired parties against the central government, conquers two-thirds of the Congolese territory.

### 1964

- > Sophie Kanza, a University of Geneva graduate in sociology, becomes the first Congolese woman to obtain a university degree.
- > Belgium passes a convention with Congo to settle a disagreement over finances between the two countries. The former Belgian Congo's portfolio remains with Congo and the debt incurred by Belgium on behalf of Congo is shared between them.
- > Moïse Tshombe is named Prime Minister by President Kasavubu.
- > Government forces and mercenaries retake Stanleyville.
- > Proclamation of the Luluabourg Constitution. The country is officially renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- > Tshombe puts an end to the government in Stanleyville, where Belgian commandos, assisted by British and American troops, are deployed.

### 1965

- > Legislative elections.
- > Kasavubu replaces Tshombe with Évariste Kimba.
- > Second coup d'état by army commander Colonel Mobutu.

# INDEPENDENCE

## BEST WISHES TO THE NEW CONGOLESE STATE!

Patrice Lumumba, victorious in the May elections, is appointed to form a coalition government on 21 June. On 24 June, he wins the confidence of the House and Senate and is appointed Prime Minister. The same day Joseph Kasavubu is elected president. The new republic's political system is a copy of Belgium's: the president's role is mainly formal.

On 17 June 1960, the Belgian Parliament adopts a law that offers to Belgian companies with colonial status in Congo the possibility of opting for either Belgian or Congolese nationality. Most companies opt for Belgian nationality. The law is the root of Belgo-Congolese contention: many Congolese feel that while Belgium is ceding political power, it is maintaining its hold on Congo's economic capital.



Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba introduces the members of his government to King Baudouin: on the right Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, 29/06/1960  
RMCA

## **SIGNING THE 'GOLDEN BOOK'**

The independence act is a terse document: in only a few lines, it enacts the political transition but includes not a word on the transfer of economic resources. This elliptical piece of writing disappoints Congolese. Indeed, in the colonial era, the 'book' is an important symbol of power, and, in this case, the political transition has great symbolic impact. In popular depictions, power passes from King Baudouin, representing the colonial authority, to Patrice Lumumba, the prime minister elected by the majority of the Congolese people. But, in fact, signing the independence act involves the two prime ministers: Patrice Lumumba for Congo and Gaston Eyskens for Belgium. Over time in the Congolese imagination, the act becomes an imposing 'golden book': it remains the object of many myths in Congo.



Prime Ministers Patrice Lumumba and Gaston Eyskens (signing the declaration of independence)

Palais de la Nation, 1960 © Inforcongo Coll. RMCA

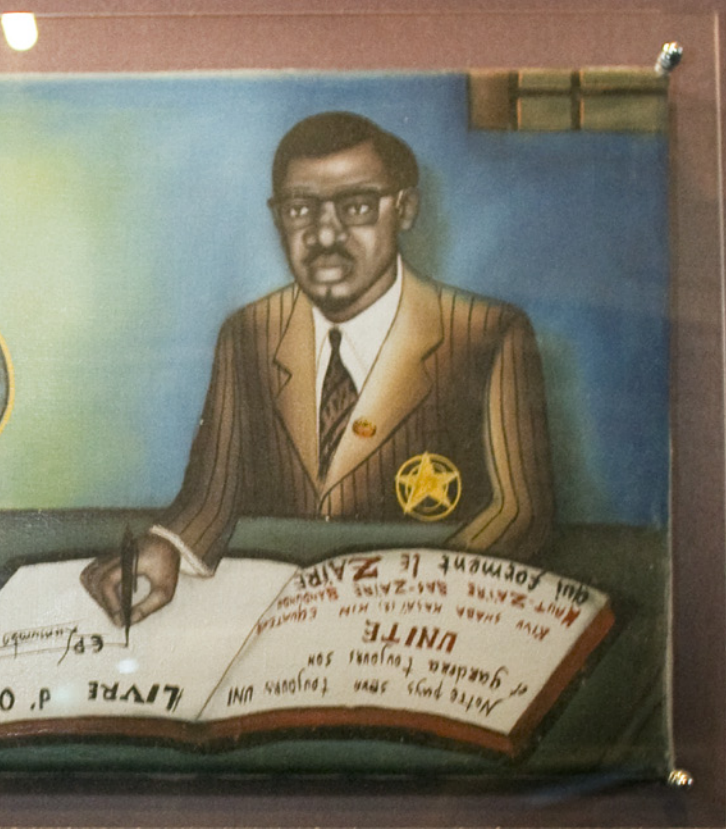
DE ONDERTEKENING VAN HET 'GULDEN B  
 LA SIGNATURE DU « LIVRE D'OR »  
 SIGNING THE 'GOLDEN BOOK'



De onafhankelijkheidsverklaring is een document van enkele  
 lijnen waarin de politieke overdracht wordt geregeld, maar  
 met geen woord over de overdracht van de economische  
 rijkdommen wordt gerept. Die bondigheid is voor vele  
 Congolezen een ontgoocheling. In de koloniale periode is  
 het boek een belangrijk machtssymbool en de politieke

Photo Raymond Dakoua © RMCA

BOEK'



## THE CONGO CRISIS

### THE MUTINY OF THE FORCE PUBLIQUE

On 4 July 1960, Force Publique soldiers in Camp Leopold, in the capital, and Thysville sign a petition demanding the africanization of the Force Publique officer corps. The next day, they mutiny against Lumumba and the Force Publique's commander, General Janssens. The latter had declared: 'Après l'indépendance = avant l'indépendance' ('After independence = before independence'). Despite Lumumba's concessions, the mutiny spreads; rebellious soldiers soon turn against Belgian civilians, who leave the country in a mass exodus. After Belgian troops intervene, Lumumba and Kasavubu call for UN intervention and peacekeepers arrive to relieve Belgian troops.

### SECESSION: KATANGA AND SOUTH KASAI

On 11 July 1960, Moïse Tshombe, president of CONAKAT, declares the secession of the industrial province of Katanga, supported by Belgium. On 8 August 1960, with the support of Western countries, Albert Kalonji of the MNC-Kalonji proclaims the establishment of the Autonomous State of South Kasai, where diamond mines are



Katangan secession: documents and photographs  
KMMA-MRAC



located. It is later renamed the Federal Kingdom of South Kasai. While the UN demands that Belgium withdraw its troops, it refrains from intervening in what it deems Congolese internal politics. The Congolese government therefore appeals to the Soviet Union, spreading the international impact of the crisis and leading to Lumumba's assassination.

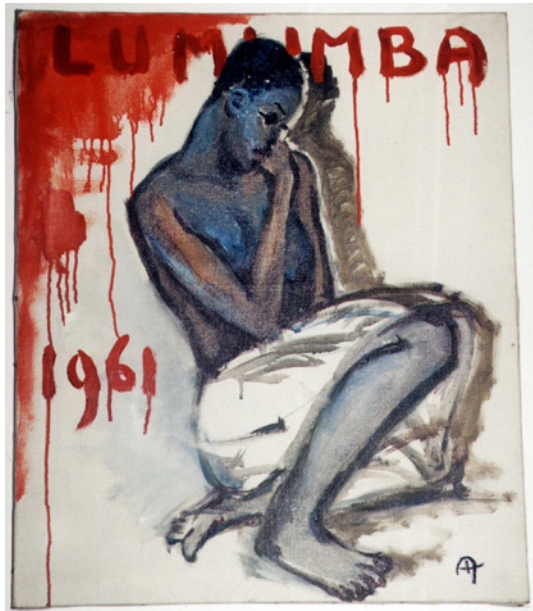
Katanga propaganda posters  
Coll. Philippe Jacquij

## REBELLIONS

In 1961, after a bloody military campaign during which thousands of civilians are massacred, the central government ends the secession of South Kasai. In 1963, the UN puts an end to Katangan secession. In 1964 and 1965, unionist forces lead a mass rebellion against the central government, killing 500,000 according to some historians. It begins in Kwilu under the leadership of Pierre Mulele, who was one of Lumumba ministers. Other rebels, including Christopher Gbenye, General Olenga, Gaston Soumialot and the future president of the Democratic Republic of Congo Laurent-Désiré Kabila, launch the Simba Rebellion in the east and take Stanleyville.

## THE END OF THE SIMBA REBELLION

The rebels conquer three-quarters of the country. To put an end to the rebellion, Joseph Kasavubu appoints Moïse Tshombe prime minister. Supported by Katangan gendarmes in exile and Western mercenaries, the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC) advances on the Simba, who take Western hostages in Stanleyville. Tshombe appeals to the Belgian and American governments: Belgian paratroopers, supported by British and American troops, are deployed. They free most hostages and evacuate Europeans and Americans from Stanleyville. With mercenary support, government forces retake the city and end the rebellion.



