

‘Souls as dark as their skin’ or ‘bright black gentlemen’?

The ambivalent discourse about Congolese ‘petits boys’ in Belgium (1885-1914)

PETITS CONGOLAIS EN BELGIQUE



(Illustration 1. A drawing of students at the Catholic institute in Gijzegem in 1896, most of whom came to Belgium as ‘petits boys’)

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I hereby declare that, in line with the Faculty of Arts' code of conduct for research integrity, the work submitted here is my own original work and that any additional sources of information have been duly cited.

Notice on translation and terminology

The primary sources cited in this master's thesis were translated from Dutch and French to English by the author of the thesis. He did this to the best of his abilities as a non-native speaker. Furthermore, when using labels such as Congolese and African, the author of this master's thesis is well-aware that these are European constructs imposed by the colonizing powers on people who used completely different identity markers. When colonized people arrived in Belgium they were labeled as Congolese and African, even though they possibly came from places located far away from the Congo River and had never heard the European name for their continent. Due to a lack of source material that provides an insight in the perspective of the 'petits boys' themselves and their identity markers, these European labels will nevertheless be used. To refer to King Leopold's colonial project in Congo this master's thesis will use the term Congo Free State, and not Congo Independent State or Independent State of the Congo, because the former is predominantly used in the English language literature. The French adjectives 'Congolâtre', meaning adoring the colonial project in Congo, and 'Congophobe', meaning despising the colonial project in Congo, were common in the francophone written press between 1885 and 1914 and will therefore be used in this master's thesis without translating them to English.

Lusambo Tchibanda and Paul Le Marinel

Lusambo, also known as André Luce, arrived in Belgium in March 1892 and went to Brussels to live with his master Paul Le Marinel, a Congo Free State expedition leader. When his master returned to Congo in January 1893, Lusambo stayed in Brussels for his education. First he joined a state middle school and later he entered the atheneum of Ixelles. Lusambo took part in the Fun Fair in Brussels in 1897. In 1900, he received private tutoring by a teacher named Mr. Bracq. In 1901, Lusambo travelled back to Congo to work for the Matadi-Leopoldville Railroad Company. In July 1905 and July 1910, he returned to Belgium for a short visit. Back in Congo, Lusambo married a Congolese woman in 1913.



(Illustration 2. A drawing of Lusambo Tchibanda or André Luce in *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*)

Max Makwangwa and Ernest-Jean Freitag

Max arrived in Belgium on the 21st of February 1893 with his master Ernest-Jean Freitag, a military officer of the Congo Free State who fought against Arab slave traders and repressed rebellions by indigenous rulers. Max had served Freitag in Congo since 1886 and nursed him when his master got wounded in battle. Max went to live with his master in Laken, where Freitag's father headed the communal administration. For two years Max went to the state middle school of Laken. On the 12th of February 1898 Max left Belgium again and travelled with his master to Siam (Thailand), where Freitag was sent on an information campaign for the Congo Free State. In September 1898 Max was repatriated to Congo.



(Illustration 3. A drawing representing Max as a black gentleman in *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*)

Sakala and Liévin Van de Velde

Sakala was the first 'petit boy' from the Congo Free State in Belgium. From the 19th of December 1885 until the 23rd of October 1887, he lived with his master Liévin Van de Velde, a Congo Free State expedition leader, in Ghent where he went to a state school and learned French and Dutch. He returned to Congo with Van de Velde and was reunited with his family in the fall of 1887. When Van de Velde died in February 1888 Sakala stayed in Congo, working as an interpreter. In 1889 he was involved in an extortion crime and in March 1895 Sakala returned to Belgium a final time to give a lecture to students in Ghent. Sakala presumably died a few years later, although it is unclear how and when.



(Illustration 4. The monument for Sakala and the Van de Velde brothers at the Citadel Park in Ghent)

Tonio and Charles Lemaire

Tonio arrived in Belgium on the 17th of October 1893 and went to live with his master, Congo Free State agent Charles Lemaire, as his 'petit boy' in Brussels. In Congo, he had worked as an interpreter, helping his master to compile a dictionary of several Congolese languages. Very soon after his arrival in Europe he started showing signs of a mental condition. He was hospitalized several times at a psychiatric institution in Evere. In between his hospitalizations he was sent to the Flemish and Walloon countryside on convalescence. After a period of approximately four months in Belgium, Tonio died on the 17th of February 1894 and was buried at the communal cemetery of Evere.



(Illustration 5. A drawing of the tombstone on Tonio's grave at the communal cemetery in Evere)

Preface

During my time as a student in Leuven, the best decision I made by far was to start the abridged bachelor's in history after my bachelor's in law. It gave me the opportunity to nurture my historical curiosity and has challenged me to push my boundaries. Quite literally, for it allowed me to study in the United States for seven months, truly a dream come true and an experience that I will treasure forever and for which I am very grateful. Without the language skills that I gained during my exchange, I am quite sure I would not have been able to complete this master's thesis in English.

Firstly, I would like to thank Professor Idesbald Goddeeris for coming up with the brilliant idea to use the Online Belgica Press archive of the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR) to conduct the research for this thesis. Furthermore, his patience while guiding me in the right direction and his thorough feedback made this master's thesis better, one step at a time. Secondly, I would like to thank everyone who has proofread my final version and has helped to filter out my numerous linguistic mistakes, in particular my parents. Thirdly, I would like to thank Koen and Ingrid for allowing me to stay with them as a part of their family while I was writing this master's thesis and Evert, for being my other best decision ever. Finally, I would like to thank my grandfather René who was the first to ignite my passion for history. I am sure he would have stood by my side every step of the way on my journey to become a historian, if only he had been around longer to see it.

Researching the stories of the 'petits boys', piecing together all the little bits of information, was a thrilling exploration into the unknown. Uncovering their long-forgotten lives has been an absolute privilege. Giving a voice to people who did not have one themselves is what makes history writing so fantastic. May their voices be heard!



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Abstract

Between 1885 and 1914, black male underage domestic servants from Congo, so-called ‘petits boys’, were brought to Belgium by white colonial agents as part of the European civilizing mission. Their presence in Belgium, as educated Congolese individuals, challenged the sacred binary structure of colonial society, with inferior black colonized people on one side and superior white colonizers on the other. As a newly emerging intermediate group in colonial society, ‘petits boys’ were defying the established order, demonstrating that not all Congolese were complete savages. This created friction and instability, raising questions about the status, character, and capacities of the ‘petits boys’, and resulted in an ambivalent discourse about them in the Belgian newspapers.

During the Congo Free State period as well as during the pre-World War I Belgian Congo period, both positive and negative themes were part of the discourse. This was a consequence of the lack of clarity about where exactly the ‘petits boys’ fitted in the colonial order. Some newspapers highlighted their function as future agents of assimilation and wrote about their successful reintegration in Congo after their Belgian training, using them as a tool of imperial propaganda. Others emphasized their evil and insurmountably different nature, portraying them as potentially dangerous revolutionaries. Several newspapers criticized the colonial agents for abusing the ‘petits boys’ and held them personally responsible for bringing them to Belgium. This criticism contributed to an emerging sense of urgency on behalf of the colonial administration to take action, which resulted in 1895 and 1913 in the adoption of strict regulations on bringing new ‘petits boys’ to Belgium. This master’s thesis conducts a critical discourse analysis about the coverage of the ‘petits boys’ in the Belgian print media between 1885 and 1914, identifying approximately thirty cases of ‘petits boys’, including some that were never studied before.

Introduction

Far from the great river, forever deprived of the sun's burning kisses, little Tonio rests under the gloomy sky and the cold soil of Brabant. Not a single soul drank palm wine on his grave nor opened a parasol to give him shade and coolness while asleep. From the tears of his master, Tonio made himself a necklace which he wears over there, in the country of the Nzambi, the paradise of the blacks. Undoubtedly the little negro is happy over there, in his heavenly bamboo hut, under the tall trees, where the ripe papayas are hanging low, driven mad by the marvels of Europe.¹

This fragment is part of a eulogy published in the Belgian liberal newspaper *L'Indépendance belge* to commemorate Tonio, the personal servant of Lieutenant Charles Lemaire, who passed away on the 17th of February 1894. This passage evokes the image of a heavenly tropical paradise where a displaced Congolese boy, far away from his homeland, was now resting in peace. It contains many elements that characterized the colonial discourse about young Congolese children present in Belgium during the Congo Free State (from now on CFS) period (1885-1908) and the pre-World War I Belgian Congo period (1908-1914), which constitutes the subject matter of this master's thesis.

Before analyzing the colonial discourse about the Congolese 'petits boys', black male underage domestic servants of white colonial officials, this introduction provides an overview of the existing literature and presents the research that was conducted for writing this master's thesis. The first section discusses the literature about Congolese presence in Belgium before the end of World War I and touches the scholarship about the presence of individuals from colonized territories in the metropolises of Belgium's European neighboring states. The second section describes the evolution of the Belgian print press media landscape during the CFS period and the pre-World War I Belgian Congo period and reviews the most relevant literature about the Belgian colonial discourse. The third section presents the research question, the primary sources, and the methodology adopted to carry out the research of this master's thesis and clarifies the structure of subsequent chapters.

A. Counterflows to colonization in Belgium and beyond

Compared to the extensive historiography on Europeans who traveled to different continents and colonized them, the scholarship about the people from those continents who traveled in the opposite direction is relatively limited. The so-called 'counterflows to colonization', bringing colonized people from the colonies to Europe, have long been overshadowed by the mainstream historical narrative about European imperialism conquering the globe.² It is therefore no surprise that Belgian-Congolese historian Mathieu Zana Aziza Etambala's book on Congolese students in Belgium at the end of the nineteenth century was subtitled *A forgotten page of history*.³

¹ *L'Indépendance belge*, 25-01-1894, 5.

² Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism*.

³ Etambala, *Des écoliers Congolais En Belgique (1888-1900)*.

Etambala's doctoral thesis from 1989 was the first and still is the only comprehensive attempt to provide an overview of Congolese presence in Belgium before World War II.⁴ The first Congolese presence in Belgium was recorded at the start of the colonial project of the CFS in the nineteenth century. In his book from 1993 entitled *In the land of the Banoko: The history of Congolese presences in Belgium from 1885 till present*, publishing the major findings of his doctoral research, Etambala argued however that the Congolese were not the first black people in Belgium and that the first African presence dated back earlier.⁵ The global trade network that connected the ports of Bruges and Antwerp to Asia, Africa and the Americas brought African individuals to Belgium as early as the fifteenth century, often as servants for rich households. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century the city of Antwerp had the second largest African population in Europe, only Lisbon had more. But Etambala emphasized that it was under King Leopold II's reign that the interactions between Belgium and Africa rose to unprecedented heights because of the sovereign's colonial project.⁶ In spite of that, Belgian historian Anne Morelli, researching Congolese presence in Belgium after the Congolese independence, labeled the cases of Congolese in Belgium as anecdotic and scarce.⁷ She stated that between 1885 and 1960 there was hardly any colonial immigration to Belgium.⁸

Scholars have formulated several explanations for the exceptionally low numbers of Congolese in Belgium. Firstly, some pointed at the low population density of the colonized territory.⁹ Researching the history of Belgian immigration, historian Ndamina-Maduka Lusanda stated that the entire local population had to be mobilized to turn the vast Congo region into a profitable colony.¹⁰ Therefore, there was no surplus of people that could be sent to Belgium to work in the coal mining industry during the twentieth century. The problematic demographic situation in Congo even resulted in the recruitment of people from the neighboring colonies to work in the Congolese mines. American historian Matthew G. Stanard formulated a second explanation in his book on the CFS's colonial propaganda strategy.¹¹ He argued that the colonial authorities were deeply concerned about the presence of Africans in Belgium and adopted a deliberate policy of control and exclusion that segregated the colony's indigenous population from the metropole.¹² The aim was to prevent the Congolese from gaining the same status as Belgians out of fear for the loss of prestige of the latter. Additionally, the colonial administration wanted to keep the Congolese perception of European perfection immaculate by preventing that they would see for themselves, by visiting Belgium, that the daily lives of many Belgians were far from perfect. Thirdly, Lusanda

⁴ Etambala, 'Présences Congolaises En Belgique, 1885 - 1940: Exhibition - éducation - émancipation - Paternalisme.'

⁵ Etambala, *In Het Land Van De Banoko*, 5-7.

⁶ Etambala, *In Het Land Van De Banoko*, 5-7.

⁷ Morelli, 'Congolese in Belgium since the 1960s.', 295.

⁸ Morelli, 'Congolese in Belgium since the 1960s.', 295.

⁹ Lusanda, 'Zijn er Zaïrese immigranten in België?', 6.

¹⁰ Lusanda, 'Zijn er Zaïrese immigranten in België?', 6.

¹¹ Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 16.

¹² Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 16.

pointed at the fear of the colonial administration that, by bringing Congolese to Belgium, they would get in touch with socialists, who would inspire them to organize themselves in trade unions to demand better labor conditions and higher wages.¹³

In his work from 1993 Etambala categorized the different groups of Congolese that were present in Belgium before the Congolese independence.¹⁴ For several reasons, however, it is tricky to classify all the different individual cases in perfectly fitting general categories. First of all, most Congolese were only in Belgium for a short period and returned to Congo after a while, making their stay in Belgium rather anecdotic, as for example the ‘diplomatic’ visit of a Congolese King to Antwerp and Laken.¹⁵ Secondly, there sometimes can be an overlap of individual cases that can be categorized in more than one group, for example the Congolese children who came to Belgium as domestic servants but were later sent to Belgian schools as students. Thirdly, there is a small number of individuals that cannot be put in any of the categories because they came to Belgium under purely unique circumstances, for example the case of a Congolese merchant who travelled to Belgium on his own expenses to give lectures about Congo and to learn French and mathematics. Fourthly, some Congolese completely disappeared from the records after their arrival in Belgium. For didactic reasons, however, it is still useful to divide the chaotic reality into artificial categories. Etambala identified five major groups of Congolese that were present in Belgium before the end of World War I: exhibition Congolese, World War I soldiers, students, marines, and ‘petits boys’.¹⁶

The Congolese that have received the most attention in scholarship are those who were brought to Belgium to be put on display in ‘human zoos’ as part of the ethnological exhibitions at the colonial expositions. Especially the work of Belgian historian Maurits Wynants entitled *Of dukes and Congolese: Tervuren and the colonial exhibition 1897* provides an extensive account of this group.¹⁷ Etambala too published two articles about one specific case of exhibited Congolese, the Congolese King Masala and eleven other Congolese individuals who were brought for the Antwerp Fancy Fair of 1885, describing their daily experiences in Belgium.¹⁸ French historian Pascale Blanchard and Belgian anthropologist Maarten Couttenier studied the evolution of the practice of ethnological exhibitions in Belgium.¹⁹ They also described the criticism surrounding 1897 exposition in Tervuren, where seven exhibited Congolese died.²⁰ Although most exhibited Congolese, who had survived being displayed outside day

¹³ Lusanda, ‘Zijn er Zairese immigranten in België?’, 6-7.

¹⁴ Etambala, *In Het Land Van De Banoko*, 9-78.

¹⁵ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 09-07-1885, 2.

¹⁶ Etambala, *In Het Land Van De Banoko*, 9-38.

¹⁷ Wynants, *Van Hertogen En Kongolezen*.

¹⁸ Etambala, ‘Carnet de route d’un voyageur congolais’, 215-237; Etambala, ‘Carnet de route d’un voyageur congolais’, 3-28.

¹⁹ Blanchard, ‘Les Zoos Humains.’, 112.

²⁰ Blanchard, ‘Les Zoos Humains.’, 112.

and night without proper food, were immediately sent back after the end of the expositions, a few individuals still managed to stay in Belgium.²¹ Couttenier's book about the history of Belgian anthropology and the Tervuren museum also elaborated on the exhibited Congolese individuals of the expositions in Antwerp in 1894 and in Brussels in 1897.²² The second category of Congolese that has recently received attention in the literature, beyond the research of Etambala, is the Congolese volunteering corps of soldiers that fought in Belgium during World War I.²³ In commemoration of the centenary of World War I, Belgian historian Griet Brosens has reconstructed the story of twenty-three Congolese men who volunteered to fight for the Belgian army, some in a regiment stationed at the Ypres salient.²⁴ Brosens' biographical research of each individual soldier before World War I gives a good overview of the different occupations of the Congolese groups that were present in Belgium, including domestic servants, servers in bars, and marines.²⁵

Except for a few exceptional cases, for example the 'first Congolese intellectual' Paul Panda Farnana and Liévin Van de Velde's 'petit boy' Sakala, the other groups of Congolese in Belgium before the end of World War I received little or no attention in the scholarship apart from Etambala's research. Farnana was labeled as the first 'évolué' and was therefore of interest to a few Belgian and Congolese historians.²⁶ Sakala's more prominent place in the scholarship is most likely the consequence of the memorial that was erected for him and his master in the Citadel Park in Ghent. The statue gave him a permanent place in the collective memory of the population of Ghent.²⁷

For the remaining groups Etambala's focus has clearly been on the Congolese students. Etambala published multiple articles and in 2011 even a book about the children that were enrolled at the Saint-Louis of Gonzaga institute in Gijzegem, near the Belgian city of Aalst, founded by the Catholic priest Pierre Van Impe in 1889, and closed in 1900.²⁸ Apart from a few paragraphs in monographs about general Belgian migration history, the group of Congolese that worked on the ships traveling between Belgium and Congo has only been studied by Etambala.²⁹ These marines were not allowed to leave their designated area in the port of Antwerp and, when

²¹ Etambala, *In Het Land Van De Banoko*, 9-15.

²² Couttenier, *Congo Tontoongesteld*, 125-166.

²³ Etambala, *In Het Land Van De Banoko*, 33-36; Vangansbeke, 'Afrikaanse verdedigers van het Belgisch grondgebied 1914-1918.', 123-124; Wilmotte, 'Le corps des volontaires congolais.', 101-112.

²⁴ Brosens, 'Congo Aan Den Yser', 253-265; BROSENS, *Congo Aan Den Yser*.

²⁵ Brosens, *Congo Aan Den Yser*, 39-74.

²⁶ Bontinck, 'Mfumu Paul Panda Farnana 1888 - 1930', 591- 609; Mumengi, *Panda Farnana. Premier universitaire congolais; Tshitungu Kongolo, Visages De Paul Panda Farnana*, 2011; Mutamba Makombo, 'Les évolués : Situation Au Congo Belge.', 1.

²⁷ Lambrechts, 'Constructing the Image of Blacks', 76-139; Etambala, 'L'interprète du Lieutenant Liévin Van de Velde: Sakala', 83-103.

²⁸ Etambala, *Des écoliers Congolais En Belgique*; Etambala, 'La première religieuse d'origine congolaise', 103-114; Etambala, 'Leuven en de opvoeding van Kongolese kinderen op het einde van de 19^{de} eeuw.', 40-45.

