‘The Black Knights of Fortune’: A Study of the Zappo-Zap and Euro-African Encounters in the Late Nineteenth-Century Kasai

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ABSTRACT

Recent popular publications have emphasised the brutality and suffering inflicted upon African communities at the onset of colonialism in the Congo, under the Belgium King Leopold II. Yet this Euro-centric approach works to obscure African agency and collaboration under the Congo Free State, and the dependency of the Free State officers upon their African partners. Through following the trajectory of the Zappo-Zap, a distinctly under-studied slaving ethnic group who migrated to the western Kasai region, this dissertation makes a headway into understanding that the violence of the Congo Free State was fabricated from existing modes of exploitation in the Congo prior to European penetration, such as the Arab-Swahili commercial empires. Notably loyal, the example of the Zappo-Zap serves to evaluate the role of African agents in the shaping of exploitative Free State policies, and elucidates the extent that the Zappo-Zap adapted to, and gained from, the reliance of the Free State on them, in the midst of numerous rebellions in the Kasai such as the infamous Luluabourg Revolt.

Key words: colonialism; Congo; Kasai; adaptation; slavery

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ABBREVIATIONS

APCM American Presbyterian Congo Mission

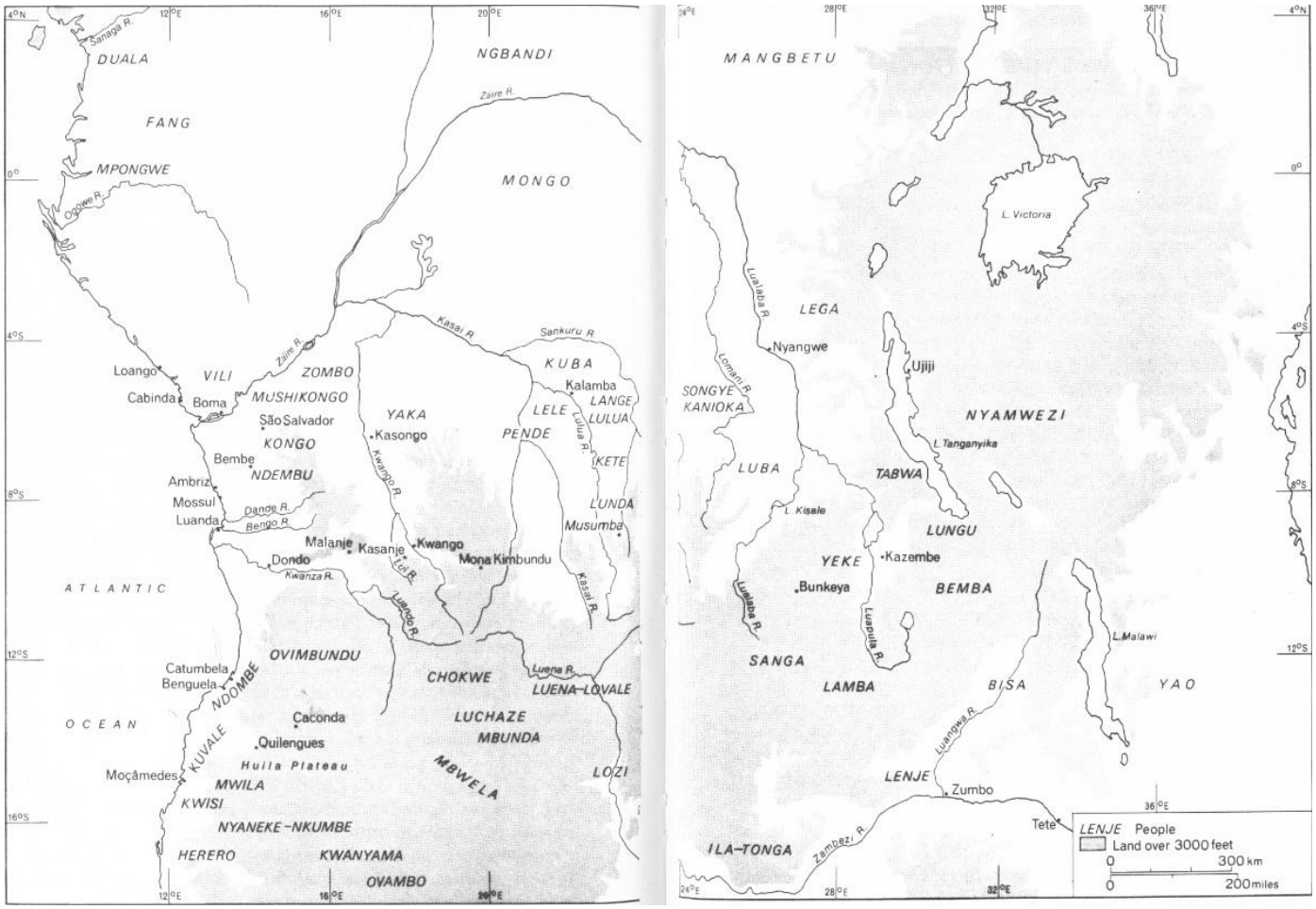
CFS Congo Free State

CK Compagnie du Kasaï

FP *Force Publique*

NAHV Nieuwe Afrikaanse Handelsvennootschap

SAB Société Anonyme Belge



Map 1. 'Central Africa in the nineteenth century' in David Birmingham, *Central Africa to 1870: Zambezia, Zaire and the South Atlantic* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1981), pp. 110-111.

INTRODUCTION

Scholarly interest in the Congo shows no sign of abating. This interest is driven partly by the scale and complexity of the recent conflicts that have plagued the country during what some commentators have dubbed 'Africa's World War'.[1] Yet, however natural and well-meaning, the outrage generated by the on-going atrocities has not always been conducive to objective historical analysis into the roots of the violence. Thus, both in the media and in popular publications, the period of Leopoldian and, then, Belgian colonialisms are presented as the key to understanding the 'Congo problem'. In this historical rendering, King Leopold II is characterised as a greedy tyrant, despotically ruling the Congo and single-handedly introducing a brutal policy of the resource extraction which has continued to this day.[2] To be sure, the exploitative structures that characterized the Congo Free State (CFS), particularly at the height of the so-called 'red rubber' atrocities, are undeniable. Yet Euro-centric narratives pander to the romantic ideal of a harmonious and tranquil Africa before the arrival of Europeans. [3] As such, they have unduly simplified a much more complex and multi-layered history of violence in the region. As Nancy Rose Hunt has stressed, 'absence of historization *[sic]*' is the distinguishing trait of the 'urgent histories' cobbled together by

[1] Gerard Punier *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2009).
[2] See, especially, Adam Hochschild's best-selling *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Pan Books: London, 2006); Kevin C. Dunn, *Imagining the Congo: the International Relations of Identity* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2003); and *King Leopold's legacy of DR Congo violence*, [online], BBC News, last updated 24th February 2004, [cited 15th November 2014]. Available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3516965.stm>
[3] See, on this score, Jan-Bart Gewald, 'More than Red Rubber and Figures Alone: A Critical Appraisal of the Memory of the Congo Exhibition at the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium', *International Journal of African Historical Studies,* Volume 39, No. 3, (2006).

international humanitarian campaigners.[4] The 'urgent histories' of the present, of course, echo the 'urgent histories' of the past: specifically, the early twentieth-century human rights campaign of the Congo Reform Movement headed by E.D. Morel. Taken together, old and new media discourses about violence in the Congo have not infrequently reinforced what Vansina calls the 'crass ignorance of the cliché that reduces the colonial period to a time of unspeakable atrocities under Leopold II followed by a breakdown into utter chaos at independence, which then somehow leads to and explains the failed state of the country today.'[5]

This dissertation seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the history of violence in the Congo by stressing the central importance of African initiative to the early establishment of the CFS. Focusing on the trajectory of the Zappo-Zap,[6] and following in the footsteps of Jean-Luc Vellut and, more recently, Aldwin Roes,[7] this thesis argues that the politics of the Euro-African encounter in the Kasai – and, by extension, elsewhere in the Congo – are poorly served by approaches that portray all Africans as victims of European violence and oppression.

While it cannot be denied that European actors were responsible for carrying out acts of brutality and for laying the foundations for future waves of violence (not least by entrenching principles of racial and ethnic categorisation), the fact remains that the early

[4] Nancy Rose Hunt, 'An Acoustic Register, Tenacious Images, and Congolese Scenes of Rape and Repetition', *Cultural Anthropology,* Volume 23, Issue 2, (2008), p. 221.
[5] Jan Vansina, *Being Colonized: The Kuba Experience in Rural Congo, 1880-1960* (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison; Wisconsin, 2010), p. 331.
[6] The ethnonym 'Zappo-Zap' seems to have derived from a chief named Nsapu-Nsapu. Nsapu-Nsapu's heirs adopted the name 'Zappo-Zap' for themselves, which was henceforth used to encompass the people as a whole.
[7] Jean-Luc Vellut, 'La violence armée dans l'État indépendant du Congo: ténèbres et clartés dans l'histoire d'un État conquérant', *Cultures et développement,* Volume 16, Issue 3-4, (1984), *p.* 671-707 ; Aldwin Roes, 'Towards a History of Mass Violence in the État Independant du Congo, 1885-1908', *South African Historical Journal,* Volume 62, Issue 4, (2010), *p.* 634-670.

exploitation of the Kasai was never an exclusive European affair. On the contrary: non-Europeans actors often held the balance of regional power, and it was largely due to the stipulation of local alliances that the CFS was able to exist.

Another central argument of this dissertation is that in order to grasp the workings of the State and the set of alliances that underpinned it, it is necessary to broaden one's focus of observation so as to encompass nineteenth-century dynamics. Different from the ancient kingdoms of the savanna, the CFS – as will be demonstrated – had more in common with the predatory warlord states that had succeeded them in several areas in the second half of the nineteenth-century. The workings of both the Arab-Swahili and Ovimbundu ivory and slave trades are particularly significant in this regard. Building upon aspects of Melvin Page's study[8] this dissertation will explore the extent to which the new socio-military forces generated by the incorporation of the Kasai region into global networks of trade were assimilated into the structures of the Free State.

This approach explains the decision not to refer to the era prior to the imposition of European territorial control as 'pre-colonial'. The adjective, although indeed convenient, is misleading, as it implies that the arrival of the Europeans coincided with the arrival of colonialism itself. Furthermore, the distinction between the 'colonial' and 'pre-colonial' eras implies that there was a sharp transfer of power from the Africans to the Europeans. This – as this dissertation will show – would be a grossly inaccurate assumption; one that would simplify the complex power relationships on the ground between European and African agents, especially at the outset of formal European rule.

[8] Melvin E. Page, 'The Manyema Hordes of Tippu Tip: A Case Study in Social Stratification and the Slave Trade in Eastern Africa', *International Journal of African Historical Studies,* Vol. 7, No. 1(1974).

The Literature on the Kasai

The literature with an exclusive focus on the Kasai region is sparse. A classic account is van Zandijcke's *Pages d'Histoire du Kasayi*, still commendable for its thorough discussion of the period between the first Euro-African encounter of 1881 and the Luluabourg Revolt of 1895. Van Zandijcke shows awareness of the activities of eastern Kasaian warlords, especially in relation to the subsequent mass migration of Luba-speaking refugees, and recognises the role of the Zappo-Zap in passing. Neither of these subjects, however, are the focus of in-depth discussions.[9] Building upon van Zandijcke's work, Martens' PhD thesis is perhaps the most comprehensive study of the transition to European rule in the Kasai. Martens was granted unrestricted access to the (no longer available) records of the *Compagnie du Kasaï*; because of this, her work is particularly valuable for the insights it provides into the economic history of the region and its involvement in international trade.[10] More recently, Congolese historian Mwana Mputu has attempted a similar feat. The value of his monograph, however, is marred by poor referencing and the ensuing presence of seemingly unsubstantiated assertions.[11]

Studies of specific Kasaian ethnicities are equally sparse,[12] even more so those that seek to illustrate the transition of societies into the colonial era, though their achievements have been altogether more noteworthy than regionally-focused studies. Vansina's lifelong work on the Kuba has recently culminated in the publication of *Being Colonized*, an important

[9] A. Van Zandijcke, *Pages d'Histoire du Kasayi* (Grand Lakes: Namur, 1953).
[10] Daisy S. Martens, 'A History of European Penetration and African Reaction in the Kasai Region of Zaire, 1880-1908' (PhD, Simon Fraser University, 1980). Insofar as the pre-colonial period is concerned, similar remarks apply to the relevant sections of A. von Oppen, *Terms of Trade and Trust: the History and Contexts of Pre-Colonial Market Production around the Upper Zambezi and Kasai* (Lit: Hamburg, 1993).
[11] Baudouin Mwamba Mputu, Baudouin, *Le Congo-Kasaï (1865-1950): De l'exploration allemande à la consécration de Luluabourg* (L'Harmattan: Paris, 2011).
[12] Although Fairley's PhD work on the Ben'eki is a notable exception. See Nancy Jane Fairley, 'Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie: A History of the Ben'Ekie' (PhD, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1978).

study of the Kuba's adaptation to the onset of European colonialism.[13] While *Being Colonized* is impressive in its job of charting the modern history of the Kuba of northern Kasai, the book does not attempt a systematic comparison between the experiences of the Kuba and those of their neighbours. Neither does the book fully sketch the broader regional context into which the Kuba trajectory must be placed. Vansina, for instance, devotes a mere two pages to the history the Zappo-Zap. Some work has also been carried out on the Bena Lulua, most notably by Congolese scholar Luadia-Luadia and, with specific reference to the hemp-based *Lubuku* cult, by Fabian.[14] While covering the relationships between the Lulua leader Kalamba and German officer Hermann von Wissmann and his colleagues, neither work present a sufficiently detailed picture of the evolution of Euro-African relations following the takeover of the post of Luluabourg by Belgian officers of the Congo Free State in 1886. .

Furthermore, whilst the history of the fierce-some warlord Ngongo Luteta has long allured scholars,[15] the broader social consequences of the politics of violence and predation that he and other Arab-ised African warlords embodied have not been fully teased out. Although some works touch upon the mass flights prompted by the extensive slaving operations of the warlords,[16] the subsequent fate of these refugees – including such Songye groups as the Zappo-Zap – has not been systematically explored. Thus, little is

[13] Vansina, *Being Colonised*. See also Jan Vansina, *Children of Woot : a History of the Kuba Peoples* (Wisconsin University Press: Madison, 1978).
[14] Ntambwe Luadia-Luadia, 'Les Luluwa et le commerce Luso-Africain (1870-1895)', *Etudes d'Histoire africaine,* Volume 7, (1974), *p.* 55-104; Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 2000).
[15] A recent example is David M. Gordon, 'Interpreting Documentary Sources on the Early History of the CFS: The Case of Ngongo Luteta's Rise and Fall', *History in Africa,* Vol. 41, (June 2014), *p.* 5-33.
[16] See, for instance, Alan P. Merriam, *Culture History of the Basongye* (African Studies Program: Indiana University; Bloomington, 1975); Jean-Luc Vellut, 'Émeri Cambier (1865-1943), fondateur da la mission du Kasaï. La production d'un missionnaire de légende', in Pierre Halen and János Riesz (eds.), *Images de L'Afrique et du Congo/Zaïre dans les lettres belges de langue française et alentour* (Textyles- Éditions: Bruxelles, 1993).

known of their resettlement in western Kasai in collaboration with CFS representatives and of their relations with neighbouring ethnicities.[17]

Outline

This dissertation advances a new understanding of the patterns of violence that characterized the CFS by exploring the under-studied history of the Zappo-Zap and their role in Kasaian politics. The Zappo-Zap were a social group that emerged out of the Songye peoples, situated between the Sankuru and Lomami rivers. The Zappo-Zap established a form of 'colonial' dominance over neighbouring ethnic groups prior to the European penetration of the region; and their collaborative relationship with the CFS from the late 1880s aptly typifies the power balance between African and European agents throughout the existence of the CFS.

The first chapter seeks to elucidate the political structures present in the Congo before the establishment of the CFS. It begins with a discussion of a 'traditional' savanna polity, the so-called Luba Empire, which used spiritual institutions and comparatively benign socio-economic conventions to bind together rulers and ruled. The chapter then moves on to charting the violent fragmentation of this type of African polities as a result of the savanna integration into global ivory and slave trading systems. Both Ovimbundu/Luso-African and Arab-Swahili trading networks are discussed . An examination of the modus operandi of the commercial empire of Tippu-Tip and his warlord allies is then presented with a view to making the argument that the CFS grafted itself onto pre-existing structures of exploitation.

[17] Minor exceptions to the rule are Paul Timmermans, 'Les Sapo Sapo prés de Luluabourg', *Africa-Tervuren,* Volume 8, Issue 1/2, (1962), *p.* 29-53, and Musuy-Bakul Libata, 'Regroupement des balubas et ses conséquences géo-politiques dans la périphérie de Luluabourg (1891-1960)', *Annals Aequatoria,* Volume 8, (1987), *p.* 99-129.

Chapter two looks more specifically at the Zappo-Zap and the history of their migration to eastern Kasai. The Zappo-Zap originally belonged to a sub-section of the Ben'eki, a sub-group of the Songye people of western Kasai. Prior to their exposure to the Europeans, the Zappo-Zap had been successful agents of the slave trade, cultivating contacts with both the western Luso-African and the eastern Arab-Swahili trading networks. In the increasingly fragmented and volatile landscape of western Kasai, however, the followers of Nsapu-Nsapu found themselves on the receiving end of persecution at the hands of Arab-ised warlords who shared their own openness to foreign trade and violent forms of political action. The Zappo-Zap flight to the CFS post on Luluabourg in 1887 was the end-result of this state of affairs.

It was at Luluabourg that the Zappo-Zap were fully co-opted into the fabric of the emerging colonial State, taking on the roles of '*capitas*' to oversee the extraction of taxes and, most importantly, fighting as an auxiliary force on behalf of the State. This process of adaptation led to the Zappo-Zap supplanting the Bena Lulua leader Kalamba – the subject of chapter three – as the key African collaborator of the CFS in eastern Kasai. Whilst Kalamba rejected CFS governance in 1890, the Zappo-Zap remained fiercely loyal to the State. Chapter four examines how this loyalty expressed itself at several critical junctures – from the Luluabourg revolt of 1895 to the Kuba rebellion of 1904, passing through the famous Pyaang Massacre of 1899 – and the benefits that it brought to the Zappo-Zap.

The Zappo-Zap, in sum, serve as a prime example of African agency and highlight the impact of pre-existing politico-economic dynamics on the CFS. The agents of the global slave and ivory trade, they were also the victims of this very same trade, having been driven from their homeland by stronger regional warlords. Moreover, the Zappo-Zap were both the cause and the consequence of the CFS's growing hegemony in the Kasai. Their

history, then, epitomizes the complexity and diversity of the African experience both during and after the CFS. If nothing else, they bear out the validity of Vansina's musing

> that throughout the colonial period none of the colonized subjects have ever shared the same fate in equal measure […] Moreover, once one starts to label who was what, one soon finds out that the identification of 'winners' and 'losers' can shift.[18]

Sources and Methodology

Thanks to the pioneering works of Jan Vansina and his students, the history of the peoples of the Congo basin prior to the arrival of the Europeans is now recognised within the scholarly community. This is not to say that this relatively new field of study is not fraught with problems: the lack of substantial written records prior to the mid-nineteenth-century has led to methodological approaches that can be viewed as controversial, such as historical linguistics,[19] and the reliance on oral sources and oral traditions.[20] Having been personally unable to carry out field research in the Congo, this thesis draws upon oral traditions as recorded by other historians, predominantly those of the Ben'eki as collected by Fairley.[21] As a large body of literature has established, oral traditions can be problematic sources.[22] However, in the 1970s, the time of Fairley's research, at least some of the

[18] Vansina, *Being Colonized*, p. 327.
[19] On which, see, for instance, Derek Nurse, 'The Contribution of Linguistics to the Study of History in Africa', *Journal of African History,* Volume 38, No. 3, (1997), *p.* 359-391, and Jan Vansina, *How Societies are Born: Governance in West Central Africa before 1600* (University of Virginia Press: Virginia, 2004), particularly the Introduction and Chapter One.
[20] See Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology,* (Aldine Pub. Co: Chicago, 1965).
[21] Nancy Jane Fairley, 'Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie'.
[22] See, for example, G. Clarence-Smith, 'For Braudel: A Note on the École des Annales' and the Historiography of Africa', *History in Africa,* Volume 4, (1977), *p.* 275-281.

testimonies she collected were still comparatively close to the events that they described. This clearly enhances their reliability.[23]

There is also the fortune of being able to draw upon a sufficient body of written records pertaining to Kasaian history in the nineteenth-century. The main body of written documents employed in this dissertation consists of the records of European travellers, missionaries, and officers of the *Force Publique* (FP). Informed by obvious racial biases, most of these documents tend to oscillate between romantic notions of the 'noble savage' and damning, sweeping statements of endemic 'savagery'. Needless to say, these ideological nuances led their European authors to resort to either self-censorship and/or exaggeration in their portrayal of Africans for the benefit of their readers: reports of cannibalistic practices are a prime example of this. Further complications arise when the state of mind of many of the Europeans in the African interior is borne in mind: many were suffering from illness and disease, intoxication and fatigue, which were liable to distort their perception of reality.[24] There is little that historians can do about these problems, aside from practicing critical awareness. The difficulties that arise from the commercial nature of travel writings, [25] however, can be curbed by drawing upon unpublished archival sources, if and where possible. With this aim in mind, this dissertation makes full use of the

[23] David Henige identifies two such practices within oral traditions which can challenge chronological integrity: "telescoping" and "artificial lengthening". Telescoping is the process of omitting the reign of kings from the political narrative of societies: usually those which occur in the middle, and thus do not impact the genesis story or the existing dynasty. Artificial lengthening is the incorporation of additional figures into the historical narrative, such as including gods as human rulers. See David Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition: Quest for Chimera* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1974), p3-9. The possibility of these distortions are lessened, however, the closer the events recalled in the tradiitons are to living memory.

[24] Fabian, *Out of Our Minds;* R. C. Bridges, 'Nineteenth-Century East African Travel Records', in B. Heintze and A. Jones (eds.), *European Sources for Sub-Saharan Africa before 1900,* Special Issue of *Paideuma,* Volume 33, (Kohlhammer: Stuttgart, 1987); Beatrix Heintze, 'Ethnographic Appropriations : German Exploration and Fieldwork in West-Central Africa', *History in Africa,* Volume 26, (1999), p69-128.

[25] See Fabian *Out of Our Minds, p.* 252-4. For a clear example of the potentially distorting impact of the editorial process, see Dorothy O. Helly, *Livingstone's Legacy: Horace Waller and Victorian Myth-making* (Ohio University Press: Athens, Ohio, 1987).

rich personal collections of two Congo Free State officers: Captain de Macar and Commissaire Gillain, who served in Luluabourg from 1886.

The problems posed by published sources emerge particularly starkly in relation to some of the documents used in chapter four: the writings of Morel's Congo Reform Association that incorporate the testimonies of such missionaries as William Sheppard and William Morrison, of the American Presbyterian Congo Mission (APCM).[26] The well-known history of the movement and its campaign against the CFS and the *Compagnie du Kasaï* (CK) need not retain our attention here.[27] A brief mention of the bias behind the written sources documenting the Pyaang Massacre is necessary, however. The shocking brutality of the incident, witnessed in part by Sheppard, triggered an international humanitarian campaign to end the violent exploitation of the Congo. However, early human rights activists (not unlike their contemporary counterparts) drew on missionary and other Congolese testimonies for primarily polemical purposes and with little regards for historical detail. Thus, for example, 'The Deeds', a section of Morel's *Red Rubber*, consists of extracts of letters from Europeans (predominantly missionaries) based in the CFS. Yet, extracts from varying regions are juxtaposed next to each other and taken out of their local socio-political context. In some cases, their place of origin is no more precisely indicated than 'river banks, central region, Domain Privée.'[28] Morel's account of the Zappo-Zaps' killings at Pyaang is a case in point: the atrocities are presented as a stand-alone event and the accompanying attacks on the Kuba royal capital which make the atrocities partially intelligible do not even rate a mention. Whatever the political undertones of missionary reports or the human rights' campaign that they inspired, these sources remain nonetheless useful historians. If

[26] See for example E.D. Morel, *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (Heinemann: London, 1904); E.D. Morel, *Red Rubber: The Story of the Rubber Slave Trade Flourishing on the Congo in the Year of grace 1907* (T. Fisher Unwin: London, 1907).
[27] See, in particular, William Roger Louis and Jean Stengers, *E.D. Morel's History of the Congo Reform Movement* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1968).
[28] Morel, *Red Rubber*, p72.

examined with a critical eye, they still provide much valuable insights into the history of the African peoples at the heart of this dissertation.

CHAPTER ONE

OLD POLITICS AND NEW MEN

Contrary to what many nineteenth-century European observers assumed - the philosopher Hegel, for one, asserted that Africa was 'no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit'[1] - the interior of the African continent had witnessed the development of social and state structures for centuries before the time of European contact. While some societies, not least the Songye of eastern Kasai, had devised a system of rotating chieftainship which allowed equal access to power for different kin groups, based on the decisions of a council of elders,[2] centralised empires were not unknown in the southern savanna of Central Africa before the nineteenth century. These polities were founded upon conquest and assimilation – not dissimilar, in this respect, to the European imperial structures that emerged in the late nineteenth century.

However, these autochthonous states were challenged in dramatic fashion by the intrusion of international trade. Whilst regional indigenous trading networks flourished up until the 1870s, on the west coast of Central Africa, in present-day Angola, Portuguese and Luso-Africans merchants conveyed the international demand

[1] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (Dover Publications: New York, 1956), p. 99.Hugh Trevor Roper famously echoed these sentiments, proclaiming African history to be 'the unedifying gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe.' For the full article, see 'The Past and Present: History and Sociology', *Past and Present,* Volume 42, (1969), *p.* 3-17.

[2] Tippu Tip (ed. and tr. W.H. Whitely), *Maisha ya Hamed bin Muhammed el Murjebi, yaani Tippu Tip* (East African Literature Bureau: Nairobi, 1974; 1st ed., 1958-9), p. 67.

for ivory, palm oil, beeswax, gum, coffee, cotton and, later, rubber.[1] Slaves, too, were in demand, although the shrinking of the Atlantic slave market meant that more and more of them were deployed internally within the continent. These goods were traded for cloth, alcohol and firearms, among other things. Similarly, on the opposite side of the continent, the east coast saw the rise of Arab-dominated trading networks. As international demand rose and market competition stepped up, coastal traders began to penetrate the interior as a means of accessing greater and cheaper volumes of slaves and ivory. Whilst ivory was initially obtained through peaceful means, the acquisition of slaves was often a violent business, involving warfare and raids, which were either undertaken directly by the traders themselves or by those supplying the slaves. Thus, the penetration of eastern and western traders deeper into the continent brought a trail of blood and the breakdown of social cohesion in its wake. These developments, of course, were exacerbated by the firearms which the traders carried and made available to inland communities. It was in the region situated between the Kasai and Sankuru rivers that eastern and western trading webs intersected.

The influx of foreign imports brought instability to traditional African polities as subjects on the periphery of kingdoms established relationships with the traders. The ready accessibility of firearms and luxury European items meant that those in contact with traders had the opportunity to lure dependents away from the centralised power bases of the kingdom, and to gain the military resources with which directly to challenge the socio-political status quo. These dynamics led to the disintegration of some of the main political formations of the southern savanna, beginning with the

[1] A. E. Atmore, 'Africa on the eve of partition', 1908', in Roland Oliver and G.N. Sanderson (eds), *The Cambridge History of Africa Volume 6: From 1870 to 1905* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1985), pp, 68-9.

Luba and Lunda kingdoms, which had had little previous exposure to firearms.[2] The power vacuums thrown open by the demise of the old states were filled by the rise of 'new men', political entrepreneurs who sought to harness international trading networks to their own advantage. These 'new men' used trade to acquire the supply of firearms which gave them the upper-hand over neighbouring communities and, therefore, the opportunity to accumulate slaves and plunder. The Chokwe and Ovimbundu of present-day Angola exemplify such processes of adaptation in the face of politico-economic change; as do the warlords to the east of the Kasai who sought out the patronage of the Arab merchant-warriors installed around Lake Tanganyika. It is the latter – Ngongo Luteta, Lumpungu, Mpania Mutombo and others - who are most relevant to the history of the Zappo-Zap.

This chapter examines these developments in detail, with a view to contextualizing the manner of the Congo Free State. It has been divided into five sections. The first section looks at the workings of the Luba Empire, a prime example of traditional African political formation. The next examines the Luso-African trading activities originating from the west coast, and how these led to the disintegration of the old political order. The third section explores the framework of the 'Arab' commercial 'empire' centred on the famous Zanzibari merchant-warrior, Tippu-Tip. The penultimate section focuses on a prominent vassal of Tippu-Tip, Ngongo Luteta, whose life and career aptly illustrates the continuity between the CFS and previous political frameworks. Whilst Ngongo rose to power through the patronage of Tippu-Tip, he later served the CFS in its campaigns against the Arabs; his followers were incorporated into the ranks of the *Force Publique*, the standing army of the State.

[2] This is not a hard and fast rule, however. The Luyana kingdom in Barotseland, for example, survived into the era of European colonialism in spite of a brief period under the rule of the armed Makololo peoples.