'Pauline Lumumba après la mort du premier ministre Patrice Lumumba.' (Pauline Lumumba after prime minister Patrice Lumumba's death)

Photo Jan Van Lierde © Coll. SOMA/CEGES

## **THE ASSASSINATION OF PATRICE LUMUMBA**

Lumumba makes enemies everywhere: as a unionist, he opposes Western powers (including Belgium), which prefer a confederal Congo with autonomous provinces in order to maintain control over the country's economic resources. Accused of being a communist, he is disowned by members of his own government and by the Katangan government. Joseph Kasavubu has only a formal role: at the national level, political power is held in reality by the group of Binza, a small, informal, unstructured group that opposes Lumumba and includes his former secretary Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, Mario Cardoso and Justin Bomboko; all three attended the 1960 Brussels Economic Round Table. Lumumba, 67 days after taking office, is dismissed by Kasavubu and placed under house arrest. He tries to escape but is captured by Mobutu's soldiers. Lumumba, Minister Maurice Mpolo and the Senate vice-president, Joseph Okito, are transferred first to Thysville, then to Tshombe. On 17 January 1961, the three men are assassinated in Elisabethville. To erase all traces, the bodies are dismembered, soaked in acid and burned. Lumumba's assassination provokes an international outcry: Belgium, in particular, is accused of being responsible. In 2001, a Belgian parliamentary commission concludes the Belgian government was morally responsible for Lumumba's assassination, and the government apologizes to the Congolese people and Lumumba's family.

## THE 1965 ELECTIONS

Joseph Kasavubu remains president during the Congolese crisis. After the rebellions end, Moïse Tshombe forms a government of national reconciliation to reunite the Congolese and pacify the country. A new, federal constitution authorizes multipartyism and organizes the country into 21 'provincettes' corresponding to the former colonial districts. In 1965, the Congo holds legislative elections. Only men can vote. After the elections, Joseph Kasavubu replaces Tshombe with Évariste Kimba. The next month, Colonel Mobutu overthrows the president and prime minister.



MPR propaganda document  
RMCA

## **THE CALL FOR AUTHENTICITY AND ZAIREANIZATION**

The Congo is politically independent. Now Mobutu wants cultural and economic independence.

The call for authenticity marks the break with the imported and imposed culture of the colonial power: its aim is to erase all traces of the colonial era and reclaim what is 'authentically Congolese'. Every Congolese born to a Congolese parent becomes a Congolese citizen: in this way, those who are not recognized by their European fathers are included in the Congolese nation. The country, the river, the currency, the cities and the Congolese themselves each take a 'Congolese' name. Men wear the abacost (short for the French 'à bas le costume', 'down with the suit') and women wear the pagne. Mobutu rejects democracy and multipartyism by appealing to 'Bantu traditions'. At the same time, he allows women the political power they were denied by the colonial regime: they can vote and be nominated for positions in government, administration and the MPR (Mouvement populaire pour la Révolution). Supporting women and musicians is at the heart of authenticity: Mobutu uses the pagne, music and dance as propaganda tools. The authenticity to which he refers is largely the product of colonization and relations with Europe.

Two years after taking power, Mobutu nationalizes the Union Minière du Haut Katanga, which becomes Gécamines. In 1974, all businesses are nationalized. The same year, the country experiences an economic crisis, and the new owners of economic and financial assets are not sufficiently prepared to manage businesses. Zaireanization is a failure and Mobutu is forced to return to a mixed economy.

## **1974: PEAK AND DECLINE OF THE MOBUTU REGIME**

In 1974, the Mobutu regime is at its peak. Authenticity and Zaireanization inspire the Congolese, who are proud of the cultural and economic capital of their country and its people. In 1974, Muhammad Ali and George Foreman fight a famous boxing match in Kinshasa, and Zaire is the first sub-Saharan nation to qualify for the final phase of football's World Cup. However, 1974 is also the beginning of Zaire's economic decline: corruption is rampant and state structures implode. Mobutu's cult of personality is not sustained without violence; any resistance is brutally suppressed. Dictatorship causes a brain drain, especially to Belgium and France.



Untitled  
RMCA



Photo Raymond Dakoua © RMCA

## **THE CONGOLESE 'CAKE'**

Since 1884, when the Berlin Conference granted Leopold II control of the country, the great powers have vied for Congo's immense natural resources. In 1960, Belgium grants political independence but retains control of the Congolese economy. A few years later, Mobutu takes power, supported by Western powers. Mobutu's death generates a wave of hope and freedom that soon recedes with the country's implosion and the resumption of war.

After the sweeping transformations on the international scene in the late 1980s, Zaire enters a long period of transition. At the end of the 1990s, following the Rwandan genocide, a regional conflict erupts in the east that leads to two wars involving six African countries vying for Congo's natural resources: Angola, Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. While affecting the entire country, the war is at its most intense in the eastern provinces and the equatorial forest, two regions long coveted for their natural resources. The two wars are among the bloodiest on record: millions dead and countless sex crimes, particularly the rape of women. Rebel groups are armed by multinational companies and Congolese criminal networks. The international community, for the most part, stays out of it. Experts expose repeatedly the link between plunder, unfair exploitation of Congo's natural resources, and systematic violations of human rights.

Throughout these successive crises and wars, the Congolese people remain strong, clinging fiercely to the notion of a united country and resisting 'Balkanization', even though the state fails to maintain control of the national territory.

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# LE FRONDEUR

15 C<sup>MES</sup> LE N<sup>O</sup>

JOURNAL SATIRIQUE PARAISSANT TOUS LES SAMEDIS

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## LE REVEILLON DES SOUVERAINS !



'De Honger van de soevereine vorsten'  
*Le Frondeur*, 20/12/1884  
 Coll. Royal Library of Belgium

## **BOULA MATARI**

The Kikongo Boula Matari or Boula Matadi is the name today's Congolese have given to the state. Literally, it means 'stone crusher' – in other words, 'he who goes through everything, who crushes everything in his path'. It's an old expression that referred originally to Stanley, then to the colonial authority, its agents and, by extension, statuettes of colonists. Boula Matari inspires simultaneously fear – of this all-powerful state imposing itself on the people without representing them – and the mix of admiration and envy that power has always aroused.

Accession to power involves the reappropriation of symbols. The day before independence, Ambroise Boimbo steals King Baudouin's sword: in doing so, he snatches 'sovereignty' from the Belgians and returns it to the Congolese. Well before independence, ABAKO followers consider Kasavubu 'King Kasa', the successor to King Baudouin. In the weeks following the signing of the independence act, Kasavubu dresses exactly like King Baudouin did on 30 June 1960; the sword at his side recalls that of the King of the Belgians as much as it does the swords of Kongo kings.

## **CHAIN AND 'CHICOTTE'**

In the most negative sense, Boula Matari is associated with state violence exercised by proxy through Congolese assistants. They are the ones who inflict violence on the population on the order of European or Congolese state agents.

While the 'chicotte' – a leather whip – is a precolonial disciplinary tool, Congolese associate its use with colonization, from Leopold II to the end of the colonial period. Abolished after independence, its use is reinstated by Mobutu. During the Mobutu years the prevalence of the chicotte as a subject of a series of popular paintings entitled *Belgian Colony* can be seen as a criticism of his regime as much as of the colonial regime. Another theme inspires Congolese artists: images of chained prisoners, which evoke the slave trade. In this way, the Congolese imagination establishes continuity between the slave trade, King Leopold II's colonization, Belgian colonization and Mobutu's dictatorship.

## **FROM WHITE MUNDELE TO BLACK MUNDELE**

The term 'mundele', translated as 'white', refers to colonial authority by evoking European skin colour or clothing. The expression 'mundele ndombe', 'almost white' or 'a white black person', refers to 'évolués' and, after independence, to Congolese elites. European cultural traits are associated with these 'mundele ndombe': writing, glasses, clothes. Still today, in popular parlance, 'mundele ndombe' refers to the pressures to which the Congolese elite subjects the masses, who must adapt. That said, the masses themselves are highly critical and in return subject the elite to enormous expectations. .

## **IN THE LAND OF THE GREAT CATS: SYMBOLS OF POWER**

Before Belgian colonization, the power of chiefs in Congolese societies was often associated with an animal, such as the leopard or the lion. The image of the leopard is widespread in the equatorial forest and that of the lion in the savannah. After independence, the leopard-skin cap becomes a nationalist symbol of how the Congolese are their own masters. Mobutu, who hails from the equatorial forest, uses the leopard as a symbol of his authoritarian power. His successor Laurent-Désiré Kabila, native to the Katangan savannah and a former Simba rebel (*simba* means 'lion' in Kiswahili), adopts the lion as the symbol of his power.

## **POLITICAL POWER AND SACRIFICE**

Newfound independence and freedom in Congo have their martyrs: Kimbangu, who spent 30 years in prison and is today considered one of the founding fathers of the Congolese nation; the UMHK strikers killed in 1942; the riot victims of 4 January 1959; the 'Pentecost martyrs' – Jérôme Anany, Emmanuel Bamba, Evariste Kimba and Alexandre Mahamba – four ministers hanged for treason by Mobutu on 1 June 1966. But the most ubiquitous icon of martyrdom is certainly the representation of Lumumba in the image of Christ.