²⁹ Morelli, 'Congolese in Belgium since the 1960s.', 295.

they tried to escape from their dorms, they were immediately repatriated. Their labor conditions were very poor and therefore they revolted and organized strikes, without success.³⁰ Etambala is also the only scholar to study the ‘petits boys’, the domestic servants of colonial agents or missionaries who followed their masters during their travels, as a category of Congolese in Belgium. These often very young Congolese children were also referred to as ‘catechists’ if they served a religious person.³¹ However, because Etambala’s focus was on the Catholic institute in Gijzegem, the ‘petits boys’ that were sent to state schools because of their master’s liberal ideology, have remained under the radar of the literature.

Compared to the number of colonized people in the metropolises of other European imperial powers, such as that of the South Asians in Britain or the North and West Africans in France, the Belgian case was an outlier.³² Due to the higher incidence of colonized people in the metropolises of other nineteenth century empires with colonies in Africa there is more historical evidence about this presence. Therefore, it is no surprise that the literature about the presence of Africans from the French, German, and British colonies in Europe is richer. In contrast to the literature about Congolese presence in Belgium, the scholarship about presence of colonized people in the Dutch and British metropolises is very often linked to the history of slavery. A few authors have attempted to cover the vast topic of African presence in Europe in one book. The first author to try this seemingly impossible mission was Swiss German historian Hans Debrunner.³³ In 1979, he published a tome, compiling individual biographies of African individuals in Europe from antiquity until 1918.³⁴ He even dedicated one short section of a chapter to the African presence in Belgium, only mentioning the Congolese at the colonial exhibitions and the students at Gijzegem.³⁵ More recently, in the wake of the global racial justice movement, the increasing popularity of black history has resulted in new publications about ‘black Europe’ targeting a wider audience, for example Olivette Otele’s book from 2020 entitled *African Europeans: an untold history* and *Leon & Juliette* by Annejet van der Zijl.³⁶

For the British empire the scholarship about the presence of colonized African people is very elaborate. In his recent and weighty tome, tracing black presence in Britain from the Roman times to the twenty-first century, British historian Peter Fryer dedicated a chapter to the period from 1830 until 1918.³⁷ He identified different groups that were surprisingly similar to the ones distinguished by Etambala in the Belgian case: black seamen, servants and other black laborers including butlers and nurses, students, and soldiers who fought during World

³⁰ Morelli, ‘Congolese in Belgium since the 1960s.’, 295.

³¹ Morelli, ‘Congolese in Belgium since the 1960s.’, 295; Etambala, *In Het Land Van De Banoko*, 16.

³² Lusanda, ‘Zijn er Zairese immigranten in België?’, 6.

³³ Debrunner, *Presence and Prestige*.

³⁴ Debrunner, *Presence and Prestige*.

³⁵ Debrunner, *Presence and Prestige*, 337-343.

³⁶ Otele, *African Europeans*; van der Zijl, *Leon & Juliette*.

³⁷ Fryer, *Staying power*, 241-302.

War I.³⁸ Similar to the Congolese in the port of Antwerp, the African presence in Britain was concentrated in the portal cities of Cardiff, Newport, Barry, London, Liverpool, Hull, Tyneside, and Glasgow.³⁹ Unlike it is for the neglected Congolese marines, case studies about black seamen and their families in Britain have been conducted. British historian Diane Frost, for example, has examined the fate of Kru seamen from Liberia who lived in Liverpool around 1900.⁴⁰ The literature about these black seamen during the early twentieth century focuses on their struggle for better working conditions and social justice.⁴¹ The scholarship about the West-African students in Britain between 1900 and 1911 is linked to their involvement in the pan-Africanist movement, similar to the literature about Paul Panda Farnana.⁴² British historian Jeffrey Green's book entitled *Black Edwardians* specifically focusses on the period from 1901 until 1914 and discusses numerous biographies of African sportsmen, entertainers, and clergymen in Britain.⁴³ He also presents cases of Congolese that were exhibited in Germany at expositions that inspired those held in Tervuren and Antwerp.⁴⁴ The most exceptional category of Africans in Green's research is the so-called new *black bourgeoisie*, constituted of wealthy merchants that could afford to send their children to private school.⁴⁵

Although the African presence in France between 1885 and 1914 has not received as much attention in the historiography as in the British case, there is way more literature than in the Belgian one. American historian Jennifer Anne Boittin and other scholars have mainly focused on the interwar period and the Africans in France during World War I, the so-called Senegalese tirailleurs.⁴⁶ Apart from World War I soldiers, who were estimated to count approximately 134,000 to have landed in Europe, the identified groups were concentrated in Paris and the portal cities of Le Havre, Bordeaux, Toulon and Marseille.⁴⁷ Blanchard described the black presence before World War I as limited to a few domestic servants, marines, a very small number of Senegalese students studying at medicine, veterinary, or law schools.⁴⁸ The emphasis in the literature is on the African individuals, including some Congolese, who were exhibited at the colonial exhibitions held between 1880 and 1910.⁴⁹ Some attention is also given to a few examples of persons of color who became members of parliament, including Gaston Gerville-

³⁸ Fryer, *Staying power*, 299-302.

³⁹ Fryer, *Staying power*, 299.

⁴⁰ Killingray, *Africans in Britain*, 88-106; FROST, *Work and Community Among West African Migrant Workers Since the Nineteenth Century*.

⁴¹ Tabili, *We Ask for British Justice*.

⁴² Killingray, *Africans in Britain*, 108-110.

⁴³ Green, *Black Edwardians*.

⁴⁴ Green, *Black Edwardians*, 60-136.

⁴⁵ Green, *Black Edwardians*, 183-219.

⁴⁶ Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis*; Boittin, 'Black in France', 23-46; Boittin, 'Among Them Complicit?'; Fletcher, 'City, Nation, and Empire in Marseilles, 1919-1939.'; Domergue-Cloarec, 'Une Histoire En Partage', 95-99.

⁴⁷ Boittin, 'Black in France', 24.

⁴⁸ Blanchard, *La France Noire*, 153; Dewitte, *Deux Siècles D'immigration En France*.

⁴⁹ Blanchard, *La France Noire*, 154-183



Réache.⁵⁰ Pascale Blanchard's book entitled *La France Noire* is the French equivalent of Fyler's tome on the history of black people in Britain.⁵¹

The scholarship on African presence in Germany during the German Empire (1871-1918) put the emphasis on its temporary and anecdotic nature.⁵² The presence was characterized as predominantly male and, in contrast to France and Britain, as scattered throughout the entire country.⁵³ Historians Robbie Aitken and Eve Rosenhaft's book *Black Germany: The Making and Unmaking of a Diaspora Community, 1884-1960* categorized the different groups of Africans in Germany, including students, protestant and Catholic missionaries, Africans exhibited at colonial expositions, and black servants.⁵⁴ They also specifically researched the presence of Cameroonian School Children in Berlin between 1884 and 1914.⁵⁵ Aitken noted that reconstructing the presence of Africans in Germany from the archival records is exceptionally difficult because of the transient nature of their stay and therefore it is not surprising that the existing historiography is dominated by biographies of the few rare well-documented cases.⁵⁶

The scholarship about the presence in the Netherlands of individuals from the Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and South America during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century is extremely limited. The period is labelled as the all-time low of immigration to the Netherlands, and consequently not much research seems to have been done about this topic so far.⁵⁷ The only presence that has been recorded during this period was described as 'circular migration'.⁵⁸ Dutch plantation owners, travelling back to the Netherlands for a holiday of a few months, brought their indigenous servants with them. One article identified the case of two children from Papua New Guinea who were brought to the Netherlands in 1890 by Catholic missionaries.⁵⁹ The article discussed the children's function to legitimize the missionary work and to draw the attention of the general public and ensure media coverage.⁶⁰

There is no scholarship that places the Belgian cases of 'petits boys' as black domestic servants in a broader European context, even though, as the previous discussion of the existing literature demonstrates, this was far from a uniquely Belgian phenomenon.

⁵⁰ Chathuant, 'L'émergence d'une élite politique noire dans la France du premier 20e siècle?', 133-147.

⁵¹ Blanchard, *La France Noire*.

⁵² Aitken, *Black Germany*, 22

⁵³ Aitken, *Black Germany*, 63.

⁵⁴ Aitken, *Black Germany*, 22-66.

⁵⁵ Aitken, 'Education and Migration', 213-230.

⁵⁶ Aitken, 'A Transient Presence', 233-255.

⁵⁷ Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 50-78.

⁵⁸ Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 50-78.

⁵⁹ Reichgelt, 'Melanesian Children as European Wards'.

⁶⁰ Reichgelt, 'Melanesian Children as European Wards', 302.

B. *The Belgian press and its colonial discourse*

The last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century were characterized as the ‘golden age of the Belgian printed press’ by historian and communications scholar Els De Bens.⁶¹ Many of the Belgian journals that still exist today were founded during these years. More information became available for the masses through the purchase of relatively cheap newspapers. Several factors contributed to this increased flow of information through print media. Firstly, newspaper prices went down because paper costs for printing companies dropped and the newspaper stamp, a tax that was levied on the buyers of a newspaper, was abolished. Secondly, the wider availability of primary education increased literacy among the masses. Advertising was included in newspapers, targeting this new reading public as potential consumers. Thirdly, innovations in printing techniques and telecommunication increased the speed of the dissemination of information.⁶² Although many newspapers had a strong political affiliation, only a few were owned by a political party, and most were founded and run as private enterprises.⁶³

Historians Aitken and Rosenhaft, researching African presence in Germany during the German Empire (1871-1918), highlighted the symbiosis between the emerging mass media and the dissemination of colonial propaganda and stereotypes about these Africans in Germany.⁶⁴ They demonstrated that these new popular media, which flourished under the very conditions of rapid economic and social development that fueled Germany’s maritime colonial project, articulated metropolitan interest in and curiosity about these ‘new African neighbors’.⁶⁵ This master’s thesis will demonstrate that this process was not unique to Germany and also took place in Belgium.

During the ‘golden age of the Belgian printed press’, as described by De Bens, the newspapers reproduced in print the visual and verbal stereotypes about black people that already existed in Belgian society. At first sight, it may seem as if the process of reproduction and dissemination of racial stereotypes by printed papers at an unprecedented scale profoundly influenced the ideas the reading public had about Africans in Europe. Words in newspapers created a perception in the minds of the reading public. The reading public formed its opinion about Congolese presence in Belgium based on these newspapers and was influenced to a certain extent by the information that it acquired through these newspapers. It is however tricky to measure what the effects were of the dissemination of this information, as some people might have disagreed completely with what they read. As stated by Stanard, measuring the impact of a discourse on the *attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, and everyday lives is*

⁶¹ De Bens, *De Pers in België*, 37.

⁶² De Bens, *De Pers in België*, 32-36.

⁶³ De Bens, *De Pers in België*, 37.

⁶⁴ Aitken, *Black Germany*, 2.

⁶⁵ Aitken, *Black Germany*, 2.

*notoriously fraught with indeterminacy.*⁶⁶ Although the reception in the minds of readers varies, this does not mean that there was no such thing as a colonial discourse that was being disseminated through colonial propaganda.

In his doctoral thesis entitled *Selling the tenth province* and his monograph entitled *Selling the Congo* Stanard, has demonstrated that, both during the CFS period as well as during the Belgian Congo period, pro-empire propaganda was actively disseminated through various media.⁶⁷ These included colonial expositions, such as the Antwerp exhibition of 1894, colonial museums, for example the Palace of Colonies museum in 1897 and the later Tervuren museum, schoolbooks and education celebrating the colonial project, colonial monuments in Belgian cities, and colonial cinema.⁶⁸ In his most recent book Stanard discussed the meaning and place of these colonial monuments present in Belgian public spaces until today, as an enduring reminder of both the colonial project and its active propaganda strategy.⁶⁹ He also noted that this *pro-empire propaganda although it did not bring about a visceral attachment to empire in the minds of the Belgian public, it did create and reinforce a denigrating image of Africans. This was accomplished by denying the value of indigenous culture, society, and economy and contrasting Belgian civilization with African backwardness.*⁷⁰

Newspapers, novels, and other print media reinforced the image of colonial officials as brave explorers that should be regarded as national heroes.⁷¹ Furthermore, to further the cause of the colonial project, the end justified the means. During the CFS years, propaganda was produced both to rebut the negative publicity surrounding the CFS regime and to sway the Belgian public opinion.⁷² One way in which this was done, was by plying journalists with cash. The CFS enthusiasts emphasized the technological benefits of Belgian presence in Congo, the advancement of agriculture and industrialism, and most importantly the European education of Congolese children.⁷³

Unlike Standard's broader approach, British historian Dean Clay specifically researched how the Belgian print press served as a vehicle to spread propaganda about the colonial project of the CFS. He argued that the period from 1890 until 1909 was characterized by a media conflict that he labeled 'the CFS propaganda war'. This conflict was fought between the Congolâtre newspapers, the worshippers of the colonial project of the CFS that

⁶⁶ Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 14.

⁶⁷ Stanard, 'Selling the Tenth Province'; Stanard, *Selling the Congo*.

⁶⁸ Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 4.

⁶⁹ Stanard, *The Leopard, the Lion, and the Cock*.

⁷⁰ Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 16.

⁷¹ Stanard, *European Overseas Empire*, 54.

⁷² Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 42.

⁷³ Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 16.

supported the imperial initiatives undertaken by King Leopold II, and the Congophobe newspapers that criticized the CFS's activities.⁷⁴ According to Clay, the topic that instigated the CFS Propaganda War was the situation in the CFS itself and the atrocities that were committed by the colonial officials in Congo. This, however, is only part of the subject matter up for debate and captures only half of the subject matter of media conflict. This master's thesis will demonstrate that the CFS Propaganda War was not only fought over the topic of atrocities within the CFS territory itself. Its aim is to prove that the presence of Congolese 'petits boys' in Belgium and the practice of bringing them to Europe to civilize them were also topics that were part of this media conflict.

After the transfer of the CFS to Belgium, the divide between the two sides of the media landscape, defending and criticizing the colonial project in Congo, decreased. Unlike during the CFS Propaganda War, for most of the time when Congo was a Belgian colony (1908-1960), the media landscape was characterized as 'an empire of silence'. The newspapers no longer served as a battlefield for opposing opinions about the colony. In his book entitled *L'empire Du Silence: Congo 1946* written after a visit to Belgian Congo, Oscar-Paul Gilbert, a Francophone Belgian journalist and writer, gave this label to the colony.⁷⁵ He did so to denounce the fact that the flow of information coming from the colony to Belgium was very limited and that the press was closely monitored by the colonial policymakers.⁷⁶

Independent journalism and transparency were seen as a threat to the smooth functioning of the colonial system. Through media censorship and control over the spread of information on the one hand, and a colonial culture of silence on the other, the image of the colony was kept immaculate.⁷⁷ The propaganda strategy from the CFS's years was replaced by a strategy of media censorship during the Belgian Congo period. Apart from the specialized magazines for colonial agents, the written mass media in Belgium hardly reported on Belgium's colonies. When they did write about Congo the information was provided entirely by the official colonial press agencies.

However, the pre-World War I Belgian Congo period (1908-1914), and in particular the years 1911, 1912, and 1913 were an exception to the overall characterization of the period as a time of censorship and silence. A smear campaign against the Congolese in Belgium took place, especially in the francophone liberal newspaper *La Meuse*.⁷⁸ The clear line between the pro-Congolese and anti-Congolese camp faded away. The antagonism decreased and both formerly Congophobe and Congolâtre newspapers attacked the practice of bringing 'petits boys' to Belgium to civilize them.

⁷⁴ Clay, 'David vs Goliath', 457-474.

⁷⁵ Gilbert, *L'empire Du Silence: Congo 1946*; BOUVY, 'Oscar-Paul Gilbert.', 719.

⁷⁶ Gilbert, *L'empire Du Silence: Congo 1946*.

⁷⁷ Castryck, 'Binnenste-buitenland.', 271.

⁷⁸ Etambala, *In Het Land Van De Banoko*, 31-33.

Although there exists no literature that has analyzed the colonial discourse about the Congolese ‘petits boys’ in the Belgian printed press, scholars have articulated what characterized the specific colonial discourse about the CFS and Belgian Congo. In her book entitled *Congo made in Flanders?* anthropologist and historian Bambi Ceuppens argues that there are two major themes in the Belgian colonial discourse. On the one hand, she identified the assimilation of the colonized individuals to the western ideals, denying the value of their own culture. On the other hand she named indigenous otherness, highlighting the inherent differences between Congolese barbarism and European civilization, as the second major theme.⁷⁹ According to Ceuppens, another distinctive feature of the Belgian colonial discourse is the presence of extremely condescending metaphors, emphasizing the paternalism of the colonizer and the infantile inferiority of the colonized.⁸⁰

C. Presentation of the research

This master’s thesis analyzes the discourse in the Belgian print press about one specific category of Congolese present in Belgium, the ‘petits boys’, during the CFS period (1885-1908) and the pre-World War I Belgian Congo period (1908-1914). By analyzing the discourse in the Belgian newspapers about the ‘petits boys’, reflecting the power structures within the colonial society, this master’s thesis will answer the question: *how were the ‘petits boys’ covered in the Belgian printed press during the CFS period (1885-1908) and the pre-World War I Belgian Congo period (1908-1914)?*

The primary sources used in this master’s thesis are preserved at the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR) and are accessible through the online newspaper archive Belgica Press. This recently digitized archive contains the daily editions of 114 different Belgian newspapers, from 1814 until 1970. The fact that Belgica Press covers the entire ideological spectrum of newspapers makes it a representative set of primary sources for a discourse analysis about Congolese presence in Belgium in the Belgian printed press from 1885 until 1914. Via the online archive’s search engine and the selection of key words several previously understudied or even ‘unknown’ cases of ‘petits boys’ have been identified. Previous scholarship never had the opportunity to search databases in such an efficient and targeted way. The full text digitalization of the archive makes it possible to bring together little snippets of information spread across thousands of newspaper pages, which makes it way easier to analyze them. In his research on the African presence in Germany, Aitken noted this as well. He stated that *the growing digitization of printed and archival materials such as newspapers, address books, medical and anthropological journals, and passenger lists now, however, offers up a wealth of new and accessible information on Germany’s African presence.*⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ceuppens, *Congo Made in Flanders?*, 515-523.

⁸⁰ Ceuppens, *Congo Made in Flanders?*, 375-379.

⁸¹ Aitken, ‘A Transient Presence’, 234.

Transcending both the ideological boundaries of identifying as liberal, Catholic, or socialist, and the quintessentially Belgian linguistic boundary, every newspaper positioned itself as more or less favorable to the colonial project of King Leopold II's CFS (see annex 1). At one end of the spectrum, the Congophobe newspapers united over their common anti-Congolese and antiroyalist sentiment. On the other end, the Congolâtre newspapers had in common that they stayed loyal to the colonizing Francophone elite and favored the monarchy. The only section of the media landscape to be unanimously Congophobe were the socialist newspapers. Since many Catholics and even more liberals were divided over the question of supporting the CFS, their newspapers were too.