The last section deals with the initial establishment and policies of CFS as a whole, as a general backdrop to Kasai-specific developments.

The Luba Empire

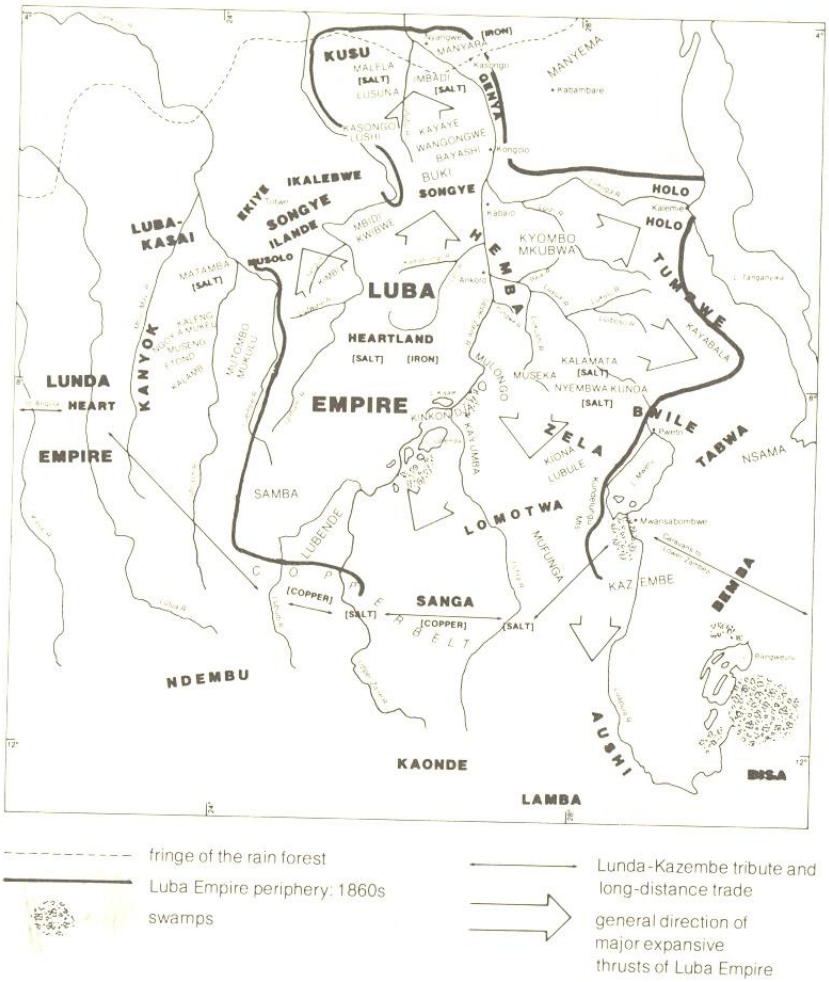
At its height in 1860s, the Luba Empire spanned the Luembe River to the west and skirted Lake Tanganyika and Lake Mweru to the east. It was during what Reefe termed the dynastic 'Age of Kings', roughly dating from 1700 to the 1860s, that the Luba Empire enlarged its peripheral territories and consolidated its regional supremacy, the greater part of its expansion dating to the eighteenth-century.[3] While Reefe's study reveals that the Luba tended to follow 'the path of least political and military resistance',[4] the expansion of the Luba polity from its heartland near the Upemba depression into what is now Katanga was undeniably brutal, despite the temptation to compare it favourably with 'industrial' contemporary European warfare.[5] Valour in battle was celebrated and provided a means for social mobility, alongside the material rewards and spoils from local wars and raids, denoting that warfare was part and parcel of Luba culture and politics. Furthermore, as the territory under the authority of the Luba King – the *Mulopwe* – increased, so did the necessity to rely on force and terror to ensure that tribute was collected from the areas on the peripheries of the state. Mutilations were common during military operations: it was accepted that a warrior may have a foot severed, should he try and flee from battle; amputations and mutilations were also inflicted as a punishment for subdued villages.[6] The Zanzibari trader Tippu-Tip provides an eye-

[3] Thomas Q. Reefe, *The Rainbow and the Kings: A History of the Luba Empire to 1891* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1981), p. 107.
[4] Ibid., p. 108.
[5] Ibid., *p.* 109-110.
[6] Ibid., p. 110.

witness account of the use of these terror tactics during the reign of King Ilunga Kabale (roughly dating 1840-1870):

> Each time he went into combat, he placed in front of him all those whose arms, noses and ears had been cut off and thus he terrorized his adversaries [...]. In all their villages one sees three or four hundred men with either their noses, ears or arms cut off.[7]

Violence was thus a tool of power and authority, and it was certainly not the exclusive preserve of later European empires.



Map 2. 'Luba Empire: late eighteenth century to the 1860s', in Thomas Q. Reefe, *The Rainbow and the Kings: A History of the Luba Empire to 1891* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1981), p. 116.

[7] Tippu-Tipp in ibid.

While it is thus important not to indulge in romantic fantasies idealising 'noble savages', the distinguishing feature of power in these ancient central African states was the use of religious institutions and the divine nature of kingship. The political organisation of the Luba Empire is best understood by imagining a 'pyramid of pyramids.'[8] The top pyramid of power represents the Luba king and his court, at the political and mystical centre of the Empire. This centre was considered sacred because of the residence of the *Mulopwe*. The Luba genesis myth, the oral epic of the Luba Empire, enshrines the concept of the divinity of the *Mulopwe*: the warrior Kalala Ilungu is said to have become king after defeating the cruel autochthonous king, Nkongolo. Then, Kalala introduced and personified the institution of divine kingship, with the aid of his father, the wandering hunter Mbidi Kiluwe.[9] Regardless of whether this story can be taken to reflect distant historical events, or whether it provides any chronological insights into the foundation of the Luba Empire, the king's divine right to rule, as passed through the male bloodline and originating with Kalala, was a central aspect of Luba power and authority. The rituals surrounding the investiture of a new king reinforced the monarchy's spiritual aspects; the king was perceived as a *vidye*, a nature spirit, which was exemplified through insignias and taboos of kingship.[10]

[8] Ndaywel e Nziem, 'The political system of the Luba and Lunda: its emergence and expansion', in B.A. Ogot (ed.), *UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume 5: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (UNESCO and Heinemann: Paris, 1992) p. 595; Reefe, *Rainbow and the Kings,* p. 79.
[9] Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts, 'Audacities of Memory', in Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts (eds.), *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History* (The Museum for African Art: New York, 1996), p. 20.
[10] Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 1966), p. 74.

The *Mulopwe* and his court were paramount over a hierarchy of smaller pyramids. The village groupings closest to the heartland of the Empire were higher up the political hierarchy, although, out of these, royal sacred villages, having some link with sacred ancestors or spirits from the characters in the Genesis Myth, were favoured over villages not linked to the royal lineage.[11] It was this spiritual connection that preserved the legitimacy of the Luba kings: 'The relationship between the Luba royal dynasty and the royal sacred-village groupings of the heartland, where ancestral spirits were venerated, became so formalized through myth, oral traditions, and rituals that the living king came to be seen as an equal to these royal spirits.'[12]

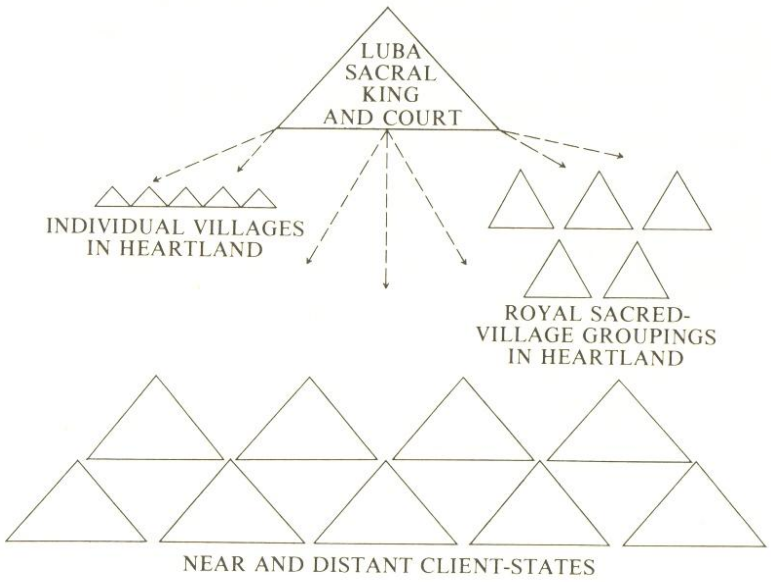


Figure 1. 'Pyramids Upon Pyramids' in Thomas Q. Reefe, *The Rainbow and the Kings: A History of the Luba Empire to 1891* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1981), p79.

However, it was not only the king that symbolised ancestral spiritual power. The *bambudye* was an elite Luba secret society, of which membership was mandatory for those holding high official positions in the Empire.[13] The *bambudye* was a means to

[11] Reefe, *Rainbow and the Kings, p.* 79-80.
[12] Ibid., p. 83.
[13] Ibid., p. 46.

hold political leaders to account, as all members formed a bond that was distinct from their kinship ties and secular life: *bambudye* members, when dressed in ceremonious garb, were anonymous and were considered spiritual entities who could preside over Luba villages.[14] Because of its inclusive nature, the *bambudye* was an effective instrument of political integration: members from different regions shared a set of values, having been through the same initiation rituals and being subject to the same charter.

Reefe, furthermore, suggests that the *bambudye* of the Luba Empire was modelled on the *bakasandji* secret society of the Songye peoples: King Ilungu Sungu (who reigned between ca 1780 and 1810) is remembered to have grown up in the Songye region before he was old enough to inherit the Luba throne and introduce the practice.[15] There seems to be a long history of inter-cultural borrowing between the Luba and Songye peoples, although the *bakasandji* seems to be the only Songye institution to have been fully incorporated into Luba culture. This is evidence of the 'soft power' of Luba rulers,[16] who sometimes expanded their influence and territory through cultural and spiritual means, as opposed to purely violent and military ones. Local Songye ancestral spirits, for example, were drafted into the Luba king-list as the Luba heartland relocated closer to the Songye border.[17]

[14] Ibid., *p.* 47-48. The bambudye, however, could also be used by the Mulopwe as a tool of power: the bambudye were charged with transmitting the Luba Genesis Story through generations, which served to validate and consolidate the historical power and precedence of the ruling Mulopwe.
[15] Ibid., p. 117.
[16] A term first coined by Joseph Nye in *Bound to Lead: The changing nature of American power,* (Basic Books: New York, 1990). He later clarified the meaning of 'soft power' as 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.' See *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (Public Affairs: New York, 2004), p. x.
[17] Reefe, *Rainbow and the Kings,* p. 97.

The collection of tribute also worked as a traditional tool of power, advantageous to both the king and his people. While tribute may be understood as an exploitative system of taxation, it is likely that Luba tributary obligations brought into being a web of exchanges that were mutually beneficial to all participants. Subjects in all of the regions of the empire, especially, of course, those closer to the Luba heartland, were expected to pay tribute to the *Mulopwe* as a symbol of political loyalty. While the royal court did indeed keep a proportion of the incoming wealth, the court was actually more important as a nucleus of redistribution. It was through this system that subjects acknowledged the supremacy of the king, allowing him a legitimate political mandate, whilst gaining access to resources from other parts of the polity that may not have been attained outside of the imperial framework.

The purpose of the above discussion was to argue that there was a cohesive and inclusive aspect to the Luba Empire and other contemporary central Africa states – one that, as will be argued below, would not be replicated in later warlord political formations.

The Angolan Long-distance Trade

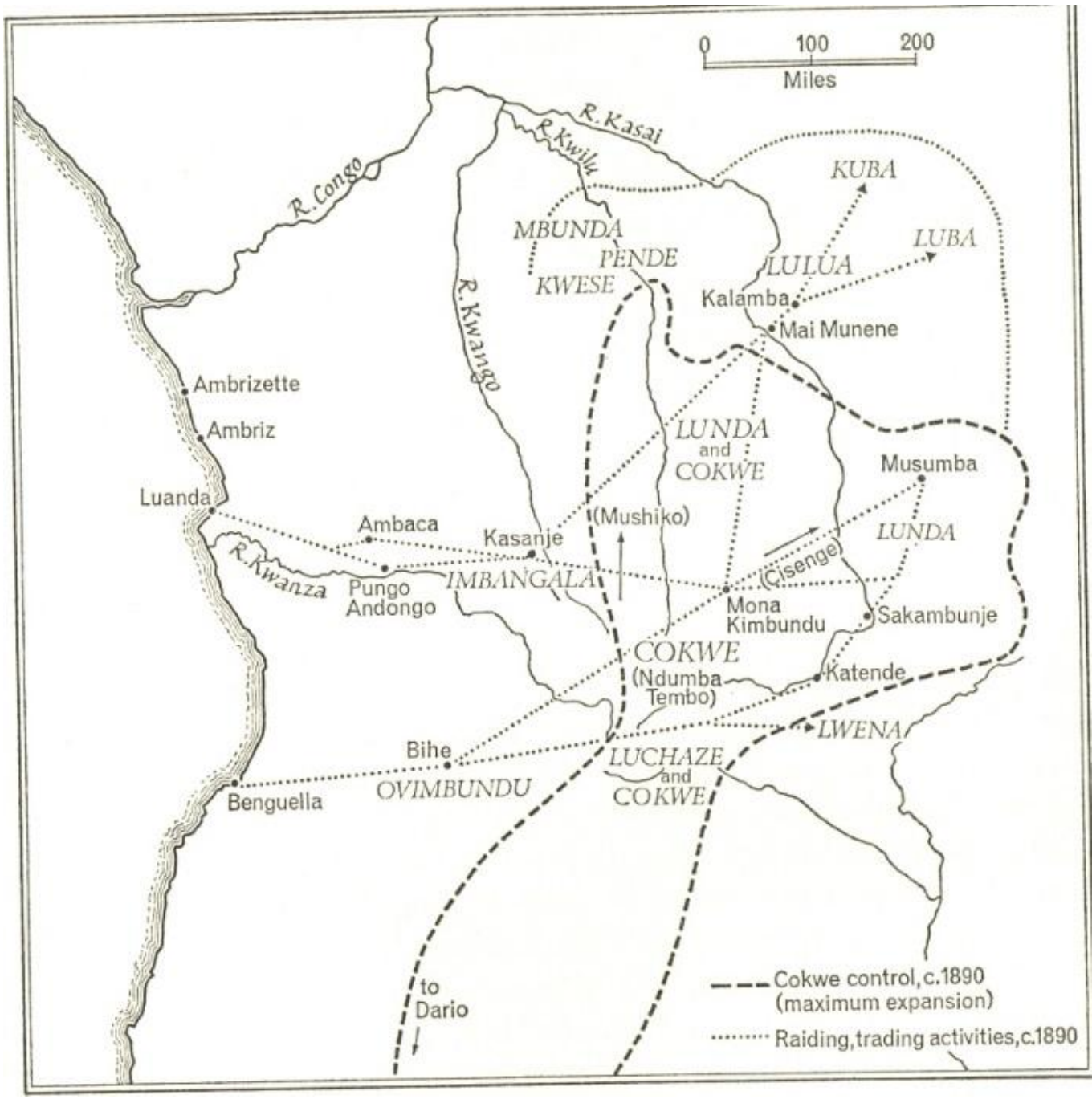
The central African empires and societies that existed prior to significant foreign penetration were linked through the operations of regional and local trading networks. Indeed, Vansina emphasises that 'all the regional trade networks of the whole Kwango and the Kasai as far east as the Songye were linked to each other.'[18] However, over the course of the nineteenth-century, commercial agents originating from both the Portuguese-dominated western coast and the Arab-Swahili-dominated eastern coast encroached upon the central African interior. These merchants and

[18] Jan Vansina, 'Long-Distance Trade-Routes in Central Africa', *Journal of African History,* Volume 3, No. 3, (1962), p. 381.

caravaneers traded in ivory and slaves: both resources were plentiful in the comparatively densely populated region corresponding to present-day Kasai. It was thus only a matter of time before the territory was directly incorporated into long-distance trading networks orchestrated by coastal agents. The Kasai region, as previously alluded to, is especially significant when discussing the integration of the Congo basin into global commercial networks, as it was the area which witnessed the convergence of western and eastern trading frontiers.

Although this dissertation is especially concerned with the relationships between Kasaian societies and their aggressive neighbours to the east – the Arab-Swahili merchant-warriors and their warlord acolytes – the trade between the Kasai and the territory corresponding to present-day Angola must also be considered. The Kasai area, being easily accessible from the west because of the waterway systems, was not left untouched by Afro-Portuguese trading influences. Indeed, diplomatic negotiations between Portugal and King Leopold over their respective spheres of influences would prove tense because of the clear historical significance of these western coastal influences themselves. It was not until 1891 that an official border agreement was reached between Portugal and the CFS: Portugal gained the territories to the west of the Kasai, and the CFS retained the lands to the east. There had been a Portuguese commercial presence on the western coast from 1493; yet it was from 1769, when the formal ban on trading in the interior of Angola was lifted, that numerous Angolan peoples were drawn into the orbit of the long-distance trade.[19] When describing the networks revolving around Angola, the emphasis should be placed on African agency and adaptation; even up until the year 1900,

[19] Ibid., p. 383.



Map 3. 'Maximum Chokwe Expansion: Peoples, Place and Trade-Routes, *c.*1890', in J.C. Miller, 'Cokwe Trade and Conquest in the Nineteenth Century', in Richard Gray and David Birmingham (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900* (Oxford University Press: London, 1970), p199.

Africans formed the bulk of traders and caravaneers.[20]

The Ovimbundu of the central Angolan highlands proved especially apt at acclimatising to the changes ushered in by the acceleration of international commerce. The Ovimbundu consisted of several kingdoms, most likely migrants from the Lunda and Luba empires, who had settled on the Angolan plateau over 400 years ago.[21] The largest kingdom was Bihé. Since the 1650s there had been a Luso-African commercial hub at the capital of the Imbangala kingdom, Kassange,[22] which served as a centre for the exchange of European items and African products such as ivory and slaves. Yet, as alluded to, the Portuguese prohibition on trading in the interior was lifted in 1769: competition from rising African entrepreneurs, such as the Ovimbundu, led the Imbangala to lose their exclusive trading monopoly by the early 1800s.[23] The increasing presence of long-distance traders in the interior led opportunistic kings to form temporary alliances in an attempt to monopolise trade and hence maximise their potential profits. The Ovimbundu alliance with the Luba *Mulopwe*, Kasongo Kalombo, in the 1860s is a case in point. Kasongo allowed Ovimbundu traders to raid peripheral Luba subjects to supply the slave markets.[24] By the 1870s, Ovimbundu men, women and children widely joined caravans to the interior in order to act as middlemen between the African polities, such as the Lunda

[20] Jean-Luc Vellut, 'Garenganze/Katanga- Bié - Benguela and Beyond: The Cycle of Rubber and Slaves at the Turn of the 20th Century', *Portuguese Studies Review,* Volume 19, Issue 1-2, (2011), p. 145.
[21] Gladwyn Murray Childs, 'The Chronology of the Ovimbundu Kingdoms', *Journal of African History,* Volume 11, Issue 2, (1970), p. 248.
[22] Also spelt 'Kasanje' in some texts.
[23] Vansina, 'Long-Distance Trade-Routes', *p.* 382-3.
[24] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 41.

Empire, within the interior and the Portuguese traders and Luso-Africans settled on the western coast.[25]

The Chokwe were another ethnic group who managed to adapt to the rise in competitive trading on the western coast, and would eventually rise to great prominence in the Kasai region. Indeed, the Hungarian anthropologist Emil Torday, conducting fieldwork in the late 1900s, remarked that 'they are a great people, and have altered the map of Central Africa as effectually as Napoleon altered that of Europe, and possess the finest fighting qualities.'[26] The Chokwe people originally resided near the sources of the Kasai and Kwango rivers, living a semi-nomadic hunting lifestyle rather than a settled agricultural existence.[27] The Chokwe of the upper Kasai had seemingly always regarded hunting as a prestigious activity: the abolition of the Portuguese monopoly over the exportation of ivory from Angola in 1836, and the subsequent 300% rise in price, allowed the Chokwe to utilise their hunting skills to profit from rising international demand.[28] Chokwe competence in hunting, however, led to the annihilation of the elephant population in their territory by the 1850s.[29] This led hunting parties to embark on long expeditions eastwards and northwards following the elephant trails. By 1865, Chokwe parties had advanced as far as central Kasai, into the territory inhabited by the Bena Lulua, near the confluence of the Kasai and Lulua rivers.[30] As these hunting parties consisted of Chokwe males, there was a strong imperative to acquire foreign women and

[25] Linda M. Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola: 1840s to the Present* (University of Rochester Press: Rochester; New York, 2000), p. 15.
[26] Emil Torday, 'Land and peoples of the Kasai Basin', *The Geographical Journal,* Volume 36, No. 1 (July 1910), p. 52.
[27] Vansina, *Kingdoms,* p.216.
[28] Joseph C. Miller, 'Cokwe Trade and Conquest in the Nineteenth Century', in Richard Gray and David Birmingham (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900* (Oxford University Press: London, 1970), *p.* 178-9.
[29] Ibid., p. 179.
[30] Vansina, *Being Colonized,* p. 13.

integrate them into the social structure. Women were either obtained by means of raids or bought on the market. The market place of the highly influential Lulua chief, Kalamba, in present-day Kananga, was, for example, a major trading spot: by 1880, Chokwe males were known to pay up to one large tusk of ivory for a woman they desired.[31]

Alongside the search for ivory, the dramatic increase in the market price of rubber further augmented Chokwe inclination for eastward expansion. In 1869, the 'first class' quality of the rubber they produced was reported at Benguela, on the western coast, and rubber prices soon surpassed those of wax and ivory.[32] By 1875 the supply of rubber from the vines in the forests of Quiboco, in the Chokwe heartland, had been exhausted, compelling the Chokwe to move northwards.[33] The process of harvesting rubber was open to the participation of women and children; hence, the migrations in search of rubber resources allowed whole communities to relocate, as an alternative to the male-only ivory hunting bands. However, Chokwe ivory hunters and traders continued to operate alongside rubber-gatherers. The opening of slave markets in Kalamba's realm and among the Kuba, to the north of the Lulua, encouraged Chokwe men to not only purchase women as dependents but also to turn to raiding for women themselves. All of these factors perpetuated Chokwe expansion and violence.

The military might of these Chokwe raiders had much to do with their considerable investment in Portuguese-imported muskets from an early date. The firearms

[31] Miller, 'Cokwe Trade', p. 183; see also Chapter Three for more on Kalamba's trade with the Chokwe.
[32] Ibid., p. 186.
[33] Robert Harms, 'The End of Red Rubber: A Reassessment', *Journal of African History,* Volume 16, Issue 1, (1975), *p.* 75-6.

allowed them to encroach upon empires based on 'traditional' modes of rule. The central Lunda state, to the south-west of the aforementioned Luba, was an early victim of Chokwe assertiveness, who took full advantage of internal dissent within the Lunda heartland. Succession to the throne in Luba-Lunda polities often resulted in violent disputes, as multiple legitimate heirs battled it out, supported by their matrilineal kinsmen. During these violent interregna, the various royal factions fought until there was a clear victor or until the alternative heirs had been killed. Interregnal battles prevented the Lunda from presenting a united front against Chokwe raiders, who frequently resorted to the strategy of supporting one royal faction against another. The years between 1883 and 1885 saw the Lunda Empire in a near continual state of civil war: four kings (*Mwaant Yaav*) were murdered and succeeded each other in that short space of time.[34] The fourth *Mwaant Yaav*, Mudiba, died in October 1885, not at the hands of his Lunda rivals, but in a battle against the Chokwe, whose expansion Mudiba had unsuccessfully sought to counter.[35] The Chokwe overran the Lunda heartland in 1885 and sold much of its population into slavery.[36] A system of organised exploitation of resources was put in place by the Chokwe during their hegemony in Lunda territories, which lasted as late as 1898.[37]

Traders from the west were thus an influential factor in the decline of traditional power, just as the establishment of the Arab-Swahili commercial empire in the east would erode traditional modes of authority among the Luba and Luba-ised peoples. Having examined the chronology and main political consequences of the trade from

[34] Edouard Bustin, *Lunda under Belgian Rule: The Politics of Ethnicity* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1975), p. 17.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Vansina, *Kingdoms*, p. 224.
[37] Bustin, *Lunda under Belgian Rule,* p. 18.

west, it is now time to turn to the commercial networks that developed in the opposite direction.

The 'Arab' State in Eastern Congo

From the middle decades of the nineteenth-century, the long-distance trade routes that joined the central African interior and the Indian Ocean were dominated by the so-called Arab-Swahili. The term 'Arab-Swahili' is used for convenience, yet the identification of who the 'Arab-Swahili' actually were is challenging.[38] The term is generally used to encompass the culturally heterogeneous, Swahili-speaking peoples of the eastern coast of central Africa and Arabs of Omani descent established in Zanzibar. Indeed, Norman Robert Bennett is quick to point out that it is largely due to the racial prejudices of nineteenth-century European commentators that there appears to be a sharp distinction between African (or Afro-Arab) people and 'pure' Arabs in written documents.[39] He contends that the term 'Arab-Swahili' includes 'all Muslim individuals, who thought of themselves as Arabs and who participated in the political, economic, and cultural system centring upon Zanzibar.'[40] However, others, such as Melvin Page, Peter Lary and Marcia Wright, have instead put forward the compelling argument that the indigenous followings of coastal merchant-warriors such as Tippu-Tip formed their own class, an intermediary between the Arabs and Africans, termed *waungwana* .[41] These *waungwana* hailed from various groups in the interior, but were 'divorced from their own societies' due to the process of

[38] See James de Vere Allen, *Swahili Origins* (James Currey: London, 1993), *p.* 1-19
[39] Norman R. Bennett, *Arab versus European: Diplomacy and War in Nineteenth-Century East Central Africa* (Africana Publishing Company: New York, 1986), *p.* 7-11.
[40] Ibid., p. 10.
[41] Page, 'Manyema Hordes' p. 71; Peter Lary and Marcia Wright, 'Swahili Settlements in Northern Zambia and Malawi', *African Historical Studies,* Volume 4, No. 3, (1971), *p.* 547-573; Frederick Cooper, 'Islam and Cultural Hegemony: the Ideology of Slaveowners of the East African Coast', in Paul E. Lovejoy (ed.), *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Sage Publications: Beverley Hills, 1981), p. 24.