Lumumba fuelled the Congolese imagination: in addition to the Christ-like image, there is also that of the 'évolué', with his suit and glasses that were generally associated with colonial state agents; or – suitless – as a disowned, defeated, chained slave. His early, dramatic murder marked the collective mind: any politician with national ambitions has to declare himself a unitarist like Lumumba and justify his power by paying homage to the first man elected by a majority of the Congo people and assassinated for defending the country's unity. Mobutu declared Lumumba a national hero. Laurent-Désiré Kabila declared himself Lumumba's successor, and his son Joseph Kabila, born after Congo's independence, erected a statue of Lumumba on Boulevard Patrice Lumumba, in Kinshasa.

## **CHURCHES AND POWER**

At the end of the colonial era, the 'évolués' receive the support of the Catholic Church, which remained a major force of opposition under Mobutu: Bishops Joseph Albert Malula (1917-1989) and Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya (born in 1939) are especially adamant in their critique of the Mobutu regime. In 1992, the Sovereign National Conference names Monsignor Monsengwo president of the assembly: the Catholic Church is at the height of its popularity. However, at the same time, it loses influence because of the boom in 'églises de réveil' – literally, 'churches of awakening' – which abstain from politics. While most Congolese are religious, some wonder 'why God is always white' and many are highly critical of the pastors of these 'new' churches, reproaching them as hypocrites motivated only by personal interest. Like young 'sapeurs', the pastors of 'églises de réveil' are generally fastidious about their appearance: 'You must be clean before God!' Other churches, however, reject the consumer culture that defines the middle class and elite, and are going back to Kimbanguism or other activist movements of the colonial era.



Photo Raymond Dakoua © RMCA

## **CURTAINS, OFFICES...**

### **AND PAGNES**

In addition to his wife – who is called, broadly speaking, ‘the curtain’ – the *mundele ndombe* keeps one or several mistresses – nicknamed ‘the offices’. After the colonial era, residents of large cities might choose their partner according to personal preferences rather than those of their families, but the man must still offer a dowry to the family of his future wife. His wife and his mistress expect him to express his affection by offering them gifts, among which the *pagne* has the greatest emotional significance.

## **THE LOST SMILE**

### **OF THE CONGOLESE**

Political disorder and precariousness have undermined Congolese society for decades and seriously frayed the social fabric. Traditionally considered an investment for the future, children today are sometimes seen as threats to the household and thrown out. The status of women has also changed, as they now play a more important economic role: when her husband is unemployed, she must support the family, often by working in the informal economy. But this economic power doesn’t translate into political power, an imbalance that explains in part the heinous, systematic violence of which women are the first victims in times of war, such as in the country’s east.

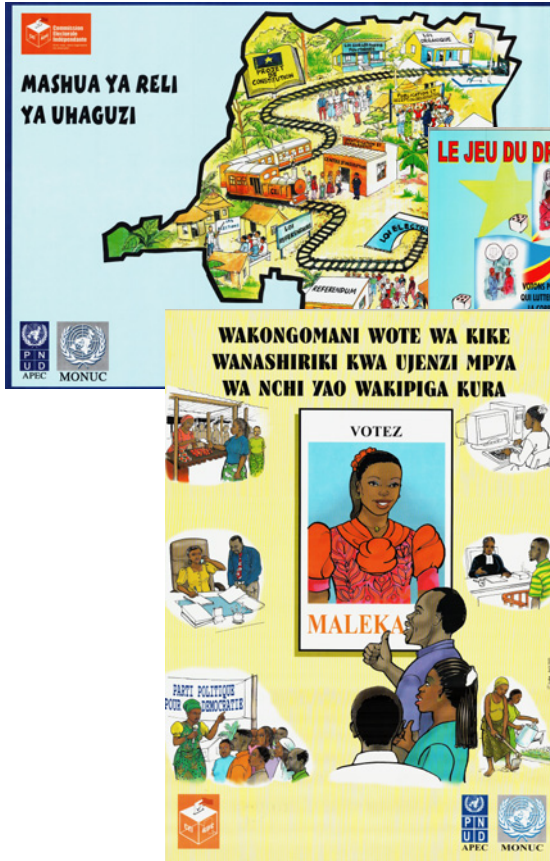
## THE 2006 ELECTIONS

In 1999, despite a ceasefire agreement, fighting continues in the DRC. The UN sends peacekeepers (MONUC) to enforce the accord, but the Congolese population protests, sometimes violently, MONUC's inaction. In 2001, Laurent-Désiré Kabila is assassinated in Kinshasa by one of his body guards; his son Joseph Kabila succeeds him. In 2002, 'inter-Congolese' talks lead to the signing of an accord between the Congolese government and the main rebel groups. A peace agreement between Congo and Rwanda puts an official end to the war: the government and the rebels accept to share power in a transitional government that must prepare elections. In 2005, Parliament and the electorate approve a new constitution that foresees the country's decentralization. In 2006, for the third time, national democratic elections are held in Congo. It's the first time that women are allowed to vote. As in 1960, many parties participate; voter turnout is 70%. Election results show a division between east and west: Joseph Kabila wins elections in the war-torn east, while most of the west votes for Jean-Pierre Bemba, a former rebel and vice-president. Joseph Kabila wins the elections.

Mes meilleurs vœux  
de bonheur et de prospérité  
pour l'année 2006



2006



## **'I LOVE YOU (ME NEITHER)'**

Political relations between Congo and Belgium have often been stormy. Many Congolese dream of leaving their country to come to Belgium, where they're more numerous than ever: after Moroccans and Turks, Congolese are the third-largest group of non-European immigrants. They often deplore that Belgium doesn't recognize them any more than it does the long history that links the two countries.

## **THE BELGO-CONGOLESE DISPUTE**

The Belgo-Congolese dispute refers to an infraction by the Belgian state in the eyes of the Congolese: when Congo acquired independence in 1960, the country's economic assets remained in Belgian hands. Many Congolese feel that Belgium is still liable to repay these assets, citing how Belgium never deprived itself from intervening in Congolese affairs to protect its own interests.

During the colonial period, the Congolese were quite aware of the division between Belgium's Flemish-speakers and French-speakers. The oldest among them still call Belgians 'Baflamands' or 'les Flamands', because the majority of Belgians in Congo were Flemish-speakers and they had the most direct contact with the population. Today, the Congolese think that French-speakers and Flemish-speakers have quite different visions of relations with Congo, and the linguistic division remains a target of mockery.

## LOLA'S DREAM

'Poto', 'Lola', 'Miguel': the Congolese use different names when they talk about Europe in general and Belgium in particular. In Congo, as in Belgium, relations between the two countries are ambiguous: while Congolese accuse Belgians of exploiting Congo for their own profit and of acting racist toward Congolese in Belgium, Belgium remains a desired destination for many of them.

Today, many descendants of Congolese who played a historic role in the country's independence live in Belgium, such as the children and grandchildren of Congolese representatives to the Brussels Round Table 50 years ago.



Encounter between Paul-Henri Spaak and Moïse Tshombe

© Belga, 01/06/1965

Coll. CARCoB absI, Archives Communistes

## **'MORE, MORE, MORE FUTURE!'**

In the colonial era, Congolese artists give shape to the confrontation with the colonizers through statuettes, gourds, masks and music. They next develop other forms of expression such as the comic strip, painting, drawing, dance and urban music. 'Art for art' – art detached from daily life – which restores the work to an object of contemplation, is a recent idea in Western history and rarely encountered in Congo. Whether they have artistic training or not, Congolese artists are in general highly committed and feel invested in an 'educational' mission on behalf of the population: they often take on the role of chroniclers of Congolese society and are highly critical of the political situation and social developments. In Congo as elsewhere, while art is produced often on the fringes of society, it is also quickly appropriated: authorities attach themselves to the most popular artists in order to consolidate their power. Pop music is often ambiguous: Franco, who dominates the Congolese music scene during the Mobutu years, sings the dictator's praises, but in his songs he also doesn't hesitate to criticize the regime and Zairean society.

Congolese rappers, who are currently popular in Belgium, are inspired often by African-American rappers; without necessarily knowing it well, they have become part of Congolese musical tradition, by embracing the critical role they have to play regarding politics. In this way, Banza M'Poyo Kasavubu – grandson of Congo's first president – and Teddy Lumumba – grandson of Prime Minister Lumumba – have chosen urban music rather than politics to pursue the same goal: using the power of words to change Congo. Like them, Congolese youths who grew up in Belgium can express themselves more freely than those who stayed in Congo, experienced colonial and postcolonial repression, and, like Franco, more often use indirect means to criticize the system. The popularity of Congolese music is explained not only by oral culture but also by its subversive potential: live music and lyrics that comment on daily life are more difficult to monitor and suppress than recordings.