Within the two general categories of either pro-Congolese or anti-Congolese newspapers, a distinction can be made between more moderate and more extreme voices. On the Congolâtre side, the most fervent CFS supporters were to be found among the francophone liberals, in particular *L'Indépendance belge*, *La Meuse*, and *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*. In addition, the Catholic newspaper *Le Journal de Bruxelles* can also be counted among the ardent defenders of the CFS's colonial project. On the opposite side of the spectrum three francophone newspapers, the Catholic *Le Patriote*, the socialist *Le Peuple*, and the liberal *La Réforme* were labeled as the most Congophobe. In 1897, the Congolâtre newspaper *Le Journal de Bruxelles* however wrote, in an article titled *Congo worshipping*, that *La Réforme* had changed sides and now belonged to the Congolâtre section of the spectrum.⁸² This illustrates how the label of a newspaper as pro-Congolese or anti-Congolese was not an objective fact and was subject to change. In the Dutch speaking part of the media landscape, *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen* had been founded as a pro-Flemish Catholic challenger for the pro-Congolese liberal francophone press and was consequently also ardently anti-Congolese.⁸³ The majority of the other liberal and Catholic French and Dutch language newspapers silently supported the cause of the CFS.

All aforementioned newspapers will be used as sources for the critical analysis of the colonial discourse about the 'petits boys'. Simply put, analyzing a discourse can be defined as the act of investigating of how language is used in a particular context. Discourse analysis, as the examination of the structure and function of language in use, thus involves the analysis of context and participants and can therefore not take place in a vacuum. Or as Etambala wrote in the introduction to one of his articles: *a meticulous investigation of the contemporary local press ... enables us to examine the 'white' Belgian view on the black subjects*.⁸⁴ As a methodology, critical discourse analysis is derived from the work of postmodern theorist Michel Foucault. For Foucault discourses are

⁸² *Journal de Bruxelles*, 11-11-1897, 1.

⁸³ "Handelsblad (van Antwerpen), Het", *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*, consulted on the the 10th of May 2022, [https://nevb.be/wiki/Handelsblad_\(van_Antwerpen\),_Het](https://nevb.be/wiki/Handelsblad_(van_Antwerpen),_Het).

⁸⁴ Etambala, 'Carnet de route d'un voyageur congolais', 215; Etambala, 'Carnet de route d'un voyageur congolais', 3.

conventional ways of talking that both create and are created by conventional ways of thinking. These linked ways of talking and thinking constitute ideologies (sets of interrelated ideas) and serve to circulate power in society. Discourse analysis thus goes beyond the linguistic aspect and aims at revealing patterns of belief, patterns of habitual action, and social roles and power relations. Such aspects are also the focus of Critical Discourse Analysis which sees discourse as social practice and has a special interest in revealing the discursive (re)production of power and social inequality.⁸⁵ Written statements are affected by the context of the era in which they were produced. The power relations and social hierarchy present in a society built on a binary of distinctive identities, with on the one hand the colonizers and on the other the colonized, are reflected in the discourse of newspapers.

Because Foucault did not specifically apply his theory to the colonial context, adding Edward Saïd's Orientalism theory is helpful to understand how the colonial power relations between Europeans and non-Europeans influenced the discourse about the latter in the written press of the former. By formulating his theory Saïd demonstrated how Europeans represented non-Europeans as intrinsically different and alien and consequently created an aesthetic image of what the ideal person should be like. Saïd himself wrote that he *found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of discourse ... to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage, -and even to produce- the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.⁸⁶ Therefore, to try to understand the specific dynamic of colonial power structures and its influence on the discourse about colonized people, combining Michel Foucault's and Edward Saïd's theories is very helpful. As Stanard noted *Saïd's assertion that a paternalistic Europe produced a backward 'other' while simultaneously defining itself as advanced retains a good deal of its explanatory power.⁸⁷**

After this introduction, this master's thesis will analyze the colonial discourse about the 'petits boys'. The first chapter analyzes the discourse in the newspapers about their presence in Belgium during the CFS period (1885-1908), distinguishing two major categories, propaganda themes and othering themes. The second chapter analyzes the discourse in the newspapers about their presence in Belgium during the pre-World War I period (1908-1914), distinguishing two major categories, the vilification themes and the celebration themes. Both chapters also assess the impact of the criticism that was formulated in the newspaper discourse during both periods. To end, the conclusion synthesizes the evolution of the discourse during both periods and discusses its ambivalent nature.

⁸⁵ Schäffer, 'Discourse analysis', 47-52.

⁸⁶ Saïd, *Orientalism*, 3.

⁸⁷ Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 20.

Chapter I. Congo Free State period (1885-1908)

This chapter analyzes the recurring themes in the newspaper discourse about the so-called ‘petits boys’ during the Leopoldian phase of Congo’s colonization. Some of them received much attention in the Belgian press, as Liévin Van de Velde’s ‘petit boy’ Sakala and Charles Lemaire’s ‘petit boy’ Tonio. Most others, however, were only mentioned briefly. Often in articles describing them as arriving or leaving by steamboat in the port of Antwerp, being baptized in the presence of their godparents, or attending a public event in a Belgian city with their master. Sometimes they were also mentioned in articles reporting on the welcome ceremonies that were held when CFS officials returned home. The analysis in this chapter mainly focusses on the discourse about Tonio and Sakala as these were the ones that were written about the most. However, when possible, articles about other ‘petits boys’ are included as well. Approximately twenty-five different ‘petits boys’ are discussed in this chapter, most of them identified by their own and their master’s name, but a few anonymously only. Occasionally, when it adds value to the analysis, information from articles about other groups of Congolese in Belgium during the same period is included.

Two major categories of themes, within the discourse of the newspapers that were writing about the ‘petits boys’, can be distinguished. The first category, the propaganda themes, were designed to legitimize the colonial project of the CFS and the actions of its agents as part of a ‘civilizing mission’. This category is discussed in the first section of this chapter. The second section discusses the other major category of themes, the othering themes, providing an overview of the stereotypes about black people that were omnipresent in all newspapers, regardless of their pro-Congolese or anti-Congolese affinity. The third section discusses the criticism in the radical Congophobe newspapers on the practice of bringing the ‘petits boys’ to Belgium. This final section also analyzes the links between the criticism and both the legal restrictions on bringing new Congolese to Belgium as well as the effort to repatriate those who were already in Belgium.

A. Propaganda themes

The aim of this category of themes within the newspaper discourse was to promote the cause of the CFS as a colonial project. ‘The white man’s burden’ idea, the European mission to civilize the entire world, was at the core of the narrative that King Leopold II propagated about his colonial project in Congo. A tiny aspect of this burden were the Congolese children brought to Belgium. The specific goal of this category of themes was to justify the practice of taking these young Congolese children out of their home environment and bringing them to Europe.

1. Legitimizing abduction

In most cases it is not clear under what circumstances the young Congolese individuals were taken away from their African environment and brought to Belgium. Whether the ‘petits boys’ voluntarily chose to serve their masters is highly questionable given the notoriously violent nature of the interactions between the CFS agents

and the indigenous population. In a few cases, however, the moment of recruitment is elaborately described in the newspapers. The articles, providing more background about the first encounter between a ‘petit boy’ and his master, contain three underlying arguments. The first argument that regularly returned was that the children had to be educated in Europe, as they were the future leaders of their people. Therefore, their personal and their family’s loyalty could be valuable to the young CFS. Secondly, some newspapers mentioned that the Congolese children had to be saved from the miserable situation that they were living in. A third argument was that the ‘petits boys’ were very eager to leave and were curious about Europe. Combined, these three implicit messages were all designed to legitimize the abduction of Congolese children in the name of the expansion of European civilization.

a. Sons of Congolese kings

After a six-months-long expedition to prepare the construction of the railroad between Vivi and Manyanga, CFS Lieutenant Liévin Van de Velde returned to Belgium in December 1885 to recover from his African fevers.⁸⁸ With him he brought a twelve-year-old child, prince Sakala, *the child of the King of Vivi, Mambouco, and a mother from a powerful family*.⁸⁹ Sakala was born in 1874 and was destined to inherit the kingdom of his uncle, the eldest brother of his mother.⁹⁰ Vivi served as the first capital city of the CFS and was administered by Van de Velde. The King of Vivi had entrusted his son to Van de Velde as a sign of his loyalty and friendship.⁹¹ For pioneers of the colonial project as Van de Velde it was crucial to establish friendly relations with local rulers as Sakala’s father. Van de Velde’s soft diplomacy strategy, building bridges between Congo and Belgium through human connections, was successful. Mambouco’s loyalty had already proven useful to the Belgian explorers. When King Massala, another local Congolese ruler, *was shot by a French man, the negro, for vengeance, wanted to destroy the stations established by Europeans. Thanks to the influence of Sakala’s father, located near Vivi, following orders of Van de Velde, they were spared*.⁹² Similarly, Arthur, *a negro prince*, was brought to Belgium by CFS official Legros. *His father is a man with a character sympathetic to civilization. He has negotiated repeatedly with Stanley ... whose journey through the black continent he has recently facilitated and protected*.⁹³ Promising Sakala or Arthur a trip to Europe and a western education, financed and supported by a European, was a very special and precious gift. In return the loyalty and support of the children’s fathers, as the local rulers, were expected.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ “Van de Velde, Liévin”, Africa Museum Archives, consulted on the 5th of April 2022, <https://archives.africamuseum.be/agents/people/36>.

⁸⁹ *La Meuse*, 15-10-1887, 5.

⁹⁰ *De Koophandel*, 13-12-1885, 2.

⁹¹ *La Meuse*, 24-01-1887, 2.

⁹² *Journal de Bruxelles*, 13-10-1887, 2.

⁹³ *L’Indépendance belge*, 16-02-1892, 2.

⁹⁴ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3; *La Réforme*, 25-02-1888, 2.

Léopold Vidi, the son of King Paolo of Nemlao, who reigned over a territory that is located today in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Clément, a prince from the Yaba region in the present-day Republic of the Congo, were brought to Belgium by CFS legal agent Oscar Gustin. Both boys were later enrolled at Abbot Van Impe's Catholic institute in Gijzegem together with the son of another Congolese ruler, Joseph Mavambo, a prince from Kimpamballa, also located in the present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁹⁵ The boys were brought to Belgium, as in the case of 'petits boys' Sakala and Arthur, with the explicit permission of their fathers who wanted their sons *to be raised and educated as a white*.⁹⁶ However, granting this permission sometimes happened under questionable circumstances. For example, a newspaper reported that a local ruler, who was sentenced to death, had begged a CFS agent to look after his three children, right before he was executed.⁹⁷ Another black chief had reportedly given his eldest son as a hostage to a CFS agent. This was customary as a sign of good faith when organizing a palaver. Instead of returning him when the palaver was over, the CFS agent took the child with him to Europe.⁹⁸ The Congolâtre newspaper *L'Indépendance belge* wrote that the CFS agents *could not and did not want to take away the young negros from their families by force without their consent, they had to wait for favorable opportunities*.⁹⁹ As the previous examples demonstrate, this statement did not reflect the reality on the ground, and children were taken away without their parents' consent. Apart from children of rulers, also children of other prominent figures in Congolese indigenous society came to Belgium, as for example the son of a 'féticheur', a *doctor of the black continent*.¹⁰⁰

b. Saved from their miserable existence

The thirty-year-old Belgian Lieutenant Charles Lemaire arrived back in his home country on the 17th of October 1893, after spending four years developing the first coffee, cacao, and tobacco plantations in the Equateur district. During his stay he also made many geographic, ethnographic, and botanical observations of the region and was compiling a dictionary of Congolese languages.¹⁰¹ A teenage Congolese boy travelled in the company of Lemaire. The boy was named Tonio as Lemaire claimed that the child did not have a name when he had met him in 1889.¹⁰² According to one newspaper Lemaire met Tonio in a village called Lukundu, but another article in the same newspaper wrote that Tonio's village was named Lukungu.¹⁰³ Therefore, it is not clear in which part of the

⁹⁵ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 01-09-1891, 2; *Journal de Bruxelles*, 26-04-1889, 2; *L'Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1; *Journal de Bruxelles*, 08-11-1894, 2.

⁹⁶ *L'Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1; *L'Indépendance belge*, 16-02-1892, 2.

⁹⁷ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 19-12-1895, 2.

⁹⁸ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 13-09-1891, 2.

⁹⁹ *L'Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1.

¹⁰⁰ *L'Indépendance belge*, 21-10-1888, 1.

¹⁰¹ "Lemaire, Charles (François Alexandre)", Africa Museum Archives, consulted on the 5th of April 2022, <https://archives.africamuseum.be/agents/people/183>.

¹⁰² *L'Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1; *L'Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1; "Lemaire, Charles (François Alexandre)", Africa Museum Archives, consulted on the 5th of April 2022, <https://archives.africamuseum.be/agents/people/183>.

¹⁰³ *L'Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1; *L'Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

Equateur district Lemaire met Tonio. Lemaire's stated in a newspaper interview that Tonio and some other orphan children had been paid as ransom in a conflict between two belligerent villages. He had pity on Tonio whom he portrayed as an outcast of his own village. Because Lemaire *had a kind heart he saved Tonio from his miserable existence*.¹⁰⁴ Unlike other CFS officials, Lemaire succeeded in gaining Tonio's trust and successfully trained him as his personal 'petit boy'. By including Tonio's background into the narrative the author of the article clearly tried to legitimize that Lemaire *brought Tonio with him*.¹⁰⁵ It is impossible to know whether this is the true version of events. It might very well be possible that Tonio was treated more violently by Lemaire than suggested, instead of being taken away voluntarily from his village.

When the newspapers did not highlight the fact that the 'petits boys' had been paid as ransom in an indigenous war, another pitiful detail was included. The aim of this was to make the reading public understand that the only right thing to do for the CFS official was to take the child with him to Belgium. Also frequently reoccurring was the story that the young Congolese children had been saved out of the hands of monstrous Arab slave traders, for example in the case of 'little Katanga'. After a period of four years as an agent of the Force Publique of the CFS in the Kasai region, Lieutenant Léon Rom brought Katanga with him to Belgium in March 1893. In a place named Bihé on Portuguese territory, in present-day Angola, Katanga was sold by his parents to a tribe of slave traders that took him to the Kasai region. Rom had arrested the tribe and was *struck by the beauty and intelligence of the child, so he decided to educate him*.¹⁰⁶ Two other young Congolese boys, Albert Makwama and Baudouin Bida, both enrolled as students at Abbot Van Impe's Catholic institute in Gijzegem, were also described as liberated slaves.¹⁰⁷ An article stated that *the story of Makwama ... is as the story of all the little black children who landed on our beaches. All the children are kidnapped from their parents by the Arabs, who trade them and sell them to brutal masters and drag them from market to market as a beast. But one day happiness shines bright on their miserable existence: missionaries are able to buy them back and rescue them morally and physically*.¹⁰⁸ Baudouin Bida was reportedly bought back by CFS agents for five francs.¹⁰⁹ Léopold Kassongo, the 'petit boy' of CFS official Captain Jules Jacques de Dixmude, even said in a speech, when his master returned to Belgium after an expedition in Congo in 1894: *Master, once I was a slave. We know you have fought the Arabs thirty moons long. Today, they are all dead, and we are free*.¹¹⁰ After giving his speech, he reportedly handed his master a palm leaf with the inscription *for Captain Jacques, from the grateful liberated slaves* to thank him.¹¹¹ Similarly, a young

¹⁰⁴ *L'Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

¹⁰⁵ *L'Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

¹⁰⁶ *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 01-09-1891, 2.

¹⁰⁸ *Le Courrier de L'Escaut*, 28-10-1891, 1.

¹⁰⁹ *L'Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1.

¹¹⁰ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 24-06-1894, 2.

¹¹¹ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 24-06-1894, 1.

Congolese boy named Pioca, who came to Belgium for the colonial exposition in Antwerp of 1894, gave a speech to CFS agents, *begging the Belgians not to abandon the Congo*.¹¹²

Another reoccurring story was that the children had to be saved because they were orphans, or that at least a large part of their families had died. Two of the three Congolese children brought to Liège in 1895 by CFS agent Baron Francis Dhanis reportedly had such a story. About Montontai, a five-year-old boy from Bouladale in the Stanley Falls district, was reported that *only his mother Edissa and one of his little brothers are still alive*.¹¹³ About another child, Konloo, also from the Stanley Falls district, was reported that he *was an orphan, having lost his mother and father, but he still has three brothers and four sisters in his native country*.¹¹⁴ Max Makwangwa, CFS Lieutenant Ernest-Jean Freitag's 'petit boy', too *had lost his father, when he was just a child, and was looked after by Freitag*.¹¹⁵

c. Enthusiasm to leave Congo and stay in Belgium

By emphasizing the free will and enthusiasm of the 'petits boys' to be taken to Europe, the Congolâtre newspapers provided potential critics with an answer before they could raise the issue of the potentially violent nature of 'their recruitment'. Sakala reportedly *cried tears of joy when he was granted the permission to follow Van de Velde to Europe*.¹¹⁶ The emphasis on Sakala's willingness to learn about Europe and eagerness to see Belgium took away every suggestion of a forced abduction. Highlighting Tonio's enthusiasm to learn French and his impatience to leave for Belgium was a strategy to conceal a more violent reality.¹¹⁷ Katanga, after being liberated from the slave trade by Rom, also reportedly *seemed extremely happy with his fate*.¹¹⁸ An article reporting on the departure of the Congolese that were exhibited at the colonial exposition of Tervuren in 1897 stated that *a Bengala was crying, he said that he would stay voluntarily in Belgium if he could*.¹¹⁹

2. Mutual affection

Another way in which the newspaper articles took away possible suspicion of violence or abuse, was by highlighting the warm affectivity between boy and master. The loyalty and devotion of a black servant was expected in return for the master's kindness and generosity to take up the 'white man's burden' and educate and civilize a black child. Given the often very violent and abusive reality they were supposed to conceal, these narratives about tenderness and mutual affection feel particularly cruel and hypocrite.

¹¹² *Gazette de Charleroi*, 10-04-1895, 2.

¹¹³ *La Meuse*, 15-03-1895, 2; *Journal de Bruxelles*, 14-03-1895, 2.

¹¹⁴ *La Meuse*, 15-03-1895, 2; *Journal de Bruxelles*, 14-03-1895, 2.

¹¹⁵ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 26-06-1897, 2.

¹¹⁶ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

¹¹⁷ *L'Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

¹¹⁸ *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

¹¹⁹ *Le Soir*, 01-09-1897, 2.

a. The master's affection for his boy

According to the article in *La Meuse* about Sakala's arrival in Ghent, he was warmly received by his host family.¹²⁰ One newspaper even wrote that *Sakala immediately became the spoiled brad of the house, and his favorite activity was to play cards with his new Belgian family.*¹²¹ When Van de Velde and Sakala returned to Congo, they left on the steamboat *La Lys* in the evening of the 23rd of October 1887. An article emphasized that both master and boy were *dressed in a prestigious white and gold uniform and a helmet adorned with plumes, the latter being a sign of authority among the indigenous people.*¹²² On board Sakala read, wrote, played cards, and fished. One time he even caught a catfish and he had to be nursed by Van de Velde, after the poisonous fish had bitten in his hand.¹²³ Including little details as these into the narrative resulted in an overall image of a master who genuinely cared about the wellbeing of his servant.