Islamisation that involved the adoption of the basic tenets of the Islamic faith, at least on the surface, and Arab dress and food.[42] The *waungwana* participated in ivory and slave-raids on communities located outside of Arab patronage networks: so long as they respected the Arab monopoly of these products, they were seemingly allowed to "steal what they wanted [for] themselves."[43]

In the 1870s, while the European presence in central Africa was limited to exploratory or minor trading missions, Arab-Swahili merchants – the most prominent of whom was the notorious Tippu-Tip – were already consolidating a commercial empire to the west of Lake Tanganyika. While the epicentre of the state was in Manyema, to the north-east of the Kasai region, the workings of this 'Arab empire' need to be elucidated for a number of reasons. Firstly, a description of the activities of these warrior-merchants goes a long way to redressing the Eurocentric bias that characterizes much of the general literature concerning the Congo. It reduces the temptation to look upon the founding of the CFS as an unprecedented imposition on autochthonous peoples: indeed the very fact that the Arab-Swahili slave traders fashioned an empire should dispel the lingering notion that Europeans were the only colonialists in the history of Central Africa. Secondly, it would be a fallacy to assume that the workings of Tippu-Tip's commercial empire in the eastern Congo were unconnected with developments in adjoining regions, such as the Kasai. The slave-raiding activities associated with the Arab commercial hubs caused mass migrations of refugees westwards due to the socio-political disintegration of their homelands. Furthermore, Arab-owned slaves and Arab-ised African warriors originating from lands to the east of the Kasai were later incorporated into the CFS as state agents

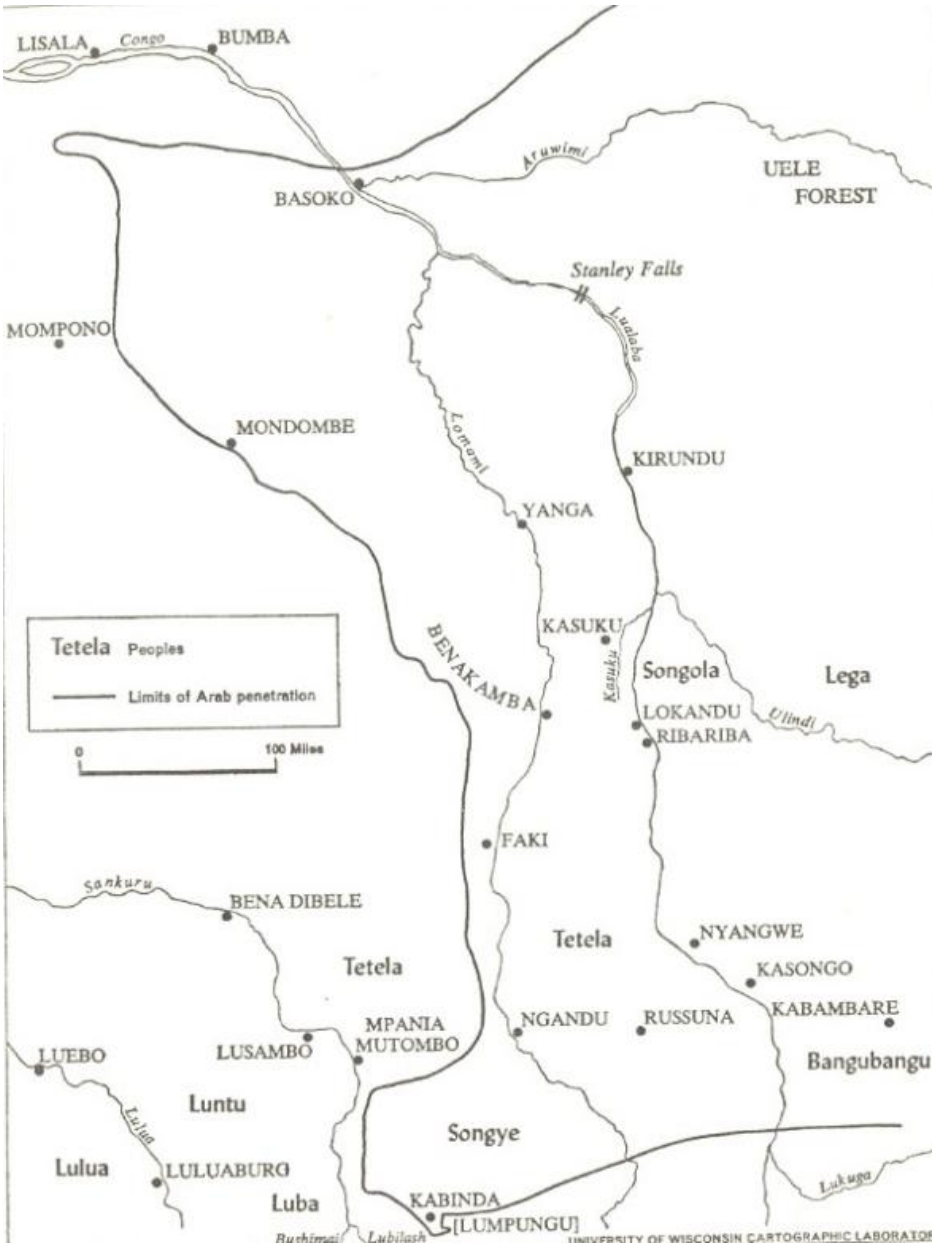
[42] Page, 'Manyema Hordes', p. 76-77.
[43] Verney Lovett Cameron, *Across Africa* (Harper and Brothers Publishers: New York, 1877), p. 253.

and auxiliaries and deployed within the Kasai region itself. This direct correlation between Arab-Swahili activities and developments in Kasai under the Europeans will be explored in detail in Chapter Four.

Although there were numerous Arab-Swahili traders residing and trading in east-central Africa since the early part of the nineteenth-century, Tippu-Tip is the best documented, owing most likely to his undoubted dominance and success. It was Tippu-Tip who inflicted a decisive defeat on Nsama III of the Tabwa in 1867.[44] This was a watershed moment. Thereafter, African chiefs to the west of Lake Tanganyika would rarely be able to defend their monopoly over foreign trade in the region, as the Arab-Swahili were now capable of exerting military force to ensure favourable trading terms and opportunities. Native resistance to establishing trading relations with Tippu-Tip and his followers would from this point onwards be met with warfare. The conflict in mid-1872 against the ruler of Kayumba (a Luba client state) after an attempt to prevent Tippu-Tip's caravan from leaving is one such instance.[45] From his position in Luba territory, Tippu-Tip entered the southern lands of the Songye, travelling northwards until he reached the Kusu district of Kasongo Lushie. It was here that the foundations of his commercial empire were laid. Claiming royal kinship with the chief, Tippu was able to influence politics in the area.[46] Indeed, the years 1873-74 were dedicated to absorbing surrounding peoples into his sphere of influence, while the next two years were spent near the already established Arab-Swahili settlements of Nyangwe and Kasongo.[47] Kasongo became the main base for

[44] Tippu-Tip, *Maisha, p.* 19-27; David Livingstone, (ed. Horace Waller), *The Last Journals of David Livingstone,* Volume 1 (John Murray: London, 1874), *p.* 208-223.
[45] Reefe, *Rainbows and the Kings,* p. 165.
[46] See the account in Tippu-Tip, *Maisha,* p. 69.
[47] Reefe, *Rainbow and the Kings,* p. 167.

Tippu-Tip's excursions in the mid-1870s, until he relocated his headquarters further northwards, on the Lualaba river, to present-day Kisangani.



Map 4. 'Arabs in the Congo' in Vansina, Jan, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 1966), p. 237.

The state that Tippu-Tip gradually brought into being in eastern Congo can be conceived of as a series of concentric circles. The central areas, where the bulk of the

Arab-Swahili and their direct subordinates resided, were havens of comparative peace in an otherwise violent environment. Tippu-Tip, according to the testimonies of Europeans, took pride in the humane treatment of his slaves, and his efforts in undertaking a 'civilising mission': such as improving food yields with the introduction of new crops, ending fractious African quarrels, opportunities of education.[48] Islam also provided ideological justification, as Muslim patriarchs could regard themselves as having been entrusted with the task of spiritually liberating the African heathens and caring for them as members of a global faith community.[49] Richard Reid asserts that such nineteenth-century commercial centres did indeed provide 'protection and security', despite also meaning 'overbearing settlers, social and cultural upheaval, and the partial erosion of "sovereignty"'.[50] It was even in the interests of local chiefs to seek patronage from Tippu-Tip to ensure the maintenance of peace in their areas; this policy was actively pursued by chiefs from the Kihandi, Kibongo and Kabanga areas in the Manyema region, to the east of the Lualaba River.[51]

Economically speaking, it made sense to establish a stable and secure centre of commercial operations and target the villages and communities in the outer circles of the 'empire' for slave-raiding and pillaging purposes. Peaceful conditions allowed agriculture to flourish in a way that was not possible for those communities subject to raids. Kasongo, for instance had been in the throes of a famine prior to Arab-Swahili occupation. Yet once Kasongo had been brought under the control of Tippu-Tip and his followers, 'people from Nyangwe came and bought rice in Kasongo, calling the country Bungala because of the quantity of rice [...]. There was peace

[48] Page, Melvin E., 'Tippu Tip and the Arab 'Defense' of the East African Slave Trade', *Etudes d'Histoire Africaine,* Volume 6, (1974), *p.* 113-116; Tippu-Tip, *Maisha, p.* 110-116.
[49] Cooper, 'Islam and Cultural Hegemony', *p.* 283-4.
[50] Richard Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial Society* (The British Institute in Eastern Africa: London, 2007), p. 118; Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 559.
[51] Tippu-Tip, *Maisha,* p. 81.

again, and even women travelled; there was no one about who would not either pay respect or give them food.'[52] Furthermore, attacks on Tippu-Tip's clients seem to have been harshly punished - perhaps in an attempt to discourage fractious relationships from developing within the commercial empire. Cameron records one such incident, where Tippu's 'leading men serve out sound and well-deserved thrashings to some *Wanyamwezi* porters from Nyangwe, who had taken advantage of the war to commence looting a village' under the authority of chief 'Russana', an ally of Tippu-Tip.[53] Of course, protection came at a cost: Tippu-Tip imposed a strict trading monopoly on ivory and had the power to impress work obligations onto his subjects. He himself explained that 'all authority over them was in our hands, and in the matter of ivory they had no right to sell even the smallest tusk, and any work that we needed doing, they brought men to do it.'[54]

There can be no mistaking, however, that Tippu-Tip and his empire brought an unprecedented level of violence to the region. Renault emphasises the psychological impact of Tippu's raiding activities, alongside the more obvious physical losses: "*Son acharnement manifestait son intention d'inspirer la terreur aussi bien dans sa nouvelle possession que chez les populations limitrophes : c'était la condition indispensable au développement du système d'exploitation mis en place*."[55] Henry Morton Stanley confirms the scale and destructiveness of Tippu-Tip's slaving activities on the periphery of his Kasongo base:

> The river border, then, of Manyeuma, from the Luama to Nyangwe, may be said to have had a population of 42,000 souls, of which there remain

[52] Ibid., p. 83
[53] Cameron, *Across Africa, p.* 273-4.
[54] Tippu-Tip, *Maisha,* p. 83.
[55] François Renault, *Tippo-Tip: Un Potentat Arabe en Afrique Centrale au XIXe siecle* (Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer: Paris, 1987), p. 68.

> probably only 20,000. The others have been deported, or massacred, or have fled to the islands or emigrated down the river.[56]

Although it was predominantly ivory that Tippu-Tip sought for trading purposes, the acquisition of slaves was an important means of providing a domestic and agricultural labour force for the permanent trading settlements, as well as for the porterage of the ivory gained. Thus, local populations targeted for raids by Tippu-Tip's followers were not only pillaged or slaughtered for their material goods, but were also at risk of being coerced into slavery – be it for domestic purposes or for export to the Swahili coast.

While Tippu-Tip was the figurehead and chief benefactor of the Arab-Swahili empire, he did not establish a permanent colonial capital from which he could rule. This has led some historians to suggest that the Arabs cannot be deemed as state builders in the strict sense of the term as economic imperatives shaped their conduct much more profoundly than political ones: whilst traditional African leaders 'had a sense of principal, political legitimacy and pride, the traders remained more flexible.'[57] Indeed, akin to Leopold II famously never setting foot in the Congo, Tippu-Tip often roamed his empire and the areas outside of his sphere of direct tributary power to enhance trading opportunities. He acknowledged his nomadic lifestyle in his autobiography, stating that he 'didn't settle in one place, but at once was off, not staying more than two or three months in any spot.'[58] A system of 'indirect rule'[59]

[56] Henry Morton Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent, or, The Sources of the Nile around the Great Lakes of Equatorial Africa and Down the Livingstone River to the Atlantic Ocean,* Volume 2, (Harper and Brothers Publishers: New York, 1878), *p.* 123-4.
[57] Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 573.
[58] Tippu-Tip, *Maisha,* p. 93.

was thus employed, and a basic state structure cultivated, with Tippu delegating his authority to both African collaborators and fellow coastal merchants. These delegates, often more brutal and feared than Tippu-Tip himself, were charged with a specific region to govern and in which to collect tribute. The armies of the Arab merchants were largely made up by slaves: this practice was so commonplace that Tippu-Tip mentions his slave militia in his writings by the bye, denoting that there was nothing remarkable in this custom.[60]

Perhaps the most famous of Tippu-Tip's Congolese lieutenants was Ngongo Luteta, who was assigned an area bordering the Lomami river. Tippu-Tip himself comments on Ngongo's fierce reputation in his autobiography, asserting that: 'As for the man I left in charge of the Utetera [Batetela], people of those parts feared him more than they feared me.'[61]

Ngongo Luteta

Ngongo Luteta – or Ngongo Lutete (the spelling varies)[62] – was originally a slave, although it has been contested as to whether he was of Batetela or Songye origins.[63] Regardless of the uncertainty surrounding his birth, it is clear that Ngongo came under the authority of Tippu-Tip, who presumably purchased him while he was still young. Thus, Ngongo was able to rise to the ranks of leader. In his autobiography,

[59] 'Indirect rule' is widely understood to be a system of rule through which colonial authorities incorporate 'traditional' autochthonous chiefs and leaders into the colonial administrative framework, thereby gaining control and ruling over colonised peoples.
[60] Page, 'Arab "Defense"', p. 112.
[61] Tippu-Tip, *Maisha*, p. 83.
[62] Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1996), p. 33. 'Luteta' is now the preferred variant, in homage to his likely Batetela origins.
[63] Merriam, *Culture History,* p. 28. Although more recent literature regard Ngongo as Batetela (see above).

Tippu reveals Ngongo's exhibition of valour and loyalty in his service. He rewarded him with large number of guns in the early to mid-1880s, delegating him authority over the Songye peoples to the west of the Lomami River and providing Ngongo with supplies of firearms.[64] This superior firepower enabled Ngongo to conduct raids in the Songye region in similar fashion to his Arab-Swahili mentors in Manyema.

Indeed, while Ngongo was still loosely tied to Tippu-Tip and acknowledged the latter's superiority, the extent of his power and authority are borne out by the fact that the main warlords of the Kasai were Ngongo's vassals. Both Lumpungu and Mpania Mutombo recognised Ngongo's superiority. Ngongo had undeniably strong ties with the Arab-Swahili-dominated commercial networks to the east, yet it has also been suggested by scholars such as Alan Merriam that he also sought to establish links with Angola. Merriam regards Ngongo's visit to Fwamba, an important chief of the Bena Lulua, as an attempt to establish an affiliation with Kalamba, the 'paramount' of the Bena Lulua from 1886. It is further suggested that this connection with Kalamba was cultivated in order to gain access to the Chokwe, who were at the time the key agents in the slave and ivory trade with the Angolan coast.[65] However, Ngongo was seemingly refused permission to cross Kalamba's territory in order to gain direct access to the Chokwe and had to move his temporary slave markets from the periphery of Kalamba's kingdom in August 1891, after receiving strong threats from the same Lulua leader.[66] Although the evidence is patchy, Ngongo's ambition to connect the Kasai with both the east and the west coasts does not seem a far-fetched notion. Thus it becomes clear that the Kasai region was the strategic nexus

[64] Tippu-Tip, *Maisha,* p. 155.
[65] Merriam, *Culture History,* p. 31.
[66] Ibid., p. 32.

of trading networks between the Arab-Swahili dominated eastern trading routes and the Chokwe-dominated western routes.

The scale of Ngongo's operations in the region was authenticated by contemporary eyewitnesses: Michaux refers to Ngongo as '*le fameux Ngongo Lutete*' when he first arrived in Lusambo, the Congo Free State station on the Sankuru, in 1889.[67] In August 1890, Ngongo's gunmen attacked Lusambo while Le Marinel, the first Commissaire de District du Lualaba, was away. While Ngongo was defeated in this instance, his power in the region does not seem to have suffered from this setback. Indeed, it was at about the same time that he began to extend the range of his raiding activities, targeting the Luba-speaking peoples situated between the Lomami and the Sankuru rivers. The scale and intensity of Ngongo's raids led to a mass migration of Luba-speakers from the eastern Kasai region across the Sankuru River. It is important to note at this point, that the Luba-speaking peoples that are being referred to here should not be confused with the Luba-Katanga or Luba Shankadi (Luba of the Heartland), whose empire was briefly considered at the beginning of the chapter. Allen F. Roberts asserts that 'Luba' is more than an ethnicity: it is 'a social identity available to a much wider complex of cultures than that of the Heartland.'[68] The Luba-speakers targeted by Ngongo are commonly referred to as 'Luba-Kasai' and are indeed geographically distinct from the Luba of the Heartland, or Luba of Katanga.

Although the early history of the Luba-Kasai remains poorly understood, it seems that at least some of them were strongly associated with sections of the neighbouring Songye population. Thus, the Ben'eki, a Songye sub-group, are

[67] Oscar Michaux, *Carnet de Campagne* (Librairie Falk Fils: Bruxelles, 1907), p. 95.
[68] Allen F. Roberts, Allen F., with a contribution from Pierre Petit, 'Peripheral Visions', in Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts (eds.), *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History* (The Museum for African Art: New York, 1996), p. 211.

reported to have drawn the bulk of their domestic slaves from neighbouring Luba-speaking peoples.[69] It is also apparent that the Luba-Kasai paid tribute to the Ben'eki King, Kasongo IV, who is likely to have reigned from c. 1870 to c. 1882.[70] However, Ngongo's ventures also caused mass devastation to the Songye themselves. The violence brought to bear on sections of the Songye was witnessed by Wissmann in December 1886. His 'former friend' Mona Lumpungu, he reported, 'had turned to the south, where, with the other greatest chief of the Kassonge, Mona Kakesa, he had taken refuge in the Baluba country from the murdering and devastating expedition of the Arabs.'[71]

On 13 September 1892, Ngongo was defeated by State forces at the beginning of what historians have called the 'Arab Campaign'. This long-drawn campaign was the result of the European determination to rid the eastern Congo of the Arab-Swahili presence, and lasted until 1894. After being defeated, Ngongo defected to the ranks of the CFS, to the detriment of his Arab patrons. He then joined Free State officials in their attacks and raids on the Arab-Swahili slavers and traders. David Gordon's recent revision of the relationship between Ngongo and the officers of the CFS, however, emphasizes "a consistent pattern of political manoeuvrings" on the part of Ngongo, who used fears of an imminent Arab threat as leverage to obtain more power and resources from the Europeans.[72]

Michaux's observations on Ngongo's camp in the spring of 1890 demonstrate both the size of Ngongo's following and the hybridization of military cultures that

[69]Fairley, ''Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie', *p.* 85-86.
[70]Ibid., p. 68.
[71] Hermann von Wissmann, *My Second Journey through Equatorial Africa from the Congo to the Zambezi in the Years 1886 and 1887,* (Chatto & Windus: London, 1891), p. 180.
[72] Gordon, 'The Case of Ngongo', p. 21.

characterized it. Ngongo's camp, three days march from Lusambo, displayed both African and Arab military elements. There were numerous drums, the noise of which was described as an '*infernale cacophonie*'; the 983 soldiers stationed at the camp carried their guns, '*à la mode arabe, c'est-à-dire la crosse en arrière, l'arme étant maintenue dans cette position par la main droite, qui tient le canon à plein main*.'[73] The military discipline enforced by Ngongo impressed Michaux, warranting an appreciation for the capability of Ngongo's militias:

> *Tout ce monde défilait dans l'ordre le plus parfait, et, en arrivant devant nous, se groupait rapidement de façon à former un demi-cercle dont leur chef devait occuper le centre.*
>
> *C'était la première fois, depuis mon arrivée au Congo, que je voyais un pareil développement de force militaire nègre en même temps qu'une cérémonie que je qualifierai presque de grandiose et certainement de très impressionnante*.[74]

Ngongo's choice of greeting Michaux and other European officers with a handshake was also welcomed as a sign of cultural receptiveness.[75] It was perhaps these favourable impressions that allowed the CFS to later foster a close collaboration with Ngongo. Despite this seemingly advantageous alliance, however, Captain Scheerlinck controversially ordered Ngongo's execution on 15 September 1893, having accused him of treason.

[73] Michaux, *Carnet de Campagne,* p. 97.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., p. 98.

The Early History of the Congo Free State

Different from the ancient kingdoms of the savanna, the Congo Free State had more in common with the predatory warlord states that had succeeded them in several areas in the second half of the nineteenth-century. As we have seen, the Luba Empire, a well-known example of the former, largely relied on a system of mutual exchanges between the royal courts and the subjects of the *Mulopwe*. Its institutions of rule were predicated on the subjects adopting a 'Luba' identity dependent on the appropriation of cultural practices and the perception of kinship. Consequently there was a degree of socio-cultural coherence within the Empire, particularly in the regions closer to the royal capital at the centre of the state. There are, on the other hand, greater parallels between the CFS and the 'Arab' State in the Eastern Congo: the CFS posts dotted along the frontiers of European penetration are comparable to the Arab settlements in Manyema, and both colonial systems had clear economic motives. However, the political motivation underlying Arab-Swahili colonisation was less sharply defined; what coastal traders aspired to was essentially a 'loosely-defined economic hegemony.'[76] Conversely, the CFS, on paper at least, had far-reaching objectives: King Leopold had secured the Congo basin for himself at the 1885 Berlin Conference by promoting the notion of a 'civilising mission' for the Congo – one that encompassed spiritual, moral and political aims alongside economic ones.[77]

Furthermore, Leopold acquired the Congo as a private territory in 1885. It was only in 1908, when the Belgian government took over its administration, that the vast domain became a colony 'proper'. A major stipulation of the 1885 treaty was that

[76] Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial,* p. 113.
[77] Ruth M. Slade, *King Leopold's Congo: Aspects of the Development of Race Relations in the Congo Independent State* (Oxford University Press: London, 1962), *p.* 37-42.

the Congo basin should be open to free trade, and that no preferential treatment should be given to any one nationality or organisation, hence the name 'Free State'. There was thus little internal cohesion since the inception of the CFS, making it 'a very peculiar kind of organization.'[78] Indeed, Leopold allowed for the infiltration of a plethora of European and American actors: trading companies and agents, missionaries, military men, explorers and anthropologists.

On paper, Leopold's new territory was a vast expanse of land, people and resources to be drawn upon not only for his own personal benefit but for that of Belgium as well. Nevertheless, in practice, the CFS was plagued by economic instability from its infancy. The 1885 free trade provisions meant that the State was not able to levy custom duties.[79] Such was the initially dire financial situation of the CFS that, by 31 December 1890, Leopold had pumped the equivalent of 20 million francs from his own resources to keep the State afloat.[80] The fortunes of the State quickly recovered from 1890, thanks to the burgeoning European appetite for wild rubber. Indeed, the collection of wild rubber and the violence that it brought in its wake have become historically synonymous with the CFS; the rubber is often referred to as 'red rubber', allegedly in reference to the blood of the Africans who gathered the said natural. Many historians have thus regarded the collection of rubber (and other natural resources such as ivory) as the rationale behind the expansion and consolidation of the CFS:

> From improvised beginnings, a system developed consisting of rubber collecting posts backed up by a highly mobile military and served by a

[78] W. G., Clarence-Smith, 'Business Empires in Equatorial Africa', *African Economic History*, Volume 12, (1983), p. 6.
[79] Vansina, *Being Colonized*, p. 23.
[80] R. P. Ceulemans, *La Question Arabe et le Congo (1883-1892)* (Académie royal des Sciences Coloniales: Bruxelles, 1959), p. 126.

> network of armed African auxiliaries (called sentinelles, gardes forestières or capitas) stationed in the villages upon which regular rubber quotas were imposed.[81]

Between 1891 and 1892, King Leopold introduced what became known as the *régime domanial*: all of the 'vacant' land within the CFS – that is to say, uninhabited or un-worked – was decreed to belong to the State. The products sourced from these lands were, as a result, regarded as State property.[82] With the *régime domanial*, the State became a massive business enterprise, whose primary function was the extraction and trading of the Congo's two most valuable wild products – ivory and rubber – by any means necessary. Yet, though rich in rubber, the Kasai was initially kept out of this new dispensation, and was earmarked for the continuation of free trade, alongside the lower Congo. This is not to say, however, that the region did not suffer abuses akin to the rest of the Congo, as shall be seen.

[81] Roes, 'Towards a Mass Violence', p. 7.
[82] Jean Stengers and Jan Vansina, 'King Leopold's Congo: 1886-1908' in Roland Oliver and G.N. Sanderson (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Africa Volume 6: From 1870 to 1905* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1985), *p.* 318-9.

CHAPTER TWO

WARLORDS AND WAYFARERS

The consolidation of Arab-Swahili power around the northern reaches of Lake Tanganyika had, as has been suggested, far-reaching consequences for the interior of the continent. The devastation caused by African warlords receiving patronage from their coastal masters has been briefly illustrated through the example of Ngongo Luteta. Yet Ngongo was but one of the representatives of the new political order. In the Songye region of present-day eastern Kasai, between the Lomami and the Sankuru rivers, the new patterns of governance that Ngongo embodied were replicated by Lumpungu of the Beekalebue, Mpania Mutombo of the Basanga, and Nsapu-Nsapu of the Ben'eki. These warlords gained access to firearms from the Arab merchants in return for ivory and slaves. This resulted in extensive slave-raiding activities within the region in order to sustain the supply of weaponry that was central to the power of the new political formations – formations which no longer derived their strength from religious institutions, but rather from their openness to the market and readiness to resort to extreme forms of violence and coercion.

The competition amongst warlords augmented the level of violence in eastern Kasai further as stronger warlords preyed on their weaker peers. The trajectory of the Zappo-Zap illustrates the vulnerability of the generation of African leaders-cum-warlords who equated firearms with power. Even amid their own slaving and

conquering activities, the Zappo-Zap were targeted and attacked by both Lumpungu and Mpania Mutombo. This led to their eventual migration to the newly founded CFS post of Luluabourg between 1882/4 and 1887. Nevertheless, narratives such as these are more complex than historians sometimes allow for.[1] This chapter seeks to reconstruct the Zappo-Zaps migration to Luluabourg while taking into account the intricacies of the relationships between the various Kasaian warlords, and also those between them and the Arab merchant-warriors. It is a fallacy not to take into account that even 'strong' Kasai warlords such as Lumpungu (who would later be recognised by the Belgians as paramount of all the Songye people)[2] were themselves exposed to military assaults and the threat of slave raiding. It is important, therefore, to understand the events in the Kasai region in this context of widespread turmoil and political volatility.

Songye Warlords

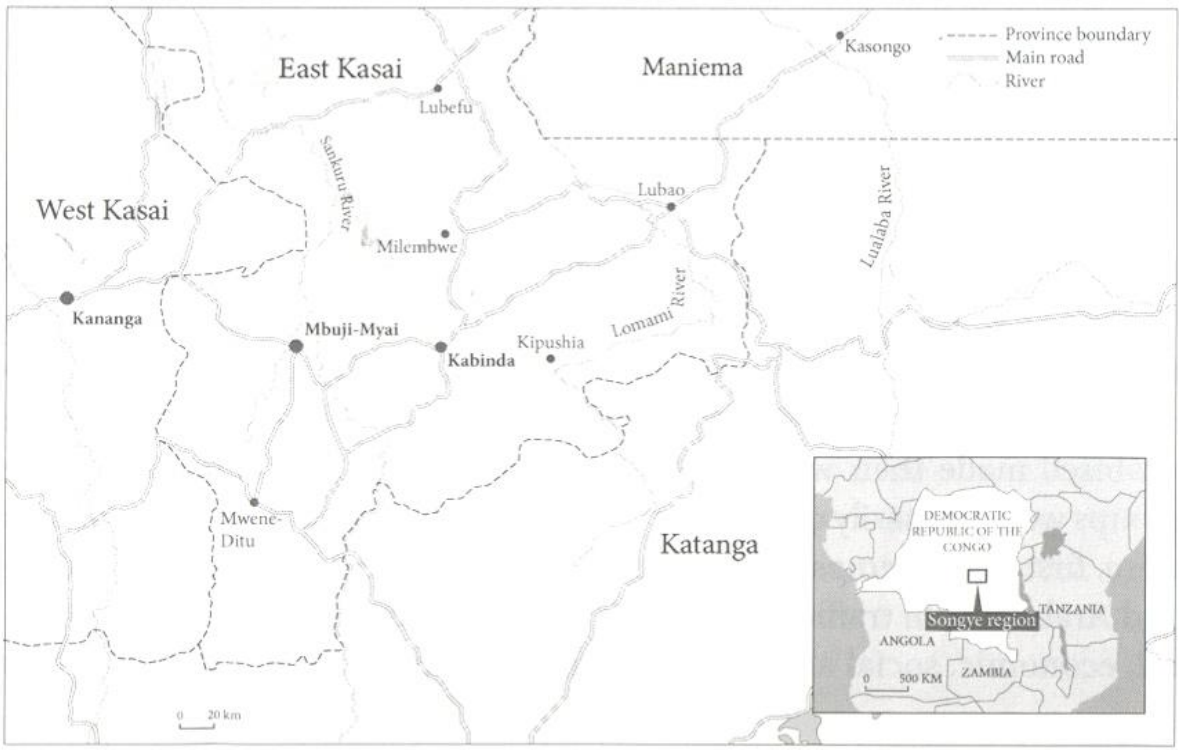
The Songye people, as has been mentioned in Chapter One, are situated between the Sankuru and Lomami rivers. Writing in 1975, Alan Merriam noted that 'almost nothing is known of the Basongye before the Arab incursions, which began in the 1860's; what we know of [them] from that period until 1900 indicates only gross fragmentation'.[3] Fairley's unpublished study of the Ben'eki in the late 1970s went some way to addressing this gap. Yet, as Fairley herself admitted, neither primary nor secondary sources have done justice to the Songye. Their complex 'political system [...] apparently confused many explorers, and their reports have successfully confused contemporary scholars as well.'[4] The Songye oral tradition implies an ancient connection with the Luba kingdom, the heartland of which lies to the south

[1] See, for instance, in Jan Vansina's *Being Colonized.* See also above, p5.
[2] Fairley, 'Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie', p. 31.
[3] Merriam, *Culture History,* p. 26.
[4] Fairley, 'Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie', p. 61.

of the known nineteenth-century location of most Songye-speakers. The existence of secret societies among both the Songye and the Luba attests to this shared spiritual heritage; there is also evidence of extensive and ancient trading networks between these ethnic groups.[5] However, the political framework of Songye society differed from the rigid hierarchy found in the Luba kingdom of present-day Katanga.

The Songye ethnonym comprises three main groups: the Beekalebue, Basanga and Ben'eki. While Europeans tended to place all Songye-speaking peoples into the same 'tribal' category, these ethnic groups considered themselves as discrete entities.[6] While this thesis is largely centred on the Zappo-Zap, a break-away entity from the Ben'eki , the activities of the Beekalebue and Basanga cannot be ignored. Movements of communities and refugees in the Lomami valley were extensive from the 1870s, partly as a result of the advance of the slave-raiding frontier from the East, and also because of links with slave traders from the western coast. This was intensified further in the early 1890s by the Arab-European conflict, whose early phases at least were played out in Songye territory.[7] The extent of the socio-political disintegration during this period necessitates the adoption of a comprehensive perspective so as to provide a broader and clearer picture of the region; an exclusive focus on the experience of the Zappo-Zap would distort and obscure general trends and common experiences. It is for this reason that we now turn to a brief discussion of the experiences of warlords Lumpungu and Mpania Mutombo.