Photo Raymond Dakoua © RMCA

## **'THE SUNS OF INDEPENDENCE'**

**Texts selected from the introduction to the exhibition**

***'Indépendance !'.***

**RMCA Director General:** Guido Gryseels

**Curators:** Bambi Ceuppens (RMCA), Jacob Sabakinu Kivilu (UNIKIN) and Sabine Cornelis (RMCA)

**Museology:** Christine Bluard (RMCA)

**Translation, proofreading and review:** Benoît Albinovanus (RMCA), Isabelle Gerard (RMCA), Lee Gillette (RMCA), Miriam Tessens (RMCA)

**Exhibition Design:** Sandra Eelen (RMCA)

**Graphic Design:** Friederike Kratky (RMCA)

**If the 19th century was the age of colonization, then the 20th century will be the age of decolonization: between 1958 and 1960, the word 'independence' resonates internationally.**

1960 is a record year for independence. Between 1 January and 28 November 1960, no fewer than 18 countries declare it: Cyprus and 17 African countries of which 15 were under French rule. Other colonies – British and Portuguese – will follow suit between 1962 and 1990. The wave of independence is generated within a particular international context. The end of the Second World War sends a strong signal: Europe is weakened, and its colonies, which contributed greatly to the war effort, examine the nature of their relationship to the colonial master. Calls for democratization and a desire for autonomy spread like wildfire. At the same time, the cold war begins and spreads across the globe as the two blocs, East and West, look to expand their spheres of influence over new independent states. Both sides invoke ideological motivations, but they also have geopolitical and economic ones.

1944

## **SPEECH BY CHARLES DE GAULLE IN BRAZZA-VILLE**

On 30 January 1944, General de Gaulle opens a conference in Brazzaville that will be the first step toward replacing the French colonial empire with the French Union, which will transform colonies into overseas territories and departments. In his speech, he refers to the war that precipitated this evolution and the necessity to involve these populations 'in the management of their own affairs'.



'Les Africains choisiront. L'indépendance ? Vous l'aurez !'  
(... The Africans will choose. Independence? It will be yours! ...)  
*Horizons*, 31/08/1958  
Coll. Bibliotheek Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

1945

## **UNITED NATIONS CHARTER**

After the Second World War, the international community unites to declare 'never again'. It intends to equip itself with mechanisms to protect people from war, defend human rights, establish gender equality and equal rights among nations large and small, and create conditions for upholding justice in the world. On 26 June 1945, at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, the United Nations Charter is signed by 51 member states. Article 73 – ratified by Belgium – advocates self-determination. But the declaration pertains only to free and independent countries.

1955

## **BANDUNG CONFERENCE OF NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES**

The first Afro-Asian Conference is held in Bandung (Indonesia) 18 to 24 April 1955, attracting representatives of 29 independent African and Asian countries. In attendance are political leaders such as Nasser (Egypt), Nehru (India), Sukarno (Indonesia) and Zhou Enlai (China). The conference marks the entry of the 'Third World' onto the international stage. It condemns colonization, imperialism and racism, and apartheid in South Africa. Participating countries call on those still colonized to fight for their independence using peaceful means and negotiation. The 29 'non-aligned' countries declare their intention to distance themselves from the cold war and to refuse inclusion in either the American or Soviet bloc.



Eleanor Roosevelt holds the Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
1948. © United Nations

1958

## ALL-AFRICAN PEOPLES' CONFERENCE, ACCRA

The Accra, Ghana, conference is held 15 to 22 April 1958. Representatives from eight countries attend: Ghana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. Strongly united by their common concerns – independence and economic development – they demand an end to colonialism and greater representation of African countries in the UN and the international community. The conference is the first concrete demonstration of pan-Africanism. The eight countries decide to support independence movements in Africa, representatives of which they invite, including Patrice Lumumba of Belgian Congo. On his return from Accra, at a meeting to report back on conference proceedings, he will demand independence for Congo.



'Voici le visage politique de l'Afrique à partir du 1<sup>er</sup> juillet'  
(This is the political face of Africa as of 1 July)  
Essor du Congo, 29/06/1960  
RMCA

1963

## **23-25 MAY 1963 – CREATION OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU): THE NEED FOR UNITY**

Convinced of the necessity to strengthen African unity, and that Africa must express itself in a single voice if it is to be heard by the international community, heads of state put their differences aside to defend the interests of the African continent. From 23 to 25 May 1963, 30 African heads of state meet in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and adopt the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Charter. The Charter supports the sovereign equality of all member states, non-interference in another state's internal affairs, respect for territorial integrity, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the condemnation of subversive activities. Beginning in 1963, the OAU focuses on anticolonialism, economic development of African countries and conflict prevention. But problems remain, as Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah declares at the Addis Ababa summit: 'Delaying genuine African unity exacerbates our differences and entangles us in the net of neocolonialism. It will lead us permanently astray from our solemn pursuit of Africa's total redemption.'

## THE SUNS OF INDEPENDENCE

*The Suns of Independence* is a 1968 novel written by Ahmadou Kourouma (Ivory Coast) in reaction to the upheavals experienced by African political regimes emerging from decolonization. The story takes place in a utopian African country, the 'Republic of the Ebony Coast', in turmoil and racked by drastic changes. The title is a play on the Malinke word *tile*, which means 'sun' or 'day' but also 'era' or 'epoque'.

**'Independence enveloped Africa like a swarm of locusts, leaving nothing in most pockets but national identity and state party cards. Others got fat.'**

*The Suns of Independence*, Ahmadou Kourouma, 1968

In 1960, the 17 African states in question do not share the same path to independence. Many factors contribute to making it a long process with a drawn-out denouement. On the political and international scene, and against the backdrop of national movements, the personalities of African leaders, intellectuals and union organizers play an important role in the gradual emancipation of independent African states and in the emergence of African cultures. And while some new states are tempted by socialism pan-Africanism and the non-aligned movement are the era's predominant ideologies, driving the mass movement that is decolonization. Nevertheless, many new independent states, such as those of French West Africa, maintain strong economic and strategic ties with their former colonizer.

So while 1960 is their official year of political independence, 'independence day' does not mean a complete break. Far from it.



R D CONGO



NIGERIA



BURKINA FASO



TCHAD



BÉNIN



GABON



MAURITANIE



MADAGASCAR



SOMALIE



CAMEROUN



RÉPUBLIQUE  
CENTRAFRICAINE



MALI



NIGER



CONGO -  
BRAZZAVILLE



CÔTE D'IVOIRE



TOGO



SÉNÉGAL

1960 is a record year for independence.

Between 1 January and 28 November 1960, no fewer than 18 countries declare it: Cyprus and 17 African countries.

Ce moment, la prise de conscience d'empêcher que le janvier 1989, des émeutes raciales n'éclatent dans la Force publique. Le roi Baudouin éclate : « L'État est en premier ministre. Très vite, le Katanga et l'Équateur ont entre Kasavubu et Lumumba le gouvernement central fait pour le proche du bloc communiste se terminant par l'assassinat de Unis, de la Belgique, de Léopoldville (Kinshasa) et de Kongo. s'envenime. En novembre 1966, le général Mobutu prend le pouvoir. Laurent Désiré Kabila préside à son tour une démission de quelques alliés africains et de la communauté internationale lui succède en 2002. Depuis août 1998 jusqu'à aujourd'hui, une guerre qui a fait des millions de morts.

Zano Azizo Elombele (BRAC)

Aujourd'hui, 30 Juin 1960  
le Congo fête son  
**INDEPENDANCE**

★ *Indépendance*

Tout comme un grand fleuve, depuis le jour où un grand Roi, un roi, Léopold II, se pencha sur la constitution de l'Etat Indépendant du Congo. Pour attendre ce résultat, il dut surmonter les pires obstacles, les engager sa fortune personnelle et son amour, dans une course à la prise jugée par beaucoup d'hommes de son époque et de toutes les familles réunissables, Dieu Roi des Belges lui fut accordée. Il appartenait à Bandoulou lui de remettre entre les mains des Congolais, le dessein de l'Indigénat, dans tout le bon pays. 25 millions de lettres, de projets, de victoires. La Belgique et son empire présentèrent les forces de leur empire. C'est au Congo, groupé sous son amour, dessein, de

Indépendance ! Ayons-nous expliqué le sens exact de ce mot à nos congolais ? Je ne le crois pas. Et pourtant ce mot fut au cœur de l'esprit des sens divers, il y fallut donc des livres et des conférences. Indépendance, c'est se débarrasser des priures et des préjugés. Indépendance, c'est vivre librement et égarer de ses chaînes. Indépendance, c'est travailler moins et égarer de ses chaînes. Indépendance, c'est un mot, être libéré de l'esclavage nous a permis d'être libres. Les peuples coloniaux. Aussi, nous pouvons dire que l'indépendance a confondre la tête d'un ave c'est un mot, être libéré de l'esclavage nous a permis d'être libres. L'indépendance, c'est un mot, être libéré de l'esclavage nous a permis d'être libres. L'indépendance, c'est un mot, être libéré de l'esclavage nous a permis d'être libres.