Several other articles emphasized the affection of CFS agent Charles Lemaire for *his little black protégé* Tonio.¹²⁴ When the first signs of Tonio's mental troubles appeared, Lemaire had refused to send Tonio to the institution in Evere because he wanted Tonio *near him.*¹²⁵ As Lemaire was recovering from a leg injury himself, his doctors managed to convince him to send him away.¹²⁶ The article announcing Tonio's death reemphasized Lemaire's generosity to liberate Sakala from his life as a miserable outcast and to give him so much of his affection and attention.¹²⁷

In an article entitled *Congolese atrocities* the newspaper *La Gazette de Charleroi* defended the actions of the CFS agents.¹²⁸ *We know that all the Belgian agents who went to Congo are breast and hand choppers, child eaters, and terrible bashi-bozouks, but despite this, there are a few who still have a little bit of humanity, a shimmer of generosity, because these courageous men, instead of eating the young negros, decided to take them to Europe and have them taste the joys of civilization.*¹²⁹ The newspaper's message could not be mistaken. Despite the criticism, the CFS agents were affectionate, generous, and caring people.

¹²⁰ *La Meuse*, 21-01-1886, 2.

¹²¹ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3; *La Meuse*, 21-01-1886, 2.

¹²² *La Réforme*, 24-10-1887, 3; *L'Indépendance belge*, 25-10-1887, 2.

¹²³ *La Réforme*, 28-02-1888, 1.

¹²⁴ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 27-10-1893, 2.

¹²⁵ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 27-10-1893, 2.

¹²⁶ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 27-10-1893, 2.

¹²⁷ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 27-10-1893, 2.

¹²⁸ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 26-09-1896, 1.

¹²⁹ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 26-09-1896, 1.

b. *The boy's affection for his master*

While at his parents' house, Van de Velde suffered severely from the illness he incurred in Africa, Sakala reportedly nursed him *with much dedication*.¹³⁰ Similarly, the 'petit boy' Djouma, brought to Belgium by CFS Lieutenant Renier, who was also severely weakened, *looked after his master with much devotion*.¹³¹ Lieutenant Ernest-Jean Freitag too got wounded in battle and his 'petit boy' Max reportedly *cared for his benefactor with devotion and selflessness*.¹³² In the article entitled *Congolese atrocities* the newspaper *La Gazette de Charleroi* also stated that *you should ask the young blacks about their chefs ... most of them are very intelligent and answer the same thing and do not stop praising them when they are talking about their benefactors*.¹³³

A newspaper article emphasized Tonio's affection for his master, by writing that the 'petit boy' was constantly asking for news about Lemaire during his stay at the psychiatric institution in Evere.¹³⁴ He reportedly expressed *the most vivid desire to see him again*.¹³⁵ The article also emphasized that Tonio never expressed missing his real father.¹³⁶ The eulogy written for Tonio in *L'Indépendance belge* stated that Tonio said to Lemaire: *You are my father and my mother! Every place where father goes, I will go too, and I will consider it my country*.¹³⁷ The author of the article felt the need to counter the idea that Lemaire was somehow to blame for Tonio's death by bringing him to Belgium.

3. Repatriation as 'agents of assimilation'

The ultimate goal of educating talented Congolese children in Belgium, preferably sons of local rulers, was to make them loyal auxiliaries of the colonial administration. Many of them served as interpreters, facilitating the communication between the Europeans in Congo and the indigenous population. Even opinion writer Joe of the Congophobe newspaper *La Réforme* acknowledged the importance of Congolese traveling to Belgium as *agents of assimilation, as a way of convincing, educating, and slowly conquering*.¹³⁸ This is a formulation of the colonial strategy of mimicry, portraying Congolese individuals that behaved as Europeans as heralds of western ideology and as tools of implementing this ideology in Africa.¹³⁹ These individuals, in a later phase of the colonization of Congo called 'évolués', may have progressed from their primitive state by incorporating European values and ideas.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, they were never considered as equal to white Europeans because of their racially different

¹³⁰ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 23-12-1885, 2.

¹³¹ *La Meuse*, 21-06-1894, 2.

¹³² *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 26-06-1897, 2.

¹³³ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 26-09-1896, 1.

¹³⁴ *L'Indépendance belge*, 29-12-1893, 1.

¹³⁵ *L'Indépendance belge*, 29-12-1893, 1.

¹³⁶ *L'Indépendance belge*, 29-12-1893, 1.

¹³⁷ *L'Indépendance belge*, 25-01-1894, 5.

¹³⁸ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

¹³⁹ Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', 415.

¹⁴⁰ Mutamba Makombo, 'Les évolués : Situation Au Congo Belge.', 1.

background. Similar to the idea of repatriating the ‘petits boys’ as ‘agents of assimilation’, some of the children at Abbot Van Impe’s Catholic institute in Gijzegem were destined to go back to Congo to be priests and nuns. Their mission was to spread the Catholic faith there, *rendering great services to religion, civilization, and first and foremost their underprivileged brothers.*¹⁴¹

Defending the practice of bringing ‘petits boys’ to Belgium, the Congolâtre newspaper *Le Journal de Bruxelles* wrote that *the trip to Europe would indisputably have positive results for the project in Congo, the blacks do not have an ungrateful nature and will spread the word about the brilliance and power of our race, they already discovered ‘new needs’ among themselves, as for example the value of money and the need to establish coffee plantations.*¹⁴² Similarly, Lieutenant Freitag’s ‘petit boy’ Max Makwangwa *looked forward to telling his fellow Congolese about all the wonders that he had seen in civilized Europe.*¹⁴³ Pioca, a Congolese boy who came to Belgium for the colonial exposition in Antwerp of 1894 reportedly said: *we all want to become men like you, brave and intelligent.*¹⁴⁴

a. Interpreters

In an article CFS agent Charles Lemaire stated that he wanted to take Tonio with him upon his return to Congo.¹⁴⁵ For his ‘petit boy’ had proven to be a very valuable asset, as an interpreter, in communicating with indigenous Congolese people.¹⁴⁶ Lemaire was working on a dictionary of six languages and dialects: French, English, Zanzibarite, Fiote, Kibangi-Irebou, Mongo, and Bangala. His choice to include English in the dictionary was practical as it was indispensable in dealing with the many English and American missionaries present in the Congo region.¹⁴⁷ English was also key for negotiating with Swedish and Danish merchants who did not master French. Fiote was a dialect spoken by Congolese merchants on the ‘route des caravanes’.¹⁴⁸ Which of these languages and dialects Tonio spoke is uncertain, but most likely his native tongue was Mongo, the language of the Equateur district where Lemaire was stationed. In one newspaper the extremely condescending comment was made that Lemaire’s African dictionary was *partially compiled by a completely illiterate little negro.*¹⁴⁹ This comment completely disregarded Tonio’s intelligence as a human being and denied his recently acquired language skills.¹⁵⁰ Another article described the role of the ‘petits boys’ after their return to Congo as serving *as a bridge between*

¹⁴¹ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 19-12-1895, 2.

¹⁴² *Journal de Bruxelles*, 11-11-1897, 1.

¹⁴³ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 26-06-1897, 2.

¹⁴⁴ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 10-04-1895, 2.

¹⁴⁵ *L’Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

¹⁴⁶ *L’Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

¹⁴⁷ *L’Indépendance belge*, 22-11-1893, 1.

¹⁴⁸ *L’Indépendance belge*, 22-11-1893, 1.

¹⁴⁹ *L’Indépendance belge*, 22-11-1893, 1.

¹⁵⁰ *L’Indépendance belge*, 22-11-1893, 1.

*the indigenous population and the whites and they will contribute to the fraternization of the two races as proclaimed by the sovereign of the CFS.*¹⁵¹

b. Educated vassals

When Sakala was sent to a state school in Ghent, a newspaper wrote that he would become a *valuable auxiliary for the young CFS* after completing his European education.¹⁵² Initially, his education in Belgium was supposed to take at least three or four years.¹⁵³ In October 1887, however, Sakala's schooling had to be cut short abruptly because Van de Velde was promoted by King Leopold II to administer the Stanley Falls district.¹⁵⁴ *Ever since his departure was decided Sakala was sad.*¹⁵⁵ During a farewell dinner *the tears ran down his tanned cheeks in silence.*¹⁵⁶ Commenting on Sakala's repatriation an article reported: *Sakala, who came to Europe on Christmas 1885 as a negro, will leave absolutely civilized and in better shape.*¹⁵⁷ *The young prince will certainly take from his stay with us memories that he will treasure for long in his nostalgic dreams.*¹⁵⁸ An article stated that Sakala was expected to take up a leading role in the colonial administration of the station.¹⁵⁹ *Sakala was predestined to render great services to civilization in Africa. One day he is supposed to reign over a large and powerful population.* Van de Velde had high hopes for Sakala's career as an auxiliary of the CFS.¹⁶⁰ Another article concluded that *Sakala's youth was already over, the time of sorrows had arrived, and that Sakala would decide the fate of the CFS, we might very soon hear of him again in Belgium.*¹⁶¹

Similarly to Sakala's story, Mawamba, the 'petit boy' of Emile De Keyser, the head of the Boma district, *was sent to Europe to inculcate him with the necessary knowledge to make a black CFS agent out of him.*¹⁶² After his Belgian training Max Makwangwa, the 'petit boy' of Ernest-Jean Freitag, was repatriated to Congo in September 1898 *carrying a diverse body of knowledge* and the article wrote that *as of today, the administration of the CFS can count on his services.*¹⁶³ *With the knowledge that they acquired and their gratitude towards our country, they will go there (Congo) to work on the moral and material uplift of their brothers.*¹⁶⁴

¹⁵¹ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 26-09-1896, 1.

¹⁵² *La Meuse*, 15-03-1887, 2; *La Nation*, 14-03-1887, 1.

¹⁵³ *Vooruit*, 15-03-1887, 3.

¹⁵⁴ *La Meuse*, 15-10-1887, 5; *Vooruit*, 13-10-1887, 4.

¹⁵⁵ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

¹⁵⁶ *La Réforme*, 25-02-1888, 2.

¹⁵⁷ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

¹⁵⁸ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

¹⁵⁹ *La Meuse*, 15-10-1887, 5.

¹⁶⁰ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

¹⁶¹ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

¹⁶² *Journal de Bruxelles*, 13-09-1891, 2.

¹⁶³ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 26-06-1897, 2.

¹⁶⁴ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 26-06-1897, 2.

When Sakala arrived at the Congolese port of Matadi in December 1887, he was welcomed by two men sent by his father, anticipating his arrival.¹⁶⁵ *The return of Sakala to his home country provoked a vivid sensation among the local population.*¹⁶⁶ When they were finally reunited Sakala's father, King Mambouco, reportedly cried, because he thought his son was no longer alive, and held an enormous party to celebrate his return. *Everyone looked at him without recognizing him, but his mother ran forward with a loud scream when she saw him. All the women of the family ran towards him and started screaming. Shots of joy were fired, and everyone danced. Mambouco held on to me (Van de Velde) with his two hands and could only mumble mboté, mboté. Sakala was a bit ashamed and confused and took his father's hand and sat down next to him.*¹⁶⁷ His entire family was present, and he greeted them according to the indigenous ceremonial customs, which he had not forgotten, just as his language, which he started speaking volubly. The first thing he told his parents was to take care of the grave tomb of Van de Velde's brother Joseph in Vivi.¹⁶⁸ This small anecdote demonstrates the bridging function of individuals like Sakala. They understood the society that they were born in, but also got a taste of the society that started colonizing their land. The sensibilities of the colonizer, in this case the moral imperative to preserve the grave of a CFS agent, could be communicated more easily to the indigenous population through people like Sakala.

4. Loved by the people

In the articles about the arrival, departure, and the public appearances of the 'petits boys', the newspapers often included details about the Belgian public's reaction when seeing them. The tone of these descriptions was without exception positive and admiring. By emphasizing that the 'petits boys' were loved by the people the newspapers enhanced their popularity even more.

a. Local celebrities

Sakala was welcomed with open arms by Van de Velde's family and the population of Ghent.¹⁶⁹ This affectivity was reportedly shared by Sakala himself. A newspaper published a letter by Sakala to Van de Velde's parents after his master's death stating *I will never forget you and warm greeting to the city of Ghent.*¹⁷⁰ Similarly, the liberal newspaper *Le Petit Bleu du Matin* dedicated a biographical article in the series 'one Bruxellois a day' to Max Makwangwa, the 'petit boy' of CFS official Ernest-Jean Freitag. Although he is described as an *odd duck in the city of Brussels*, he was also reportedly *enjoying a popularity without precedent because of his long stay in the city.*¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 10-03-1888, 2.

¹⁶⁶ *La Meuse*, 21-02-1888, 3.

¹⁶⁷ *La Réforme*, 28-02-1888, 1.

¹⁶⁸ *La Réforme*, 28-02-1888, 1.

¹⁶⁹ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 31-07-1888, 2.

¹⁷⁰ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 31-07-1888, 2.

¹⁷¹ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 26-06-1897, 2.

When the ‘petits boys’ had to leave Belgium and end their education, events were sometimes held to celebrate their departure. For ‘petit boy’ Max Makwangwa a ceremony was organized upon his departure in the courtyard of the state middle school of Laken. The occasion was described as *most touching as it would certainly leave a memory in the mind of the little hero Max*.¹⁷² The school’s principal gave a speech expressing his *wholehearted sympathetic feelings* for Max and he received several *beautiful books on behalf of the teaching staff and the different classes of the school*.¹⁷³ Reportedly, *everyone present was deeply touched* and Max himself was *very emotional and could not contain his feelings and said that he would keep the memory of his class principal forever, in whatever country he would find himself*.¹⁷⁴ For Sakala’s departure the school also organized a celebration with speeches dedicated to him and he also received personalized gifts from his schoolmates.¹⁷⁵

b. The public was very touched

The public attachment to the ‘petits boys’ manifested itself also in a less joyful context. When Charles Lemaire’s ‘petit boy’ Tonio died on the 17th of February 1894, after several unsuccessful hospitalizations to cure his mental troubles, the newspapers reacted very emotionally. The fact that the newspaper *L’Indépendance belge* wrote about Tonio’s death on the front page for three successive days, demonstrates the reading public’s engagement with Tonio’s story.¹⁷⁶ Many other newspapers also reported on Tonio’s death.¹⁷⁷ One article from before his death stated that *the public was very touched by the folly that negro Tonio underwent* and after his death someone wrote *everyone is heartbroken*.¹⁷⁸

Although some Congophobe newspapers voiced concerns about the practice of bringing young Congolese children to Belgium, it is not clear whether the general reading public held Lemaire responsible for Tonio’s tragic death. What is clear however is that Tonio’s story was widely known and debated. One article even explicitly wrote that *the readers know Tonio’s story very well*.¹⁷⁹ This indicates that people were at least intrigued by his fate. For months many different national and regional newspapers had reported on *the folly of the little negro Tonio*.¹⁸⁰ His story continually popped up in the ‘faits divers’ section of both French and Dutch language newspapers, giving little updates about him. The emotional public response to Tonio’s dramatic story in the

¹⁷² *L’Étoile belge*, 12-02-1898, 3.

¹⁷³ *L’Étoile belge*, 12-02-1898, 3.

¹⁷⁴ *L’Étoile belge*, 12-02-1898, 3.

¹⁷⁵ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

¹⁷⁶ *L’Indépendance belge*, 18-02-1894, 1; *L’Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1; *L’Indépendance belge*, 20-02-1894, 1.

¹⁷⁷ *La Meuse*, 19-02-1894, 2; *Het Handelsblad*, 18-02-1894, 2; *Journal de Bruxelles*, 20-02-1894, 2; *L’Émancipation*, 21-02-1894, 2; *Le Peuple*, 19-02-1894, 3; *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 21-02-1894, 2; *Le Soir*, 19-02-1894, 2.

¹⁷⁸ *L’Indépendance belge*, 02-11-1893, 1; *L’Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1.

¹⁷⁹ *Het Laatste Nieuws*, 19-02-1894, 2.

¹⁸⁰ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 29-10-1893, 2; *Le Peuple*, 04-11-1893, 2; *La Réforme*, 27-10-1893, 2; *Le Courrier de L’Escaut*, 28-10-1893, 2; *Le Patriote*, 27-10-1893, 2.

newspapers resulted in a very large crowd attending his funeral.¹⁸¹ He was buried *with a cross in his hands for he had been baptized as a real 'chrétien de race'* on the 19th of February 1894 at the cemetery of Evere, at the outskirts of Brussels.¹⁸² He was believed to be *the first negro from the Congo to be buried in Belgium*.¹⁸³

B. Othering themes

The western image of the African other, taking up a lower position in the racial hierarchy, manifested itself in comments about the intellectual and physical differences between black and white people. Stereotypes about the exotic nature of black people were part of the colonial discourse that aimed 'to other' non-Europeans to legitimize the European civilizing project. Because of their Congolese descent, the 'petits boys' in Belgium were also dismissed as intellectually inferior, as the first part of this section explains, and physically exotic, as the second part of this section demonstrates. Othering themes in the discourse about the 'petits boys' were present in all newspapers across the media landscape, regardless of their stance towards the colonial project of the CFS.

1. Intellectual othering

A frequently reoccurring theme in the articles about the 'petits boys' is their first reaction to and understanding of western civilization. In most cases, this confrontation was described by means of funny anecdotes, but, according to the narrative, for Lemaire's 'petit boy' Tonio, the impulses of the completely foreign surroundings turned out to be detrimental. In general, the 'petits boys' were described as witty and receptive to learning new things. They were portrayed as exceptionally intelligent individuals who stand out from the average person of their race. The first segment of this part provides an overview of the very different narratives about the confrontation of the 'petits boys' with European civilization. The second segment discusses some of the comments that were made about the remarkable intelligence of the 'petits boys'. The third segment explains how the colonizer tried to make the colonized imitate him without him ever becoming fully equal.

a. Confrontations between savagery and civilization

This part juxtaposes very different narratives about the experiences of several 'petits boys', seeing Europe for the first time. The small anecdotes contain implicit messages about the intellectual capacities of Congolese people in general. Some articles emphasized the childish stupidity of the 'petits boys', others highlighted their remarkable intelligence.

The narrative about Tonio's confrontation with the Brussels city life is a fine example of intellectual othering. A newspaper article wrote that *the young negro fell into our civilization*, emphasizing the stark contrast between

¹⁸¹ *L'Indépendance belge*, 20-02-1894, 1.

¹⁸² *L'Indépendance belge*, 20-02-1894, 1.

¹⁸³ *L'Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1.

the African barbary to which Tonio was accustomed and the civilized environment that surrounded him now.¹⁸⁴ Another article claimed that the confrontation with *our civilization made his head spin*.¹⁸⁵ He was *so bedazzled by the marvelous things that he saw here that it disturbed his mind*.¹⁸⁶ Yet another later article concluded that *seeing our civilization made him crazy*.¹⁸⁷ After he had gone to the Vaudeville theater to see a comedy piece named ‘*Le Sous-Préfet de Château-Buzard*’ by Léon Gandillot where he had been staring *stunned and with his eyes wide open*, he went on a tour of Brussels by car.¹⁸⁸ When he returned from a visit to a live venue in a café the day after, he started acting weird. First, he could not stop laughing, claiming he saw giants with wooden legs. In reality, what he described were just stilt walkers on stage. Tonio also claimed he had witnessed ‘Peters’ death’. Peters used to be a CFS agent who had been decapitated during a fight with indigenous rebels. What Tonio interpreted as ‘Peters’ death’ was in fact just an arrest of someone in the streets of Brussels. The police officers that were making the arrest were holding the head of the man under their arms to make sure he would not flee. The real murder of agent Peters must have left a very strong impression on Tonio. The fact that Tonio linked his memory of Peters’ murder to a scene in the streets of Brussels demonstrates the impact of the violence to which ‘petits boys’ were exposed and most likely traumatized by.