[5] Reefe, *Rainbow and the Kings, p.* 97, 117-8.
[6] Fairley, ''Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie' p31(?)
[7] Merriam, *Culture History,* p20.



Map 5. 'Map of the Songye Region' in Donatien Dibwe Dia Mwembu, 'The Role of Firearms in the Songye Region (1869-1960), in Robert Ross, Marja Hinfelaar and Iva Pesa (eds.), *The Objects of Life in Central Africa: The History of Consumption and Social Change, 1840-1980* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 42.

Lumpungu, like Ngongo Luteta, had a direct affiliation with Tippu-Tip. However, while Ngongo rose from the position of slave to that of warlord and slave-raider, Lumpungu's relationship with the Zanzibari merchant was a consequence of the latter's power-brokering activities. At some point in the 1870s, while travelling through the Songye region, Tippu-Tip had played a role in installing Kalamba Kongoi (Kaumba ka Ngoyi), Lumpungu's father, as chief after taking advantage of the enfeebled state of the Beekalebue polity due to a local rebellion.[8] Once in power, access to firearms consolidated Kalamba Kongoi's position. It was in the interest of Tippu-Tip to supply the Beekalebue with weapons with which to conduct slave-

[8] Ibid., p34; Donatien Dibwe Dia Mwembu, 'The Role of Firearms in the Songye Region (1869-1960)', in Robert Ross, Marja Hinfelaar and Iva Pesa (eds.), *The Objects of Life in Central Africa: The History of Consumption and Social Change, 1840-1980* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), *p.* 46-7; Vansina, *Kingdoms,* p. 239; Reefe, *Rainbow and the Kings*, p. 169.

raiding campaigns; a portion of the loot was presented to Tippu as tribute. Lumpungu inherited the chieftainship after the death of his father, who, according to oral history, died shortly after attaining the title of chief.[9] By the early 1880s, Lumpungu's strength was such that he could himself act as king-maker among neighbouring Songye groups.

The other key warlord in the eastern Kasai region was Mpania Mutombo. Mpania had been a vassal of Lumpungu's father. As was the case with Kalamba Kongoi of the Beekalebue, Mpania Mutombo became chief of the Basanga through external power-brokering. It was Lumpungu himself who worked to install Mpania as chief, deposing the legitimate chief Sapo-Mutapu by poisoning him. Both Vansina and Timmerman date this episode to 1888; yet this date is undoubtedly mistaken.[10] Indeed, it is certain that, by 1887, Mpania had used his position as leader of the Basanga to drive the Zappo-Zap to Luluabourg, as will shortly be elaborated upon. Le Marinel, furthermore, noted in passing on 26 March 1887 that 'Zappo-Mutapo' was dead, placing the death of Sapo-Mutapo in the early months of 1887, at the very latest.[11] Mpania Mutombo, through his access to firearms and his alliance with Lumpungu, was able to maintain his position of authority and subdue rivals to the throne, although one of the sons of Sapo-Mutapu never did submit or recognise Mpania as chief.[12] Indeed, Mpania Mutombo's later collaboration with the CFS enabled him to acquire a status that rivalled that of Lumpungu. His alliance was rewarded with the recognition of his authority over the Bakua Kalagi, an ethnic group

[9] Mwembu, 'The Role of Firearms', p. 47.
[10] Vansina, *Kingdoms,* p. 240;Timmermans, 'Les Sapo-Sapo', p. 31.
[11] Paul Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route dans l'Etat Indépendant du Congo de 1887* à *1910* (R. Le Marinel: Bruxelles, 1991), p. 19.
[12] Timmermans, 'Les Sapo-Sapo', p. 31.

situated in Kaniok territory, in the valley of the Lubilash/Sankuru river.[13] At least one early CFS official, Cyriaque Gillain, District Commissioner since 1893, thought that Mpania's rise to power represented an '*inadmissible*' inversion of the chain of command. After all, he wrote, Mpania, '*il n'y a pas bien longtemps, était lui-même vassal de Lumpungu*.'[14]

Lineage power-brokering, of course, was part of the repertoire of central African state-builders long-before the onset of the long-distance trade in ivory and slave. Yet, the emergence of new actors on the scene made indigenous political structures increasingly vulnerable to exogenous manipulation. Contenders to chiefly positions now had external power-brokers to whom they could turn and who had tangible material motives to get involved in local disputes. When made available to their local allies, the firearms that they controlled helped challenge pre-existing hierarchies and legitimate rulers. Once installed, of course, the 'new men' had to chart a careful course. The origins of both Lumpungu and Mpania Mutombo's power lay beyond their own ability and rendered them dependent on the continuing support of those directly above them – be they coastal traders or fellow warlords. Indeed, both Lumpungu and Mpania Mutombo's districts lay in the area which Tippu-Tip had originally delegated to Ngongo and were theoretically the latter's subordinates.[15] Thus, following Ngongo's execution in 1893, Dhanis described Lumpungu as '*le successeur legal de Gongo*'.[16] Kasaian warlords, in sum, were both powerful and vulnerable. Because the states they brought into being – or gained control of –

[13]De Macar to Gillain, 30 May 1895, in Papiers Cyriaque Gillain, Musée Royal de L'Afrique Centrale (henceforth MRAC), Tervuren, HA.01.69/59-87-98.
[14]Pelzer to Gillain, 30 May 1895, MRAC, HA.01.69/59-87-100.
[15] Ceulemans, *La Question Arabe,* p. 45.
[16] C. Gillain (ed. A Verbeken), 'La campagne contre le chef arabe Rumaliza : textes inédits', in *Bulletin des séances de l'Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales*, Volume 4, (1958), *p.* 813-42.

depended on uninterrupted access to armaments made available by external partners, the fortunes of warlords could change quite suddenly. It is in this whirlwind of conflict and turmoil that we must place the emergence of the Zappo-Zap as a corporate group, and their migration.

The Origins of the Zappo-Zap: Persecutors and Persecuted

The Ben'eki, even prior to any foreign political manipulation, experienced a succession crisis which laid the foundations for the later separation of chief Nsapu-Nsapu from the main Ben'eki entity. Their oral tradition presents Lubamba, an alleged relative of the protagonist of the Luba genesis myth, Ilungu Kalala, as the first king of the Ben'eki.[17] Lubamba's son and heir, Nkole a Lubamba, is widely recognised as the first king to actively unite and rule over the Ben'eki.[18] From this point onwards, the *Nkole* became the highest political title of the Ben'eki. The exclusive preserve of kings, it was heavily associated with the supernatural and ancestral forces that were utilised by other polities, such as the Luba Empire, as traditional modes of power.[19]

According to the oral tradition of the Ben'eki, it was perhaps in the early eighteenth-century that Nkole a Lubamba changed the system of succession by appointing his eldest son, Kabangu a Nkole, as successor. This is said to have ushered in a dynastic patrilineal succession tradition, whereas before the time of kings, the elders in society had enjoyed the right to elect the holders of chiefly positions.[20] However, Kabangu was ousted by one of his younger brothers, Kiamba kia Nkole, with the support of the elders. Kabangu and his followers then moved away from Kiamba's

[17] Fairley, ''Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie', p. 140
[18] Ibid., p. 144.
[19] Ibid., *p.* 72-4.
[20] Ibid., p. 149.

district and established their own political unit, known as *Babanga* after its first leader.[21] The *Babanga*, however, were only one of ten political units within the Ben'eki kingdom that developed over time. By the nineteenth-century, the Ben'eki polity consisted of three provinces comprising of ten different political units in total; each political unit had its own chief, who was superior to the village chiefs at the local level.[22] The *Nkole* title, chosen from men from the *Babenga* political unit, which neighboured the *Babanga*, was recognised as paramount over all of the Ben'eki. While close to the heart of Ben'eki power, the *Babanga* enjoyed a more autonomous status than the other political units subservient to the Nkole. The leader of the *Babanga* political unit in the 1880s was a man called Nsapu-Nsapu, who went on to challenge the then *Nkole* and was forced into exile.

The *Babanga* were, furthermore, the only unit of the Ben'eki that possessed warrior villages aside from the ruling *Babenga* clan.[23] This military development allowed the *Babanga* to dominate some of their Ben'eki's neighbours, subduing 'Babindji, Bena Lubala, Bakua Mwanza and Bakua Sumpi, all Baluba-Kasai people, to their rule and regularly collect[ing] tribute from them.'[24] The limits of this sphere of tributary influence are supported by Le Marinel. On 23 March 1887, Le Marinel – travelling along the Lubefu River – set up camp in Luidi '*qui appartient à Zappo-Zapp. Plusieurs petits chefs nous disent qu'ils sont esclaves de Zappo depuis toujours*'.[25] A few months earlier, Wissmann, too, had reported that the Zappo-Zap dominated the area around 'the place where the Lomami and Sankurru separate...'[26] In recording his impressions of the Batua – indigenous pygmies of the equatorial forest – he wrote

[21] Ibid., p. 168.
[22] Ibid., p. 66.
[23] Ibid., p. 168.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route,* p. 18.
[26] Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 168.

that 'the Batua were soon going to kill the powerful chief Zappu Zapp, who had made himself master throughout this neighbourhood.'[27] It seems, then, that although contemporary observers also described the Zappo-Zaps as refugees fleeing the devastations of Arab raiding to the west of the Lomami river, they were still a comparatively strong and military-orientated group in the mid-1880s.

Indeed, the narrative as to how the Zappo-Zap came to settle in Luluabourg (present-day Kananga, in western Kasai) as associates of the CFS is rather convoluted. Most written records oscillate between acknowledging the regional sway of the Zappo-Zap and recognizing the extent to which Arab slave raiding in eastern Kasai was devastating the regional social landscape. This contradiction is reflected in the variety of motives that the same sources attribute to the Zappo-Zap: in some cases, they are themselves portrayed as slave raiders; in others, as victims of the trade and related violence. The present section endeavours to unravel and reconstruct the identity of the Zappo-Zap vis-à-vis other Kasaian factions and in relation to their participation in the long distance trade with both the east and the west coasts.

The explorer Herman von Wissmann was probably the first European to gather detailed information about the Zappo-Zap, in March 1882.[28] He recorded that unlike many of their neighbours in Songye country, the people of Nsapu-Nsapu had guns – percussion-lock muskets – which they had acquired thanks to their links with the Arabs of Manyema.[29] Yet Wissmann did not apparently assume that these guns were specifically for the purpose of raiding and slave hunting. Four years later, during his second journey through the Kasai, Wissmann stated explicitly that 'the Bassonge

[27] Ibid., p. 167.
[28] Timmermans, 'Les Sapo-Sapo', p. 29.
[29] Hermann Wissmann, *Unter Deutscher Flagge quer durch Afrika von West nach Ost* (Walther & Apolant: Berlin, 1890), p. 142.

chief Zappu Zapp', who had been forced to flee his original capital and shift his headquarters to the right bank of the Sankuru/Lubilash, 'was not slave-hunting.'[30]

In fact, the data gathered at the about the same time by Wissmann's companion, Dr. Wolf, cast doubts on the former's reconstruction. Having encountered Nsapu-Nsapu in February 1886 on the Sankuru/Lubilash, Wolf described him as a '*chasseur d'esclaves*' and as '*le fléau de la région située entre la Lubila(che) et la Lomami. Presque tous ses hommes étaient armés de fusils à percussion, qu'il achetait à Nyangoue aux Arabes*.'[31] Nsapu-Nsapu's, Wolf went on, was '*le point le plus occidental dont le commerce va vers Zanzibar. Plusieurs hommes de Zappou Zappe, y compris son fils, parlaient le Souaheli*.'[32]

The fact that the Swahili language had been adopted by many of Nsapu-Nsapu's armed followers suggests a long period of exposure to Arab-Swahili trading. According to Wolf, Nsapu-Nsapu caravans were indeed wont to travel to Nyangwe. [33] Wissmann tells us, furthermore, that the Arab trader Djuma Bin Salim lived amongst the Zappo-Zap for nearly a year, prior to their encounter with Wolf, leading to their having 'adopted many customs' of the Arab's retinue.[34] The chief Nsapu-Nsapu, alongside his sons, was consequently dressed in Arab fashion, 'with a cloth round his hips, over which he wore a long white shirt; whilst a handkerchief was twisted round his head like a turban.'[35] Nsapu-Nsapu's followers, however, were dressed in traditional Songye attire.[36]

[30] Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 162.
[31] Wolf, 17 June 1888, in Timmermans, 'Les Sapo-Sapo', p. 29.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., p. 30.
[34] Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 46.
[35] Ibid., p. 47.
[36] Ibid., *p.* 47-48.

Trade was also established with merchants from the west. The Zappo-Zap appear not to have travelled westwards: instead caravans from Bihé, in the highlands of central Angola, were despatched to Nsapu-Nsapu's capital. It is Wissmann himself who, whilst staunchly denying Zappo-Zap involvement in the slave trade, unwittingly alerts us to the Kasaian activities of Angolan long-distance traders. In October 1886, whilst briefly residing in the 'populous district of Baqua Chameta', in Kuba territory between the Lulua and Sankuru River, he registered the presence of caravan from the west coast:

> They carry on the most shameful slave trade imaginable. Black traders from Angola or Benguela turn to Bihe carriers or attendants, who, though thievish, are comparatively bold and warlike, and who undertake longer journeys than any other negroes of the west coast. They go in quest of countries where a gun is unknown; they make arrangements with the chiefs about supplies of slaves, and they will even join the slave-hunters. They then take their prisoners to the Bakuba tribes, where they exchange them for ivory...[37]

His remark that the Bihéans, most likely Ovimbundu, were travelling further than other merchants from Angola suggests that these traders had recently begun to cross the Sankuru river into Songye territory and the Luba heartland. The fact that the Ovimbundu targeted gun-poor peoples and collaborated with local slave-raiders indirectly implicates the Zappo-Zap in slaving activities. Indeed, a few months before Wissmann's encounter with the Bihéan caravan in Kuba territory, Dr. Wolf had noted that, while the Zappo-Zap had obtained firearms, '*les autres tribus sont encore*

[37] Ibid., p. 145.

armées d'arcs et de fleches.'[38] Furthermore, Zappo-Zap involvement in this trade triangle is clearly illustrated when in 1886, an estimated eight hundred slaves were present at the residence of chief Nsapu-Nsapu, by the Lubilash river, ready to be transported to the southern Kuba market of Kabaw by Ovimbundu traders.[39]

It has been established, therefore, that the Zappo-Zap were able to infiltrate trading networks with both the east and west coast of central Africa. These set of connections undeniably gave them the technological edge over neighbours who had traditionally been subservient to the *Babanga* political unit, such as the Baluba-Kasai. Their dominance is attested by the fact that the Zappo-Zap were able to acquire enough slaves to fulfil the demands of two separate slave trading frontiers. On this score, it is remarkable that even Ngongo Luteta had not been able to access western markets on account of the opposition of Kalamba, situated between the Lulua and Sankuru rivers, south of the Kuba Kingdom.[40] In sum, Nsapu-Nsapu and his followers, while classified as refugees by European commentators, were still a comparatively strong and predatory band. This, however, makes the retreat of the Zappo-Zap from their homeland at the hands of other Songye chiefs all the more puzzling, particularly as these same Songye chiefs were themselves fleeing from Arab harassment.

Lumpungu: The Hunter and the Hunted

The migration of Nsapu-Nsapu and his followers can be put into context when one considers the fate that befell Lumpungu and his followers. Despite his initial alliance with Tippu-Tip, Lumpungu was forced to leave his original base in what is present-

[38] Wolf in Timmermans, 'Les Sapo-Sapo', p. 29
[39] Carvalho, *Lubuku,* p. 48.
[40] See chapter one, p35.

day Kabinda because of Arab-Swahili slaving pressures. Wissmann, writing in about December 1886, was told that:

> Mona Kakesa and Mona Lupungu had emigrated from the south-east, and that only the Bassonge chief Zappu stood his ground. This was the first report of inroads of the Arabs west of the Lomami, whose extended ravaging experiences we were soon to experience.[41]

The nature of the relationships between local warlords is also thrown into question by this passage. Wissmann understood that it was Tippu-Tip and his 'hordes' who were responsible for displacing the Zappo-Zap and other warlord bands they had initially supported. Yet, subsequent scholars have asserted that it was Lumpungu and his subordinate, Mpania Mutombo, who were responsible for the attacks on the Zappo-Zap. Donatien Dibwe dia Mwembu and P. Timmermans both suggest that it was these warlords, and not Tippu-Tip, who targeted the Zappo-Zap and the Ben'eki. Dibwe dia Mwembu contends that Lumpungu and Mpania Mutombo were prompted to conduct increasingly far-reaching slave raids so as to increase their personal wealth in the forms of slaves and ivory, a substantial proportion of which was earmarked for their patron Tippu-Tip.[42] This would suggest that, contrary to Wissmann's account of 1886-7, Lumpungu still enjoyed the favour of his Arab patrons and was permitted a level of autonomy in order to extract resources from the eastern Kasai region and maximise personal profits. Timmerman's also regards Lumpungu and Mpania Mutombo as the perpetrators of the assaults on the Zappo-Zap and other Songye groups, yet descries their action as having been motivated solely by the need to '*satisfaire aux exigences des Arabes*'.[43]

[41] Wissmann, *My Second Journey*, p. 162.
[42] Mwembu, 'The Role of Firearms', p48.
[43] Timmermans, 'Les Sapo-Sapo', p. 31.

Some of the primary evidence, however, seems to suggest that Lumpungu had indeed antagonised the Arabs and was being pursued by followers of Tippu-Tip. Wissmann recorded that Lumpungu had provoked Tippu-Tip's wrath by not paying tribute and seeking an alliance with Famba, a rival Arab merchant to the west of the Lomami, who contested Tippu-Tip's dominance in the region.[44] Having paid tribute to Famba, Lumpungu had refused to also remunerate Tippu-Tip for his dues, and so was attacked by Tippu's subordinate army:

> He had retreated to his friend Mona Kakesa, and being pursued even here by Tibbu's hordes, those two, after the loss of many lives, emigrated to the south on the boundary of the Belande, leaving many prisoners as slaves in the hands of their assailants. The hosts of Arabs, never minding their enemies, but only eager to obtain slaves and ivory, proceeded to the Benecki, who at every approach of the robbers fled into the forests. The Zappu Zapp of the west had, as we know, fled to the Sankurru.[45]

Le Marinel gives evidence that supports the view that Lumpungu was in retreat from Tippu-Tip's raiding bands. His record of his first meeting with Lumpungu, on 17th March 1887, reads as follows:

> *Nous arrivons aux campements de Lupungu et de Mona-Kankeza, car on ne peut donner le nom de village à leurs huttes provisoires, à ces retraites de ces tribus aux abois, qui sont traquées par les bandes des Arabes ou des Arabises du Maleba.*[46]

[44] Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 183.
[45] Ibid., p185; Tippu Tip's *Maisha* corroborates attacks on the 'Kirembue' [Beekalebue] people; *p.* 67-71, 75.
[46] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route,* p. 16.

Indeed, the persecution of Lumpungu seems to have been a long-term affair: Lumpungu and his followers were apparently exposed to such extreme levels of trauma while being hunted down that Wissmann noticed that a process of brutalisation had occurred since his previous meeting with the warlord in 1882.

> [Lumpungu] was likewise changed from his former modest and amiable deportment: his constant persecution during the last few years had made him restless and savage in a way that he had not been formerly [...] The proceedings in this large camp were barbarous and wild, as might be expected under these warlike circumstances, for a troop of Tibbu Tibb's was said to be stationed but two days' journey from here in order to attack this camp. The force was sure to be very strong, and the Basongye had quite made up their minds not to fight, but to flee at the approach of the enemy.[47]

Le Marinel still described Lumpungu as a vassal of the Arabs. But he also stressed that the same Lumpungu was determined fully to emancipate himself from those whom he presented as the warlord's '*persecuteurs* et maîtres.'

> *Lupungu n'a nullement signe la paix avec les Arabes. Il a toujours peur d'une attaque de Sefu, le fils de Mutchiputa (Tippo-Tipp). Lupungu compte même fuir vers le Sankuru si les Arabes continuent à le traquer, et il ira alors, à son tour, ravager les paisibles populations de l'Ouest*.[48]

[47] Wissmann, *My Second Journey, p.* 188-9.
[48] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route,* p. 17.

The Zappo-Zap's Migration to Luluabourg

In 1886, Wissmann suggested that the Zappo-Zap had abandoned their traditional home, M'penge, and moved to the Sankuru/Lubilash four years earlier. As we know, he believed that Nsapu-Nsapu had 'been turned out of his old home by the rapacious expeditions of Tibbu Tibb's slave-hunters.'[49] This seems to conflict with other accounts of the origins of the migration that would eventually lead the Zappo-Zap to resettle in Luluabourg in the late 1880s. On the basis of Wolf's encounters with Nsapu-Nsapu, Timmerman dated the Zappo-Zap flight to the Lubilash to late 1884 or early in 1885.[50] His hypothesis is confirmed by Le Marinel, who included the following passage in a letter he wrote to Wissmann from Ben'eki country on 10th May 1887:

> From Lubefu, where I encamped in the same place that you did, I took a south-westerly direction, and reached within four days a group of four or six villages of the Ku-Mapenge; they formerly belonged to Zappu Zapp, having since his departure made themselves independent. According to my calculation, Zappu Zapp must have left his old domicile in 1884.[51]

Adopting a more local perspective, the Ben'eki traditions recorded by Fairley explain the Zappo-Zap migration in domestic terms, as the result of an unsuccessful bid for the *Nkole*, rather than the consequence of external slaving pressures. In fact, given the role played by the Arab-supported Lumpungu in the affair, the two factors do not exclude one another and are, in fact, eminently compatible. The death of Kasongo IV in c. 1882 was followed by a succession dispute between Kakesa and Budia. The former was installed with the support of Lumpungu, who was now strong enough

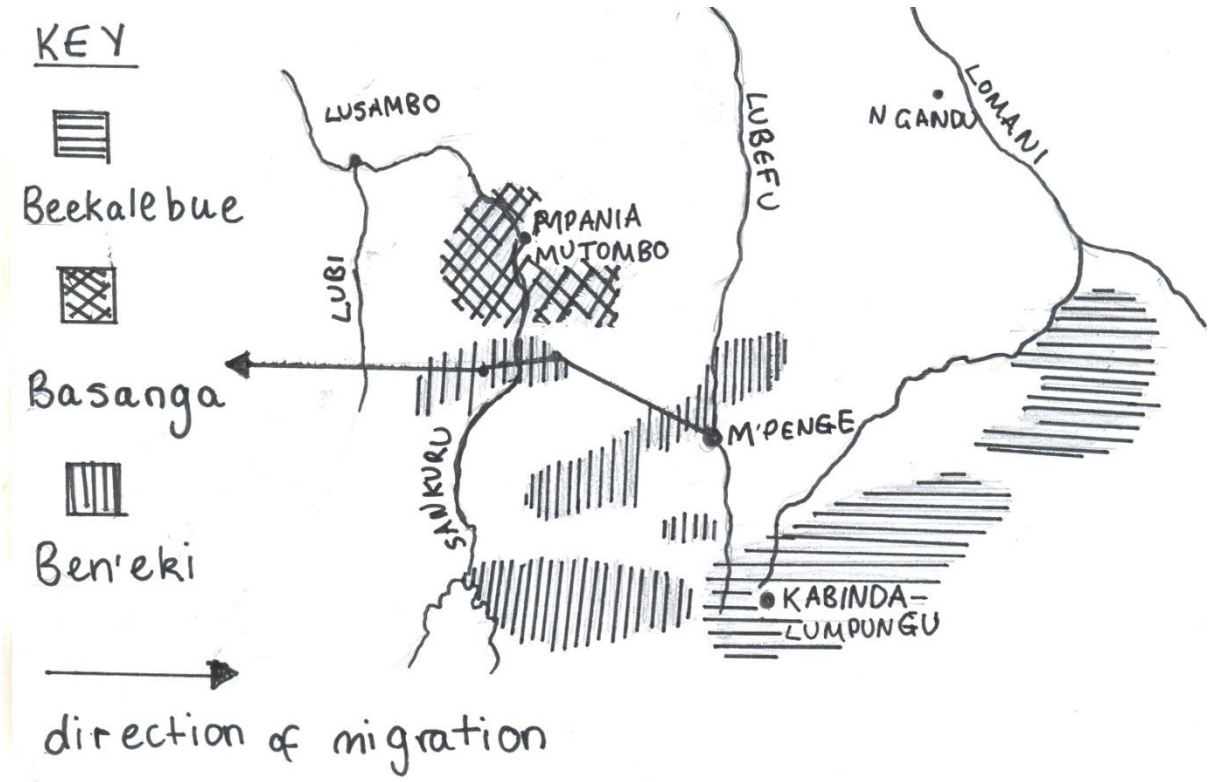
[49] Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 162.
[50] Timmermans, 'Les Sapo-Sapo', p. 31.
[51] Le Marinel, in Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 303.

regionally to act as king-maker. The newly crowned Kakesa was then challenged by Nsapu-Nsapu, who was supported by other Ben'eki sub-groups, who resented the depredations that had accompanied Lumpungu's earlier involvement in the clash between Kakesa and Budia. The Ben'eki civil war involving chief Nsapu-Nsapu can be tentatively dated to about 1883.[52]

The initial clash, in keeping with the oral interpretation, led to the defeat of the Zappo-Zap army and a subsequent retreat to Basanga territory, in the north-western region of Songye territory. This region, as previously mentioned, was ruled over by Mpania Mutombo, a staunch ally of Lumpungu. It is thus plausible that Lumpungu and Mpania Mutombo conducted joint attacks on the Zappo-Zap in Basanga in c. 1884-85. Yet, it seems more likely that it was Mpania Mutombo and his followers who harried the Zappo-Zap from this point onwards: in his *Carnets de Route*, Le Marinel mentions three times that it was Mpania who was responsible for chasing chief Nsapu-Nsapu.[53] The Belgian Catholic missionary Constant de Deken, who settled with the Scheutists in the Kasai between 1892 and 1896, also points to Mpania, in contrast to Lumpungu, as being largely responsible for harassing the Zappo-Zap. Mpania, he wrote '*lui prit tous ses biens, toutes ses femmes, et finit par le tuer*.'[54] However, the reliability of Deken's writing is questionable: we know that Mpania did not kill the old Nsapu-Nsapu, who actually died in Luluabourg, as witnessed by Le Marinel.[55]

[52] Fairley, ''Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie'?
[53] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route, p.* 61, 63, 105.
[54] de Deken in Merriam, *Culture History,* p. 36.
[55] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route,* p. 61.

Understandably, the Zappo-Zap continued to advance westwards, in flight from the Songye warlords. By 1886, as we already know, Wolf met them on the right bank of the Lubilash (lower Sankuru River). They were thus still within Songye territory, although on its extreme western border. Le Marinel provides the next piece of information regarding the migration of Nsapu-Nsapu and his followers. Writing to Wissmann in May 1887, he explained that the Zappo-Zap had changed their position since encountering Wolf: they now resided on the left bank of the Sankuru.[56] It is likely that the Zappo-Zap had attacked Baluba peoples in the Sankuru valley and that they now lived off of the land with those resources.[57] At the same time, Le Marinel



Map 6. 'Zappo-Zap Migration from M'Penge', based on 'La region Songye avant 1887', in Paul Timmermans , 'Les Sapo Sapo pres de Luluabourg', *Africa-Tervuren,* Volume 8, Issue 1/2, (1962), p. 30.

[56] Le Marinel, in Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 304.
[57] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route,* p. 61.

was also keen to stress that he had found

> Zappu Zapp not nearly so powerful as I had conjectured; his reputation is greatly exaggerated by his people and his enemies. Though he may be called a formidable chief, he is not to be compared to Lumpungu, Mona Kakesa, and Mona Kialo. He has subdued many people, but this was not difficult, as they had none of them any firearms.