Blancs et de tous les  
forte et une administration durable

Aujourd'hui, 30 juin 1960, le Congo fête son  
indépendance.  
(Vandaag, 30 juni 1960, viert Congo zijn onafhankelijkheid  
(Today, 30 June 1960, the Congo celebrates its  
independence)  
L'Eclat du film, 30/06/1960,  
13:00h, 45min.



# RÉPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN - REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

INDEPENDENCE 1 JANUARY 1960

Republic of Cameroon

(former territory under French and British trusteeship / colonial languages German, French and English)

Capital: Yaoundé

Currency: CFA franc

Area: 475,440 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 16.8 million

Languages: French, English, Pidgin, Ewondo, Fulfulde, Duala  
(approximately 280 in all)

Official languages: French and English

## **HISTORY:**

A Central African country whose name is derived from the Portuguese *Rio dos Camarões*, the 'river of shrimps'. In 1884, Germans establish a protectorate in Cameroon. After the First World War, the territory is placed under a League of Nations mandate. The latter gives the eastern part of the country to France and the western part to the United Kingdom. The peoples of Cameroon do not consider themselves colonial subjects; beginning at the end of the Second World War, they express a strong desire for autonomy. The UPC (*Union des populations du Cameroun*) movement demands independence and reunification of the country; its insurrection is suppressed violently by the colonial authority. UPC leader Ruben Um Nyobe is executed in 1958 by a French commando. Virtual civil war continues until the late 1960s and leaves tens of thousands dead. Independence for the French part of Cameroon is granted 1 January 1960; Ahmadou Ahidjo is its first president. In 1961, following a referendum, the northern part of the British zone joins Nigeria, while the southern part unites with the former French

Cameroon to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. On 20 May 1972, a referendum ends federalism and leads to the creation of the United Republic of Cameroon, which, in 1984, becomes the Republic of Cameroon.

*Isabelle Van Loo (RMCA)*

*P.L. Geschiere (University of Amsterdam)*

# RÉPUBLIQUE DU SÉNÉGAL

INDEPENDENCE 20 AUGUST 1960,

CELEBRATED 4 APRIL

Republic of Senegal

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: Dakar

Currency: CFA franc

Area: 196,720 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 12.2 million

Languages: approximately 35, including Wolof, Pulaar, Serer, Diola, Mandinka and Soninke

Official Language: French

## **HISTORY:**

Over the centuries, Senegal is part of the great socio-political entities such as the Kingdom of Ghana, the Mali Empire, the Jolof Empire and the Songhai Empire. French colonial conquest follows Portuguese and Dutch occupation, and is complete by the end of the 19th century. The country becomes the figurehead of French West Africa (AOF) and produces an intellectual and political elite to which the French Empire grants citizenship. Some of the leaders who work locally and in France for the emancipation of the colonies include Blaise Diagne, who serves in 1914 as the first 'black' African member of the French National Assembly; Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first president – and poet – of the newly independent state in 1960; and Lamine Guèye, responsible for the law conferring French citizenship to 'natives'. Theories of 'Negritude' proposed (around 1930) by Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Léon Gontran Damas, and Cheikh Anta Diop's theory (around 1950) concerning ancient Egypt's African roots, still enliven political, literary, ideological and philosophical debates over African identity.

During the presidency of René Coty, Senegal votes 'yes' to General de Gaulle's 1958 referendum for a 'common destiny' with France. In 1960, it gains independence, but the pan-Africanist dream is shattered by mistrust of Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Ivory Coast) and competition for power with Modibo Keita (French Sudan, today the Republic of Mali). At the dawn of its independence, when a new Africa is dominated by 'one-party' governance, Senegal is one of the first states to implement political pluralism. Having never experienced a coup d'état, it is often cited as a model of democracy.

***Ken Ndiaye***

# RÉPUBLIQUE TOGOLAISE

INDEPENDENCE 27 APRIL 1960

Togolese Republic

(former territory under French trusteeship / colonial language French)

Capital: Lomé

Currency: CFA franc

Area: 56,790 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 6.5 million

Languages: approximately 40, including Ewe, Kabiye, Mina

National or official languages: Ewe, Kabiye, French

## HISTORY:

Togo takes its name from *Togodo*, which means 'village on the opposite bank'. It becomes a German protectorate in 1884. The Germans sign an agreement with the English on 1 July 1890, establishing the border between Togo and the Gold Coast (today Ghana), then with the French, on 28 September 1912, establishing the borders with Dahomey and French Sudan. After the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles of 28 June 1919 strips Germany of all its colonies; the League of Nations gives Togo to France and Great Britain. The western part of the territory is annexed to Ghana in 1956 and the eastern part, previously under French trusteeship, becomes an overseas territory. Under France, political leaders such as Nicolas Grunitzky of the Parti togolais du progrès (PTP) call for the unification of the two Togos. The Comité de l'unité togolaise (CUT) supports unification into a single British Togo. Grunitzky becomes prime minister of the Autonomous Republic of Togo in 1956. The United Nations supervises 1958 elections won by Sylvanus Olympio, who serves as prime minister until Togo's independence

on 27 April 1960. Olympio is elected president on 9 April 1961 and serves until he is assassinated during a 13 January 1963 coup d'état. At the invitation of the military, Nicolas Grunitzky takes power on 5 May 1963 and is overthrown on 13 April 1967 by General Étienne Eyadema. Togo's declaration of independence is more like a commercial contract signed with the Compagnie minière du Bénin – through which the French consortium controls the country's phosphate reserves – than a political victory. President Étienne Eyadema creates the Parti du rassemblement du peuple togolais (RPT) in November 1969 and adopts Mobutu's policy of 'returning to authenticity'. Togo and Ghana have often been at odds over the Ewe community, who straddle their common border. With its population of 500,000, Lomé, Togo's capital, is the country's largest city.

*Jacob Sabakinu Kivilu (UNIKIN)*

# RÉPUBLIQUE DE MADAGASCAR

INDEPENDENCE 26 JUNE 1960

Republic of Madagascar

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: Antananarivo (Tananarive)

Currency: Ariary

Area: 587,040 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 19.6 million

Languages: Standard Malagasy and its dialects Merina, Betsileo, Betsimisaraka and Sakalava, French, Comorian, Urdu, Cantonese, Mauritian Creole, French Creole of Réunion, Arabic

Official languages: Standard Malagasy, French and English

## **HISTORY:**

The 'great island' of the Indian Ocean still holds many mysteries, despite the numerous 'oral traditions' dating to the 19th century and archaeological and historical research that takes us even further back. Its population is definitely composite, though the question of an 'indigenous' people – the mysterious 'Vazimba' – has never been answered. For 3,000 years, the island has received successive and overlapping waves of people from Indonesia, the Near East and the African coast, including Mozambique. In the modern history of Madagascar, the major development is the gradual political unification of the island, beginning in the high plateaus, led by Andrianampoinimerina (who reigned from 1787 to 1810) and his successors. This continually expanding 'Kingdom of Madagascar' pursues a policy of wilful acculturation, carefully selecting which Western techniques, social practices and religious beliefs to appropriate. French colonization attempts to shatter this national unity. General Gallieni, as governor of the island (1896-1905), implements race-based policies in order to divide

and conquer. Queen Ranavalona III, a symbol of national unity, is banished to Algeria and the colonial authority strives to pit coastal dwellers against those of the high plateaus. But anticolonial resistance maintains a national dimension, despite differing social foundations and forms of organization: the **Menalamba** mass movement against the 'protectorate'; the VVS secret society during the First World War; urban middle class pressure and activist groups in the 1920s and 1930s. The 1947 insurrection is the first synthesis of these socio-political dynamics: though crushed viciously, it sets in motion the process of independence, which is eventually granted in 1960. A second synthesis of these dynamics, led by urban youths and workers, becomes apparent in the social turmoil of independence and leads to the fall of the 'Father of the Nation', Philibert Tsiranana, in 1972.

***Elikia M'Bokolo (EHESS/UNIKIN)***

# RÉPUBLIQUE DU NIGER

INDEPENDENCE 3 AUGUST 1960

Republic of Niger

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: Niamey

Currency: CFA franc

Area: 1,267,000 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 14.9 million

Languages: Hausa, Zarma, Fulfulde, Tamashek, Kanuri, Songhai,

Arabic, Gurma

Official language: French

## HISTORY:

Niger is in the Sahel. The country owes its name to the river that runs through it. In Europe the country is popularized by the writings of Mungo Park (1771-1806). In the 19th century, its Hausa regions are divided between France and Great Britain. In 1900, the French establish Niger as a military territory. French becomes the administrative language and Niger becomes a colony in 1922. France then integrates it into its federation of French West Africa (AOF). In the 1950s, Niger is swept up in Africa's independence movement. France oversees the process, as the uranium-rich country is of strategic and economic importance. The progressive PPN-RDA and its candidate Hamani Diori win the December 1958 elections. Niger gains independence on 3 August 1960. The new government maintains close economic ties with France and sends the *Sawaba* ('freedom') opposition party into exile; for 14 years, Niger is governed by a one-party regime. When it severs colonial ties, Niger is one of West Africa's poorest countries; 80% of its population lives in rural areas. Soil erosion worsens and demographic pressures

mount. Drought, famine and accusations of corruption lead to a 1974 military coup that ousts President Diori and establishes a military regime that holds power into the 1990s. Since then, Niger has remained very unstable. It has mineral resources such as gold, iron, coal, uranium and, above all, oil. The marginalized Tuaregs have demanded more autonomy. Since a 2010 coup, Niger's multicultural society has sought political, economic and social stability.