The same newspaper stated that Tonio was unable to mentally process all the new things he saw in Belgium.¹⁸⁹ Tonio is described as in a state of insanity because he could not stop laughing and screaming.¹⁹⁰ While waiting for a doctor to arrive, Tonio was locked up in a small room. The article described how he had destroyed all the furniture in the room. After examination by a doctor named Phillips, Tonio was sent to an institution for mentally ill in Evere near Brussels. All of this happened only eight days after his arrival in Antwerp.¹⁹¹ After a week in the psychiatry in Evere Tonio’s behavior had normalized and he had seemingly fully recovered from his folly.¹⁹² Another ten days later, Tonio was released from the institution.¹⁹³ Doctor Cuylits, who was in charge of Tonio’s treatment, advised Lemaire to take him for a month or two to the countryside, before bringing him back under Lemaire’s service in the city.¹⁹⁴ Lemaire followed the doctor’s advice and left for the countryside with Tonio.¹⁹⁵ A newspaper article on the compilation of Lemaire’s dictionary of Congolese languages, published during their time in the countryside, put the so-called harmful *effects of our civilization on the brain of the black man* in a different

¹⁸⁴ *L’Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

¹⁸⁵ *L’Indépendance belge*, 02-11-1893, 1.

¹⁸⁶ *L’Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

¹⁸⁷ *L’Indépendance belge*, 18-02-1894, 1.

¹⁸⁸ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

¹⁸⁹ *L’Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

¹⁹⁰ *L’Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

¹⁹¹ *L’Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

¹⁹² *L’Indépendance belge*, 02-11-1893, 1.

¹⁹³ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 09-11-1893, 2.

¹⁹⁴ *L’Indépendance belge*, 02-11-1893, 1.

¹⁹⁵ *L’Indépendance belge*, 10-11-1893, 1.

perspective.¹⁹⁶ *It was no longer believed that Tonio was overexcited by the delights of our modern society. His insanity had just been a symptom of a mucus fever and had nothing to do with the different environment he was in.*¹⁹⁷

But in December 1893 several newspapers reported that Tonio had not completely recovered from his mental troubles and was sent back to the Evere psychiatry.¹⁹⁸ After this new period in Evere, Lemaire took Tonio back to a family member's house in the Flemish countryside. For a while it seemed as if his mental state had finally normalized. But as soon as he was exposed to the *grand air, movement, and circulation of the city* he became agitated and nervous again and he had to be sent back to Evere. The author claimed that although *insanity is extremely rare in Africa, Tonio was very much predisposed to get his lamentable condition.*¹⁹⁹ Surprisingly, the author of the article argued that not the fact that Tonio belonged to an inferior race, but instead his individual vulnerability, was the cause of his mental condition. The Evere psychiatry was described as a peaceful place with a large garden and a beautiful pond where Tonio could wander around freely.²⁰⁰ The reality was less idyllic, as Tonio was just locked away from the rest of society without receiving real treatment for his mental condition, as most psychiatry patients during the nineteenth century. The psychiatric institution in Evere, was, like other institutions of the same kind in Belgium at the time, more a shelter or a refuge than a place where scientific treatment was provided.²⁰¹ The idea was put forward to repatriate Tonio for it was believed that being back in his home environment might help him to overcome his mental state.²⁰² He was supposed to leave on the 6th of February on the same steamboat that he had arrived in October, the Akassa.²⁰³ The doctors hoped that *the air of his native country and sweet smelling savannas* would bring peace to his mind.²⁰⁴

Tonio died on the 17th of February 1894. A newspaper ensured its readers that he died without any agony or pain.²⁰⁵ During his final weeks his only pleasure had been to sit in front of the fireplace and cook himself his favorite meal, sweet rice with meat and a sugary drink. According to one article his folly never had *a violent or even a nostalgic character*, but Tonio only sang and danced continuously day and night, only stopping to eat

¹⁹⁶ *L'Indépendance belge*, 22-11-1893, 1.

¹⁹⁷ *L'Indépendance belge*, 22-11-1893, 1.

¹⁹⁸ *Het Handelsblad*, 29-12-1893, 2; *L'Indépendance belge*, 29-12-1893, 1.

¹⁹⁹ *L'Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1.

²⁰⁰ *L'Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1.

²⁰¹ Hermans, 'Krankzinnigenzorg in België (1850-1900)', 193.

²⁰² *L'Indépendance belge*, 29-12-1893, 1.

²⁰³ *Het Handelsblad*, 09-01-1894, 3; *La Meuse*, 06-02-1894, 3.

²⁰⁴ *Le Peuple*, 30-12-1893, 3.

²⁰⁵ *L'Indépendance belge*, 18-02-1894, 1

greedily.²⁰⁶ This statement contradicts earlier articles that reported on Tonio's aggressive behavior, smashing all the glasses and furniture in the room.²⁰⁷

The narrative about Tonio's complete disorientation, caused by his confrontation with European modernity, suited the discourse about a dichotomy between African savagery and European superiority perfectly. By describing Tonio as *a child of the burned lands* who only knew *the vast horizons of the lost fatherland, the pure night sky, the free and sacred forests, peaceful views, the singing of the birds, all the voices, and the whispers there*, he was positioned on the African side of this dichotomy.²⁰⁸ The same article however also included criticism on European modernity, by writing about the *grey sky, without light and cheerfulness* above our European cities and *the agitated circulation of the city* that drove Tonio crazy.²⁰⁹ The idea of a hierarchy between Africa and Europe was reinforced by emphasizing the seemingly natural polarity between European civilization, characterized by technological advancement and modernity, on the one hand and primitivism on the other. This had as a side effect that indigenous people were also portrayed as 'noble savages', still pure and uncorrupted by western industrial culture, romanticizing them.²¹⁰

Somewhat similar in tone, but radically different in outcome were the anecdotes about the confrontation of the 'petits boys' Sakala, Mawamba, and Katanga with European civilization. All three of them, at first, reacted oddly to what they saw. The newspapers portrayed them as endearingly naive. For example, when a newspaper reported that on the 12th of December 1885, a cold and snowy winter day, Van de Velde arrived at the house of his elderly mother and eighty-year-old father in Ghent with Sakala.²¹¹ *The young black boy had never seen it snowing: he was flabbergasted. Someone told him it was sugar falling from the sky, so he took some snow from the ground and tasted it. He suddenly said: Ah! Now I have arrived in the land of the whites.*²¹² Another example is an anecdote about Mawamba, the 'petit boy' of CFS agent Emile De Keyser, who arrived with his master in Le Havre in September 1891. Together, the 'petit boy' and his master, travelled to Paris before heading to Belgium. *Mawamba thought he had been transported to the land of dreams, and he did not possess eyes that were large enough to marvel at all the wonders that he found in his sight. In particular, he asked to climb to the top of the Eiffel tower for he was convinced that he could see his village from there. Arrived at the top he started crying, screaming 'mommy, mommy!', pointing to the limits of the horizon faraway.*²¹³ The article reporting on the arrival

²⁰⁶ *L'Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1.

²⁰⁷ *L'Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

²⁰⁸ *L'Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1; *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

²⁰⁹ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1; *L'Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1.

²¹⁰ Jovanovic-Kruspel, 'Show Meets Science', 222.

²¹¹ *La Meuse*, 24-12-1885, 2; *Journal de Bruxelles*, 14-12-1885, 2.

²¹² *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3; *La Meuse*, 24-12-1885, 2; *Journal de Bruxelles*, 14-12-1885, 2; *De Koophandel*, 13-12-1885, 2.

²¹³ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 19-12-1895, 2.

of Katanga, the ‘petit boy’ of Léon Rom, in Antwerp contained a similar anecdote. *The little barbarian was struck by the work of the street sweepers, armed with enormous broomsticks, cleaning the docks’ and he reportedly asked: don’t these men have boys to do that?*²¹⁴

The same article on ‘petit boy’ Katanga stated that *his amazement when seeing the shop windows of the butchery was very big.*²¹⁵ Hinting at the fact that Katanga did not realize that he was looking through a glass window, the article stated that he asked *do they really leave the meat hanging outside like that and no one comes to steal it?*²¹⁶ Right after, the article concluded that *Katanga’s reflections on everything prove that he has a very strong power to observe.*²¹⁷ An article about Sakala’s departure from Congo, included a similar positive anecdote about the remarkable observation skills of the ‘petits boys’. The newspaper wrote that Sakala had not brought adequate clothing for the journey, because his departure from Congo had been decided without much preparation. Consequently, when they arrived in Liverpool in December 1885, the first thing Lemaire did was to buy Sakala warmer clothes in an English bazaar. The store had an interior *railroad system of little wagons to bring money from the different checkout stations to a central collection point.*²¹⁸ *We can imagine how seeing all of this must blow the little primitive’s mind.*²¹⁹ *The multitude of entirely new impressions presented simultaneously to his brain did not confuse him: Sakala knew how to ‘class these documents’ and someone heard him say lately in one of our big stores in Brussels: They are not as smart here as the English. They don’t have a railroad: they carry money by foot.*²²⁰ Unlike the discourse about Tonio, the other ‘petits boys’, as Katanga and Sakala, were presented as being able to make sense of what he witnessed for the first time in Europe. The fact that these radically different narratives about the way ‘petits boys’ reacted in confrontation with western society existed, shows that some people did believe in the intellectual capacities of black children. Not everyone saw them as inherently incapable of learning and adapting to a new environment.

b. Surprisingly smart and polite

At the conferences that Van de Velde organized about his time in Congo, he emphasized the indisputable intelligence, sense of justice and materiality, compassionate and human nature, mercantile spirit, and bravery of the indigenous Congolese population.²²¹ All the ‘petits boys’ without exception were described as remarkably intelligent for their age. Van de Velde taught Sakala French and as soon as his language skills reached the required

²¹⁴ *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

²¹⁵ *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

²¹⁶ *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

²¹⁷ *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

²¹⁸ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

²¹⁹ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

²²⁰ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

²²¹ *La Nation*, 24-02-1886, 1.

level he sent him to a Belgian school.²²² On the 21th of January 1886 a newspaper announced that Sakala would start going to a state middle school in Ghent.²²³ A year after that an article reported that Sakala was able to speak, read, and write without difficulty in French.²²⁴ A later article, publishing a letter written by Sakala to the family of Van de Velde, however made the condescending comment that the letter was reproduced with respect *for Sakala's naive spelling*.²²⁵ So not everyone was completely convinced of Sakala's recently acquired language skills. Another article emphasized that Sakala was *remarkably docile, intelligent, and receptive to everything that he is taught*. He also became fluent in Flemish.²²⁶ He was ambitious and wanted to be the first of his class. He was especially strong in calculus, and he could narrate the story of the Battle of the Golden Spurs in detail.²²⁷ *His notebooks were kept very orderly*.²²⁸ Sakala also had the capacity to adapt himself easily to his surroundings, without ever feeling awkward or out of place. *He behaves as a gentleman and is extremely polite*.²²⁹

An article reporting on the baptism of an unnamed young Congolese boy in the Saint-Jacques Church in Liège described him as *clever-looking*.²³⁰ Similar comments were made about other 'petits boys' as well. About Arthur, the 'petit boy' of CFS official Legros, was stated that he *has adapted himself completely to the European values and traditions, his education also goes fast ... he reads and writes almost correctly in French, even though he has only been in Belgium for several months*.²³¹ *La Réforme* wrote that CFS agent Léon Rom *had not been mistaken about Katanga's ability of assimilate, it has been only fifteen days since the little negro had heard him speak French and he could already pronounce many words. The little African has an extraordinarily bright mind and learns how to read and write with a lot of dedication. The children that were going to school fascinated him, he wanted to join them*.²³² Lieutenant Freitag's 'petit boy' Max Makwangwa was described by his teacher at the state middle school of Laken as *studious and he is not averse to pulling an all-nighter to prepare his classes*.²³³ Reporting on the Congolese individuals that were present at the colonial exposition in Tervuren the Congolâtre newspaper *Le Journal de Bruxelles* wrote that *these savages are very docile, curious, and studious and possess an 'awakening intelligence'*.²³⁴ The author of the same article also hinted at the fact that there were also unintelligent white people by mentioning that he did not want to make comparisons with certain white

²²² *La Meuse*, 30-12-1885, 2.

²²³ *La Meuse*, 21-01-1886, 2; *Journal de Bruxelles*, 23-01-1886, 2.

²²⁴ *La Meuse*, 15-03-1887, 2.

²²⁵ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 31-07-1888, 2.

²²⁶ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 13-10-1887, 2.

²²⁷ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

²²⁸ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

²²⁹ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

²³⁰ *La Meuse*, 24-04-1889, 2.

²³¹ *L'Indépendance belge*, 16-02-1892, 1.

²³² *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

²³³ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 26-06-1897, 2.

²³⁴ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 11-11-1897, 1.

populations because that would be humiliating for them. Although he called the Congolese *these big children* he also stated that white people *unfortunately too often only have tasted 'the varnish of civilization'*.²³⁵ He concluded that it is the task of white men, who tasted civilization first, *to turn the black children into black men*.²³⁶ Similarly, an article on Abbot Van Impe's Catholic institute in Gijzegem stated that the students there *at the age of five and six reached the same level of physical and intellectual development that our children only reach between eleven and twelve and they express themselves already perfectly in French and Flemish, which is very rare among whites and they make remarkable progress in a short time*.²³⁷ Finally, two 'petits boys' were described as *demonstrating that the negro race possesses intelligence, has good will, and can have its place 'in the sunlight of civilization'*.²³⁸

c. Almost but not quite

Although their reaction to European civilization was radically different, all 'petits boys' including Tonio were represented as savages in awe of the wonders of European civilization. Sakala's remarkable receptivity to European civilized knowledge clearly made him stand out from most other Congolese savages, as he resembled the superior white race more than other black people. Nevertheless, he was never portrayed as equal to a white person. Although he *wears his European suit with a lot of ease* this did not mean that he was a European.²³⁹ According to the 'white men's burden' logic Africans had to be civilized and had to incorporate western ideals, but this did not take away the insurmountable differences between Africans and Europeans. Those dissimilarities stayed firmly in place. Although comments as *according to his teachers, very few whites could gain as much knowledge in such a short amount of time as he did* challenged the idea of the white versus black hierarchy, the main idea of European superiority remained.²⁴⁰ Only by incorporating European knowledge, Sakala became superior to the people of his race. His case remained the exception to the rule of black inferiority.

At first sight, the significantly different narratives of, on the one hand Tonio losing his sanity, and, on the other 'petits boys' like Sakala who made sense of the things they witnessed, could lead to the conviction that not all Africans were inherently incapable of attaining the same intellectual and moral level as Europeans. This optimism about the capacities of the 'petits boys', however, did not last very long. The narrative about Sakala's intelligence radically changed. In an article from December 1889 a surprising update was given about Sakala, whose master, Lieutenant Van de Velde, had passed away in February 1888.²⁴¹ The article stated that *the good lessons he (Sakala) has received with us did not entirely civilize him after all, or at least they did not civilize him as they should*

²³⁵ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 11-11-1897, 1.

²³⁶ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 11-11-1897, 1.

²³⁷ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 19-12-1895, 2.

²³⁸ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 26-09-1896, 1.

²³⁹ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 24-02-1886, 2.

²⁴⁰ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

²⁴¹ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 31-07-1888, 2.

have.²⁴² During his service as an interpreter, Sakala reportedly had *extorted money ... from different chiefs whom he made believe many lies and whom he threatened with the anger of the white men and war if they did not give him money. Now he is under forced labor.*²⁴³ He was sentenced by a Congolese court and *chained as a vulgar criminal.*²⁴⁴ Sakala went from being celebrated as an example of successful assimilation, to being portrayed as a corrupted criminal who had completely lost the morals that he had acquired during his European education.

The story about Sakala's criminal behavior was widely published. As if the newspapers wanted to make clear to the reading public that even an educated black person like Sakala stayed an inferior creature after all. Even the radical liberal newspaper *La Réforme* wrote that *this story casts a gloomy shadow over the great things we were expecting from our black brothers. Poor Sakala! What would you have been happy, if the civilizers would have left you alone in your village.*²⁴⁵ In another article in the same newspaper 'petit boy' Katanga, was described as being *destined, by the fact of his stay in Belgium, to become one of the most illustrious individuals of his race.*²⁴⁶ But then the author of the article compared Katanga to Sakala, mentioning the latter as the worst possible example of a black person who had completely gone rogue despite his Belgian education.²⁴⁷ He raised the question whether Katanga would *need to be 'in chains' first as well, in order to see the beauty of military orders and be promoted to the rank of corporal.*²⁴⁸ The underlying message was not to entrust too much responsibility to black people as they were very likely to abuse it. The author of the article drew a general conclusion about all the 'petits boys' with a Belgian education: *very interesting and maybe also painful might be the story of the little Congolese boys who return home, with memories of our civilization and crazy desires of independence, very soon to be repressed.*²⁴⁹ The bottom line of the discourse was that, although black people were capable of gaining knowledge about western civilization through their education in Belgium, they could not be trusted and had to be supervised by Europeans.

In response to the story about Sakala's criminal path, the Congophobe newspaper *La Réforme* criticized the CFS as an example of bad colonial governance, blaming the CFS administration for the fact that Sakala had gone rogue. In an article a comparison was made between the methods used by the Danish to administer the indigenous population of Greenland and those used in the CFS.²⁵⁰ The article started by stating the fact that *almost all the*

²⁴² *La Meuse*, 19-12-1889, 2; *Vooruit*, 18-12-1889, 3; *Le Courrier de L'Escaut*, 18-12-1889, 2.

²⁴³ *La Meuse*, 19-12-1889, 2; *Vooruit*, 18-12-1889, 3; *Le Courrier de L'Escaut*, 18-12-1889, 2.

²⁴⁴ *La Meuse*, 19-12-1889, 2; *La Réforme*, 19-12-1889, 2.

²⁴⁵ *La Réforme*, 19-12-1889, 2.

²⁴⁶ *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

²⁴⁷ *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

²⁴⁸ *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

²⁴⁹ *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

²⁵⁰ *La Réforme*, 28-12-1889, 3.

*wild races decline rapidly when they enter in contact with Europeans.*²⁵¹ In the CFS *the negros are civilized by giving them alcohol and mercantilism. Meanwhile, the Danish example is the best answer to the pessimism of those who claim that even a European education can only be fatal for inferior races, as for example the sentence to forced labor of little Sakala.*²⁵² *La Réforme* clearly did not oppose colonization as a concept. The newspaper was only denouncing the way the CFS was governed. *When civilized people are aware of their duties towards the savages, as for example in Greenland, we can see that the results are completely different.*²⁵³ The author was very clear about the fact that it was possible to civilize the Congolese, but only when colonizing forces acted responsibly. Instead of pointing to Sakala's 'otherness' and inferiority as the cause of his criminal path, *La Réforme* blamed the CFS administration.