In his most recent work on Kuba history, Jan Vansina dates the relocation of the Zappo-Zap to Luluabourg to 1889.[58] Yet the evidence in our possession rather supports Jean-Luc Vellut's assertion that the Zappo-Zap were first introduced to the vicinity of Luluabourg in 1887.[59] The move may have been a gradual one, though, as Le Marinel did not want to place exceeding pressure on food supplies and cause a famine.[60] It seems that the old chief Nsapu-Nsapu, accompanied by 100 of his people, was in the first wave of migration; he was dying and claimed that he wanted to see the European settlement before he died.[61] Le Marinel recorded this information under his diary entry for the 7th or 8th of January 1888 in hindsight: he was recalling the ways in which Nsapu-Nsapu and his people had entered the region, but '*sans pouvoir preciser la date*.'[62] Captain de Macar, who presided over Luluabourg at this time, provides a more precise chronological detail, recording on 23 August 1887 that the 'famous' Zappo-Zap (which could only refer to the 'old' Zappo-Zap chief Nsapu-Nsapu - his son and successor not having yet gained regional prominence) had sent porters to announce his visit to Luluabourg and his intention

[58] Vansina, *Being Colonized*, p. 25.
[59] Jean-Luc Vellut, 'Émeri Cambier', p. 48.
[60] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route,* p. 61.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

of becoming a 'vassal' of the Europeans.[63] We can assume that these groups of Zappo-Zap men stayed in the vicinity of Luluabourg in order to negotiate the later phases of their move. Le Marinel, in an entry dated 27 September 1887, asserts that:

> *Ces gens de Zappo s'installent sur un plateau entre la station et le village de Pinda-Kambala, et paraissent faire un bon travail. Ils prétendent toujours que Zappo-Zapp arrivera prochainement avec tout son monde*.[64]

Le Marinel's account of the establishment of the Zappo-Zap in Luluabourg places great emphasis on the role of the Europeans as messianic figures, ready to lend a 'civilising' hand to the harassed Zappo-Zap. The Ben'eki oral tradition, on the other hand, posits that Nsapu-Nsapu appealed to Kalamba, newly appointed as paramount of the Bena Lulua by the Europeans, for protection from the Songye marauders.[65] Timmermans also credits Kalamba with extending Nsapu-Nsapu and his followers an invitation to seek shelter in his territory to the west of the Sankuru river and establish a new settlement there.[66] It is the purpose of the next chapter to explore the subsequent relationship between Kalamba and the Zappo-Zap, in the context of the imposition of colonial control in the Kasai.

[63] De Macar, diary entry for 23 August 1887, in Papiers Adolphe de Macar, MRAC, 97.31.
[64] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route,* p. 41.
[65] Fairley, ''Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie', p. 183
[66] Timmermans, 'Les Sapo-Sapo', p. 33.

CHAPTER THREE

HEMP-SMOKING AND POWER STRUGGLES

This chapter seeks to explore the early relationships between Congo Free State posts, on the one hand, and African authorities in the Kasai region, on the other. Special emphasis is placed on Kalamba, a chief of the Bena Lulua, to the west of the Sankuru river, and the Zappo-Zap. The rise and demise of the collaborative liaison between Kalamba and CFS agents in the region casts important light, not only on the process of transition to European colonialism, but also on the deep roots of contemporary 'tribal' tension between the Bena Lulua, considered the 'original' inhabitants of the area, and such 'foreign' ethnic groups as the Luba-Kasai.[1] Despite the subject's obvious importance, Martens' unpublished PhD thesis is still the only scholarly work to have examined in some detail the workings of the Kalamba-CFS partnership and the former's gradual loss of status to the advantage of such transplanted groups as the Luba migrants and, indeed, the Zappo-Zap.[2] Building upon Martens' analysis, this chapter begins by charting the development of Kalamba's relationship with the Europeans. The emergence of tensions and the Zappo-Zap's related rise to prominence are next addressed.

[1] See, for example, Thomas Turner, '"Batetela", "Baluba", "Basonge": Ethnogenesis in Zaire', *Cahiers d' Études Africaines,* Volume 33, Cahier 132, (1993), *p.* 589-597.
[2] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', *p.* 65-77.

Kalamba and the Bena Lulua

The Bena Lulua, also known as the Bashilange, are an ethnic group which developed from Luba ancestry. Writing in 1885, Charles Bateman, a British Lieutenant and CFS officer, neatly described these Bena Lulua peoples thus:

> they form that portion of the nation known as Bashilange, and are a distinct tribe from the Baluba properly so called, who inhabit a country to the east of the Sankoro, and between the seventh and eighth parallels of the south latitude, from which the Bashilange have migrated at no very remote period to their present domains, which extend westwards from the Sankoro to the Kasai. The people whom they have probably displaced by thus intruding into the country to the west of their original home are the Bakete, the remnants of which nation, divided into two very unequal portions, now occupy widely separated strips of the country, between which the great bulk of the Bashilange population is to be found.[1]

However, while Bateman suggests that the migrations occurred at 'no very remote period', African historian Baudouin Mwamba Mputu suggests that the resettlement occurred in a series of movements spread over a span of 250 years, between c. 1600 and 1850.[2]

The Bena Lulua were not organized into a kingdom comparable to that of their Luba-Katanga ancestors. Before the European intervention, there was no king or paramount equivalent to the Luba *Mulopwe*. Indeed, it would be misleading to assume that Kalamba Mukenge was the paramount of the Bena Lulua before

[1] Charles Somerville Latrobe Bateman, *The First Ascent of the Kasai: Being some Records of Service Under the Lone Star, (*George Philip & Son: London, 1889), p. 19.
[2] Mwamba Mputu, *Le Congo-Kasai,* p. 23.

Wissmann and the first CFS representatives created the office. In the late 1870s, Pogge had noted the ambiguousness of the political structure of the Bena Lulua:

Map 7. 'The Peoples of Kasai and Katanga Around 1890', in Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 1966), between pages 167-168.

> As yet I don't know the borders of the Kasselange [...] Many big chiefs rule in the Kasselange land, such as Kalamba Mukenge, Kingenge, and so on. To these the smaller
>
> chiefs owe tribute, as much as in Lunda country. Every village, or several together, form, so to speak, a family; the inhabitants consider themselves, as it were, related and stick together through thick and thin [...] The people living at Mukenge's residence belong to the Bena Katschia.[1]

Kalamba Mukenge was a leader of the Bena Katschia people, who were a minority group within the Bena Lulua settlers.[2] The majority group was headed by Mwana Mputu, who had founded a hemp-smoking religious cult. Kalamba's father created a similar religious sect to rival this, which Kalamba inherited in 1873, after the death of his elder brother.[3] The cult, *Lubuku*, was considered a '*symbole de la nouvelle société*' and emphasised a hospitable and open attitude towards strangers.[4] Thanks to his heading of *Lubuku*, analogous to a spiritual institution among the Bena Lulua, Kalamba thus possessed a strong degree of ideological legitimacy as leader. This position was not held by him alone, as his sister Sangula seems to have been highly influential in the practice of *Lubuku*. Remarking on this power-sharing agreement, Johannes Fabian asserted that Kalamba 'was the leader and chief arbitrator', while Sangula 'was the principal ideologist and ritual specialist: there was no noticeable hierarchy to come between the leaders and their followers.'[5] In fact, several contemporary European accounts seem to strongly suggest that it was Sangula who held the balance of power over their Bena Lulua followers. Wissmann, who had built

[1] Pogge, in Fabian, *Out of Our Minds,* p. 166.
[2] Vansina, *Kingdoms,* p. 220.
[3] Libata, 'Regroupement des balubas', p. 102.
[4] Luadia-Luadia, 'Les Luluwa', p. 103.
[5] Fabian, *Out of Our Minds,* p. 163.

a close friendship with the two siblings during his extensive travels in their company, to be shortly discussed, recognised Sangula as the agent wielding the greater amount of political power, stating that 'Sangula Meta, the high-priestess of the Riamba worship [...] had great influence over her brother'.[6]

The unpublished diary of Adolphe de Macar, the Commander of Luluabourg from 1886, also presents Sangula as the real power behind Kalamba. Kalamba, de Macar noted after his first meeting with the two leaders, was under the control of his sister, who was always followed by her slaves.[7] Gillain, *Commissaire de district Lualaba-Kasai*, further corroborates this claim in his journal dating to 1894-95. Kalamba's power was great, Gillain wrote, because of his sister.[8] Unfortunately, not much more than these tantalizing glimpses is known about Sangula. The rest of this chapter is thus limited to discussing Kalamba in relation to developments in the region at the outset of European penetration; the existing evidence does not allow for a fuller discussion of the political will or impact of Sangula.

The Growth of Trade and Kalamba's Rise to Prominence

Kalamba ascended to regional prominence through his establishment of a trading relationship with Chokwe and Luso-Africans from present-day Angola. The Chokwe, as previously examined, had been advancing northwards in search of ivory and rubber resources to satisfy the demands of the Angolan market. According to Carvalho, a Portuguese officer and the commander of a Portuguese expedition to the Lunda heartland in 1884-88, the first contact between Chokwe traders and

[6] Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 87.
[7] De Macar, diary entry for 15 June 1886, MRAC, 97.31.
[8] Gillain, 'Appréciation sur la situation politique de l'ancien district du Kassaï ou la zone de Luluabourg', MRAC, HA.01.69/59-87-18.

Kalamba's Bena Lulua took place in 1866.[9] Kalamba received guns in exchange for '*quelques*' slaves. This established a '*traffic régulier*' between the two parties, with Kalamba receiving supplies of firearms, gunpowder, cloth and metal objects, in return for slaves, ivory and rubber.[10] Yet, at this point, the volume of trade was not so great as to ensure Kalamba's regional ascendancy; other Bena Lulua chiefs, after all, had begun to trade with the Chokwe at the same time as he did.[11] Nonetheless, a steady trade was established: Kalamba supplied slaves (later also providing ivory and rubber) in return for firearms and other European articles.[12] The Chokwe gained from this arrangement greatly. Bateman even surmised that the aforementioned hemp-smoking cult had actually originated from the Chokwe in an attempt to foster friendship with the Bena Lulua, thereby implying that the Bena Lulua conducted an informal policy of cultural borrowing from their stronger partners.[13] Indeed, the name Kalamba itself was an import from Chokwe society, which had then transmuted into a dynastic name.[14] The importance of the Chokwe in Bena Lulua affairs was acknowledged by Wissmann, who through his long-standing friendship with the Bena Lulua had developed an informed insight into their culture and history. He noticed that the 'Kioque Mukanjanga [leader of the Chokwe] was the patron of the new [Lulua] chiefs, and, making a base use of his position, he always enriched himself.'[15]

[9] Miller, 'Cokwe Trade', p. 196; Libata, 'Regroupement des balubas', p. 101. The first introduction of Chokwe trading to the area is dated to 1865 by Luadia-Luadia, 'Les Luluwa', p. 61.
[10] A. Van Zandijcke, *Pages d'Histoire,* p. 17.
[11] Vansina, *Kingdoms,* p. 220.
[12] Miller, 'Chokwe Trade', *p.* 182-3.
[13] Bateman, *The First Ascent,* p. 112.
[14] Luadia-Luadia, 'Les Luluwa', p. 94; Libata, 'Regroupement des balubas', p. 101.
[15] Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 313.

A significant shift in terms of Kalamba's commercial relations occurred with his decision to actively seek a greater role with his trading counterparts. In 1875, Kalamba and his retinue travelled down the Mbuji Mayi river to Mona Kimbundu, a commercial hub located in present day north-eastern Angola.[16] The journey itself warranted him a level of respect amongst his own followers in his homeland: this act of valour and bravery was interpreted as a sign of Kalamba's 'modernity', and it increased his prestige among the Bena Lulua.[17] This journey, and the firearms subsequently accessed, allowed Kalamba to be 'universally acknowledged as the head of all hemp-smokers.'[18] Furthermore, the contacts he made at Mona Kimbundu opened the way for the establishment of direct trading and diplomatic relationships between Kalamba's people and the Europeans. Such contacts were to greatly enhance his standing as a regional African power. It was at Mona Kimbundu that Kalamba met the German explorer, Dr. Paul Pogge, and came into direct contact with Portuguese traders from the Angolan coast, such as Saturnino de Souza Machado, with whom he developed enduring commercial relations.[19] It was Saturnino who established what would soon become the major trading post at Kalamba's capital, Mukenge, on the Lulua River.[20]

Charles Bateman asserts that the trading centre was successful from the start, as Saturnino and his trading partner, Senhor Carvalho, were 'determined to [...] introduce a considerable quantity of merchandise into the Baluba [Kasai] country [...] and thus able to establish a permanent trading station in the interior by seizing upon

[16] Vansina, *Kingdoms, p.* 220-1; Mwamba Mputu, *Le Congo-Kasai*, p. 48.
[17] Mwamba Mputu, *Le Congo-Kasaï*, p. 49; Luadia-Luadia, 'Les Luluwa', p. 82.
[18] Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 313.
[19] Vansina, *Kingdoms,* p. 221
[20] Yoder, *The Kanyok of Zaire: An Institutional and Ideological History to 1895* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1992), p. 125.

the advantage of being the first to enter the newly opened country.'[21] Indeed by 1887, de Macar put the number of Angolan traders residing in Kalamba's village at 63, with their total entourage consisting of 532 more people.[22] A by-product of this fast-developing trade was the rapid influx of firearms into Kalamba's domain. This was viewed as a dangerous development by Chokwe caravans, who, in 1878, tried unsuccessfully to circumvent Kalamba's market with a view of preventing him from forming a dangerous trade monopoly.[23] Indeed the volume of trade was so great that Kalamba became the most heavily armed Bena Lulua chief by 1886, owning 150 guns distributed amongst his entourage. His closest Bena Lulua rival, Tshinkenke is reported to have owned 100.[24] This seems a conservative estimate, however. On their first arrival to Kalamba's village in 1881, Pogge and Wissmann estimated the village to comprise of a minimum of two thousand inhabitants, possessing more than one thousand firearms.[25] In 1886, de Macar went as far as suggesting that Kalamba might have owned as many as nearly two thousand firearms.[26]

Early Relationship with the Europeans

The flourishing of the new market in Kalamba's domain attracted the interest of Wissmann and Pogge, whom Kalamba had met previously in Mona Kimbundu. In the autumn of 1881, in their journey from Angola to the eastern coast, they were guided to the commercial centre by one of Saturnino's men. Kalamba took full advantage of the opportunity afforded to him and swiftly worked to establish a strong bond with the Europeans. The relationship had both a spiritual and a politico-economic dimension. The spiritual endorsement consisted of the proclamation that Wissmann

[21] Bateman, *The First Ascent,* p. 84.
[22] Yoder, *The Kanyok,* p. 125.
[23] Vansina, *Kingdoms,* p. 221.
[24] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 69.
[25] Luadia-Luadia, 'Les Luluwa', p. 73.
[26] De Macar, diary entry for 15 June 1886, MRAC, 97.31.

and Pogge were reincarnations of close family members,[27] a recurring theme in the early history of Euro-African contact. On a practical level, the friendship and collaboration was cemented by a series of journeys which Kalamba and his retinue undertook in the company of Wissmann and his various European companions.

In December 1881, Kalamba, Sangula and a number of Bena Lulua porters accompanied Pogge and Wissmann to the Arab stronghold of Nyangwe.[28] Thereafter, while Wissmann continued to the eastern coast with the help of the Arabs, Pogge and his Bena Lulua escorts retraced their step to the Lulua region, which they re-entered in July 1882. Pogge then built a station in present-day Kananga; two years later, this was rebuilt and renamed Luluabourg. In 1884, Wissmann, now working for Leopold, returned with Wolf to the Bena Lulua, his 'old friends and travelling companions.'[29] It was at this time that the relationship between Kalamba and Wissmann was formalized through a *Lubuku* blood pact. This set the connection between Kalamba and the Europeans within a formal framework of alliance.[30] Following the stipulation of this alliance, Kalamba and his entourage helped Wissmann and Wolf explore the Kasai, from May to November 1885. What should be stressed at this point is the mutuality of the alliance. As pointed out by Mwana Mputu[31], it would be a mistake to regard this alliance as an early instance of indirect rule – the practice of installing Africans as 'traditional' chiefs of a categorized ethnic group. The embryonic CFS depended on Kalamba as much as Kalamba needed the State. Kalamba and the Bena Lulua had established independent links with the Portuguese and the Chokwe, and Leopold's remote representatives relied heavily on

[27] Mwamba Mputu, *Le Congo-Kasaï* , p. 52
[28] Tshinkenke, another important chief among the Bena Lulua also accompanied Kalamba and the Europeans. At this point, Kalamba had not yet monopolised the European favour.
[29] Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 64.
[30] Fabian, *Out of Our Minds,* p. 174.
[31] Mwamba Mputu, *Le Congo-Kasai,* p. 57*n.*

autochthonous support. Their weakness meant they could be easily manipulated, particularly considering that:

> Until 1890 there were never more than two or three State officers in the area including Luebo and this placed the State in the position of having to depend on Kalamba, who, in turn, had gained power as a result of being supported by the State Luluabourg.[32]

Indeed, militarily, the support of Kalamba was indispensable in the early years of the CFS. Even by November 1886, Luluabourg station had 'not got one single man capable of handling a gun.' Luebo had only six Zanzibari soldiers stationed there at that time. The presence of these state forces, without the aid of Kalamba, provided little defence against Luso-African slave traders 'armed to the teeth and with plenty of ammunition.'[33] Furthermore, Kalamba's co-operation and support was politically vital at this stage to secure the Bena Lulua territory for the CFS, whose claims to the region remained contested by Portugal until 1891.

The Recognition of Kalamba as Paramount

The State's reliance on Kalamba was such that, by May 1886, Wissmann was clearly planning on installing Kalamba as the paramount of the Bena Lulua peoples, largely, one assumes, because of the personal nature of their *Lubuku* pact. In his published account, Wissmann shows awareness that his comrade Kalamba was only one of the main chiefs of the Bena Lulua, but he also expressed his hopes to have 'arranged political affairs' so that the handover of the Luluabourg station to Le Marinel and de Macar on 22nd May 1886 would be simplified by the 'new commanders' having 'in

[32] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 73.
[33] Carvalho, *Lubuku,* p. 48

future only […] to negotiate with Kalamba, the upper chief'.[34] Indeed, eight years later, Gillain ascribed Kalamba's advancement to the assistance he had lent the Europeans during the early explorations of the region and the founding of State settlements. The Europeans at Luluabourg were indebted to Kalamba and consequently treated him as an equal in all affairs.[35]

Kalamba's ambition, with the assistance of Wissmann (and other European agents of the CFS), had enabled him to consolidate his domination over the whole of the Bena Lulua, to the detriment of his competitors. A total of thirty six Bena Lulua chiefs recognised Kalamba's sovereignty, agreeing to pay regular tribute payments to him.[36] This is borne out especially clearly by Wissmann's account, where it is revealed that the German – acting as an agent of the CFS – had at one point flirted with the idea of backing other chiefs of the Bena Lulua, should such alliances provide greater advantages than a partnership with Kalamba would.

> In *Lubuku*, the country of the hemp-smoking Bashilange, my tactics had always been to keep the natives separated into two parties, so as in case of need to lead one against the other. I had made Kalamba and Chingenge [Tshinkenke] chiefs of the two parties. Experience had taught me these tactics, which always made the management of the natives difficult, were necessary no longer. This had been made evident to me during the two long journeys with the chief of the *Lubuku* Bashilange, so that I resolved upon a single control of the natives. There could naturally be no doubt as to who was to be the chief dependent on me or my successor. Kalamba was

[34] Wissmann, *My Second Journey*, p. 86.
[35] Gillain, 'Appréciation sur la situation politique de l'ancien district du Kassaï ou la zone de Luluabourg', MRAC, HA.01.69/59-87-18.
[36] Luadia-Luadia, 'Les Luluwa', p. 75.

> the mightiest, the most respected, and, above all, the most devoted of all the princes of *Lubuku*
>
> [...]
>
> I now began [...] to make the greater chiefs, the eldest members of a family called Baqua or Bena, responsible masters of the districts allotted to them [...] Each of the chiefs was to have a star flag, and all of these flags were to be placed under the large union flag of Kalamba's. The latter, to whom a certain, not too large tribute (mulambo) was to be paid by the chiefs only, was to engage himself always to supply warriors for any chance campaign, conductors for a journey, labourers for keeping the roads clear, &c.[37]

Immediately prior to Kalamba's appointment, Wissmann had already conducted joint activities with Kalamba to subdue chiefs who had been problematic – either politically or economically – in the region. One such example is made by Wissmann in April 1886:

> Before riding back to the station I met Katende, the chief of the Bashi Lamboa, whom a year ago I had defeated and taken prisoner, together with Kalamba. He had come to pay tribute to the latter, and was complaining of the extortionate demand. After a short interview with Kalamba I arranged about the remaining amount, and got leave for him to return home.[38]

The decision to recognize Kalamba as 'Chief of the Bena Lulua' meant that the Europeans were now inclined to defend their ally's newly-acquired position. This, in turn, led to greater military involvement in local affairs by CFS officials. Indeed it was the 'business' of State officers at Luluabourg, Bateman records, 'to receive, or more

[37] Wissmann, *My Second Journey, p.* 86-88.
[38] Ibid., p. 70.

correctly to enforce […] submission and homage' of the Lulua chiefs to Kalamba.[39] In his unpublished journal, de Macar documents the refusal of 'Tshilunga-Maissau', a Bena Lulua chief, to submit to Kalamba's authority in August 1886. Instead, 'Tshilunga-Maissau' declared war on Kalamba, raiding and then setting fire to one of his villages. De Macar gathered a company of men armed with guns and went to subdue the rebel chief on behalf of Kalamba. The threat of state violence was enough to deter the war; the Europeans, in this instance, acted as peace-brokers.[40] The discord lasted for under a month, with Wissmann accompanying 'Tshilunga-Maissau' on 4th September to submit to Kalamba.[41]

An earlier incident provides another illustration of the extent to which the European intrusion was affecting the local balance of power, enhancing the standing of some leaders to the detriment of others. Writing to Bateman on 26th June 1886, Le Marinel urged the former – who was then stationed at the Luebo post –to prepare for a 'military demonstration against the people at Biombe, the Chiplumba-Bashilange town, or rather towns, situated between the Kasai and Lulua rivers, some three hours' march from Luebo'. The people of Biombe were said to be in open defiance of state control.[42] The responsibility for their attitude was attributed to the Chokwe, who had 'lost no time in representing to the Chiplumba that the authorities of the Congo State came into the country for the one purpose of imposing taxes and oppressing the aborigines [...] which [...] produced the immediate result of that hostility toward ourselves' and Kalamba, as an ally of the Europeans.[43] The

[39] Bateman, *The First Ascent,* p. 110
[40] De Macar, diary entry for 31 August 1886, MRAC, 97.31.
[41] Rik Ceyssens, 'La Conférence des Chefs Lulua, Luluabourg, 17 Août 1886', in Jean-Luc Vellut (ed.), *La mémoire du Congo: Le temps colonial* , (Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale : Tervuren, and Éditions Snoeck : Gand, 2005), p. 78.
[42] Although military action was able to be averted. Bateman, *The First Ascent, p.* 163-4.
[43] Ibid., p. 164 ; also reported in Carvalho, *Lubuku,* p. 58.

commercial and political rise of Kalamba in the region threatened the interests of the Chokwe who, as we know, had previously played a dominant role in the area. Wissmann himself wrote that 'since we had settled here, the time of [Chokwe] predominancy over our Bashilange was over.'[44] This clash of interests between the State and the Chokwe set the scene for a long-standing confrontation between the two parties – one that, as will be considered shortly, may have ended up affecting Kalamba and led him to reconsider his earlier political choices.

Kalamba and the Zappo-Zap

Kalamba's position could not have been more different from that of the Zappo-Zap. Kalamba continued to cultivate his trading networks with the Chokwe to the west, and he could also draw on the firearms bestowed upon him by his European partners. On his first visit to Kalamba in June 1886, de Macar presented a revolver both to the chief and the latter's son and heir, alongside a number of cartridges. State representatives evidently had little qualms about arming their ally, as they considered it in their best interest. The strength of Kalamba through these partnerships grew to such an extent that, in 1891, he was able to repel Ngongo Luteta from the eastern border of his territory when the latter attempted to establish communications with the Chokwe gun traders based among the Bena Lulua.[45]

However, the Zappo-Zap, as previously established, had arrived in the region in the mid 1880s as refugees after being chased from their homeland. The death of Nsapu-Nsapu in 1887, shortly after reaching Luluabourg, had shook the cohesion of the refugees. Nsapu-Nsapu's son, named Zappo-Zap in European documents, succeeded

[44] Wissmann, *My Second Journey,* p. 62.
[45] Ceulemans, *La Question Arabe,* p, 346; See chapter one, p.35.

him at the young age of 16 or 17.[46] The inexperience of their young leader and the foreignness of their new residence meant that the Zappo-Zap were heavily dependent on the Europeans.[47] Le Marinel was quick to predict as early as April 1888 that this circumstance could be used to the CFS's advantage:

> *...la situation de ces nouveaux indigènes, très différents des Bachilenge du pays, était définitivement réglés. C'était en quelque sorte une armée auxiliaire aux portes même de la station, car, étrangers eux-mêmes, leurs seuls amis étaient les Blancs et leur personnel [...] Le chef de la station de Luluaburg peut en espérer de grands services.*[48]

Former officer Verdick would later even go so far as to suggest that the Zappo-Zap were introduced into Luluabourg as a counter-power to the strength of Kalamba, should he ever turn against the State.[49]

There seems, however, to have been an initial reluctance on the part of the Zappo-Zap to put down their roots in the Luluabourg vicinity. De Macar recorded on 22 September 1887 that some people of Zappo-Zap had departed from Luluabourg in an attempt to return to their homeland across the Sankuru, only to come back the next day because the route had proved impassable.[50] The choice of whether or not to settle permanently in Luluabourg was further exacerbated by an internal rift between the young Zappo-Zap and his brother. As late as January 1890, the latter

[46] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route,* p. 61.
[47] To be sure Verner suggests that the Zappo-Zap 'were extremely well acquainted with all tribes, chiefs, paths and local conditions of the surrounding country' because of their historical involvement with the slave trade networks; yet it is one thing to have a predatory knowledge of an area and peoples and quite another to actually settle into a new territory and carve out a niche in the socio-political landscape from scratch. See Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa,* p. 360.
[48] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route,* p. 61.
[49] E. Verdick, 'Historique de Luluabourg: Petites Notes D'un Ancien', *Congo: Revue générale de la Colonie belge* (Octobre 1927), p. 3.
[50] De Macar, diary entry for 23 September 1887, MRAC, 97.31.

was still opposed to the young Zappo chief's attempt to seek official approval from the Commander of Luluabourg for his group's relocation towards the direction of their Ben'eki homeland.[51] The '*très ancienne querrelle*' between these brothers can be interpreted as a succession crisis, since both parties are likely to have vied for the leadership of the breakaway Ben'eki faction to which they belonged. The rivalry between the brothers escalated to the extent that Zappo-Zap fractured his brother's tibia in a fight, to the dismay of the Europeans, who considered such behaviour an embarrassing display of savagery.[52]

The new leader also had another problem to contend with. His authority over the Zappo-Zap people was seen as illegitimate and open to contention as long as his late father's body remained in Luluabourg and not his birthplace, M'Penge: *'c'est là le grand souci de tous ses instants et, tant qu'il n'aura pas enterré là-bas les restes du vieux Zappo, il ne sera pas considéré comme le vrai chef des Beneki-Massenge*.'[53] However, as the Zappo-Zap had already discovered, the journey back to M'penge was unfeasible at that time due to the intense slave trade-related violence that prevailed to the west of the Sankuru river. To add to the new chief's hardship, the late Nsapu-Nsapu's mother, Zappo-Zap's grandmother, is reported not to have accepted the demise of her son. According to Le Marinel she insisted that he and de Macar bring her son back to life, so as to prevent her grandsons from 'eating' each other.[54] Regardless of whether this was an expression of grief and distress, or whether the resurrection request was rooted in cultural symbolism, this line of thinking made the young Zappo-Zap's quest for legitimacy even more problematic.

[51] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route,* p. 86.
[52] Ibid., p. 99.
[53] Ibid., p. 100.
[54] Ibid., p. 99.

Zappo-Zap's grandmother was then residing with Kalamba and Sangula. On 19 February 1890, she is reported to have told her grandson that Sangula was a former friend of her late son, who had recognised her as the master of the land. It was because of her and Kalamba, she continued, that Nsapu-Nsapu knew the white men: thus the Bena Lulua rulers deserved respect.[55] Indeed, it is true that the core tenant of the *Lubuku* cult was hospitality to foreigners: opening their country 'to all strangers who wished to maintain amicable intercourse and trade with its inhabitants.'[56] The Ben'eki oral traditions as collected by Fairley, furthermore, claim that the chief Nsapu-Nsapu had petitioned Kalamba for shelter from their Songye persecutors, and not the accompanying European officers.[57] This fragmentary evidence lends credence to the view that, upon settling in Luluabourg, Nsapu-Nsapu had submitted to Kalamba in return for the protection of his people and that the then chief's mother had been requested to reside with Kalamba as a hostage to ensure the new arrivals' obedience and good behaviour.

This perception of submission to Kalamba was to cause friction in the interactions between the Bena Lulua, the CFS and their protégées-in-the-making, the Zappo-Zap. As has been previously alluded to, the young Zappo-Zap leader drew closer to his European mentors in an attempt to balance his inexperience. The Zappo-Zap, to be sure, regarded themselves as 'the special friends and allies of the white man' and had quickly immersed themselves in European culture. They made every effort to imitate the architecture of the Europeans' homesteads, learn to speak French and English, use imported cutlery and utensils, and 'get full suits of European clothing.'[58] The speed of these adaptations is a sure sign of increasing alignment with the

[55] Ibid., p. 90.
[56] Carvalho, *Lubuku,* p. 16.
[57] Fairley, ''Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie', p. 170
[58] Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa,* p. 360.