*Klaas van Walraven (African Studies Centre, Leiden)*

# **RÉPUBLIQUE DU CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE)**

**INDEPENDENCE 15 AUGUST 1960**

Republic of Congo

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: Brazzaville

Currency: CFA franc

Area: 342.000 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 4.2 million

Languages: Munukutuba, Kikongo, Lingala, Vili, Beembe, Mboshi, Teke,  
and more than 40 others

Official language: French

## **HISTORY:**

This Central African country, partially covered by equatorial forest, has probably long been populated, particularly by the people called 'Pygmies'. After the arrival of the Portuguese in the 15th century, Atlantic coast kingdoms form a platform for the slave trade to the Americas. French penetration begins in 1875 with Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza. In 1880, he acquires the region in the name of France by signing cession treaties, particularly with King Makoko of the Mbe Kingdom. Then the region is colonized. In the late 19th century, concessionary companies mobilize forced labour for the rubber and palm oil trade. In 1910, Congo is one of the four territories that comprise the federation of French Equatorial Africa (AEF). It becomes an overseas territory (1946), then a republic (1958) within the French Community. Bloody confrontations take place in the legislative election year of 1959. The Union démocratique de la défense des intérêts africains (UDDIA), led by Abbot Fulbert Youlou, who supports cooperation with the French, wins the elections. The transfer of power takes place peacefully and independence

is declared on 15 August 1960. The new country chooses as its capital Brazzaville, the former AEF capital. In August 1963, Alphonse Massamba-Débat overthrows Youlou and leads the country in a socialist direction. Major Marien Ngouabi overthrows him on 1 January 1969. A cooperation and friendship treaty is signed with the USSR. The country is named the People's Republic of Congo until 1992, when the first democratic elections are won by Pascal Lissouba (who is overthrown following a civil war, in 1997). Previous rulers were General Yhombi Opango (1977-1979) and Colonel (today General) Denis Sassou Nguesso (1979-1992 and 1997 to the present). After 50 years of independence, the Republic of Congo – which possesses abundant oil reserves exploited since 1949 by the French company TotalFinaElf – is often cited as among those former colonies that France maintains in a political and economic stranglehold.

***J. Maniacky (RMCA)***

***Ch. D. Gondola (Indiana University)***

# RÉPUBLIQUE DÉMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO

**INDEPENDENCE 30 JUNE 1960**

Democratic Republic of Congo

(Republic of Congo at 30 June 1960, Democratic Republic of Congo 1965–1971, Zaire from 1971–1997, Democratic Republic of Congo since 1997)

(former Belgian colony / colonial languages French and Dutch)

Capital: Kinshasa

Currency: Congolese franc

Area: 2,344,860 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 61.2 million

Languages: four national (Kikongo, Lingala, Swahili and Ciluba) and more than 200 local (Mongo, Songe, Pende, Shi, Tetela, Zande, etc.)

Official language: French

## **HISTORY:**

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is Africa's third largest country – 60% of which is covered by equatorial forest – and the francophone world's most populous state. Its ancient history is long and rich. The slave trade removes millions. The colonial period, however brief, exerts enduring political, economic and cultural influence. The Congo Free State of King Leopold II exploits natural resources such as ivory and rubber, using means that take a heavy human toll. In 1908, Congo becomes a Belgian colony. Administration, territorial control, industrialization and evangelization of the population by many religious congregations develop during the interwar period. After the Second World War, economic and social development is emphasized, especially infrastructure, education and health care. In 1957 and 1958, the first communal elections mark the beginning of the political emergence of Congolese elites – not without causing significant

tensions between different communities – and political parties replace cultural associations; from this moment, the nationalist awakening strengthens and spreads. In January 1959, riots erupt in Leopoldville and are violently suppressed by the Force Publique. King Baudouin promises independence to the Congolese, and it is granted on 30 June 1960. Joseph Kasavubu becomes president and Patrice Lumumba prime minister. Immediately, Katanga, led by Moïse Tshombe, secedes, followed by Kasai, led by Albert Kalonji. The central government appeals to the UN. The Kasavubu-Lumumba rivalry ends with the assassination of Lumumba – seen as too close to the communist bloc at the height of the cold war – with the complicity of the United States, Belgium, Leopoldville (Kinshasa) and Katanga. Civil war engulfs the country. In November 1965, General Mobutu takes power. In May 1997, Laurent Désiré Kabila becomes president with the support of African allies and the international community. His son Joseph succeeds him in 2002. Since August 1998 to the present day, the DRC has been racked by war, leaving millions dead.

***Zana Aziza Etambala (RMCA)***

# REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA

INDEPENDENCE 1 JULY 1960

Republic of Somalia

(former Italian colony and British protectorate / colonial languages English and Italian)

Capital: Mogadishu

Currency: Shilling

Area: 637,660 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 8.7 million

Languages: Somali, Maay, Garre, Dabarre, Jiiddu, Mushungulu, Tunni, Taizzi-Adeni Arabic

Official languages: Somali and Arabic

## HISTORY:

The population of Somalia, a crossroads and area of dynamic trade in the Horn of Africa, is mainly nomadic. The 19th century construction of the Suez Canal reinforces its strategic position. Somalia includes the former Italian Somalia (Mogadiscio) and the former British Somaliland (Aden). The British administer the Barbary Coast beginning in 1877. The Italians wage war against the other Somalia beginning in 1885 (the Massaouah occupation) and take over from the Omani (the Oman Sultanate), but they lose their colony during the Second World War. The French, Italians, Russians, Americans and British compete for regional influence. The United Nations places the three sectors of Somalia (British Somaliland, Italian Somalia and the adjacent part of Ethiopia) under British, Italian and French control. Nationalism grows much more slowly in the British protectorate of Somaliland than it does in Somalia: in 1943, the 'Somali Youth League' founded by Raji Mohammed Hussein demands independence for Greater Somalia, which would encompass all territory inhabited by the Somali people. On 1 April

1947, the Ligue de la jeunesse somali is created to unite the Somali and avoid inter-community prejudice and friction. Abdullahi Issa becomes prime minister in 1956. The British protectorate ends on 26 June 1960: on 1 July Somalia gains independence and the two territories are joined to form the Republic of Somalia. This provokes border skirmishes between Somali, Ethiopians and Kenyans. Somalia proposes combining all Somali into a single state, but African states reject this. Prime Minister Abdirashid Ali Shermarke and President Aden Abdullah Osman attempt to recreate the pre-colonial 'Greater Somalia', since many Somali find themselves in neighbouring countries – Kenya, Ethiopia and in the French sector of Somalia, which becomes independent as Djibouti in 1977. To achieve this, Somalia aligns itself with the Soviet Union and other communist countries. On 21 October 1969, the Somali government is overthrown by a military coup and General Siad Barre becomes president. Currently, Somalia remains embroiled in civil war.

***Jacob Sabakinu Kivilu (UNIKIN)***

# RÉPUBLIQUE DU BÉNIN

INDEPENDENCE 1 AUGUST 1960

Republic of Benin

(Dahomey until 1975)

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: Porto Novo

Currency: Franc CFA

Area: 112,620 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 8.9 million

Languages: Fon, Yoruba, Bariba, Goun, Ayizo, Nago, Gen, Ditamari

Official language: French

## HISTORY:

Today's Benin should not be confused with the Benin of ancient African history located in present-day Nigeria and made famous by its sumptuous bronze sculpture. Called 'Dahomey' by French colonizers, modern Benin is one of the African countries where pre-colonial states existed. The most famous is the Kingdom of Abomey, founded in the 17th century, also called Dahomey (*Dan-ho-mè*, 'on the stomach of Dan', from King Dan, from whom the states are absorbed to form a new kingdom). In the 19th century, a small coastal territory breaks away to form the Kingdom of Porto Novo. Few African states are as demonized as Dahomey, portrayed as a 'slave state' and stigmatized for its human sacrifice rituals. In reality, it is to escape looting by neighbours that these peoples unite under the new state, which to defend itself buys arms from Europeans and, against its will, enters the slave trade. After the slave trade is abolished and in spite of the presence of a few Brazilian slave traders, including the famous Chacha (Francisco de Souza), King Glèlè (1818-1858) commits his kingdom to the production of palm

oil in order to profit from strong European demand. The new wealth arouses French ambition to conquer the kingdom. Two wars ensue (1890 and 1892-1894), during which an elite army of female warriors fight heroically. The symbol of the resistance, King Behanzin (1884-1894, died 1906), is exiled to Martinique, then to Algeria. Integrated into French West Africa (AOF), the colony of Dahomey becomes a breeding ground for pan-Africanism, embodied by Marc Kodjo Tovalou Houénou in the first third of the 20th century, and by Derlin Zinsou after 1945. Called 'Africa's Latin quarter' by the philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, Dahomey perhaps suffers from its many intellectuals, who engage in fierce political competition that will render the country one of independent Africa's most unstable. At first taken by the idea of the 'Mali Federation', which is supposed to unite nearly all of the AOF into a single state, Dahomey opts, on the eve of independence, for the 'Council of Accord' conceived by the Ivorian Félix Houphouët-Boigny. In 1975, Colonel Mathieu Kérékou, in power thanks to a coup d'état, renames the country 'Benin', in reference to the glorious past of 'precolonial' Africa.