The Catholic newspaper *Het Handelsblad* also reported on Sakala's forced labor sentence but framed the story differently.²⁵⁴ Sakala himself was inherently capable of being a morally righteous person but *the neutral and nonreligious liberal education* corrupted him and therefore caused his criminal behavior.²⁵⁵ This argument should be understood in the context of the long-lasting nineteenth-century conflict between Belgian liberals and Catholics about who could provide primary education. Probably without him ever being aware of it, Sakala's story became an instrument for the Catholics to discredit the liberal educational system. The author was obviously being sarcastic when he stated that Sakala was *a fine example of European civilizing indeed, which will make the black philosophers over there think thoroughly.*²⁵⁶ *Het Handelsblad* reported that a liberal newspaper blamed Sakala's poor fate on the *uncompleted education* of the boy.²⁵⁷ The author of the article was however more critical about Sakala's liberal schooling.²⁵⁸ He stated that *he did not receive any education at all, he learned a little bit how to read, write, and count, but that is about it, on his heart they did not work, for only the development of the spirit can prevent certain follies. We prefer to see negros, who are slowly civilized by means of religion, over negros who are quickly taught some letters to ... end up as a criminal.*²⁵⁹ Even though the author clearly looked down Sakala's individual fate, when writing *let the liberals keep their civilized negro*, he still suggested that Congolese children in general did have capacity to be put on a more morally righteous path by means of a Catholic education.²⁶⁰

²⁵¹ *La Réforme*, 28-12-1889, 3.

²⁵² *La Réforme*, 28-12-1889, 3.

²⁵³ *La Réforme*, 28-12-1889, 3.

²⁵⁴ *Het Handelsblad*, 18-12-1889, 2; *Het Handelsblad*, 19-12-1889, 1.

²⁵⁵ *Het Handelsblad*, 18-12-1889, 2; *Het Handelsblad*, 19-12-1889, 1.

²⁵⁶ *Het Handelsblad*, 19-12-1889, 1.

²⁵⁷ *Het Handelsblad*, 19-12-1889, 1.

²⁵⁸ *Het Handelsblad*, 19-12-1889, 1.

²⁵⁹ *Het Handelsblad*, 19-12-1889, 1.

²⁶⁰ *Het Handelsblad*, 19-12-1889, 1.

Two years after the reports about Sakala's forced labor sentence, *La Meuse* provided a more optimistic update about Sakala's story. The liberal newspaper stated that *the child now has become a man and, even more than that, an honest man with irreproachable manners.*²⁶¹ According to the article *Sakala absolutely wanted to see the family of his poor master Liévin again and, to earn the means to make the trip, he became a soldier for the CFS army for three years. He made 1,25 franks per day and spends absolutely none of it to assemble to largest amount possible for returning to Europe.*²⁶² Two years later another newspaper raised the question whether Sakala had returned, writing *did he stay in the land of the gorillas?*²⁶³ Finally two years after that an unexpected event was announced by the Dutch language newspaper *Het Laatste Nieuws*. *As promised, Sakala unexpectedly returned to Belgium on the 31st of March 1895.*²⁶⁴ He arrived in Antwerp by steamboat and went to Ghent to give a lecture to students about the situation in Congo.²⁶⁵ So, in the end, Sakala was presented as a man of his word who had left his criminal past behind. Consequently, the narrative about his fate did have a positive outcome, even though most newspapers never reported about him after the news about his criminal behavior. Therefore, for most of the reading public, the image of the educated black boy who took the wrong path remained in place.

Similar to the ambivalent discourse about Sakala, Lieutenant Freitag's 'petit boy' Max Makwangwa was described by a Congolâtre author as somewhat in between a proper gentleman and a Congolese savage. Thanks to his education in Belgium, he had clearly progressed from his status of an indigenous primitive but was still culturally very different. The author wrote about his return to Congo that *Makwangwa, proud as a peacock, would dance the bamboula (indigenous drum dance) of success, if he had not become too much of a gentleman to take part in such tropical demonstrations.*²⁶⁶ An article titled *The education of young Congolese in Belgium* wrote that *we do not pretend to support (the argument) that generally the negros are as improvable and educable as whites: the inferiority of their poor race compared to ours is demonstrated by history and science, but it would be unjust and inhumane, following that principle, to conclude that there is no future for these numerous unhappy African people.*²⁶⁷ *There is plenty of proof that demonstrates that the negro race is not only capable of a rudimentary civilization, but that, with white guidance, it can be initiated in the regime of our civilized societies and can improve its institutions, of such a strength is her imaginative force.*²⁶⁸ Statements as these prove once more the CFS agents' strong belief in black inferiority. However, as the 'petits boys' were more like Europeans, the article stated that *on the other hand, it is indisputable that, given their young age, the negros are as able to receive the*

²⁶¹ *La Meuse*, 24-08-1891, 3.

²⁶² *La Meuse*, 24-08-1891, 3.

²⁶³ *L'Indépendance belge*, 31-08-1893, 1.

²⁶⁴ *Het Laatste Nieuws*, 31-03-1895, 3.

²⁶⁵ *Het Laatste Nieuws*, 31-03-1895, 3.

²⁶⁶ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 26-06-1897, 2.

²⁶⁷ *L'Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1.

²⁶⁸ *L'Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1.

*same instruction and education as our children placed behind the same school desks.*²⁶⁹ Yet the very same article also stated that the *class* (of the Congolese children) *was separated from the white class because ... bourgeois families feared that their children would be 'contaminated by the contact with the negros'.*²⁷⁰ This illustrated the extreme ambiguity that characterized the discourse. So even though the 'petits boys' were believed to mimic European ideals better than most Congolese, they were still seen as 'others' and treated very differently.

2. Physical othering

The first segment of this part analyzes the description of the physical differences between the black 'petits boys' and white people. It aims to demonstrate how these differences were used to reinforce the idea of a hierarchy between Europe and Africa. Typical white European features were elevated above inferior black African features. A reoccurring narrative in the discourse about the 'petits boys' is them being described as exceptionally beautiful and physically more resembling Europeans than most other people of their race, making them more praiseworthy. The second segment of this part analyzes the theme of the 'petits boys' being treated as a rare curiosity by their masters and the general public. As in the section on intellectual othering, the last segment of this part applies demonstrates how the 'petits boys' were presented as 'similar, but not quite European'.

a. Exotic features

The appearance of the 'petits boys' was often described as if they were newly discovered species that still held intriguing secrets. The focus was mostly on their skin color, lips, noses, and length. The characteristic European features were categorized as fine and desirable over the savage African ones. By exoticizing the features of the 'petits boys', they were presented as mysterious creatures from a fascinating faraway place. The article about Tonio's funeral comments on the fact that his black skin color had altered to a much whiter complexion after he had passed away. There was also a picture of Tonio on his deathbed displayed outside the central offices of the *L'Indépendance belge* newspaper.²⁷¹ The conclusion was drawn that *the blacks are born white and die white, their color changes and their skin tone is no longer recognizable.*²⁷² Ascribing the capacity to change the color of their skin to black people, made them seem alien. In one article Sakala was referred to as *that tiny ape, that griffon* (a small dog breed) *of the four-legged*, hinting at his African descent and his moderate height.²⁷³ By emphasizing their visible physical differences the 'petits boys' were placed outside of regular Belgian society.

²⁶⁹ *L'Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1.

²⁷⁰ *L'Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1.

²⁷¹ *L'Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1.

²⁷² *L'Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1.

²⁷³ *L'Indépendance belge*, 31-08-1893, 1.

Newspapers making comments about the fact that Africans were not adapted to live in the Belgian climate are an additional example of physical othering. In July 1891 an article complained about the terrible summer weather.²⁷⁴ It stated that *we are surprised to see that so many of our people succumb in Congo, knowing what we must endure to live in Belgium. We are however convinced that the Congolese would have a much harder time to live here, than that the Belgians do to live over there.*²⁷⁵ An article, reporting on the departure of the Congolese that were exhibited at the colonial exposition of Tervuren in 1897, stated that *several blacks were complaining about the cold and were saying they are happy to return.*²⁷⁶

But unlike the discourse about Africans in general, the narrative about the ‘petits boys’ was nuanced and more ambiguous. Within their racial group they were categorized as resembling the European ideals the most. An article describing Tonio’s facial features stated: *his forehead pure and fine like those of Europeans and not large and harsh like the one natural Africans have and only his skin color, flat nose, and thick lips remind of the negro.*²⁷⁷ In an article, reporting on the baptism of a young Congolese boy in the Saint-Jacques Church in Liège, he was described as *possessing the characteristics of the black race, frizzy hair and thick lips, even though the complexion of his skin was rather bright.*²⁷⁸ Lieutenant Rom’s ‘petit boy’ Katanga was described as *possibly one of the most beautiful specimens of the black race that we have seen in Belgium, his forehead is absolutely not pronounced, his nose is less thick than those of most negros, and finally his jaws are not prominent. He is of a type that comes very close to the European one, only the fatness of his lips and the chocolate complexion of his skin reveal the origins of the little boy.*²⁷⁹ These comments were meant as compliments to the ‘petits boys’, praised for resembling the civilized European race more than other black people.

b. A public attraction and an elitist toy

The curiosity of the general public to see Sakala was immense and during his first days in Ghent *a real parade took place. Many inhabitants of the city wanted to catch a glimpse of the Congolese prince and Sakala, happy but also little amazed, received an entire legion of curious people.*²⁸⁰ Sakala started attending public events in Ghent and for one occasion he was dressed in a fantasy costume, when he took part in the funfair of the casino where he sold maps of Congo.²⁸¹ The general public embraced Sakala and saw him as a fascinating and exotic creature. Van de Velde organized conferences to tell all those interested about the things he learned during his expeditions. He

²⁷⁴ *Le Soir*, 10-07-1891, 2.

²⁷⁵ *Le Soir*, 10-07-1891, 2.

²⁷⁶ *Le Soir*, 01-09-1897, 2.

²⁷⁷ *L'Indépendance belge*, 19-02-1894, 1.

²⁷⁸ *La Meuse*, 24-04-1889, 2.

²⁷⁹ *La Réforme*, 12-03-1893, 2.

²⁸⁰ *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

²⁸¹ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 31-12-1885, 2.

brought Sakala along as a sort of living illustration for his stories.²⁸² The announcements for Van de Velde's events were published in many different newspapers.²⁸³

The 'petits boys' whose masters practiced Catholicism were baptized. These ceremonies attracted much public attention. *An elevated platform that allowed the public to follow the ceremony* was installed for the baptism of three young Congolese children in the Saint-Jacques Church in Liège.²⁸⁴ *In the transept seats were reserved for entrance ticket holders and the tickets could be bought from the clergy of the church.*²⁸⁵ After the baptism of 'petit boy' Léopold Vidi, *a large crowd came to the exit of the church to give him a small ovation. The ceremony had been celebrated with pomp and had attracted an enormous amount of people that totally filled the church and when they saw Léopold a vivid wave of curiosity went through the crowd.*²⁸⁶ Selling tickets to look at colonized people as a special attraction, was a concept first commercialized by animal merchant Carl Hagenbeck in 1866 in the Hamburg Zoo. He turned it into a thriving business model and the phenomenon of 'human zoos' was so successful that it spread rapidly across Europe.²⁸⁷

During baptismal ceremonies it was common practice to give the Congolese children prominent members of Belgian society as their godparents. Taking up the responsibility for a little Congolese boy made one look very generous and morally upright. The godparents of three Congolese children brought to Belgium in 1895 by Baron Francis Dhanis, were for example a member of the Belgian parliament, a baroness, and a duke.²⁸⁸ King Leopold II himself even accepted to be the godfather of 'petit boy' Léopold Vidi.²⁸⁹ His closest confidant, Edmond Van Eetvelde, administer-general for foreign affairs of the CFS, became the godfather of 'petit boy' Baudouin Bida.²⁹⁰ Many noble women, including Queen Marie-Henriette, King Leopold II's wife, and the Duchess of Flanders, King Leopold II's sister-in-law, were also active as patrons of committees to support the *humanitarian initiative* to civilize the Congolese children.²⁹¹

Le Journal de Bruxelles wrote about the arrival of Emile De Keyser's 'petit boy' Mawamba in Paris that *he must have provoked a lot of curiosity from our excellent neighbors* and that he *instigated their interest.*²⁹² Further on the article stated that De Keyser *did not dare to walk with his protégé through Brussels anymore because he*

²⁸² *La Nation*, 24-02-1886, 1.

²⁸³ *La Meuse*, 24-01-1887, 2; *L'Indépendance belge*, 27-02-1886, 3; *Le Bien Public*, 06-02-1886, 2.

²⁸⁴ *La Meuse*, 15-03-1895, 3.

²⁸⁵ *La Meuse*, 15-03-1895, 3.

²⁸⁶ *La Meuse*, 15-03-1895, 3.

²⁸⁷ Jovanovic-Kruspel, 'Show Meets Science', 222; *La Meuse*, 24-04-1889, 2.

²⁸⁸ *La Meuse*, 15-03-1895, 2.

²⁸⁹ *L'Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1; *Journal de Bruxelles*, 24-01-1889, 1.

²⁹⁰ *L'Emancipation*, 12-04-1890, 2.

²⁹¹ *L'Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1.

²⁹² *Journal de Bruxelles*, 13-09-1891, 2.

feared a repetition of some scandalous precedents that had been caused by the reaction of the passers-by (in Paris).²⁹³ This small detail reveals the problematic nature of interaction between the ‘petits boys’ and the general public. The latter seeing the former as a sort of attraction, and therefore not treating them with dignity and respect. Similarly, a newspaper article on the colonial exposition of 1897 in Tervuren stated that for the *vulgar masses ... the savages ... had the lure of something new, of ‘never seen before’, what excited their curiosity*, but also that *the blacks are sometimes troubled by the indiscrete curiosity of these civilized people*.²⁹⁴ Inspired by the ‘human zoos’ concept introduced by German animal merchant Carl Hagenbeck, Congolese individuals were displayed as stuffed animals in a museum. The difference with a normal museum was however that the ‘human zoos’ presented ‘the other’ in the flesh as ‘cultural aliens’ in a live theatrical context.²⁹⁵ Reporting on the arrival of the Congolese pygmies by steamboat in Antwerp for the same colonial exposition, the Congophobe newspaper *Le Peuple* wrote with an unmistakably reproachful tone that *we have never seen in Europe dwarfs from that country and the Congolâtre newspapers are announcing that the spectacle of their arrival would not disappoint*.²⁹⁶ When Captain Jacques came back to Brussels with his ‘petit boy’ Léopold Kassongo after his stay in Congo, they were both put on a float, and were driven around the city to be admired by the spectators.²⁹⁷

A small but revealing detail that speaks to the way Sakala was not seen as an equal human being: the wife of another famous CFS official, Madam de Laveleye, gave her ape the name Sakala.²⁹⁸ Two Congolese children, brought to Belgium by one of the CFS co-founders, Doctor Allard, as a gift from two indigenous rulers for King Leopold II, were described as his *elephants*.²⁹⁹ So, Congolese people were not only displayed as animals and alongside animal species from their home countries, but also given the same animal names. Defending the colonial exposition in Tervuren, the Congolâtre newspaper *Le Journal de Bruxelles* wrote that *the goal of the human zoo of Congolese in Tervuren is not for them (the Congolese) to be exhibited as an exotic curiosity and staged as a vulgar spectacle. On the contrary, the goal is to give them an opportunity to be initiated into western civilization and to be educated. We wanted to show the negros the land of the white man and demonstrate them how whites make use of the products they take from Congo. They saw what the product is of (their) work and (admired) the variety of objects to be found in Europe in exchange for their products. Their journey (to Belgium) was an extensive lesson about (a wide range of) things. That is why the blacks were brought to the colonial exposition every day in groups of twelve. There, we explained to them in detail the marvelous ways our sculptors use their ivory from Congo. We have shown them the tires of our bicycles, and twenty other objects fabricated*

²⁹³ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 19-12-1895, 2.

²⁹⁴ *L’Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1

²⁹⁵ Jovanovic-Kruspel, ‘Show Meets Science’, 222; *L’Indépendance belge*, 28-08-1897, 1.

²⁹⁶ *Le Peuple*, 23-06-1897, 1.

²⁹⁷ *Le Peuple*, 24-06-1894, 3.

²⁹⁸ *La Meuse*, 07-06-1893, 3.

²⁹⁹ *L’Indépendance belge*, 18-09-1885, 2.

*from their rubber, the wood of their forests transformed into luxurious furniture crafted by our handy laborers, the use of palm oil, they tasted the delicious coffee of our African plantations and smoked the tobacco from Congo.*³⁰⁰

Although Lemaire had taught Tonio French and had used him as his personal interpreter during his travels, it still seemed as if Tonio was some sort of *real-life travel souvenir*. *Most often when a European brought a young Congolese boy with him to Europe the child served as a living trinket, as if he brought home a bizarre weapon, a fetish, or a parrot. A memento who laughs, barks, waves.*³⁰¹ Lemaire also took other rare and exotic trophies, like a monkey and a tropical bird, with him from his expedition, but Sakala was the most special of all the curiosities he had found Congo.³⁰²

On public occasions the ‘petits boys’ were brought along by their masters to showcase them. A reoccurring story is that a master attended a meeting of an anti-slavery society bringing his ‘petit boy’ with him. CFS legal agent Oscar Gustin for example entered the venue of an anti-slavery meeting *with two negros accompanied by long cheers.*³⁰³ He also brought his ‘petit boy’ to a meeting, attended by more than two hundred people, in Ypres in 1889.³⁰⁴ During another anti-slavery meeting *four young negros, with the most beautiful black skin, of whom the entrance made an impression, handed a superb bouquet of flowers* to a speaker under loud applause.³⁰⁵ Van de Velde also brought his ‘petit boy’ Sakala to the conferences of King Leopold II’s Geographical Society to show him off and brag about how developed and intelligent Sakala had become under his guidance.³⁰⁶ Not only secular CFS officials used ‘petits boys’ as a rare toy to symbolize their status and success. A missionary from the Abbey of Tongerlo, returning from the Congo after a stay of seven years, was invited by King Leopold II. He came to the Royal Palace in Brussels with a Congolese child, the son of a Congolese ruler, to illustrate his successful missionary work.³⁰⁷ For a fundraising theater performance, CFS official Oscar Van Lint also took his *little negro from Nyangwé* with him in the gala suite.³⁰⁸

c. Almost but not quite

Two articles reporting on Sakala’s criminal behavior wrote that Sakala had *a soul as dark as his skin*, linking his personal morality to his physical appearance.³⁰⁹ The articles describing the skin complexion of the ‘petits boys’ as

³⁰⁰ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 11-11-1897, 1.

³⁰¹ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

³⁰² *La Réforme*, 23-10-1887, 3.

³⁰³ *La Meuse*, 17-12-1888, 2.