Europeans, particularly considering the clear Arab-Swahili cultural leanings that Wolf had identified among the Zappo-Zap 1886.[59] Le Marinel even boasted on 13th April 1890 that '*le jeune Zappo m'écoute religieusement'*, and that, if he were permanently stationed at Luluabourg, he would be able to bring to an end the quarrels within the Zappo-Zap elite. [60]

This internal political tension amongst the Zappo-Zap royalty was regarded by Le Marinel as dangerous; there was the concern that the course of action favoured by the young Zappo-Zap would provoke Kalamba.[61] Indeed it is possible that by insisting on returning to M'penge in order to become the legitimately recognised chief, the young Zappo was bent on extricating himself and his followers from Kalamba's custody and authority. If that was indeed the young Zappo's objective, the European desire to see Nsapu-Nsapu's mother returned to her people must have made this clear to Kalamba. It is certainly suggestive that the first act of open defiance of European authority on the part of Kalamba took place early in 1890, when Captain Braconnier, de Macar's replacement in Luluabourg, visited the Bena Lulua leader officially to request the return of Nsapu's mother. Kalamba reacted by throwing pepper in Braconnier's eyes and by ordering the limbs of his interpreter to be broken.[62]

The clash between Kalamba and Bracconier suggests that relationships between the Lulua potentate and his CFS sponsors were rapidly deteriorating. Indeed in 1892, the body of old Nspau-Nsapu, having been preserved by his people, was escorted back to

[59] See chapter two, p.51.
[60] Le Marinel, *Carnets de Route,* p. 100.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa,* p. 394; Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 76; Stanley Shaloff, *Reform in Leopold's Congo*(John Knox Press: Richmond, Virginia, 1970), p. 44.

M'Penge by the State. His funeral procession was grand and attended by approximately 1,300-1,400 people, including representatives of the other important Songye groups, such as Lumpungu's Beekalebue and the Basanga headed by Mpania Mutombo.[63] This is particularly significant, as it indicates some level of truce between the Zappo-Zap and their former Songye persecutors, and the emergence of such a coalition of battle-tested militias in alliance with the State might well have been regarded by Kalamba as posing an unacceptable threat.[64]

These developments were exacerbated by the takeover of the Luluabourg station by Belgian officers on 1 June 1886. Whilst Kalamba had established a strong relationship with the German explorer Wissmann over the space of five years, his appointment as paramount chief had been intended to facilitate a smooth takeover of the region by the incoming Belgian officers of the State. Yet, while the German officers had encouraged a horizontal power relationship based on mutuality, the Belgians took steps to transform their dealings with the Bena Lulua into a hierarchical system.[65] In this sense, de Macar, the new commander of Luluabourg was held in low esteem by Wissmann, who deemed him incapable of communicating with the Africans.[66] Racialising influences were also at work: those ethnic groups more open to the adaptation of European culture were treated more favourably. To be sure, from Kalamba's point of view, Le Marinel's plan for the Zappo-Zap and the latter's growing intimacy with 'his' whites must have been regarded as worrying developments.[67]

[63] Le Marinel, in Timmermans, 'Les Sapo-Sapo', *p.* 34-35.
[64] By 1892, Kalamba had already turned against the State. Lumpungu and Mpania Mutombo submitted to the CFS shortly after the onset of the Arab Campaign, strongly suggesting that their common alliance to the State had enabled the former Songye enemies to put aside former grievances.
[65] Mwamba Mputu, *Le Congo-Kasai* , p. 70.
[66] Rik Ceyssens, 'La Conférence des Chefs Lulua', p. 78.
[67] Shaloff, *Reform in Congo,* p. 44.

No less worrying for Kalamba was the increasing influx of Luba refugees and migrants into the region. There had always been a Luba presence in the area, particularly when one considers the Luba ancestry of the Bena Lulua themselves. However, beginning in ca. 1890, the traditional land of the Bena Lulua was being settled by further waves of Luba migrants who fled the depredations of such slave-raiding warlords as Mpania Mutombo, Lumpungu and Ngongo Luteta. The scale of the phenomenon was such that, by 1894, the Luebo-based Rev. C. de Witt Snyder lamented that 'you can not go anywhere in this part of the country and not find a Muluba; and, were it not that the state has taken control, not many years would pass before the Baluba would be the ruling tribe here on account of their numbers'[68] From 1895, moreover, the CFS embarked upon an informal policy of transplanting Luba peoples into the Luluabourg vicinity on a large scale: *'en deux or trois ans, des milliers et des milliers de gens affluerent sur la terre hospitaliere des Bena Lulua*.'[69] Following in the footsteps of the Zappo-Zap, these Luba refugees were quick to ingratiate themselves with the Europeans: many settled at mission stations and converted to Christianity, or were integrated into the colonial framework as soldiers of the *Force Publique*. The beginning of Kalamba's clash with the CFS corresponded with the influx of Luba-speaking refugees from the east. The parallel between the two developments is unlikely to be coincidental. Thus, without wanting to project 'tribal' tensions in the Kasai backwards,[70] it is still reasonable to conclude that the arrival of new groups in the region, and the forging of new alliances between them

[68] DeWitt C. Snyder to Brother Philips, Luebo, 13 January 1894, in Robert Benedetto (ed.), *Presbyterian Reformers in Central Africa: a documentary account of the American Presbyterian Congo Mission and the human rights struggle in the Congo, 1890-1918* (Brill: Leiden, 1996), p. 97.
[69] A. Van Zandijcke, *Pages d'Histoire, p.* 118-9.
[70] A trend in which Richard Reid warns of. See Richard Reid, 'Past and Presentism: The 'Precolonial' and the Foreshortening of African History', *Journal of African History,* Volume 52, (2011) *p.*135-155.

and the CFS, threatened Kalamba's recently gained prominence and were thus important factors in changing the latter's attitude towards the CFS.

Other factors may well have contributed to push Kalamba towards the path of open resistance. Following Martens, it is possible to surmise that the inherent weakness of the State oriented Kalamba's actions. In this reading, a critical event was the defeat experienced by the joint forces of Kalamba and the CFS at the hands of 3,000 Chokwe slave traders in 1887, to the west of Luluabourg. This defeat might have alerted Kalamba to the vulnerability of the Europeans in the region.[71] Indeed, according to Gillain, so ill-equipped and under-manned had state forces been at the time of this confrontation with the Chokwe that the State-allied troops were forced to retreat.[72] Following this demonstration of Chokwe strength, Kalamba might have plausibly entertained the idea of throwing his lot in with his old allies, especially when the benefits of his union with the State began to dwindle. Certainly, by the early 1890s, the interests of the Chokwe and those of Kalamba had co-aligned, and the CFS was engaged in combat with both. The strength of this African alliance was such that, by May 1895, the State had to acknowledge the impossibility of administering the Bena Lulua country until this force had been subdued.[73]

This reading of events is still partial and might be refined by further research. Indeed, what the above scenario does not fully clarify are the reasons that led Kalamba in 1891 to open up his territory to Belgian Catholic missionaries of the Scheut congregation. The Mission of Saint Joseph-Mikalayi was established in August 1891,

[71] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p74.
[72] Gillain, 'Appréciation sur la situation politique de l'ancien district du Kassaï ou la zone de Luluabourg', MRAC, HA.01.69/59-87-18.; Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p74.
[73] Michaux to Gillain, 30 May 1895, MRAC, HA.01.69/59.87-99.

at an estimated two and a half hours' distance from Luluabourg.[74] Its leader, Father Cambier arrived at Luluabourg on 24 November 1891, only two months after the State had engaged in direct warfare against Kalamba. A possible explanation is that Kalamba had learnt to differentiate between European agents of the State and the missionaries: by 'insist[ing] on obtaining missionaries' and selecting Cambier as a possible intermediary between the State and himself,[75] he might have sought to keep his option open. The State and the Catholic missionary were indeed notoriously closely aligned; perhaps Kalamba, hoping for a restoration of harmony with the CFS, lent Saint Joseph-Mikalayi the critical initial support that the mission needed. According to Cambier's philosophy for central African missions, 'liberated' slaves placed under missionary care would form the first nuclei of converts and the means to ensure African salvation. Thus it was that, his ongoing conflict with the CFS notwithstanding, Kalamba bestowed a number of clients and dependents upon Cambier. By April 1892, Cambier had accumulated a total number of 255 'liberated' slaves.[76] Of course, Kalamba's support may have been calculated to gain further prestige in the region. Other chiefs soon followed Kalamba's suit, asking for Cambier to establish mission stations in their villages, paying Cambier homage and tribute items such as liberated slaves, goats and agricultural tools.[77]

Whether the state's bond with the Zappo-Zap was the cause or the consequence of the breakup of the 'grand alliance' between Kalamba and the CFS, the fact remains

[74] Cambier to Clerbaux, 4 April 1892, in Émeri Cambier (eds. A. Cornet and F. Bontinck), *Émeri Cambier. Correspondance du Congo (1888-1899): Un apprentissage missionnaire* (Institut Historique Belge de Rome Bibliothèque: Rome, 2001), p. 307.
[75] Ibid., p. 335; Bram Cleys and Bruno De Meulder, 'Imagining a Christian Territory: Changing Spatial Strategies in the Missionary Outposts of Scheut (Kasai, Congo, 1891-1940), in Fassil Demissie (ed.), *Colonial Architecture and Urbanism in Africa: Intertwined and Contested Histories* (Ashgate: Farnham, 2012), p. 205.
[76] Cambier to Clerbaux, 4 April 1892, in Cambier, *Correspondance du Congo,* p. 309.
[77] Mwamba Mputu, *Le Congo-Kasaï* , *p.* 108-9.

that, beginning in the first half of the 1890s, the Zappo-Zap lived up to Le Marinel's original expectations. By then, the Zappo-Zap had wholly supplanted Kalamba. Fighting as auxiliaries alongside the FP, the Zappo-Zap confronted both the Chokwe and Kalamba's Bena Lulua. The campaign, lasting from April to June 1895, saw '*le chef Zapo-Zape et trois cents de ses hommes armés de fusils à piston*' at the vanguard of the State force, taking the brunt of the fighting.[78] This was only one example of the '*grands services*' that the Zappo-Zap rendered the State in repressing autochthonous dissent. Their successive experiences at the service of the state are examined in detail in the next chapter.

[78] Michaux, *Carnet de Campagne,* p. 265.

CHAPTER 4

MUTINIES AND MUTILATIONS

So far, this thesis has worked to place the CFS firmly within the context of Euro-African relationships, and the influence of pre-existing polities. It is the aim of this chapter to focus more specifically on the mechanics of the Zappo-Zap collaboration with the State. Indeed, in the midst of regional tensions and rebellions, Zappo-Zap loyalty held steadfast to the extent they became an undeniable pillar of support in the Kasai, propping up State authority. It becomes apparent that the Zappo-Zap had more to gain from the State than the former Arab-ised 'Batetela' gunmen who had been incorporated into the *Force Publique*: the behaviour of the latter, unlike the Zappo-Zap, was restrained by the imposition of State discipline. The Zappo-Zap, however, were free to accumulate slaves and plunder, provided that they undertook the work necessary as military auxiliaries.

This chapter is subdivided into five sections. The first examines the economy of the Kasai under the CFS, teasing out the changes wrought by the establishment of the *Compagnie du Kasaï* and exploring the workings of the commercial system into which Zappo-Zap '*capitas*' were co-opted. The next section looks at the FP, the standing army of the CFS, and establishes the patchwork ethnic makeup of the force and, within this, the significance of the 'Batetela', who mostly consisted of former followers of Ngongo Luteta. The third section of this chapter scrutinises the Zappo-

Zap role in the context of the 1895 revolt of these 'Batetela' FP soldiers. The penultimate section considers the infamous Pyaang Massacre as an example of State expectations of the Zappo-Zap and the reality of the brutally extractive policies of the CFS. Lastly, this chapter ponders over the ultimate reliability of the Zappo-Zap in the context of the Kuba rebellion of 1904.

The *Compagnie du Kasaï*

In the Kasai, no commercial monopoly was established until 1901, when the CK was formed. Before the establishment of the CK, there were numerous commercial companies that founded trading posts. Largely independent of the CFS,[1] these conducted a thriving, market-driven trade with neighbouring African communities. The volume of trade on the right bank of the Kasai river, on the periphery of the Kuba kingdom, was such that, in 1898, Presbyterian missionary Samuel P. Verner referred to a location called 'Traders' Hill'. This, he explained, was 'a good example of [...] furious competition.'[2] African experiences with these separate trading companies seem to have varied; yet it is clear that the atmosphere of commercial rivalry that prevailed in the free-trade zone of the Kasai ensured that the local populations gained good prices for their products, with the opportunity of choosing whom to sell their wares to.[3] There is evidence that independent company agents were 'very popular with the natives.' For instance, Mr Stache, an agent of the Société Anonyme Belge (SAB) at Luebo, was called '*Chibuia*' (Generous) by the local peoples,

[1] In some cases, however, trading companies shouldered the responsibility for State posts. The Société Anonyme Belge, for example, oversaw the State post of Luebo from the mid-1880s; see Martens, 'History of European Penetration', *p.* 108-9; Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa,* p. 101.
[2] Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa,* p. 88.
[3] Vansina, *Being Colonized, p.* 63-65.

revealing that European trade with Africans was not always wholly mercenary.[4] Before the inception of the CK's monopoly, trade was voluntary and held at manageable levels that did not threaten local livelihoods. In 1896, for instance, the total production of rubber in the Kasai amounted to 160 tonnes, not much more than ten percent of the total amount of rubber exported from the CFS in that same year.[5]

In light of the above, and insofar at least as the Kasai in the 1890s is concerned, the term 'robber colonialism' to describe the workings of the CFS is misleading.[6] In particular, it disguises the room for local agency that existed before the inception of the CK's commercial monopoly and its system of violently enforced quotas. For instance, in the 1890s, there are examples of Africans using fraudulent means to obtain a higher profit margin; these included using sand, bark, and other natural debris to boost the weight of the rubber they sold, especially when the price per kilo rose.[7] This is not to say that the trading companies that preceded the CK were innocuous and benevolent institutions, however. While trade with independent African communities was market-driven and bilateral, the plantations belonging to these companies profited from traditional institutions of slavery in the area. Labourers were paid wages, yet when such labourers were not freemen, their wages were given to their masters. For instance, Verner, speaking of the labourers at 'Gallikoko', one of the first Kuba towns along the Kasai river near the Lulua river, in 1898, pointed out:

[4] Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa,* p. 101. For greater analysis of the symbolism behind the names given by Africans to Europeans, see Osumaka Likaka, *Naming Colonialism: History and Collective Memory in the Congo, 1870 – 1960* (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 2009).
[5] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 111; F. Cattier, *Etude sur la situation de l'État indépendant du Congo* (Larcier : Bruxelles, 1906), p. 214.
[6] Clarence-Smith, 'Business Empires', p. 6.
[7] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 116.

> There were five hundred of them there […] These laborers were chiefly Baluba slaves of the Zappo-Zaps, who hired them out and took their cloth. Their terms of contract were generally for five years.[8]

On the other hand, due to the fluid situation of the Kasai in the 1890s, even slaves appear to have enjoyed some opportunities for social mobility. The same Verner thus wrote the following about a trading establishment near Bena Luidi, in the Kuba kingdom:

> The ordinary pay of a common labourer is a piece of cotton domestic per month, of eight yards to the piece, costing about forty cents to cover the cost of transportation; besides about forty cents' worth of seashells, salt or brass wire, the cloth paid by the month, the latter by the week. Some of the labourers, astonishing as it may sound, thus actually save means to buy slaves, and so a trading factory generally has a contingent of this class about it also.[9]

The CK was established by royal decree on 24 December 1901 and worked to amalgamate the fourteen separate trading companies which had been in operation in the Kasai since 1886.[10] The monopolisation of trade led to a sharp decrease in the price paid to the producers of raw rubber: whereas on the free market the Africans could expect to receive about three francs per kilogram, the CK was only willing to pay five cents for half of a kilogram.[11] The close relationship between the State and the CK meant that living conditions rapidly deteriorated for the Africans of the Kasai. The CK was given the authority to collect the taxes demanded by the State in the

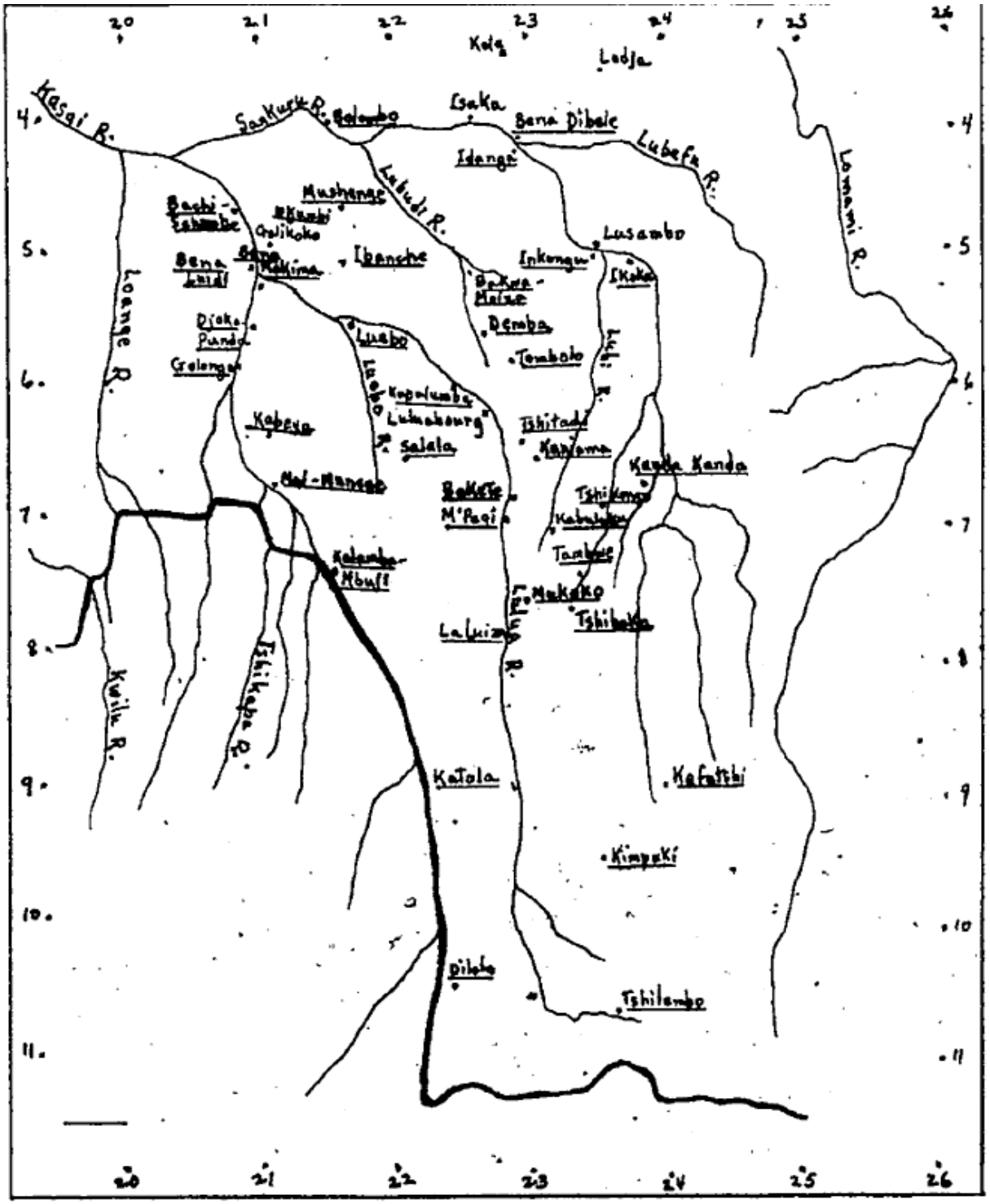
[8] Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa,* p. 93.
[9] Ibid., p. 216.
[10] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 233.
[11] William Morrison, 'Treatment of the Native People by the Government of the Congo Independent State', in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account,* p. 207.

areas where no State post existed. This led to the development of a system of exploitation which forced the Africans into producing the required rubber. The State levy required payment in the form of *croisettes*,[12] which could only be obtained by trading rubber (or some of the fast-dwindling ivory of the region) with the CK. In order to meet their fiscal obligations towards the State, therefore, Africans had to yield rubber.[13]

The rubber quotas were arbitrary and undetermined, thereby enabling the CK agents to demand unprecedented quantities of raw produce.[14] In order to ensure compliance with these quotas, the CK employed '*capitas*'. Not unlike the Arab-ised *waungwana* , these *capitas* undertook most of the 'dirty work', acting as intermediaries between the State and CK, on the one hand, and chiefs and local villagers, on the other. They were responsible for all kinds of abuses, examples of which shall be discussed below, making the CK and the CFS *capitas* instruments of local terror. A good number of *capitas* in the Kasai region were Zappo-Zap; the role of *capitas* must have appeared to be a natural progression from their earlier role of suppliers of captive labour to the pre-CK rubber-trading companies. Indeed, alongside the collection of taxes, the procurement of slaves seems to have been an additional duty. Lapsley, of the APCM at Luebo, revealed that:

> The State forbids slave-holding, but has a provision whereby persons may ransom slaves, who then come under the control, 'guardianship,' of the ransomed for seven years; then the slave is finally at liberty. There libérés

[12] *Croisettes* were copper crosses, and were used in the stead of a currency in the CFS until a monetary system was put in place.
[13] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 144.
[14] Stengers and Vansina, 'King Leopold's Congo', p. 339.



Map 8. 'Compagnie du Kasai Factories', in Daisy S. Martens, 'A History of European Penetration and African Reaction in the Kasai Region of Zaire, 1880-1908' (PhD, Simon Fraser University, 1980), p. 189.

> (freed men) must be registered as such before the commissaire du district, I believe. When the State overpowers a big slave trader, they get a great number of slaves, who pass into the seven years' guardianship at once [...] The Compagnie has many here; and children are offered (for sale the dealers find it) at one, two and three dozen bandannas a head."[15]

Almost all European agencies in the Kasai and elsewhere in the CFS relied heavily on slave labour. *Libérés* were enlisted for work on the plantations and the collection of rubber, yet missionaries in the Kasai also secured 'liberated' slaves for conversion and manual labour on the mission grounds. In 1891, for example, the State entrusted Catholic father Cambier with 300 prisoners of war from a raid against a Chokwe caravan. These 'liberated' slaves were to be accommodated by the Scheutist mission at St Joseph-Mikalayi, in the immediate vicinity of Luluabourg.[16] Protestant missionaries are unlikely not to have benefited from this practice as well. When Lapsley first arrived at the mission in Luebo, 'he began by buying, and so freeing slaves. These remained on the station and became "station people" […] and they were given work to do'.[17]

In a similar vein, joining the FP was perceived as being akin to slavery by many Congolese. The recruits were to serve five years active service, and then a further

[15] Samuel Norvell Lapsley, diary entry for 16 April 1891, in *Life and Letters of Samuel Norvell Lapsley: Missionary to the Congo Valley, West Africa. 1866-1892* (Whittet & Shepperson: Richmond, VA., 1893), p. 163.
[16] Vellut, 'Émeri Cambier', p. 49.
[17] DeWitt C. Snyder to Joseph Hawley, Luebo, 5 September 1894, in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account,* p. 101.

two years in reserve, before being 'liberated.'[18] Indeed, the generation after the famous Zappo-Zap massacre of the Kuba at Pyaang equated the demand for recruits for the FP with enslavement: the status of the two was very much the same in their eyes.[19] This stigma draws clear parallels with the Arab methods of enlistment, as shall be explored in greater depth in this next section.

The *Force Publique* and the 'Batetela'

The *Force Publique* was the standing army of the CFS, theoretically created for the purpose of fulfilling the humanitarian obligations that the Berlin Conference had outlined, such as the ending of the slave trade.[20] Instituted by royal decree on 5 August 1888, the FP comprised of a hodgepodge of nationalities. It was not a solely Belgian enterprise: alongside the Belgians, in the officer corps of the FP, were also drafts from Scandinavia, Italy, England, Switzerland, Germany, Austria and at least one officer from Romania.[21] European officers were, however, thinly spread in the Congo. The 12 State posts in the Lualaba-Kasai district had only 28 European officers distributed among them.[22] This led to a heavy dependence on African recruits. Soldiers were initially recruited in other European colonies in Africa – particularly Nigeria and the west coast[23] – and among the Bangala. Some Bangala, who originated from the area of Mbandaka, in present-day Equateur province, had been enlisted by H.M. Stanley for his trans-Africa journey of 1874-1877. These men – and

[18] F. Flament, *La Force Publique de sa Naissance à 1914* (Institut Royal Colonial Belge : Bruxelles, 1952), p. 49.
[19] Vansina, *Being Colonized*, p. 75.
[20] Flament, *La Force Publique*, p. 36; Marcel Storme, *La Mutinerie militaire au Kasaï en 1895* (Académie royale des sciences d'outre-mer : Bruxelles, 1970), p. 34; Morrison, 'Treatment of the Native People', in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account,* p. 208.
[21] Flament, *La Force Publique*, p. 48.
[22] Storme, *La Mutinerie,* p. 19.
[23] There was a particularly high volume of 'Haoussas', Sierra Leonean soldiers and Zanzibarites. There are also soldiers listed as hailing from Accra, Abyssinia, Somalia, Egypt, Liberia, Yoruba (Nigeria), Zulu and Dahomey. See Guy de Boeck, *Baoni: Les Révoltes de la Force Publique sous Leopold II; Congo 1895-1908* (Editions EPO: Anvers, 1987), *p.* 34-5; Storme, *La Mutinerie,* p. 34.

others who chose to adopt the 'Bangala' identity – extended their partnership with early European explorers to become the first Congolese soldiers of the FP.[24]

Bangala aside, the general lack of willing autochthonous Congolese recruits led to the issuing of the royal decree of 30 July 1891, which inaugurated the introduction of a quota system for the enlistment of local men. The term 'cannibal troops' has often been employed with reference to these recruits of the FP, yet this term is misleading, since not all of the native recruits were cannibals or came from regions where ritual cannibalism was practiced.[25] That is not to say that the indigenous soldiers were savoury characters. The task of recruitment was often devolved to local chiefs and soon became a method for freeing villages of 'undesirables', such as rebellious or dangerous subjects, criminals, or slaves.[26] Slaves did indeed make up a substantial proportion of FP recruits. The bulk of these slave recruits were obtained in collusion with State-allied slaving warlords, who gathered potential recruits whilst on raiding operations. State agents then bought these slaves for recruitment. On 4 May 1887, for example, de Macar recorded in his journal that Wissmann's return expedition from Nyangwe had bought a quantity of slaves '*dans le pays de cannibales; a Lumpoungou, Zappo-Zap, etc*.'[27] This was not an isolated occurrence, since three years later Gillain noted that '*Legat vient avec nous pour ramener les esclaves libérés que nous comptons acheter à Mpania Mutombo*.'[28] This system eventually morphed into direct 'recruiting' of slaves by the State's auxiliary troops. On 6 August 1902, the Reverend William M. Morrison, of the APCM mission at

[24] Mumbanza Mwa Bawele, 'Colonialisme et identité 'Bangala' en Afrique centrale', in Bahru Zewde (ed.), *Society, State and Identity in African History* (Forum for Social Studies: Addis Ababa, 2008), *p.* 87-90.
[25] Kajsa Ekholm Friedman, *Catastrophe and Creation: the Transformation of an African Culture* (Harwood Academic Publishers: Amsterdam, 1996), p. 231.
[26] Storme, *La Mutinerie,* p. 35
[27] De Macar, diary entry for 4 May 1887, MRAC, 97.31.
[28] Gillain, 2 June 1890, MRAC, HA.01.69/59-87-14.

Luebo, among the Kuba, denounced the following to Deschamps, the then commander of Luluabourg.

> Suddenly, without warning or reason, your soldiers commenced running through villages, seizing men by force. Some of these men thus caught, you took away with you by force, others were released by the soldiers upon the payment of the ransom, while others who were too weak to make soldiers or workmen were turned loose again. Since you object to the word 'pillage,' I will substitute the word 'raiding,' with all that this latter word implies.
>
> [...]
>
> I wish still further to state that I have in no way interfered with legitimate recruiting, in fact I tried to persuade the chief of Kasenga to secure some of his people to go with your officer, and might have succeeded had not your officer begun seizing the people by force.[29]

The majority of the forced recruits, however, originated from the eastern Congo and consisted of 'liberated' slaves from intercepted slave caravans and eastern slave-traders, or prisoners of war from skirmishes.[30] Levies from the Uele and Province Orientale, traditional Arab-Swahili strongholds, consisted of roughly twice the number of recruits from other regions of the Congo. The Lualaba-Kasai also yielded significant numbers in 1893-1897, corresponding with the European campaign against the Arabs and their later campaigns against Batetela soldiers in the region.[31] It would be tempting to assume that many of the native recruits had been hardened by the exposure to the brutalised conditions that plagued their regions of origin; yet interviews from the Casement Report of 1903 reveal that some of those in the

[29] William M. Morrison to *Chef* Deschamps, Luebo, 6 August 1902, in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account, p.* 134-136.
[30] Flament, *La Force Publique*, p. 51.
[31] Boeck, *Les Révoltes de la Force Publique,* p. 43.