***Elikia M'Bokolo (EHESS/UNIKIN)***

# RÉPUBLIQUE DU BURKINA FASO

**INDEPENDENCE 5 AUGUST 1960**

Republic of Burkina Faso

(Upper Volta until 1984)

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: Ouagadougou

Currency: CFA franc

Area: 274,000 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 14 million

Languages: Mosi or Mooré and approximately 60 national ones,  
including Fulfulde, Diula, Bisa, Lobi, Lyélé and Marka

Official language: French

## **HISTORY:**

If any country can be called a miraculous survivor of colonization, it's Upper Volta (the colonial name of Burkina Faso). However, perhaps it's no wonder, given the persistence of the remarkably organized and independent political units of the great empires and kingdoms – Ghana, Mali, Songhai, Ségou and Macina – that mark nearly a thousand years of West African history, from the 10th century to the 19th century. Among these political entities, 'independence' does not at all translate into antagonism and conflict. While the Mossi Kingdoms, including Ouagadougou, maintain their local cult beliefs even while Islam spreads across West Africa, the 'joking relationships' that bind all Burkinabé peoples and their neighbours, from Senegal to Niger, attest to long-established collective familiarity and exchanges. In Ouagadougou itself, the Mogho Naba continues the royal rituals of bygone days. French colonization penetrates the territory using extreme brutality, the most well known episode being Voulet-Chanoine's violent 1897 mission to establish control. 'Pacification' takes a long

time, stymied by strong and widespread resistance. Such bravery by the Voltaic peoples convinces the French army to recruit them en masse to serve in the First World War, causing a 1916 insurrection the French found difficult to crush. The colony is created officially in 1919 when it becomes part of French West Africa (AOF). The rigidity of the French colonial system and the jobs and salaries available in the Gold Coast (modern Ghana) attract many of the young to emigrate to the English colony, to the great displeasure of French plantation owners in Ivory Coast and to the detriment of post war development projects. In 1932, Upper Volta is wiped from the map after being redistributed among its three neighbours, Niger, French Sudan (modern Mali) and especially Ivory Coast. It is reborn in 1947, when the colonial administration, disturbed by the close relations between Ivorian politicians and the French communist party, restores a reputedly politically conservative colony. The march toward independence takes place smoothly within the AOF framework. However, the country suffers from political rivalries that endure long after 1960 and culminate in rebellion, even revolution, by young officers led by Thomas Sankara. In power from 1983 to 1987, he renames the country Burkina Faso ('Country of Honest Men'), in a spirit of nationalism and pan-Africanism. Continuous migration toward Ivory Coast, first imposed by the French and now a sour legacy of colonization, is a constant source of tension between the two countries.

***Elikia M'Bokolo (EHES/UNIKIN)***

# RÉPUBLIQUE DE CÔTE-D'IVOIRE

INDEPENDENCE 7 AUGUST 1960

Republic of Ivory Coast

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: Yamoussoukro (since 1983)

Currency: CFA franc

Area: 322,460 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 18.7 million

Languages: approximately 70 national ones, including Baule, Senufo, Yacuba, Agni, Attie, Guere, Bete, Dioula, Abe, Mahu, Wobe, Lobi

Official language: French

## HISTORY:

In 1960, the independent Republic of Ivory Coast (RCI) keeps the name that had been attributed to it in the 15th century by Portuguese explorers and revived by French colonizers in 1893. The current territory of Ivory Coast corresponds to the French colony of the same name, which belonged to the eight-colony federation of French West Africa (AOF). The AOF becomes the French Community in 1958, which yields to the pressure of decolonization two years later. At the end of the Second World War, struggles for independence lead to the creation of the Syndicat agricole africain (1944) and an anticolonial political party, the *Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire* (1946). Félix Houphouët-Boigny plays a major role in these two organizations. His electoral successes confirm his leadership of both, and he is eventually elected president of the RCI, which gains independence on 7 August 1960. Most of Houphouët-Boigny's presidency (1960-1993) is marked by one-party impediments to democracy, remarkable economic growth and rapid development of the health care and education systems. In the second half of

the 1980s, the situation begins to regress. After the introduction of multipartyism in 1990 and Houphouët-Boigny's death in 1993, the RCI falls into political, social and then military turmoil. The nominations of subsequent heads of state – Henri Konan Bédié in 1993 and 1995, Robert Guéï in 1999 and Laurent Gbagbo in 2000 – are disputed. Since then, the impoverishment of significant portions of the population has gone hand-in-hand with profound differences of opinion on the question of who can or cannot claim full Ivorian citizenship. Fifty years after independence, the RCI is more than ever in search of a national vision supported by a majority of its citizens.

***Karel Arnaut (University of Ghent)***

# **RÉPUBLIQUE DU TCHAD**

**INDEPENDENCE 11 AUGUST 1960**

Republic of Chad

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: N'Djamena

Currency: CFA franc

Area: 1,284,000 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 10.3 million

Languages: Chadian Arabic, Sara, Kanembou, Daza, Maba, Naba, Moussei, Moundan, Fulfulde, Marba, Massana, Kanouri, Toubour, Zagawa

Official languages: Arabic and French

## **HISTORY:**

Chad is a vast country in the heart of the African continent. It contains an immense desert region in the north, occupied by nomads, and a Sahelian region in the south more favourable to farming. Based on the 1898 Franco-British Accord, France occupies Chad. In 1900, it defeats the slave trader Rabah, but genuine occupation does not proceed until 1911, after defeating Fadel Allah (Rabah's son) and Mohamed Idriss es Senoussi, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. Nationalism emerges just after the Second World War. The Parti progressiste tchadien (PPT) is founded in 1946 by the Antillean Gabriel Lisette and François Tombalbaye, who leads Chad's march toward independence. In the 1950s, other political parties join the independence movement, such as the Union nationale du Tchad (UNT), whose Secretary General from 1958 to 1963 is Mahamat Abba. On 11 August 1960, the country gains independence. On 20 January 1962, François Tombalbaye commits to a one-party system and suppresses all other political parties. Opposition builds and results in the June 1966 creation of the Front

de libération nationale du Tchad (FROLINAT). In 1973, President F. Tombalbaye replaces the PPT with the Mouvement national pour la révolution culturelle et sociale (MNRCS); he applies Mobutu's policy of 'returning to authenticity'. On 13 April 1975, a military coup d'état overthrows him and installs General Félix Malloum. Ever since, the country has experienced severe political instability defined by civil wars and coups d'état (Hissein Habré, Goukouni Weddy). The economy is based on agriculture and livestock. The discovery of oil provides new resources for Chad while exposing it to additional French control.

*Jacob Sabakinu Kivilu (UNIKIN)*

# RÉPUBLIQUE CENTRAFRICAINE

INDEPENDENCE 13 AUGUST 1960

Central African Republic

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: Bangui

Currency: CFA franc

Area: 622,980 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 4.15 million

Languages: approximately 60, including Sango, Southern Banda, Banda-Banda, Bokoto, Gbanu, North-western Gbaya, South-western Gbaya, Bosangoa Gbaya, Kaba, Karre, Manza, Mbatî, Ngbaka ma'bo, Pana, Yakoma, Zande

Official language: French

## HISTORY

This is one of the rare colonial territories whose name, invented in the independence era of pan-African aspirations, hasn't changed. French colonizers call this territory 'Oubangui-Chari', as diverse in its geography as in its population, and yet so poorly known at the time that 19th century geographers invent all kinds of infamously fantastic descriptions. While eastern regions live under 'Sultanates', the rest of the territory is organized into lineage and village societies. More important, the country suffers two slave trades: first the centuries-long European transatlantic trade, which explains the presence of 'Central African' names in Central and South America; then the trans-Saharan trade in the second half of the 19th century, whose impact remains controversial. Its position as a crossroads also explains the fierce competition between Germans, Belgians, British and French. Established in 1888, the territory becomes a French colony in 1903, then becomes integrated into the AEF (French Equatorial Africa) in 1910. The years between 1890 and 1940 are the colony's most dramatic, its hands tied by 'concessionary

companies' exercising kingly rights, and by the labour drain caused by the building of the CFCO (Congo-Ocean Railway), which results in maltreatment witnessed in the 1920s and 1930s by André Gide, Marcel Homet and Albert Londres. Conversely, the Second World War appears to be the colony's hour of glory, as it stands shoulder to shoulder with General de Gaulle and unoccupied France. While the independence process generally conforms to French decolonization, it becomes known for delays caused by reactionary colonists, flagrant racism, and the virtual absence of modern economic and social infrastructure. Barthélemy Boganda, a former priest, channels popular energy and hope with MESAN (Mouvement d'évolution de l'Afrique noire) and its ambitious economic programme based on peasant cooperatives. This pan-African party hopes to create in the heart of Africa the 'United States of Latin Africa', whose core would be a 'Central African Republic' encompassing AEF territories. But the project fails owing to territorial nationalism and secret French efforts to undermine it. Loathed by colonists, Boganda dies in a well-timed plane 'accident' whose cause remains unknown to this day. His tragic death weighs heavily on what CAR has become, betrayed by the insatiable appetites of its former colonial overseer, party and military antagonisms, and the instability of inherited colonial borders.