³⁰⁴ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 04-05-1889, 2.

³⁰⁵ *La Meuse*, 01-05-1891, 2.

³⁰⁶ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 24-02-1886, 2.

³⁰⁷ *L’Avenir du Luxembourg*, 26-09-1908, 1.

³⁰⁸ *Le Patriote*, 10-02-1895, 2.

³⁰⁹ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 18-12-1889, 2; *Le Soir*, 18-12-1889, 2.

lighter and consequently more European also linked this to their intelligence and good morals. Physical othering was in that sense inextricably linked to intellectual othering. The more European a ‘petit boy’ looked, the better and the more intelligent he was expected to be. Whereas mimicking European values and knowledge was hard but not impossible for the ‘petits boys’, mimicking a European physique was not something they could do. Although they were seen as more alike the superior European race, they continued to be inherently and insurmountably different due to their African origins.

Caught in between two worlds the ‘petits boys’ did not fully fit in Belgian society as they were perceived as different because of their ethnicity. Upon their return in Africa their European clothing, traditions, and manners also made them stand out from the local Congolese population. When Sakala returned to Congo with Van de Velde and stayed with his family for ten days, a newspaper reported that *his boots and collar made the biggest impression on the people of his native village*.³¹⁰ Sakala gave speeches to them about the theaters, factories, steamboats, and trains, which he described as *ships sailing on land*, that he had seen in Belgium.³¹¹ King Massala, who had already visited Belgium in 1885 as part of the colonial exposition in Antwerp, affirmed Sakala’s stories since there were people who did not believe him.³¹² Anecdotes as these provide a rare insight in the explanatory strategies used by hybrid individuals like Sakala to translate European concepts into African ones.

C. Criticism and its impact

The first part of the third and final section of this chapter discusses the criticism in the radical Congophobe newspapers on the practice of bringing ‘petits boys’ to Belgium. The second part of this section links the criticism to the emergence of legal restrictions on bringing new ‘petits boys’ to Belgium and the effort to repatriate those who were already in Belgium. The dominant tone in most newspapers during the Leopoldian period was clearly one of propaganda and othering, as demonstrated in the two previous sections. This did, however, not mean that there were no alternative, more critical voices in the discourse about the ‘petits boys’. In response to the propaganda spread by the Congolâtre newspapers, the Congophobe newspapers formulated severe criticism on the practice of taking Congolese children away from their home environment and bringing them to Europe to educate them. They refuted the legitimate reasons of the colonial agents and revealed their true intentions. The aim of this section is to analyze impact of this more critical discourse on the CFS’s policy concerning Congolese presence in Belgium.

1. Congophobe voices

The Congophobe newspapers *Le Peuple*, *Le Patriote*, *La Gazette de Charleroi*, and *Het Handelsblad* all voiced concerns about the CFS agents who brought a ‘petit boy’ to Belgium, but some more explicitly than others. By far

³¹⁰ *Vooruit*, 17-02-1888, 3.

³¹¹ *L’Indépendance belge*, 16-02-1888, 1.

³¹² *L’Indépendance belge*, 16-02-1888, 1.

the most critical voice was the liberal newspaper *La Réforme*, and more specifically, one particular author, writing under the pseudonym Joe. He published a very skeptical piece entitled *Little Tonio* on the 30th of October 1893.³¹³ Joe claimed that ‘petit boy’ Tonio’s tragic story contained an important lesson about what he described as the practice of *child trafficking*. Instead of roughly exposing children like Tonio to our pleasures and delights, causing them to lose their sanity, people like Lemaire should act with more care. Joe had a very clear message for the CFS agents, blaming them for their shameful deeds. He also called them *displayers of negros, elephant trainers, enthusiasts of the slave trade, and traffickers of living flesh*.³¹⁴ He stated that they should feel ashamed about destroying Tonio’s dreams and taking him out of his *natural habitat*.³¹⁵ Joe also argued that there was an analogy between Tonio’s story and a character from the novel *Jack*, written in 1876 by Alphonse Daudet. In that novel the main character Jack goes to a boarding house together with other neglected children. They were sent there by their parents from Algeria, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, and other faraway places to get a French education and learn Parisian etiquette. All of them were abused and malnourished by the patron, but one of them, the captured son of an African king, was singled out, when his father stopped paying his tuition. With no one left supporting him financially, Jack was turned into a domestic servant, cleaning boots, scrubbing the floors, and serving food. The fictional African prince underwent a fate that was inspired by the real-life abuse of children like Tonio. According to one article in *La Meuse*, one of the first priorities was to teach the children how to cook European style food. The article stated that *this would be a real relief for the whites who stay in Africa*.³¹⁶ This illustrates the master’s real motivation for recruiting a ‘petit boy’.

Further on in his piece Joe stated that although Lemaire was far from the worst ‘master’ he had known, he still treated Tonio as *a sort of slave*. And even though he had taught Tonio French and used him as his personal interpreter during his travels, having far more legitimate reasons than most other CFS officials to bring a Congolese child to Europe, it still seemed as if Tonio was some sort of *real-life travel souvenir*. *When a European brings a young Congolese boy with him to Europe the child is used more often for emptying bedpans and cleaning shoes than that his masters make an effort to civilize and educate him*. Joe claimed that he *knew some who were forever corrupted in less than a year*.³¹⁷ With Tonio’s fate in mind this was clearly not exaggerated. At the time Joe’s opinion piece was published, Tonio had only just arrived in Belgium, so he could not have known what would happen to Tonio a few months later. However, somehow he managed to predict Tonio’s tragic death. Having a personal servant free of charge came in handy for some colonial agents on leave in Belgium, who were often recovering from injuries and illness and had to be nursed.

³¹³ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

³¹⁴ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

³¹⁵ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

³¹⁶ *La Meuse*, 17-08-1894, 3.

³¹⁷ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

Abuse of different types was suggested by the authors of the Congophobe newspapers. In particular the young age of most ‘petits boys’, became the focal point of the criticism on their masters. Joe described the abuse as follows: *during their stay in Brussels no party was complete without them, and they were passed from hand to hand in the salons, restaurants, and cabarets.*³¹⁸ Reportedly Tonio used to sleep on a sofa next to his master’s bed.³¹⁹ This small detail speaks to the way a ‘petit boy’ was not seen as a regular person that would need his own bed but was treated as a pet that kept his master company, also during nighttime. Lemaire’s personal family history might have contributed to his desire never to be alone, as his parents had passed away early on in his life.³²⁰ This could be part of the reason why he decided to make Tonio his servant. It is hard not to read a sexual connotation between the lines of some articles. Joe also seemed to imply this kind of undertone when he wrote that *it was surprising to see that their (the CFS officials’) efforts (to bring Congolese to Belgium) only target children, as grooms and ‘chasseurs de cercles’, and not young men between twenty and twenty-five-year-old who, by being in contact with Europeans for a longer time, would have been better prepared for the surprises and emotions of our big cities. In the new environment they would have a better armed brain, and a more robust health and would become perfect agents (for the CFS) upon their return to Africa.*³²¹

In the same way as Joe wrote that Tonio’s story contained an important warning, the liberal *La Gazette de Charleroi* wrote that there was a lesson to be learned from Sakala’s story. An article titled *The exploits of a civilized negro* criticized Sakala’s poor education, his young age upon return to Congo, and his inevitable moral weakness: *The black chap, that they brought to us here, stayed for three years in the middle of a social environment that he barely understood. They gave him a basic education and instructed him, limited by what his level of intelligence could grasp from our civilization. And later, they sent him back there. What age could he have had upon his return? Twelve? Maybe thirteen? He came back in his country with a sense of superiority over his fellow Congolese derived from both the instruction he received and his stay with the whites. After a while they gave him a position of power. After having resisted the lure of evil, he fell for it. That is a pity because of the effect that that must have had on Sakala’s fellow Congolese. ... If they want to show the blacks of Africa what we can do in Europe with their children, shouldn’t they keep him here until they have made a man out of him, until he is aware of his dignity and his honor, until he’ll have the force to resist to the temptations that he will inevitably encounter in his country?.*³²² Van de Velde was to blame, as Sakala’s master, for repatriating his ‘petit boy’ unprepared. The Congophobe newspaper *Het Handelsblad*, similarly, pointed at Lemaire’s responsibility for

³¹⁸ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

³¹⁹ *L’Indépendance belge*, 27-10-1893, 1.

³²⁰ *L’Indépendance belge*, 25-10-1893, 1.

³²¹ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

³²² *Gazette de Charleroi*, 18-12-1889, 2.

Tonio's fate, raising the question *whether it had been a wise idea to take the poor child away from his black native land*, since he had become insane after witnessing *all these weird things in Brussels*.³²³

The Congophobe newspapers attacked the CFS agents for bringing the 'petits boys' to Belgium as a symbol of their successful expeditions in Congo and to showcase that they could force the Congolese population to be loyal and submissive. *La Réforme* wrote in 1889 that *the Congo worshippers did nothing but praise little Sakala. It was as if he was an example of the wonders they were going to accomplish there. It was Sakala, here, Sakala, there!*³²⁴ In his opinion piece from 1893, Joe mocked CFS agents for using 'petits boys' as a status symbol, by imitating a fictional conversation between a colonial official and one of his Belgian friends, wherein the former is bragging to the latter about his 'petit boy' from Congo: *Look at that. I brought this from M'Boma or the land of the Bangala. It walks, it talks, it drinks bitter and faro... You will see the amusing grin on its face when it is drinking gin.*³²⁵ Joe wrote that the friend concluded that *after all... the little boy is already almost as civilized as we are.*³²⁶ Even though Joe himself clearly believed that white people were superior to black people, he openly criticized the way the master treated his boy. He literally wrote that although *on the scale of living beings blacks are a bit closer to apes than you and me, this scientific hypothesis does not authorize anyone to treat black people as animals.*³²⁷

In 1897 *Le Peuple* attacked the CFS agents for another reason. An article denounced the fact that the Congolâtre newspaper *L'Étoile belge* published the text of a panegyric delivered by a black nurse who had come to Belgium as part of the colonial exposition of Tervuren. The black nurse thanked the colonial agents twice in his speech and assured them that the exhibited Congolese *would hold an eternal memory of them in their hearts and, when they returned, they would make their brothers and sisters understand the great wonders generated by civilization.*³²⁸ By emphasizing that *L'Étoile* stated that *the speech was written by the black men himself*, *Le Peuple* suggested that this was not the case at all.³²⁹ *Le Peuple* stated that another Congophobe newspaper *Le Patriote* had made fun of the 'Congo worshipping' of *L'Étoile* by writing *Isn't this negro prodigious. He should be given nothing less than the position of governor of a Congolese district!*³³⁰ The Congophobe newspapers saw through these authentic expressions of sympathy and discredited them by suggesting that they were preordained and scripted. The Congolese individuals delivering these speeches were portrayed as 'puppets on a string', delivering a performance controlled by the CFS propaganda machine.

³²³ *Het Handelsblad*, 27-10-1893, 2.

³²⁴ *La Réforme*, 19-12-1889, 2.

³²⁵ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

³²⁶ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

³²⁷ *La Réforme*, 30-10-1893, 1.

³²⁸ *Le Peuple*, 02-09-1897, 1.

³²⁹ *Le Peuple*, 02-09-1897, 1.

³³⁰ *Le Peuple*, 02-09-1897, 1.

All in their own way, the Congophobe newspapers denounced the situation of the ‘petits boys’ in Belgium. Either by highlighting their physical and emotional abuse, their poor preparation to reintegrate in Congo when repatriated, the fact that they were staged as their master’s status symbol, or the fact that they were forced to spread propaganda through speeches about their master’s civilizing mission. By identifying all these elements as problems, the Congophobe newspapers contributed to the rising awareness that the situation of the ‘petits boys’ was no longer tenable.

2. Impact

As early as the end of 1894, approximately half a year after Tonio’s mediatized death, administrator-general for foreign affairs of the CFS Edmond Van Eetvelde started questioning the desirability of educating Congolese children in Belgium.³³¹ Instead of bringing them to Belgium, he argued that the children had to be educated in an environment that they were more familiar with. Van Eetvelde thought this was possible because Catholic missionaries had already created their own schools in Congo. When reformulating the CFS’s civilizing mission, relocating the place where the education of ‘petits boys’ had to be accomplished from Belgium to CFS, Van Eetvelde might have had Tonio’s tragic death in mind. On the 5th of November 1894 an ordonnance entitled *Indigenous people taken abroad – Authorization* was adopted by the CFS administration.³³² It subjected the act of bringing a ‘petit boy’ from Congo to Belgium to an authorization of the governor-general. The aim was to limit the influx of ‘petits boys’, to assure that those who were brought to Belgium were properly educated, and to verify if their masters had the means to pay for their stay and repatriation. A deposit of 2500 francs had to be made to guarantee that a master would fulfill his legal obligations concerning his ‘petit boy’ in Belgium. To monitor all of this a ‘committee for the surveillance of indigenous children’ was established.³³³

The role of the critical Congophobe newspapers in subverting the image of generosity and selflessness of the masters to educate a Congolese child in Belgium, by exposing the abuses, cannot be underestimated. As Etambala has demonstrated relying on Edmond Van Eetvelde’s correspondence, a scandal about sexual abuse of a Congolese girl brought to Belgium by a man named Paul-Jean Boulangé for a doctor in Halle in December 1894 gave Van Eetvelde the final push to prohibit all missionaries to bring new Congolese children to Belgium in early 1895.³³⁴ Another way in which the Congophobe newspapers raised awareness was by writing about how some ‘petits boys’ tried to run away from their masters. Several newspapers wrote for example about the case of little

³³¹ Etambala, *Des écoliers Congolais En Belgique*, 63.

³³² “Indigènes emmenés à l'étranger. - Autorisation.”, *Bulletin Officiel de l'Etat Independant du Congo*, 1897, 90-92, consulted on the the 22th of May 2022, <https://www.kaowarsom.be/documents/BOC/BOEIC1897.pdf>.

³³³ Etambala, *Des écoliers Congolais En Belgique*, 64; “Indigènes emmenés à l'étranger. - Autorisation.”, *Bulletin Officiel de l'Etat Independant du Congo*, 1897, 90-92, consulted on the the 22th of May 2022, <https://www.kaowarsom.be/documents/BOC/BOEIC1897.pdf>.

³³⁴ Etambala, *Des écoliers Congolais En Belgique*, 65-66.



boy Tobie, who ran away from his master's house in Brussels.³³⁵ *Le Peuple* published an article titled *Unhappy little negro*, implying that the 'petit boy' had good reasons for running away.³³⁶

³³⁵ *Le Soir*, 17-06-1890, 2; *La Meuse*, 18-06-1890, 2.

³³⁶ *Le Peuple*, 17-06-1890, 3.

Chapter II. Pre-World War One Belgian Congo Period (1908-1914)

This chapter analyzes the newspaper discourse about the ‘petits boys’ present in Belgium during the pre-World War One Belgian Congo period (1908-1914). On the 15th of November 1908, the CFS was transferred to Belgium and was renamed Belgian Congo. It is not clear what the exact impact was of the transfer on the CFS’s legal restrictions limiting the amount of new ‘petits boys’ coming to Belgium. It seems as if the stricter rules were no longer enforced by the new colonial administration. During the first years of Belgian Congo, there continued to be a presence of Congolese children in Belgium. Unlike the Congolese students at Abbot Van Impe’s Catholic institute in Gijzegem, who were repatriated in 1900 when the institute was closed, the liberal colonial officials’ ‘petits boys’, who were already in Belgium, continued their training before being repatriated to take up positions in the colony. Paul Panda Farnana, brought to Belgium in 1895 by CFS agent Jules Derscheid, Pedro Kungive, who arrived in 1899 with CFS doctor Lucien Ledoseray, and Lusambo, who came along with CFS expedition leader Paul Le Marinel in 1892, were some of the most famous examples.³³⁷ The colonial administration of Belgian Congo was staffed by many of the same men who had previously served the CFS under King Leopold II. Therefore, it is not surprising that these men continued to bring their ‘petits boys’ to Europe and educate them there, as they had done during the CFS years.

The first section of this chapter analyzes the extremely negative discourse about the ‘petits boys’ that emerged in some formerly Congolâtre newspapers between 1911 and 1913. Because of its very negative framing of the ‘petits boys’ this part of the discourse is categorized as the vilification themes. The newspapers portrayed the ‘petits boys’ as villains, hostile to the colonial project of Belgian Congo. Etambala labeled this period as the ‘smear campaign’ against the Congolese in Belgium.³³⁸ The second section of this chapter analyzes the positive discourse, the celebration themes. These emphasized the success stories of some ‘petits boys’ who returned to the colony as ‘agents of assimilation’ and who embodied the ideals of being a European style gentleman. The third section discusses the impact of the critical discourse on the legislation regulating the practice of bringing ‘petits boys’ to Belgium between 1908 and 1914

A. Vilification themes

By attributing several vices to the ‘petits boys’, including a lack of moral virtue, incapacity to work as hard as whites, and a potentially rebellious nature, they were vilified. The last one of these three vices made the colonial agents the most nervous. For they feared to lose control over their ‘petits boys’ who started disobeying their orders and would instigate hate against the whites present in Belgian Congo when they were repatriated. Instead of becoming loyal ‘agents of assimilation’ they were portrayed as ungrateful people turning their back on western civilization and becoming critical opponents of the colonial regime.

³³⁷ Etambala, ‘Panda Farnana’, 30; Etambala, *In Het Land Van De Banoko*, 27; *Journal de Bruxelles*, 16-08-1905, 5.

³³⁸ Etambala, *In Het Land Van De Banoko*, 31.

1. Morally corrupt

Gaston Dumestre, a French writer, and composer who resided in Brussels, published a grim article, entitled *La vie en noir*. Therein he warned against the danger posed by black people generally and ‘petits boys’ specifically to European civilization. The tone of Dumestre’s article was very dramatic, especially when he wrote that *this is not just any other article, this a warning call ... Oh my white brothers! Let me please warn you for the Negro! The Negro takes over!*³³⁹ In his article Dumestre told the story of a ‘petit boy’ named Chocolate, brought to Brussels by one of his friends in 1901. *On board of the Tanganika, Chocolate was the most devoted servant that one could imagine, he waxed the white man’s boots, and cooked food for him, he hired black women for him and waived refreshing palm leaves during his sleep. In Brussels, Chocolate became extremely annoying. The night of his arrival, he went to a café-concert in the city center. Two poor devils, in a Tyrolean costume sang picturesque duets on stage. Chocolate had pity with them and said with great sorrow: all the whites are crazy! The next morning, we noticed that Chocolate had left his boots at the door of his room, so that his master could wax them for him! All the ladies in the neighborhood teased Chocolate, and he did not resist them. Even though, a negro is not quickly compromised because, as my tailor always says, even when he is naked a black man is still dressed, this did not stop Chocolate from, for a couple of months, leading the life of an alley cat. He came home every morning, exhausted, emaciated, muddy, in a bad mood, breaking the dishes, drinking 1867 port, going to bed, and sleeping until dinner time. In the end his master had to get rid of such a bad servant and paid him a return ticket.*³⁴⁰ According to Dumestre, instead of having a civilizing effect, the confrontation with European decadence corrupted young Congolese children. Dumestre’s key argument was that the blacks’ inherent lack of moral virtue made them unsuited to live among white people in civilized Europe.