State's employment as soldiers did not actually relish the brutal practices of a military career, but rather endured them so as 'to be with the hunters rather than the hunted.'[32] In an attempt to keep desertions and rebellions down to a minimum, FP soldiers were often posted to different districts to those in which they grew up in. Verner, for example, 'saw Baluba soldiers who had been brought from the district' while he was 'passing through Boma', near the mouth of the Congo, in March 1904.[33]

In tandem with regular FP soldiers were auxiliary forces. In the Kasai region, these auxiliaries consisted of the armed followings of such slaving warlords as Mpania Mutombo, Lumpungu and the Zappo-Zap. Auxiliaries were in theory organised into companies and platoons under a superior regular officer of the FP and subject to the regulation of the Governor-General.[34] Yet, in practice, the auxiliary militia were given a free rein within their designated regions, so long as they did not oppose or antagonise the state. Indeed the continuity between the CFS and the Arab system that had preceded it is striking. Historians such as Roes have commented on this parallel, arguing that 'to organise the profitable extraction of natural resources under these circumstances, EIC [État indépendant du Congo] officials resorted to copying and adapting the social organisation and terror tactics of the Eastern slave trade.'[35] Continuity was not just a matter of imitation, however, as former Arab conscripts and collaborators were directly absorbed into the State militia. In essence, the roles of these men had remained the same; what had changed was the identity of their employers. This is indeed aptly borne out by the example of the 'Batetela'.

[32] Robert M. Burroughs, *Travel Writing and Atrocities: Eyewitness Accounts of Colonialism in the Congo, Angola, and the Putumayo* (Routledge: New York, 2010), *p.* 61-2.
[33] William M. Morrison, 'Statement to His Majesty's Government On Conditions in the Congo', in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account,* p. 155.
[34] Flament, *La Force Publique*, *p.* 42-3.
[35] Roes, 'Towards a History', p. 23.

As with many other ethnonyms dating to the early colonial era, the characteristics and traits attributed to the term 'Batetela' remain ambiguous, and vary among contemporary European commentators.[36] Thus it is not immediately clear who the Batetela people, in the strict sense of the word, were. Thomas Turner, during his field work in the 1970s, detected 'three or even four meanings of the term "Tetela", in consecutive utterances of Sankuru informants.'[37] From the nineteenth century, the term 'Batetela' was probably less an ethnonym than a general label encompassing speakers of the Otetela language, or dialects derived from it.[38] This seems to have been recognised by anthropologists Emil Torday and M.W. Hilton-Simpson in 1908-09:

> The tribes who must be included under the general name of Batetela extend over a very large region; from a number of sub-tribes who inhabit both banks of the Lubefu adjoining the Basonge, to the others living to the north of the Lukenye and adjoining the Akela. The former appear to have moved to their present home from the north, the latter from the south-east.[39]

Anthropologist Luc de Heusch has further suggested that the term 'Batetela 'should be placed squarely within the context of the social and political dynamics of the late nineteenth century.[40] Indeed, from the onset of the 'Arab Campaign' in 1892 and the

[36] However, the early twentieth-century anthropologist Emil Torday seems to recognise to an extent the wide variety of people that the term encompassed. See E. Torday, 'Culture and Environment: Cultural Difference Among the Various Branches of the Batetela', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland,* Vol. 51, (July-December 1921), *p.* 370-384.
[37] Thomas Edwin Turner, 'A Century of Political Conflict in the Sankuru (Congo-Zaire)' (PhD, University of Wisconsin, 1973), p. 104.
[38] Thomas Turner, *Ethnogenèse et nationalisme en Afrique centrale: Aux racines de P. Lumumba* (L'Harmattan : Paris, 2000), p. 119.
[39] Torday, 'Land and peoples, p. 29.
[40] Isabelle M. de Rezende, 'Visuality and Colonialism in the Congo: From the "Arab War" to Patrice Lumumba, 1880s to 1961' (PhD, University of Michigan, 2012), *p.* 38-9.

execution of Ngongo Luteta in 1893, the term 'Batetela' was often deployed as a 'social category' to describe the indigenous followers of Ngongo and the main protagonists of the revolt at Luluabourg in 1895.[41] Turner reinforces the ideological connotations of the use of the ethnonym Batetela: while the 'Batetela' were considered rebellious and more wont to savagery, those identified as 'Songye' were the loyal collaborators of the State.[42]

There are, in reality, broad similarities between the Batetela and Songye peoples: both inhabited the same region of the Congo and both were reported to practice cannibalism by contemporary European observers and commentators. The Batetela and Songye were both situated at the intersection of the westward Arab and the eastward Luso-African slave and ivory-trading frontiers: indeed geographical proximity means that it is likely that a degree of fluidity existed between their respective 'ethnic' identities and boundaries.[43] Both, moreover, suffered the devastating consequences of the European campaign against the Arabs in 1892-4.

The presence of Arab-Swahili merchants to the east of their territory strongly suggests that the Songye and the Batetela had established significant long-distance trading relationship. While the Beekalebue had established contact with Tippu-Tip by the 1870s[44], Fairley asserts that the Ben'eki were trading with Batetela scouts working for the Arabs by the 1880s, acquiring Arab sandals, cloth, and firearms, among other items.[45] The Zappo-Zap, moreover, are considered to have been the

[41] Ibid.
[42] Thomas Turner, 'Ethnogenesis in Zaire', p. 606.
[43] The fact that that ethnic origin of Ngongo Luteta, for example, has been debated as either Songye or Batetela must surely indicate the blurred nature of the distinction between the two ethnicities.
[44] See chapter two, p45.
[45] Fairley, ''Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie', p94.

first Ben'eki to procure firearms.[46] By this time the Batetela were clearly integrated into the Arab politico-economic system as *waungwana* . The extent of the Batetela assimilation into the culture of the Arab merchant-warriors is attested by Dugald Campbell, a Plymouth Brethren missionary who served in Katanga, and then Northern Rhodesia, from the 1890s. Writing of the Batetela, he remarked that 'many of them spoke Swahili as fluently as they did their own language [...] I found they elected to speak Swahili in preference to their own tongue' in as late as 1922.[47]

The Batetela stationed at Luluabourg in the mid-1890s were predominantly former members of Ngongo Luteta's militia, integrated into the FP after his execution at the hands of the State in 1893. Their arrival boosted the numbers of the State posts significantly: by the time of the Luluabourg revolt, approximately half of the 87 soldiers stationed there were Batetela or Manyema men.[48] The significant contribution of these soldiers to the 1895 rebellion has meant that the latter has often been referred to as the 'Batetela Revolt'. This sweeping generalisation, however, confines analysis of the revolt to a racial framework which conceals the participation of other ethnic groups. Groups other than the Batetela (however the term is construed) joined the mutiny, such as Luba soldiers.[49] Furthermore, the epithet 'Batetela Revolt' implies that all Batetela in the employment of the State joined the rebellion. This was demonstrably not the case. Verner, residing at Luebo, testifies that there were Batetela boys who had voluntarily left their homeland in order to follow and serve the Batetela warriors who were being incorporated into the FP. These boys were considered legal 'charges of the State' and were thus

[46] Ibid.
[47] Dugald Campbell, *Wanderings in Central Africa: The Experiences & Adventures of a Lifetime of Pioneering and Exploration* (Seeley Service and Co. Limited: London, 1929), p. 90.
[48] Storme, *La Mutinerie,* p. 47
[49] Le Marinel, *Carnets de route,* p. 325.

'placed under [the] religious and educational influences' of surrounding mission stations so that they may be taught European ways, later becoming evangelists themselves. Whilst the revolt at Luluabourg and the wider regional violence triggered by the rebellion were ongoing, 'the boys at Luebo remained entirely quiet and faithful', according to Verner.[50] It is therefore preferable to refer to the rebellion as the 'Luluabourg Revolt'.

The Zappo-Zap and the Luluabourg Revolt

It is important to briefly contextualise the revolt in order to fully understand its regional significance. Smaller-scale mutinies by soldiers of the FP had taken place in 1894 in Lusambo and two other State posts, Kabambare (Manyema) and La Romée (Upper Congo). In every case, however, the unsupported rebels had been easily quelled by their loyalist peers.[51] These revolts must be viewed against a background of indigenous unrest in the broader region. To the east of Luluabourg, the European campaign against the Arab merchant-warriors had raged for two years, causing intense destruction to the lands in the eastern Kasai, which had been one of the theatres of violence. There had also been unrest amongst the Kaniok. Captain Pelzer, commander of Luluabourg, staged a five-month campaign against them from January to June 1895.[52] Finally, there was also the ongoing campaign against Kalamba and the Bena Lulua, and their Chokwe allies.

A variety of theories have been put forward over the years to account for the Luluabourg revolt. The execution of the State's erstwhile ally Ngongo Luteta in 1893 is seen by many historians, including Martens and Flament, as well as contemporary

[50] Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa, p.* 124-6.
[51] Flament, *La Force Publique*, p. 350; Turner, 'A Century of Political Conflict, p. 81.
[52] Flament, *La Force Publique*, p. 352.

commentators such as Michaux, as the ultimate cause of the rebellion on the part of his former followers.[53] Ngongo's former militia were certainly numerous in the Kasai region. By 1895, out of a total of 1,088 regular FP soldiers, almost half were 'Batetela' who had earlier served under Ngongo.[54] However, Boeck argues that it is '*absurde d'imaginer que, vingt mois après la mort de leur chef, ils se soient brusquement mis en tête de le venger*.'[55] Instead, Boeck points to the fact that life for these mutineers was simply not as good under the Europeans as it had been under Ngongo. Militiamen working for either the Arab-Swahili or their proxies had not been paid wages, but they had enjoyed the license to freely 'loot the country all round in search of subsistence and slaves.'[56]

Their military commander Pelzer, was, furthermore, notoriously cruel and quick to inflict harsh punishments for seemingly minor offenses.[57] Pelzer

> *détestait les noirs, maintes et maintes fois sans motif aucun, il leur flanquait de la chicotte. J'ai vu de mes yeux vu frapper les soldats batétélas en pleine figure avec la chicotte alors que ces hommes faisaient leur service au plus grand contentement de tous les blancs.*[58]

Indeed, life under the Europeans constrained the Batetela in a way that they had not experienced under Ngongo. Feliciano T. Nobre, an Angolan carpenter residing at Luluabourg at the time, observed that the Europeans had forced their Batetela soldiers to abandon polygamy and take up monogamous relationships, used the

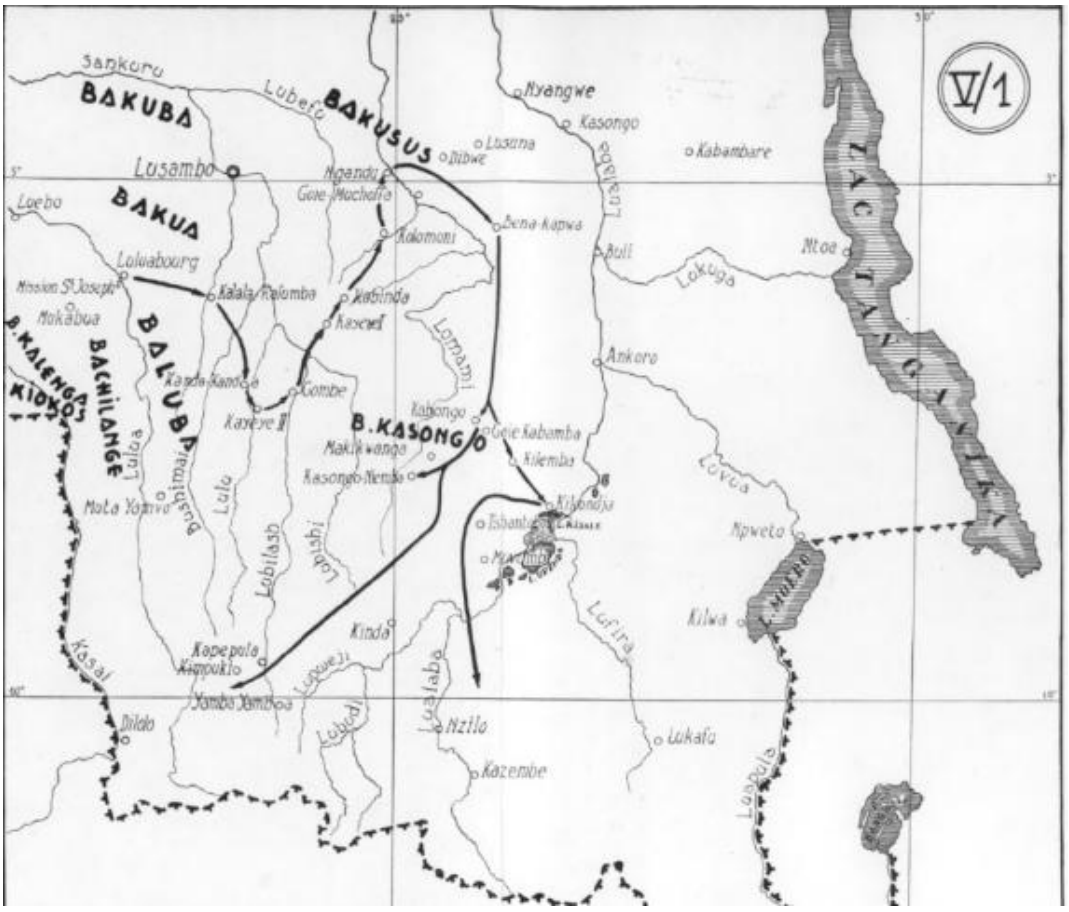
[53] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 13; Flament, *La Force Publique*, p. 242; Michaux, *Carnet de Campagne,* p. 281.
[54] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 83.
[55] Boeck, *Les Révoltes de la Force Publique,* p. 92; Storme, *La Mutinerie,* p. 49.
[56] Cameron, *Across Africa*, p. 259.
[57] Despite Cassart's assertions to the contrary; Cassart to Gillain, Luluabourg 18 August 1895, in Auguste Verbeken (ed.), *La Révolte des Batetela en 1895* (Académie royale des Sciences coloniales: Bruxelles, 1958), p. 29.
[58] Palate to Gillain, Lusambo 11 July 1895, in Verbeken, *La Révolte des Batetela,* p28. 'Chicotte' was the name of a whip used in the Congo, made with the hide of a hippopotamus.

chicotte excessively and did not provide sufficient food rations. Supplies were distributed roughly fortnightly, yet the rations were not enough to last for more than five or six days.[59] The relative decline in living standards experienced by Batetela warriors must have provided them with a compelling reason to take up arms against their new patrons, the European officers of the FP. After all, according to Gillain, the event that sparked the revolt was the excessive use of the *chicotte* against a Batetela soldier who had been mistreating a Luba woman.[60]

The revolt itself began on 4th July 1895 at the garrison of Luluabourg. The Batetela fired upon the European officers. The latter allegedly did not realize that this was the beginning of a mutiny until Pelzer was killed, since it was commonplace for shots to be fired in the air for occasions such as celebrations, or raucous behaviour.[61] Lassaux and Cassart, the other officers stationed at Luluabourg at that time, went into hiding, Lassaux finding shelter at the Zappo-Zap complex, a short distance away. The Batetela rebels spent the night at Luluabourg, but then began the trek eastwards in the direction of Ngandu, Ngongo's former stronghold. It was here that they engaged with loyal State forces from 12 September to 13 October.[62] During their journey to Ngandu, the rebels were joined by mutinous soldiers from other State posts: Kayeye II, Kayeye I and Kabinda. It took the CFS two years to quell the rebellion in the Kasai, by which time many of the mutineers had migrated to the bush lands of western Katanga, where they could roam and raid in safety from State repercussions until the 1900s.[63] Indeed, the last of the rebels would not be rounded up until 1908.

[59] Feliciano T. Nobre to Gillain, Luluabourg 5 August 1895, in Verbeken, *La Révolte des Batetela,* p42.
[60] Confidential letter from Gillain to the Governor General, Lusambo, 12 July 1895, in Verbeken, *La Revolte des Batetela,* p16.
[61] Flament, *La Force Publique*, p. 354.
[62] Ibid., p. 366.
[63] Vellut, 'La violence', p. 693.

The tumultuous conditions triggered by the mutinies at the State posts enhanced Kalamba's longstanding campaign against the CFS and affiliated establishments. By 7th July 1895, the Batetela who had not travelled eastwards from Luluabourg had joined forces with Kalamba, bringing with them the supply of firearms and ammunition which they had looted. This development understandably concerned the European officers, who feared that the new allies might also join forces with the Chokwe. Drawing on the Zappo-Zap, they ordered a swift counter-strike.[64]



Map 9. 'Campagne Contre Les Révoltes de Luluabourg: carte générale des opérations', in Flament, *La Force Publique de sa Naissance à 1914* (Institut Royal Colonial Belge : Bruxelles, 1952), found at the end of the book.

[64] Michaux to Gillain, Tande, 12 July 1895, in Verbeken, *La Révolte des Batetela,* p. 21.

Some scholars such as Mwana Mputu have presented the Luluabourg revolt as an instance of resistance against the colonial takeover.[65] This misleading interpretation is predicated on the simplistic view that colonialism in Africa amounted to a clear-cut confrontation between European colonisers and autochthonous peoples. When viewed in the light of the historical processes discussed so far, the Luluabourg revolt was less an anti-colonial rebellion, or an act of 'primary resistance',[66] than the swan song of the late nineteenth-century warlord order that had taken roots in the eastern Congo; such was the political model and way of life to which the mutineers aspired to return. Even though – as has been argued above – 'tribal' readings of the revolt are potentially misleading, it is nonetheless incontestable that by 1895 a significant proportion of the regular FP troops in the Lualaba-Kasai district were Batetela, in the sense that they had either been former followers of Ngongo or other Afro-Arab agents, or that they hailed from Manyema, the recently conquered Arab stronghold.[67] The mutiny of the Batetela, then, was likely a movement to revert back to the warlord conditions that the slave and ivory traders had brought into being (and that the Europeans themselves were prepared to tolerate and make use of in select instances). In other words, far from being anti-colonial heroes, the rebels harked back to the era of raiding and pillaging on their own terms, and not on the terms of the State. Medical officer Sidney Hinde observed that the rebellion of

[65] Mwamba Mputu, *Le Congo-Kasai* , *p.* 130-135. See also Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (Zed: London, 2002), p. 45.
[66] See T. Ranger, 'Connexions between 'Primary Resistance Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central African. Part I.', *Journal of African History,* Volume 9, Issue 3, (1968), *p.* 437-453. As the title suggests, Ranger sees 'primary resistances' as linked to nationalism and 'modernity' rather than as movements intended to bring pre-colonial political institutions back to life.
[67] Turner, 'A Century of Political Conflict, p81.

Ngongo's former followers was motivated by their anger at seeing 'their power being broken' at Ngongo's former stronghold since his execution.[68] In a similar vein, Vellut once suggested that the revolt might be helpfully understood, not as an instance of resistance to the State, but rather as a series of '*luttes intestines entre conquérants…*'[69]

The military prowess of the Zappo-Zap came as a blessing to the State during the revolt. The records of State officers are littered with references to the Zappo-Zap and the military lifeline they provided in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the revolt. One of the reported military clashes with the rebels, Kalamba's men in this instance, took place at the Scheutist mission of St Joseph-Mikalayi on 18 July 1895. On this occasion, the Zappo-Zap saved the life of Cambier and protected the African inhabitants of the mission, estimated at 1,100 by the end of 1894.[70] Kalamba was defeated at Luluabourg; yet by 27 July, he had still not given up or disarmed, and so Cassart was sent with a

contingent of Zappo-Zap militia to confront him.[71] Kalamba retreated north-eastwards towards Luebo. Thereafter, the Zappo-Zap were instructed to follow and ambush the insurgents along the path.[72]

The Zappo-Zap loyalty to the State, alongside that of the majority of Luba soldiers, never seems to have wavered during the course of the revolt. This was widely acknowledged by European officers. Writing to Gillain in August 1895, Cassart stressed that while the situation in Luluabourg might soon improve, he had

[68]Sidney Langford Hinde, *The Fall of the Congo Arabs* (Methuen & Co: London, 1897), p286.
[69] Vellut, 'La violence', p. 705.
[70] Cleys and De Meulder, 'Imagining a Christian Territory', p. 215.
[71] Lassaux to Gillain, 27 July 1895, MRAC, HA.01.69/59. 87-167.
[72] Cassart to Gillain, 22 October 1895, MRAC, HA.01.69/59.87-273.

nonetheless been very lucky to have had the Zappo-Zap on hand during the early stages of the revolt.[73] As has been earlier established, the main body of the Zappo-Zap populace resided in the immediate vicinity of Luluabourg, at a mere twenty minutes' walking distance from the CFS station.[74] After the initial shots were fired, Lassaux sought refuge in the village of the Zappo-Zap, who protected his life against the mutineers who were inquiring after his whereabouts. According to Flament, a gift of guns and cloth was given to the Zappo-Zap by the State as a reward for sending the rebels away without relinquishing Lassaux.[75] However, Cassart's letter to Gillain on 1st August 1895 suggests that it had been the Batetela who had offered the Zappo-Zap ivory and cloth in an attempt to induce them to join the rebellion. The leader of this Zappo-Zap contingent is reported to have shunned this opportunity and to have answered that, as long as he lived, the rebels would not have Lassaux.[76] Another (warped) version of the event appears in Demetrius Boulger's work published three years after the event: this time, it is the wounded Cassart that the Zappo-Zap refuse to hand over to the mutineers.[77]

The deviations notwithstanding, these accounts bear out the clear alignment of the Zappo-Zap with the State. This begs the obvious question: why did the Zappo-Zap not join the revolt at its outset? To express this more pointedly: if – as has been argued – the revolt was inspired by the ambition to return to the late nineteenth-century warlord order, why did the Zappo-Zap – who, after all, were the products of the

[73] Cassart to Gillain, 1 August 1895, MRAC, HA.01.69/59. 87-173.
[74] Gillain, 'Appréciation sur la situation politique de l'ancien district du Kassaï ou la zone de Luluabourg', MRAC, HA.01.69/59-87-18.
[75] Flament, *La Force Publique*, p. 359.
[76] Official Report by Lieutenant Cassart of the events between 4-19 July 1895, in Verbeken, *La Révolte des Batetela,* p. 34; see also Van Zandijcke, *Pages d'Histoire, p.* 202-3. It is not clear whether the leader in question was the Chief Zappo-Zap himself, or a Zappo-Zap man acting as spokesperson on behalf of those present at the time.
[77] Demetrius Charles de Kavanagh Boulger*, The Congo State: Or, The Growth of Civilisation in Central Africa* (W. Thacker & Company: London, 1898), p. 243.

Arab-dominated long distance trade network – choose to consort with the Europeans rather than seeking to revive their previous marauder identity?

One possible explanation is that they did not fully realise the scale of the rebellion. They may have been under the impression that the uprising in Luluabourg was nothing more than a minor insular rebellion, unlikely to seriously threaten the authority of their European partners. Moreover, European officers seem to have worked hard to disguise the true extent of the mutiny from their local allies. This was certainly the policy adopted in Katanga. For example, on 6 June 1897, while Captain Brasseur was on Lake Mweru (on the border between present-day Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia), he received a letter from the *Commissaire de District* Maréchal, then at MTowa, on Lake Tanganyika. Reproduced by Brasseur in his diary, Maréchal's letter reads as follows:

> *8 Mai. Le Commissaire de District me communique la grave nouvelle de la révolte des Batétélas de l'expédition de l'Inspecteur [Dhanis]. La sédition, au sujet de laquelle les renseignements précis font défaut, a éclaté vers le commencement de mars [1897], au 2e de lat N et au 30e de longitude Est. Le Commissaire de District croit que les révoltés, s'ils ne peuvent être arrêtés par l'Inspecteur, chercheront probablement à regagner leur pays d'origine, en se dirigeant sur Kirundu ou plus à l'Est ; il recommande à nous tous de nous tenir sur nos gardes contre les surprises et de mettre armes et munitions en sûreté. La plus grande discrétion est de riqueur afin que les évènements qui se passent dans le N n'aient pas leur contrecoup dans la zone. Aucun noir ne doit connaître la nouvelle.*[78]

[78] Brasseur, diary entry for 8 May 1897, MRAC, RG 768/81.15. The emphasis is my own.

On the other hand, there are signs that the Zappo-Zap did grasp the extent of regional tensions. In a note to Gillain, dating to only two days after the initial outbreak of the revolt in 1895, Michaux certifies that the Zappo-Zap knew – and had even warned – the Europeans of an impending revolt at the State post of Mukabwe.[79] Mukabwe had been established to keep an eye on Kalamba since the beginning of the confrontation between the State and his Bena Lulua. It lay at a distance of 80km, to the south west of Luluabourg.[80] Thus, the Zappo-Zap were aware of the unrest among FP soldiers, at least to the west of Luluabourg.

An alternative explanation might point to the identity of the Batetela soldiers stationed at Luluabourg. Consisting largely of former followers of the late Ngongo Luteta, it is possible that these same soldiers had in the past participated in – or were viewed as being responsible for – the man-hunt that had driven Nsapu-Nsapu and his men away from their Ben'eki homeland. If this was indeed the case, then the Zappo-Zap had little reason to abandon their new European allies in favour of their former enemies. On the other hand, the continuing enmity between Arab-ised warlords and their followers ought perhaps not to be overemphasized. Writing to Gillain on 12thJuly 1895, Michaux suggested that the best way to tackle the Batetela alliance with Kalamba was to deploy Mpania Mutombo and his men in the same western arena of fighting as the Zappo-Zap.[81] Had the two groups still been intensely hostile to one another, placing them within the same battleground would have risked the intensification of violence.[82]

[79] Michaux to Gillain, Mocadi 6 July 1895 – 4h soir, in Verbeken, *La Révolte des Batetela,* p. 13.
[80] Storme, *La Mutinerie*, p. 12.
[81] Michaux to Gillain, Tande, 12 July 1895, in Verbeken, *La Révolte des Batetela,* p. 21.
[82] The attendance of delegates from the Beekalebue and the Basanga at the old Nsapu-Nsapu's funeral also suggests some measure of reconciliation. See chapter three, p80.

The warlords Lumpungu and Mpania Mutombo themselves did not throw their weight behind the rebellion either, and remained loyal to the State. These mercenaries, like the Zappo-Zap, had been incorporated into the CFS military structure as auxiliaries. They largely retained their own followers and were presented with regions formerly belonging to the Luba Lubilanji of the eastern Kasai to rule over – Lumpungu the southern region and Mpania the northern region – in tandem with CFS expectations.[83] The Zappo-Zap probably enjoyed similar privileges. On 9 January 1895, six months prior to the outbreak of the revolt, Gillain noted in his personal diary that he had visited the Zappo-Zap in Luluabourg to scold them for not having gathered enough tribute from their '*sujets*' there.[84] Furthermore, it is likely that the State turned a blind eye (or even encouraged) the Zappo-Zap's continuing slave-trading activities, as it did in the cases of Lumpungu and Mpania Mutombo. Verner, for instance, lamented that 'where […] the chief dealers in human beings were the strongest professed allies the government possessed, as in the case of the Zappo-Zaps, the officials at Lusambo and Luluabourg experienced troubles well-nigh insurmountable in putting down the trade.'[85] It is even possible that new slaving frontiers were thrown open to the Zappo-Zap thanks to their alliance with the CFS: the personal testimony of a liberated Batetela slave, as collected by Verner, suggests that 'the Zappo-Zaps had followed in the wake of the white man in his country.'[86] Slaves were not the only end-product of State-sanctioned raids: whilst on tribute-collecting missions on behalf of the State, the Zappo-Zap were permitted to 'plunder,

[83] Mwembu, 'The Role of Firearms', p. 62.
[84] Gillain, 9 January 1895, MRAC, HA.01.69/59. 87-18.
[85] Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa, p.* 3. 61. This point is also made in a general sense in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, 'The End of Slavery in Africa' in Richard Roberts and Suzanne Miers (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 17.
[86] Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa,* p. 244.

burn, and kill for their own amusement and gain.'[87] It thus seems clear that the auxiliary troops of the CFS enjoyed greater independence, room for manoeuvre and opportunities for self-enrichment than their peers who were directly incorporated into the FP as regular soldiers. This being the case, they are likely to have had less grounds for discontent and, therefore, rebellion.