***Elikia M'Bokolo (EHESS / UNIKIN)***

# RÉPUBLIQUE GABONAISE

INDEPENDENCE 17 AUGUST 1960

Gabonese Republic

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: Libreville

Currency: CFA franc

Area: 267,670 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 1.4 million

Languages: approximately 50, including Fang, Mpongwe, Mbede, Punu

Official language: French

## HISTORY:

Gabon's location has been both a blessing and a curse. Its dense forest – a copious jungle – is home to substantial renewable forest resources and game. Gabon Estuary, so named by the Portuguese because its shape suggests a sailor's jacket (gabão), is long thought to be a river and attracts Europeans to settle on its banks, where in 1849 the French establish Libreville, modelled on the British Freetown, to welcome slaves wrested from slave ships after Europe abolishes the trade in 1815. Environmental factors, especially climate and vegetation, cause 'underpopulation', aggravated by endemic and epidemic diseases, which persists to this day. The major demographic event is the 19th century arrival of Fang peoples, and increases the country's diversity. Unlike its neighbours, Gabon never experiences large centralized states. The main chiefdoms and most well known city-states are along the coast, on the estuary's banks, at the mouth of the Ogooue River and at Fernan Vaz. Established in the first half of the 19th century, the French presence takes colonial form after the expeditions of Pierre

Savorgnan de Brazza in the 1870s and 1880s. Nationalist sentiment grows in French Equatorial Africa, created in 1910 as a federation of territories, fuelled by the discontent of French colonists and Gabonese over the flow of revenue to Brazzaville. Massive expropriations led by concessionary companies and foresters incite an anti-colonial, though not necessarily anti-French, movement embodied by Léon Mba, a follower of local religions and a Catholic, once associated with Freemasons and French communists, and the first president of the republic (1960-1967). In the 1960s, okoumé wood is gradually replaced by oil and minerals as the chief export, leading to exceptional economic growth from which Léon Mba's successor, Omar Bongo Ondimba (1967-2009), greatly benefits.

***Elikia M'Bokolo (EHESS/UNIKIN)***

# RÉPUBLIQUE DU MALI

INDEPENDENCE 22 SEPTEMBER 1960

Republic of Mali

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: Bamako

Currency: CFA franc

Area: 1,240,190 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 14.3 million

Languages: approximately 30, including Bambara, Bozo, Bomu,

Hassaniya Arabic, Fulfulde, Malinke, Senufo, Dogon, Songhai

Official language: French

## HISTORY:

The territory of today's Republic of Mali was home to great West African empires and several kingdoms, most of them Muslim: the Soninke Ghana Empire, the Maninka Mali Empire, the Berber Songhai Empire, the Bambara Kingdom of Ségou, the Peul Kingdom of Macina, the Toucouleur Kingdom and the Dyula Wassoulou Empire of Samori Touré (Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast). In 1904, Mali becomes a French colony called Upper Senegal and Niger, comprising parts of Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Niger. In 1920, the colony is renamed French Sudan, after the creation of Upper Volta (Burkina Faso). A strong surge of independence sentiment leads the colonial administration to schedule the first elections reserved for native candidates, in 1947. The leaders of the Malian political parties founded in 1946 stand out: Mamadou Konaté, Modibo Keita (Union soudanaise-Rassemblement démocratique) and Fily Dabo Sissoko (Parti progressiste soudanais). The Mali Federation, a political entity that combines Mali and Senegal (April 1959 to August 1960), is the prelude to the independence of both countries. Mali's first president

Modibo Keita (1960-1968) imposes a socialist economy devoted to food self-sufficiency. It is abandoned by Moussa Traoré, president of the Comité militaire de libération nationale (CMLN), which becomes the Union démocratique du peuple malien (UDPM). Under Moussa Traoré, several opposition parties press for multipartyism, which ultimately leads to his dismissal and to the first democratic presidential election, won by Alpha Oumar Konaré (1992-2002). In 1993, long-term administrative decentralization begins, including the creation of autonomous 'collectivités territoriales' ('territorial communities'). Since 2002, the president of the Republic of Mali has been Amadou Toumani Touré.

***Cristiana Panella (RMCA)***

# FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

**INDEPENDENCE 1 OCTOBER 1960**

Federal Republic of Nigeria

(former British colony / colonial language English)

Capital: Abuja

Currency: Naira

Area: 923,770 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 137 million

Languages: Yoruba, Hausa, Ibo, Fulani, Ibibio, Tiv, Anang, Ebir

Official language: English

## **HISTORY:**

The region in which this West African country is situated – the continent's most populous – was implicated in the slave trade until the 19th century. The territory becomes a British colony in 1914, under a system of 'indirect rule' that is based on traditional authorities and on accentuating divisions between the three main communities: Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba. Nationalism emerges after the Second World War. In 1945, Nnamdi Azikiwe establishes the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) to unify and liberate the country. In 1948, the Macpherson constitution establishes universal suffrage and implements the policy of 'Africanizing' the administration. Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group and Aminu Kano's Northern People's Congress (NPC) support nationalism. Following Queen Elizabeth's 1956 visit and the 1957 London Conference, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa becomes Nigeria's prime minister. December 1959 elections lead to the creation of a coalition government between the two large political parties: the NPC and the NCNC. On 1 October 1960, Nigeria becomes a republic within the

Commonwealth; Nnamdi Azikiwe is the president and Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa the prime minister. In 1961, after a referendum, part of English Cameroon is integrated into Nigeria. Coups and civil wars destabilize the country, particularly the 30 May 1967 secession of Biafra at the height of the cold war. Mobutu's troops help put an end to it in 1970. Nigeria, the world's eighth most prolific oil producer, remains relatively poor; its political capital, Abuja, has fewer than 500,000 residents, while its commercial capital, Lagos, has more than eight million.

*Jacob Sabakinu Kivilu (UNIKIN)*

# RÉPUBLIQUE ISLAMIQUE DE MAURITANIE

**INDEPENDENCE 28 NOVEMBER 1960**

Islamic Republic of Mauritania

(former French colony / colonial language French)

Capital: Nouakchott

Currency: Ouguiya

Area: 1,025,520 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (2009): 3.2 million

Languages: Hassaniya Arabic, Pulaar, Soninke, Wolof, Bambara, Berber, Azer

Official language: Arabic

## **HISTORY:**

Mauritania is a West African and Saharan country home to Arab-Berber and black populations. It's also a country of emigration. It becomes a French colony following military expeditions launched from Senegal. In 1904, it becomes part of French West Africa; beginning in 1920, it is administered from Saint-Louis by the governor of Senegal. Resistance to French colonization surges in the 1920s; nationalism emerges after the Second World War. The French change strategy and make Mauritania an overseas province, with its own representatives in French Parliament. On 20 May 1957, the lawyer Moktar Ould Daddah is named to head the first autonomous government. The desire for further autonomy grows and independence is granted on 28 November 1960, despite the opposition of Morocco and the Arab League, which refuse to recognize Mauritania because they consider the territory part of Morocco. French and Spanish support prevent Morocco's attempt to annex the territory. Moktar Ould Daddah is elected the republic's first president. Its conflict with Morocco over Western Sahara causes

serious crises in Mauritania, and its war with the Polisario Front, supported by Algeria, plunges the country into political instability. A long drought begins in 1978. The country gains autonomy, certainly, but its organizational capacity is limited. French companies such as MIFERMA (Mines de fer de Mauritanie) control the country politically and economically. On 10 July 1978, Moktar Ould Daddah is overthrown by a military coup d'état. Lieutenant Colonel Mohammed Ould Saleck replaces him. Since then, Mauritania has experienced several military coups and political instability.

*Jacob Sabakinu Kivilu (UNIKIN)*

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