The Kuba and the Pyaang Massacre

The Kuba kingdom did not consist of a homogenous 'Kuba' ethnic group; rather, it encompassed a collection of communities, loosely united as the 'people of the king.'[88] The King, or *Lukengu*, hailed from the Bushoong ethnic group at the heart of the kingdom. The polity was informed by notions of divine kingship akin to those which existed in the Luba empire. Nonetheless, there was a strong 'democratic' undercurrent to Kuba governance which was not found in other polities in the Kasai and surrounding districts. The King's council, for instance, consisted of titleholders who had been elected to their offices by their peers.[89] Peripheral ethnic groups, however, were less closely integrated into the kingdom, although there were institutions, such as the taking up of royal wives by the *Lukengu*, which tied them to the royal capital.[90] The Kete, in particular, thought to have been the original inhabitants of the land until they were conquered by the Bushoong and subjected to their rule, were estranged from the ruling elite. These internal divisions were exploited by early CFS agents. An initial Kuba attack on Bateman while undertaking a reconnaissance of the Lulua river in 1886 led him to tell 'the Bakete that they must choose whom they would befriend […] if [...] they desired to be free from an ancient

[87] 'Massacre in Congo State: Missionaries Say Villages Have Been Burned, Many People Slain, and Some Eaten by State Troops', *New York Times,* 5 January 1900.
[88] Vansina, *Children of Woot,* p. 4.
[89] Vansina, *Being Colonized,* p. 46.
[90] Ibid., p. 47.

thraldom, and to cast their lot with us, I was willing to undertake their defence against the Bakuba.'[91] Although the Kuba kingdom did not lack military strength and had indeed been able to protect its middleman position in the 1880s to the detriment of Luso-African traders from Angola,[92] internal fragmentation weighed against its ability to present a united front against the Europeans and their local allies. The Bushoong – as will be seen in the case of the Pyaang – refused to militarily defend the peripheral chiefdoms of uncertain loyalty.[93]

It is probable that the Zappo-Zap and the Kuba people had been in trading contact before the Zappo-Zap moved to Luluabourg and stipulated their alliance with the CFS. The Kuba people, the history of whom has been well documented by Jan Vansina,[94] were a slave importing society: slaves were utilised for domestic labour and the expansion of kin groups. These imported slaves were predominantly Luba-speakers of the eastern Kasai, who had been raided by the Zappo-Zap and other marauders.[95] However, Vansina also asserts that the Kuba acquired the majority of their slave population from these slave traders in the early colonial period and not *before* the arrival of the State, despite the 'civilising' claims of the CFS to quash the slave trade.[96] The slave markets were largely based on the periphery of the Kuba kingdom: it was difficult for foreigners to penetrate the interior of the kingdom itself. The Kuba had traditionally conducted an isolationist policy and shunned foreign encroachment, preventing outsiders from entering the royal capital on pain of death. This policy was enforced even when Kuba subjects inadvertently came across

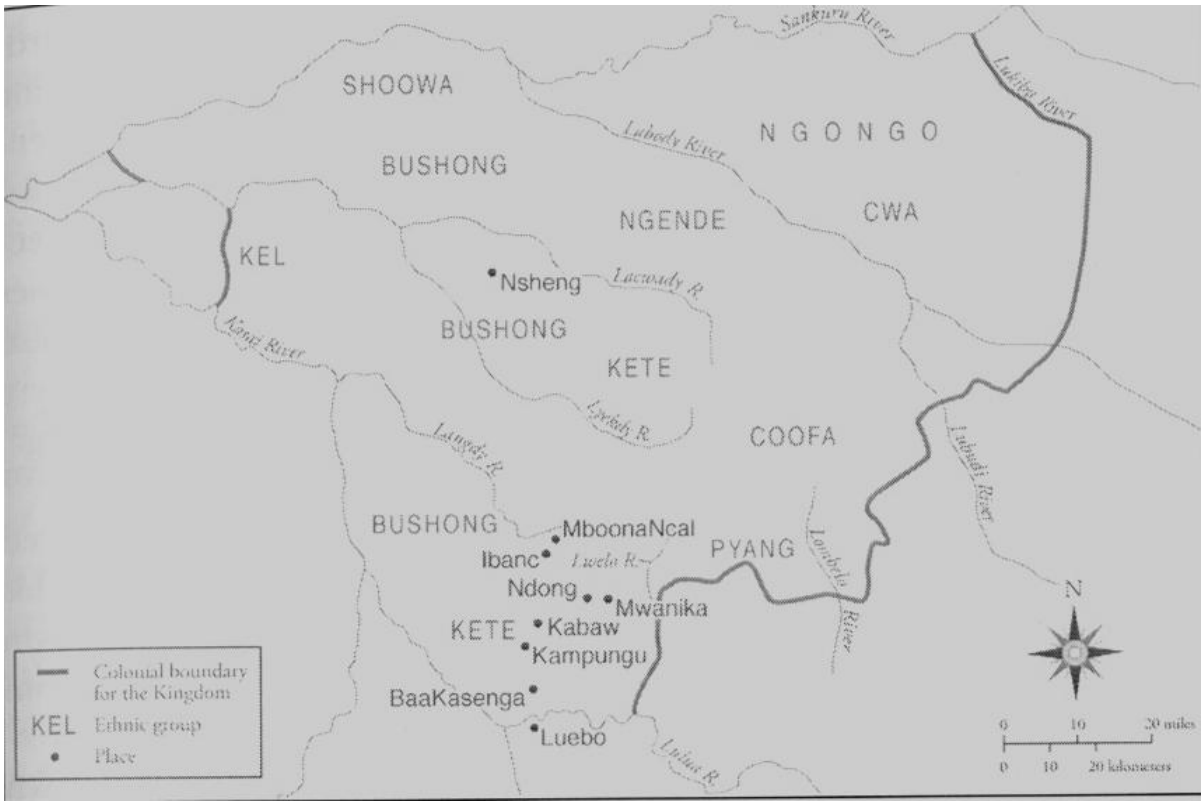
[91] Bateman, *The First Ascent,* p. 145.
[92] Vansina, *Children of Woot*, p. 195.
[93] Ibid., p. 164.
[94] See Vansina, *Children of Woot*; Vansina, *Being Colonized*.
[95] See Chapter Two for details on the 'trade triangle' between the Kuba, warlords such as the Zappo-Zap and Luso-African traders.
[96] Vansina, *Being Colonized* p. 30.

'foreigners who had dared overstep *Lukengu*'s laws and enter the forbidden bounds of his kingdom'. The Kuba 'traitors' were then summoned to the royal capital and a 'bloody death' administered to them.[97]

However, the increase in Kuba slaves was such that by 1892, there was at least one slave per household within the royal capital.[98] This dramatic increment in slaves also coincided with the introduction of amulets and charms into Kuba society from slave-trading peoples such as the Zappo-Zap and the Chokwe.[99] This would seem, on the surface, to suggest a level of cultural borrowing and spiritual assimilation between such communities. In spite of this, however, there seems to have been little love lost between the Zappo-Zap and the Kuba. The Kuba had formerly insulted their chief, and the Zappo-Zap considered themselves '*ennemis-nés des Bakubas*'.[100] The Zappo-Zap assault on Kuba subjects at Pyaang in September 1899 is also described by the eyewitness William Sheppard as an act of 'revenge' for 'an old feud which had begun long ago between the Zaps and *Lukengu*'. Sheppard, unfortunately, does not make clear how this feud may have begun.[101]

[97] 'How Sheppard Made His Way into *Lukengu's* Kingdom, Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account,* p. 92.
[98] Vansina, *Children of Woot,* p. 180.
[99] Ibid., p. 203.
[100] Shaloff, 'The American Presbyterian Congo Mission', p. 133; M. G. de Macar, 'Chez les Bakubas', *Le Congo Illustré,* Volume 4, Issue 21, (1895), p. 172.
[101] William H. Sheppard, 'Interview With Chief M'lumba N'kusa Concerning the Zappo Zap Raid', 14 September 1899, in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account,* p. 122.

The State-sanctioned actions of the Zappo-Zap against the Kuba may have thus offered the former the opportunity to exact their retribution. The Pyaang offensive was actually only one of the three attacks which culminated in the State's conquest of the kingdom: a raid against the capital in April 1899, the onslaught at Pyaang in September of the same year, and the eventual overrunning of the capital in late July 1900, after the death of the King.[102] These attacks occurred against a background of political instability and volatility within the Kuba kingdom, which had witnessed the slow infiltration of 'non-Kuba' peoples from the south and attempts at secession from the subjects in the east of the kingdom.[103]



Map 10. 'The Kuba Kingdom, 1885', in Jan Vansina, *Being Colonized: The Kuba Experience in Rural Congo, 1880-1960* (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison; Wisconsin, 2010), p. 45.

[102] Vansina, *Being Colonized*, p69-70; Jan Vansina, 'Comment l'histoire se Construit : la Conquête du Royaume Kuba (1899-1900)', *Civilisations,* Volume 40, No. 2, (1992), p. 43.
[103] Claes Josefsson, 'An Outpost of Progress: Development in the Northern Kasai Region of Zaire in the Early 20th Century', *Ethnos,* Volume 49, Issue 3-4, (1985).

Furthermore, different royal factions had been locked in competition from 1885, creating the opportune circumstances for State conquest and exploitation.[104] Indeed Rev. C. de Witt Snyder, a Protestant missionary based at Luebo, foretold State intervention in the midst of the dissension. The Kuba king, he wrote, 'is old and liable to die any day. When he dies I think the kingdom will end as the state will step in and put a stop to any succeeding king.'[105] The in-fighting among Bushoong royalty was further exacerbated by the intervention of APCM missionaries, who took Mishaamilyeng, an heir to the *Lukengu* title, under their protection. This action, while seemingly humanitarian, most likely prolonged the political turmoil: Mishaape, the new king, was under constant threat of being overthrown by this contender to the throne. Eventually, Mishaape died in July 1900 before he was acknowledged as the legitimate King, having failed to eliminate his rivals.[106]

Combining the different perspectives of oral and written sources, Vansina has fully reconstructed the fall of the Kuba kingdom to the State in 1900.[107] However, it is the September 1899 offensive against the Pyaang, a community on the eastern periphery of the Kuba state, between the Livelo and the Lubudi rivers, which best serves to illustrate the alliance between the Zappo-Zap and the CFS. The Pyaang Massacre has been made infamous by missionary reports which, in the hands of early human rights activists such as E.D. Morel and H.R. Fox Bourne, provided powerful evidence of the brutality of the workings of the CFS.[108] The full account of

[104] Shaloff, 'The American Presbyterian Congo Mission', p. 390.
[105] DeWitt C. Snyder to Brother Philips, Luebo, 13 January 1894, in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account,* p. 97.
[106] Shaloff, 'The American Presbyterian Congo Mission', p. 393.
[107] See Jan Vansina, 'La Conquête du Royaume Kuba'; Vansina, *Being Colonized p.*75-79.
[108] Morel, *Red Rubber, p.* 71-72; Henry Richard Fox Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland : A Story of International Wrong-doing* (P.S. King & Son: London, 1903), *p.* 258-261.

the events at Pyaang was authored by the American Presbyterian missionary, Mr. William Morrison. Morrison, who was based at the mission of Luebo, drew on the testimony of his colleague William Sheppard, who had been an eyewitness to the immediate aftermath of the violence. Sheppard had been alerted to Zappo-Zap raiding activities in an area 'a few hours' walk of their station at [...] Ibanche'.[109] A total of fourteen villages in this region had been subject to a scorched earth policy, and so Sheppard embarked on an exploratory mission to establish the situation on the ground, meeting and conferring with M'lumba Nkusa.[110] M'lumba Nkusa was the Zappo-Zap chief who had led the raiding party: he was not the paramount of the Zappo-Zap militia, but a subordinate ally to the successors of Nsapu-Nsapu.[111]

Sheppard's interview with M'lumba Nkusa reveals that the Zappo-Zap had ventured into Pyaang territory in order to gather tribute for the State. To this end, they had invited between 80 and 90 neighbouring chiefs and sub-chiefs into the stockade they had created. However, after they 'only' yielded 'eight slaves, two points of ivory, 2,500 balls of rubber, a few goats and fowls, and some corn and chumby', all of the visitors within the stockade were killed.[112] While the scale of the killing was certainly enough to warrant missionary outrage, the reported post-mortem brutalities proved even more shocking, sparking a veritable moral hysteria and lending weight to the campaign against King Leopold and the CFS. Sheppard asserts that he saw only forty-one bodies within the compound: only half of the chiefs that M'lumba Nkusa is said to have lured in from Pyaang. The others, according to Nkusa, had been eaten by his men.[113] This may not have come as a great surprise to Sheppard, who had

[109] Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland,* p. 258.
[110] Ibid.; 'Massacre in Congo State', 5 January 1900.
[111] Vansina, *Being Colonized*, p. 27.
[112] Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland, p.* 259-60.
[113] Ibid., p. 260.

characterised the Zappo-Zap as 'ruthless and dangerous cannibals' in his personal correspondence and public speeches.[114] It was, however, the eighty-one hands being roasted for preservation that seemed to attract the greatest moral revulsion. This was probably because M'lumba Nkusa's explanation for this practice directly implicated the State. On this score, Nkusa declared that 'they always cut off the right hand to give it to the State on their return.'[115] This, Sheppard understood, was a barbarous method through which CFS authorities ensured that gun cartridges were not wasted indiscriminately against the natives; the hand was to be cut off the corpse posthumously to prove the kill.[116]

The evidence collected by Sheppard was significant, as it demonstrated the existence of an institutional framework that explicitly encouraged violence as a means to harvest the maximum amount of resources and tribute. Such violence, in other words, was far from being a mere act of 'savage barbarianism' on the part of the Zappo-Zap. These terror tactics run parallel with those that had obtained under Arab rule. Indeed, similar to the *waungwana* under the Arab system, the Zappo-Zap materially gained from the violence: they were given free rein to 'plunder' the villages after extracting State taxes.[117]

At this point, mention must be made of the fact that the sources on the Pyaang Massacre are far from unequivocal. The APCM account summarized above clearly implicates the State as the authority behind the attack. Cambier, on the other hand,

[114] Wallace V. Short, 'William Henry Sheppard: Pioneer African-American Presbyterian Missionary, Human Rights Defender, and Collector of African Art, 1865-1927', (PhD., Howard University, 2006), p. 200.
[115] Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland,* p. 260; Shaloff, *Reform in Congo,* p. 77.
[116] However, there is also evidence to suggest that this was used as a punishment for those labourers who had failed to harvest an adequate supply of rubber, see Burroughs, *Travel Writings and Atrocities,* p. 54.
[117] 'Massacre in Congo State', 5 January 1900.

attempted to absolve the State, claiming that it had never employed the Zappo-Zap as tax collectors (although he admitted that they could be prone to misguidedly using their power and authority for their own benefit) and that it was the Zappo-Zap who had come under attack in Pyaang country.[118] Cambier was being economical with the truth here. As has been previously argued, State auxiliary troops were often used as *capitas* and tax collectors. Even as late as the late 1900s, highly placed European officers defended the Zappo-Zap right to claim large number of local slaves for State use, and escorted them in this endeavour. For example, early in 1908, the APCM at Luebo had 'not [for] the first time [...] been disturbed by the officers of the State coming here from Luluabourg and threatening to take the people away and force them to become slaves of the Zappo-Zaps again.'[119] Cambier, moreover, had not been present in the Congo at the time of the Pyaang attack. Finally, he was also, as we know, personally indebted to the Zappo-Zap since their defence of St Joseph-Mikalayi station only four years earlier. Cambier's rendition of the attack, then, does not hold in the face of the historical evidence.

This, however, is not to say that the narrative of exploitation propagated by the American Presbyterian missionaries should be swallowed unconditionally. There is certainly a sense that the evidence they presented was deployed for political purposes. The practice of dismembering hands, for example, was described as having been introduced by the CFS, and it became an international symbol of the unparalleled savagery that Leopoldian colonialism cultivated. Morel, for one, felt entitled to conclusively assert that while

[118] Shaloff, 'The American Presbyterian Congo Mission', p. 137.
[119] William M. Morrison to the District Commissioner, 27 February 1908, in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account, p.* 297-8.

> I have read, I think, nearly all that is to be read of Congo literature, and, eliminating the recent bald official statements - statements unsupported by a shadow of proof - I have come across nothing which tends to show, or even to suggest, that the native tribes of the Congo territories mutilate their enemies either dead or living.[120]

Yet, it seems that this practice – or similar examples – predated the CFS. The English explorer Verney Lovett Cameron, writing of his experience among the Luba of Katanga in June 1875, recorded, for example, that at the mention of the name of the Luba *Mulopwe*, 'there was immediately much lively pantomimic action as of cutting off ears, noses, and hands, and all [villagers] declared that on his approach they would secrete themselves in the jungle.'[121] The historically untenable notion that mutilations were introduced by the State is both a cause and a consequence of an intellectual climate that, since the days of the Congo Reform Association, has distorted the structure and workings of the CFS. In this simplistic reading, rubber-hungry Europeans, led by an evil, greedy king, inflicted untold misery on innocent Africans. An extract from a letter from Morrison to the Aborigines Protection Society aptly exemplifies this intellectual standpoint:

> The fact is that the petty officers who personally do all this 'dirty work' are not really the guilty ones after all so much as are the high officials, and most prominent among these latter, of course, is none other than Leopold II, the professed philanthropist.[122]

[120] E. D. Morel , *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (Heinemann: London, 1904), p. 116.
[121] Cameron, *Across Africa,* p. 128. See also chapter one, p15-16, for Tippu-Tip's account, and Alexandre Delcommune, *Vingt Années de Vie Africain. 1874-1893; récits de voyages d'aventures et d'exploration au Congo Belge,* Volume 2, (Ferdinand Larcier : Bruxelles, 1922), p. 144.
[122] William M. Morrison to the Aborigines Protection Society, 7 October 1902, in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account,* p. 142.

Readings such as these tend to present Leopold as the actor solely responsible for the acts of violence that punctuated life in the CFS. For instance, in the words of Slade, 'research has shown again and again that it was the King's will alone which shaped his Congo policy; that he was a constitutional monarch in Europe, and was also an absolute despot in the Congo.'[123] This take – most recently regurgitated in works such as *King Leopold's Ghost*[124] – divests the CFS's African agents, such as the Zappo-Zap, of their historical responsibilities – responsibilities which were, ironically, acknowledged by State officers of the time. Indeed, it is revealed in the inquiry into the Zappo-Zap killings at Pyaang that the governor-general '*établi à la charge des gens de cette tribu une certaine part de culpabilité dans les faits qui se sont passés dans la région*' of the Kuba.[125] The subsequent warping of events have underplayed the importance of the late nineteenth-century global trade in transforming and brutalizing the socio-political landscape of the southern savanna, before any direct European encroachment.

What is needed, in other words, is to form an accurate picture of the real balance of power in the State. The study of the historical trajectory of the Zappo-Zap goes some way towards making this objective possible. The Zappo-Zap were a valuable ally to the State, as their loyalty during the 1895 rebellion had shown. As such, M'lumba Nkusa was imprisoned for merely weeks as punishment for the killings at Pyaang: a distinctly mild penalty, calculated to appease the critics of the regime. The State – and missionaries such as Cambier – owed much to the Zappo-Zap because of the recent revolt. Furthermore, the number of Zappo-Zap exceeded that of State forces,

[123] Ruth M. Slade, *English-speaking missions in the Congo Independent State (1878-1908)* (Académie Royale des Sciences colonials: Bruxelles, 1959), p. 286.
[124] See fn 2 for further works in this vein.
[125] Gustave Babin, 'Congo', *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires,* Issue 122, (3 May 1900), p. 2.

and it is unlikely that the State could have long survived a Zappo-Zap insurrection in the midst of the other coeval insurgencies.[126] Even the short imprisonment of Nkusa, however, allegedly threatened the loyalty of the Zappo-Zap. Outraged at having been 'treacherously dealt with' by the State, the Zappo-Zap were rumoured to be 'on the eve of revolting' in the weeks after the sentencing of Nkusa. Had the threat materialized, it would have been 'a most serious affair, seeing that their number is estimated at about 25,000 or 30,000, and that they have many guns, and know from long experience how to use them.'[127]

Zappo-Zap Loyalty to the State

Fortunately for the State, a Zappo-Zap rebellion did not materialise,, even though the Kuba rebellion of 1904 sparked renewed fears of Zappo-Zap infidelity. The course of the rebellion itself is not of importance in this context,[128] but the fetishes and *bwanga* (magic) employed are. In 1903, the Kuba had sent for a Zappo-Zap shaman to expel the small pox epidemic rife in the kingdom, the logic being that the Zappo-Zap, having defeated the Kuba, possessed greater spiritual power than the latter.[129] These 'magic men' stayed within the kingdom and lent assistance with the contrivance of the 'Tonga-Tonga' cult, which originated from a village near Bena Dibele in April or May of 1904.[130] The Tonga-Tonga *bwanga* was believed to provide immunity from European bullets. It thus incited open rebellion against the State and

[126] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 91.
[127] Morel, *King Leopold's Rule,* p. 198
[128] Fuller accounts are provided by Shaloff, 'The American Presbyterian Congo Mission', *p.* 403-411, and Vansina, *Being Colonized*, *p.* 91-101.
[129] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 148.
[130] Ibid., p. 155; James A. Smith to William M. Morrison, 23 March 1908, in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account, p.* 225-6.

the rejection of European culture and, more specifically, the enforced State dues demanded by the *Compagnie du Kasaï*.[131]

The presence of Zappo-Zap shaman within the region and their direct influence on Kuba spiritual practices posed the tangible threat of the Zappo-Zap population joining the rebellion alongside the Kuba. It is unclear, however, how much of a risk the Zappo-Zap mercenaries posed to the State in the context of the Kuba rebellion. According to Fairley's collection of oral histories, the *Babanga* sub-sect of the Ben'eki, from which the Zappo-Zap originated, never spoke highly of traditional *Bukishi* spiritual practices; that is to say that the extent to which Zappo-Zap militias adhered to traditional fetishes and magical practices is unclear.[132] On the other hand, scholars such Shaloff, backed by Josefsson, have hinted at the possibility that the Zappo-Zap were themselves the instigators of the Kuba rebellion.[133] Drawing upon Torday as evidence, these scholars took at face value the following remarks of the anthropologist:

> I know on the best authority that he [Zappo-Zapp, chief of the Zappo-Zap people] was responsible for the rising of the Bushongo; when he saw that it would be unsuccessful he turned against them, and his brigands committed most of the depredations attributed to the Bushongo[134].

This allegation of infidelity seems unfounded, however. Not only did Torday not reveal the identity of his mysterious source, but the reliability of his information on the Zappo-Zap is further thrown into question by the glaring error he makes on the

[131] Martens, 'History of European Penetration', p. 155; Vansina, *Being Colonized, p.* 93-96.
[132] Fairley, 'Mianda Ya Ben'Ekie', p. 166
[133] Shaloff, 'The American Presbyterian Congo Mission', p. 411; Josefsson, 'An Outpost of Progress', p. 275.
[134] Emil Torday, *Camp and Tamp in African Wilds: A Record of Adventures, Impressions, and Experiences During Many Years Spent Among the Savage Tribes Round Lake Tanganyika and in Central Africa, with a Description of Native Life, Character and Customs* (JB Lippincott Company: Philadelphia, 1913), p. 55.

very same page: Torday mistakenly describes the former Zappo-Zap chief, Nsapu-Nsapu, as having been a headman of warlord Mpania Mutombo.[135] It seems, then, that it is safe to dismiss his reading of the rebellion.

Indeed, during the following years, the Zappo-Zap continued to benefit from their cooperation with the CFS. In February 1908, the Luebo *chef de secteur* escorted a band of Zappo-Zap in a mission to reclaim alleged runaway slaves 'and force them to become slaves of the Zappo-Zaps again.'[136] In this case, the Zappo-Zap were unsuccessful, but this example – and the detailed material surveyed above – clearly demonstrate that ample opportunities were available to the Zappo-Zap to acquire power and status under the governance of the CFS. The State's reliance on the Zappo-Zap was such that an unspecified missionary described them *tout court* as 'a tribe kept by the State for its protection.'[137]

The CFS needed indigenous military backing, and this gave the Zappo-Zap plenty of leeway. Their motives and enduring loyalty to the State are unintelligible unless this fundamental consideration is borne in mind.

[135] Ibid.
[136] William M. Morrison to District Commissioner, 27 February 1908, in Benedetto, *A Documentary Account, p.* 297-299.
[137] 'Massacre in Congo State', 5 January 1900.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There are clear conclusions to be drawn from this study. As the history of the Kasai shows, the abuses and brutalities traditionally associated with the CFS were real enough. They represented, however, the intensification and systematization of pre-existing extractive practices dating back to the era of the long-distance trade and the related emergence of warlordism. Exception made for the leading coastal traders, whom the CFS *did* eliminate from the Congolese scene, the indigenous protagonists of this era of enhanced, market-driven violence found a new lease of life under the aegis of the State. As the case of the Zappo-Zap bears out, the 'new men' who had based their power and prestige on the ability to acquire firearms and participate in the slave and ivory trades were more readily co-opted into the structures of the CFS than excluded from them. The real losers were 'traditional' African societies, such as the Kuba, and the patterns of 'soft' governance that had been typical of the southern savanna before its direct incorporation into long-distance trade networks over the course of the nineteenth-century. The study of the Zappo-Zap attests to the adaptability of these 'new men'. Originally at least partially Arab-ised by their exposure to the Arab-Swahili trade, the Zappo-Zap quickly moulded their identity to enhance their assimilation into the framework of the State - to the detriment of former State allies, such as Kalamba. The loyalty of the Zappo-Zap was assured in the face of multiple attempts by regional groups to topple European authority: the Chokwe, later joined by Kalamba, clashed repeatedly with the State; the Kaniok, too, were active dissidents; soldiers of the FP mutinied in 1895; the Kuba rebelled in 1904. The Zappo-Zap, thus, serve as a key example of African agency and collaboration at the onset of the consolidation of European expansion into the Kasai.

They are proof of the adaptability and versatility of African agents: aligning themselves with whosoever would proffer the greatest benefits and advantages, much to the detriment of those groups which the Zappo-Zap lorded over.

In conclusion, it is in order to stress the provisional character of this dissertation and the areas of investigation that would repay close study in the future. Thus, in the absence of ad hoc oral investigations, this dissertation has not attempted to explore the political trajectory of the Zappo-Zap in the aftermath of the Pyaang Massacre and the Kuba rebellion. Tentatively, it would appear that the publicity gained by the Pyaang killings was such that even the CFS could not afford to ignore it. It thus resulted in the Zappo-Zap being brought under closer control and their military role diminished.[398] A worthy future research endeavour would be to chart the wane of the Zappo-Zap, in contrast to the fortunes of, for example, the Luba, another transplanted ethnic group who forged an enduring loyalty to the State, but did not suffer from similarly 'bad publicity'.

Being concerned with the violent early history of the Congo Free State, this dissertation has naturally highlighted the military dimension of the Zappo-Zap identity; yet it can be safely surmised that other economic factors and cultural symbols were at work, and that not all Zappo-Zap regarded warfare as their exclusive vocation. One of the limitations of this dissertation is that it has only focused on the Zappo-Zap residing in Luluabourg. However, while Luluabourg was indeed their 'principal settlement in the Kasai district […], a good many of them had made smaller settlements near the most important centres, at Lusambo on the Sankuru, at Luebo,

[398] Vansina, *Being Colonized*, p. 27.

at Bena Makima and […] at the Bakete town of Kabau.'[399] Without further research, it is difficult to establish whether there were significant cultural differences between these various Zappo-Zap communities. An initial look at the scattered evidence suggests that this might actually have been the case. The American missionary Verner, for instance, hinted at the presence of specialized artisans and traders among the Zappo-Zap of Luebo.[400] The metalwork and carpentry skills of the Zappo-Zap were highly praised by other Europeans.[401] These competencies appear to have enabled at least some of the Zappo-Zap to abandon the slave trade in favour of more 'legitimate' commercial pursuits, as 'hoes made by the Zappo blacksmiths' were exchanged in the Kasai alongside 'rubber, ivory, copper, native produce and provisions […] and goods obtained from Europeans."[402]

Another significant omission is that, while this dissertation has drawn on missionary sources, it has not actually explored the impact of both Catholic and Protestant missionaries on the peoples of the Kasai, in general, and the Zappo-Zap, in particular. There were certainly members of the Zappo-Zap who settled at mission stations in the Kasai, and the existence is known of at least one Zappo-Zap Catholic catechist in 1911.[403] In the absence of further research, it is impossible to say more about the importance of Zappo-Zap conversion and the extent to which they underwent a process of 'Europeanization' similar to that which the Luba converts famously experienced.[404]

[399] Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa,* p. 359.
[400] See ibid., *p.* 286, 359-362.
[401] Ibid., p. 403; the Zappo-Zap are also described as "tribus comptent des forgerons" in Geo Morissens, *L'Oeuvre Civilisatrice au Congo Belge* (Leon Dequesne: Mons, 1912), p. 230; Timmermans, 'Les Sapo-Sapo', p36-53.
[402] Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa,* p. 361.
[403] Likaka, *Naming Colonialism,* p. 64.
[404] See Martin Kalulambi Pongo, *Etre Luba au XXe siècle : Identité chrétienne et ethnicité au Congo-Kinshasa,* (Karthala: Paris, 1998).

Because of the limitations of our sources, the history and identity of Zappo-Zap women has similarly not been heeded. As such, it is difficult to confirm whether Zappo-Zap women were assimilated into European society on par with the men. The wives and concubines of regular FP soldiers accompanied their male partners to their postings and were regarded as being under military authority.[405] It is unclear whether this was also the case for such auxiliary troops as the Zappo-Zap. The only seemingly certifiable reference to a Zappo-Zap woman pertains to Chala, the wife *Monsieur* Stache, whose trading company, the SAB, had been present in Luebo from 1884/5.[406] Chala – described as a Zappo-Zap 'princess' – had converted to Christianity after settling at Luebo and, in all likelihood, had close contacts with the APCM stationed there: she and her husband placed their daughter, Emma, under the care of Mr and Mrs Sheppard on the mission.[407] Further, the marriage was reported to have prompted a number of Zappo-Zap to settle at Luebo as traders.[408] Once more, only further research might establish how typical was the experience of Chala and whether other Zappo-Zap women followed her example -and that of their male peers- in making the most of the new opportunities thrown open by the arrival of the Europeans.

[405] Boeck, *Les Révoltes de la Force Publique,* p. 45.
[406] Verner, *Pioneering in Central Africa, p.* 101-4.
[407] Ibid,
[408] Ibid., p. 104.

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