An opinion piece, by an author writing under the pseudonym Budja Mosumbuli, titled *The rootless*, made a similar argument. It stated that *whereas in Africa everyone is aware of the extreme difficulty to educate the indigenous, to push them to make an effort, to elevate them to a social level that is a little bit higher, to create for them an environment of moral and intellectual uplift*, in Europe no one was aware of this problem.³⁴¹ Further on in the same article, Budja wrote that *the amazement, the desires, and the aspirations of a boy uprooted only a few years ago from total savagery, only superficially vanished by politeness, dressed with recently acquired habits, will resemble these of a young man in his puberty, but at least a hundred times stronger, thrown into luxurious and joyous social circles! Of our civilization, he will see the gold, the jewelry, the whores, the drunks, the bars, the snobs, the brothels, and the trash. He won’t grasp its painful and poetic effort. He will not get an idea of its distant and proud ideals. He will not only misunderstand the great and noble pain of toiling labor, that lifts one up to glorious thoughts, but he will also ridicule and distort it. During the few months that he will spend in Europe, he*

³³⁹ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 15-03-1911, 1.

³⁴⁰ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 15-03-1911, 1.

³⁴¹ *La Meuse*, 04-11-1912, 1.

will fill his head with moral and intellectual nonsense, immeasurable mistakes, and totally wrong assumptions.³⁴² Budja concluded in general about the intellectual capacities of the ‘petit boy’ that *his mind, wherein hidden treasures have been sleeping for ages, is closed and he has not found the bell for waking him to make him appreciate the things that he did not know....*³⁴³ Budja also stated that *our family traditions, our life build out of conceptions acquired through many individual and ancestral efforts, are impossible to be understood by a savage only dressed materially in a suit like ours, but morally just possessing a thin layer of politeness. He will only see the amusing parts, he will retain the caricatures, but he won’t understand anything and will twist everything.*³⁴⁴ In another one of his articles Budja reported on a conversation that he had with a ‘petit boy’ named Antoine Eali who dreamed of traveling to Belgium. Budja wrote that during that conversation he had told Antoine, after he had behaved badly: *if you continue to live as a savage, you may very well be able to read and write, but you will always stay a savage and your heart will never understand what our words really mean!*³⁴⁵

2. Incapable of working as whites

One of the vices attributed to the ‘petits boys’ was that they were lazy and could not work as hard as white people. Budja’s opinion piece, titled *The effort and dedication of the blacks*, enlisted a series of reasons why a ‘petit boy’ named Antoine, even though he dreamed of staying in Belgium for a long time, could not go there. When Antoine had accompanied his master and his wife on the steamboat to Belgium to look after their newborn baby, his master had reportedly refused to allow him to go off the boat in Antwerp. *He (the master) categorically refused that I would stay in Belgium, and I went back to Boma on the same steamer that had taken me there.*³⁴⁶ Budja wrote that he replied: *Your master was perfectly right. Our climate is not fit for you, and you would not understand the life of the whites.* Antoine answered: *I assure you, master, that climate is not harmful for me. During my short stay in Belgium, I even gained weight. As to comprehending the life of the whites in Europe, I have seen enough of it to correctly understand it, I just need to learn to read and write as them.*³⁴⁷ Budja raised the question: *And what would you do for a living, during your stay? Do you think you will find banana trees along the roads? Didn’t you see that the whites in Antwerp worked, and had to work to provide for themselves the bare necessities in life? What profession would you exercise? Out here, a servant does four times as much work as you deign to deliver... Our domestic servants, our laborers work way more, and way better than you do and gain proportionally way less money... You would be so unhappy... You are even incapable of being a good valet, because you use way too much laundry soap, and it happens that you forget that it belongs to your master.*³⁴⁸

³⁴² *La Meuse*, 04-11-1912, 1.

³⁴³ *La Meuse*, 04-11-1912, 1.

³⁴⁴ *La Meuse*, 04-11-1912, 1.

³⁴⁵ *La Meuse*, 17-07-1913, 1.

³⁴⁶ *La Meuse*, 17-07-1913, 1.

³⁴⁷ *La Meuse*, 17-07-1913, 1.

³⁴⁸ *La Meuse*, 17-07-1913, 1.

Budja was convinced that Congolese ‘petits boys’ would be unable to integrate in Belgian society because they did not possess the same work ethic as Belgian laborers did.

3. Revolutionaries in the making

Opinion writer Budja’s biggest concern about the ‘petits boys’ was not their moral deficiency or their incapacity to work hard, but their potentially rebellious nature. By empowering them with the knowledge acquired by their European style education, the colonial agents risked turning the ‘petits boys’ from loyal ‘agents of assimilation’ into critical revolutionaries that could destabilize the colonial regime. In an opinion piece titled *The rootless*, Budja stated that *it cannot continue to be allowed for whomever to multiply the number of the poor ‘rootless’ (Congolese), who will become, when they return to the Colony, seeds of wrongdoings, of revolts, and of hate, because they will only have understood the worst of our civilization. The painful examples are becoming more and more numerous. There are some that have become so scandalous and well known all over our beloved Belgium that the slightest detail is enough to identify them. Action is to be taken urgently.*³⁴⁹ Earlier in the same article Budja had already warned for this danger writing that *returned to Africa, (the ‘petit boy’) will spread among his brothers a bunch of lies, that are however his dogmatic and deep convictions that he will teach with all volubility and all fanaticism whereof his simple spirit is made. He will have come to despise the white man, thinking he has become his equal....*³⁵⁰

Similarly, Gaston Dumestre warned his readers, in his article entitled *La vie en noir, for today’s negros*. He linked the story of ‘petit boy’ Chocolate, who stopped obeying his master during his time in Europe, to other cases of disloyal or dangerous black people.³⁵¹ He named the examples of black boxers who defeated their white adversaries, a black boxer who joked about wanting to eat a white baby, and a plot in Boma of indigenous people who wanted to assassinate their white masters.³⁵² The message that Dumestre spread through his article was violent and deeply antagonistic, writing that *Ham’s sons (black people) only understand one type of superiority, physical superiority. On the day that one of them will be world champion boxing in the arena, the black continent will light up and the Botocudos (an indigenous tribe labeled as very primitive) will start drinking champagne.*³⁵³ Jack Johnson, the American black boxer who had defeated his white adversary Jim Jeffries in 1910, *had on his brothers of color the effect of ‘a Napoleon’, from the very moment that a white man could not counter his uppercuts, the time of the dark changes had arrived. Be assured that, if Jeffries had defeated Johnson, the negros in Congo would have never even thought about revolting. From the moment that a negro will be world champion because of his physical strength, the danger posed by the blacks will only grow. Oh! My white brothers, is there*

³⁴⁹ *La Meuse*, 04-11-1912, 1.

³⁵⁰ *La Meuse*, 04-11-1912, 1.

³⁵¹ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 15-03-1911, 1.

³⁵² *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 15-03-1911, 1.

³⁵³ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 15-03-1911, 1.

*among us not a single man of good faith, capable of measuring up to Jack Johnson and taking back the trophy from him?*³⁵⁴

Similar to Dumestre's claim that black people only understood the language of physical power, Budja wrote in his opinion piece about 'petit boy' Antoine that he was *convinced that his moral and intellectual training will inevitably result in making him powerful, strong, to allow him domination, authoritarianism. A long time will need to pass before the intimate and essential notion, which constitutes the black's soul, that the individual can only be a despot or a slave, ceases to be the pivot of his actions.*³⁵⁵ Both Dumestre and Budja argued that if white people did not continue to dominate black people, black people would come to dominate white people, instigating fear in the minds of their readers by predicting this doomsday scenario.

Budja also published an article entitled *Can we civilize the negro, yes or no?*³⁵⁶ In the article he wrote very negatively about Congolese children with a European education, describing them as *a category of blacks ... that consists of people that we pretend to educate but that we just 'uproot'. We don't bother to think about what should become of the brain of a savage, taken from his forest, whom we learn as fast as we can to read and write, and who reads avidly every bit of written French within his reach. What a disaster!... For now, these disasters result in isolated, cowardly murders, but, as we speak, they are transforming into gang leaders, thinking they are equal to the white man.*³⁵⁷

B. Celebration themes

Alongside the vilifying themes about the 'petits boys', a radically different discourse, the celebration themes, highlighting success stories of 'petits boys' who were repatriated as perfectly civilized gentlemen, unfolded in some newspapers. Especially, the stories of Paul Panda Farnana, Lusambo Tchibanda, and Pédro Kungive, were presented as examples of the successful reintegration of 'petits boys' in Congo after their education in Belgium.

1. Successful reintegration

An article entitled *Can we civilize the negroes?*, approaching the education of the 'petits boys' in Belgium and their repatriation to Congo way more positively than in the previous section, raised the question: *shouldn't we regret not having brought more young blacks to Belgium? After their time with us, they would have returned home as our apostles and would have contributed, better than anyone else, to the civilization of the poor devils of Central Africa.*³⁵⁸ The same article stated that an unnamed *young negro, aged twenty, was preparing to return to Congo*

³⁵⁴ *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 15-03-1911, 1.

³⁵⁵ *La Meuse*, 17-07-1913, 1.

³⁵⁶ *La Meuse*, 15-07-1912, 1.

³⁵⁷ *La Meuse*, 15-07-1912, 1.

³⁵⁸ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 20-10-1908, 2.

as a *botanist*.³⁵⁹ The person referred to in the article was Paul Panda Farnana, who was later labeled the first Congolese intellectual or ‘*évolué*’.³⁶⁰ After the completion of his studies in Europe in 1909, Paul Panda was hired as a crop manager at the botanical gardens of Eala near Coquilhatville in the Equateur province. He earned 3000 francs a year, a salary equal to his white colleagues.³⁶¹ In 1911 he was allowed to go on leave and travelled back to Belgium.³⁶² Similarly, Lusambo had been repatriated in 1901 and was given a job as a clerk at the company that managed the railroad between Matadi and Leopoldville. Later in his career he was promoted to the position of deputy chief of the railroad station of Leopoldville.³⁶³ In 1905 Lusambo returned to Belgium on holiday because *the railroad company wanted to grant him this special favor to reward him for his four years of good and loyal service*. He reportedly was *the first indigenous man in Congo to occupy such a ‘liberal position’ in (Congolese) society*.³⁶⁴ Pédro Kungive, brought to Liège as ‘petit boy’ by Doctor Lucien Ledoseray in 1899, was also celebrated as an example of successful reintegration. After his training as an electrician in Belgium, he returned to Congo in 1911 to work for the Congo Railroad Company as a technician at the railroad station of Thysville. The article reporting his return described him as a hard worker and a good practician and wished him *good luck with the job that he is asked to do in his land of origin*.³⁶⁵

Moving back and forth between Congo and Belgium, individuals as Paul Panda, Lusambo, and Pédro managed to adapt themselves to their changing surroundings even though the gap between both worlds was sometimes very wide. Whereas in Congo Lusambo reportedly *lived more with the blacks than with the Europeans*, in Belgium he met with prominent figures such as King Albert I and Minister of Colonies Jules Renkin, who *wished him good luck and acknowledged his good behavior and his work ethic*.³⁶⁶ Another article emphasized that Renkin had warmly congratulated Lusambo for *his zealous attitude in performing his duties* during his time in Congo.³⁶⁷

2. Black gentlemen

An article in *La Gazette de Charleroi* made a reference to Paul Panda’s successful education in Belgium as an example to prove that it was possible to civilize ‘petits boys’. First the article stated that *many people still doubt whether it is possible to civilize negros and see them as a sort of animal, something between a man and an ape*.³⁶⁸ Later the author argued that *there are already a lot of sons of Ham (black people) who have distinguished*

³⁵⁹ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 20-10-1908, 2.

³⁶⁰ Mutamba Makombo, ‘Les évolués : Situation Au Congo Belge.’, 1.

³⁶¹ Etambala, ‘Panda Farnana, le roi Albert Ier et la question de la méthode éducative afro-américaine pour le Congo’, 30.

³⁶² Etambala, ‘Panda Farnana, le roi Albert Ier et la question de la méthode éducative afro-américaine pour le Congo’, 30.

³⁶³ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 20-07-1910, 2; *Le Petit Bleu du Matin*, 26-07-1910, 6.

³⁶⁴ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 16-08-1905, 5.

³⁶⁵ *La Meuse*, 22-12-1910, 3.

³⁶⁶ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 16-08-1905, 5; *Journal de Bruxelles*, 20-07-1910, 2; *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 24-07-1910, 1.

³⁶⁷ *L’Avenir du Luxembourg*, 25-07-1910, 3.

³⁶⁸ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 20-10-1908, 2.

*themselves as politicians, military commanders, ministers, and even writers.*³⁶⁹ The author also nuanced the idea that only white people could behave as true gentlemen by writing: *I am not saying that from one day to the next blacks will become mini examples of sociability, but not all of Belgium's citizens are superior creatures either. There is a difference between those who live in Merksplas (a forced labor camp for Belgian vagrants) and those who take a seat in the chair of the president of the Court of Cassation (Belgium's highest judiciary) or the Court of Appeals.*³⁷⁰ Further on in the article, the author described his encounter with Paul Panda: *A few days ago in the office of one of our friendliest colonial officials, I met a young black boy, dressed according to the latest fashion and wonderfully speaking French.*³⁷¹

An article reporting on the marriage of former 'petit boy' Lusambo in Congo Brazzaville in 1913 stated that, during his stay in Brussels before his repatriation, his elegance was widely admired and that *he has become a refined young man, very well-educated, and very learned.*³⁷² The author of the article also stated that André's future children, *the little Lusambos, would love perfume, and their moms would not leave their corsets aside, and would stop wearing them over their own skirts.*³⁷³ The author wrote that André himself, when he first arrived in Belgium, must have been *restive to the cuddles of the beautiful white ladies, wearing corsets and perfume, because they were 'broken in two pieces' -it was the time of the slim waists- and smelled heavily. During a dress-up party, the small child, seeing us disguised, must have thought: You are the savages today (not me)*³⁷⁴ The author believed that Lusambo's children would, unlike their father when he was born, embody the European ideals of gentility and gentlemanlike behavior from the start and understand their meaning immediately because of their father's European education. An article published in 1920 to look back on Lusambo's life described him as possessing *the appearance of a perfect gentleman.*³⁷⁵

C. Criticism and its impact

Unlike during the CFS period, the focus of the criticism on the practice of educating the 'petits boys' in Belgium during the pre-World War I Belgian Congo period was not on the fact that they were used as a status symbol nor that they were abused. Instead, the criticism focused on the personal responsibility of the colonial agents as being the ones that made the decision to transport the Congolese children to Belgium. The critical discourse in the newspapers resulted in legislative action, inspired by the legal restrictions imposed during the CFS years.

³⁶⁹ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 20-10-1908, 2.

³⁷⁰ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 20-10-1908, 2.

³⁷¹ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 20-10-1908, 2.

³⁷² *Gazette de Charleroi*, 15-05-1913, 2.

³⁷³ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 15-05-1913, 2.

³⁷⁴ *Gazette de Charleroi*, 15-05-1913, 2.

³⁷⁵ *L'Indépendance belge*, 20-02-1920, 2.

1. Blaming the colonial agents

In his article titled *The rootless*, Budja shifted the responsibility for the troubles caused by the ‘petits boys’ from the ‘petits boys’ themselves to the colonial agents who had taken the initiative to bring them to Belgium. He stated that *the amount of people that, without being aware, with childish foolishness, commit great evils, is considerable... including the many Congolese (colonial officials) who bring blacks to Belgium as their boys or their servants from Africa and throw them on European soil.*³⁷⁶ Further on in his article Budja wrote that *those boys that are brought to our families, take part in every aspect of our lives, without limits, without preparation... The moms pamper them and spoil them, to make them good servants for their sons in Africa.*³⁷⁷ In true whistleblower fashion, a former colonial agent wrote an anonymous letter to the Congolâtre newspaper *Le Patriote* to complain about the actions of his fellow colonial agents. In his letter that was published in the newspaper he wrote that *a certain number of colonial agents, returning from Congo, bring with them their boy, be it only to have the opportunity to present him to friends and acquaintances, out of curiosity. It happens often that someday, for one reason or another, the agent abandons the poor boy. What is the result of this? The poor black boy, out of place, without having the means to provide for himself, often falls prey to shady individuals that shamefully exploit him. This is how a certain number of these ‘ex-boys’ came to exercise various positions nowadays, at places that are not very recommendable. It is necessary to protect the blacks better, either by prohibiting the colonial agents to take them to Belgium, or by safeguarding them against the abandonment that threatens them. We should demand that a boy who is left behind by his master would at least be repatriated at costs of the latter.*³⁷⁸ Opinion writer Budja also accused the colonial agents of acting irresponsibly by writing that the ‘petits boys’ were *brutally uprooted, and those who have done so have forgotten how much care is needed, in our greenhouses, for the plants that are brought here from Africa, that they attribute to the palm trees, which they adapt to a particular environment, a climate reminiscent of their native country’s climate, an environment not too different from the one that they uprooted them from.*³⁷⁹

2. Nostalgia about the Congo Free State restrictions

In his article titled *The rootless*, Budja expressed feelings of nostalgia for the CFS’s policies regarding the ‘petits boys’. As described earlier, during the CFS period the colonial administration had severely limited the influx of new ‘petits boys’ by imposing legal restrictions. Budja wrote that *the Congo Free State had very clearly seen the danger, and it used to be very difficult to take a Congolese with you to Europe. Only very exceptionally, permission was given to officials, who would invest themselves rationally and methodically in their training. It is regrettable that these prohibitions have become impossible today. Nevertheless, the issue must be looked at. The Government will certainly have to face the most terrible and tenacious, sentimental arguments, because they have nothing to*

³⁷⁶ *La Meuse*, 04-11-1912, 1.

³⁷⁷ *La Meuse*, 04-11-1912, 1.

³⁷⁸ *Le Patriote*, 20-06-1913, 1.

³⁷⁹ *La Meuse*, 04-11-1912, 1.

do with reason.³⁸⁰ The Colonial Charter, the legal document that officialized the transfer, stipulated that the legislative power in Belgian Congo was exercised officially by the Belgian King but requiring a co-signature of the Minister of Colonies. In reality this meant that legislation concerning Belgium's colonies was adopted by the Belgian Government.³⁸¹ Therefore, it was upon the Belgian Government that Budja called in late 1912 to take legislative action to stop the influx of new Congolese 'petits boys'.

It is not clear if or when the Belgian Government adopted legal restrictions. What is certain is that there was a proposal for adopting a legislative act that subjected the departure of indigenous people to certain formalities. A part of it was published by two newspapers in July 1913: *First article – It is forbidden for whomever to take one or more indigenous Congolese outside of the territory of the colony, in any way whatsoever, without the special and prior authorization of the governor-general or his deputy. The issuance of the authorization will be subjected to the conditions that the governor-general or his deputy deem necessary to impose on the applicant. The applicants must, in all cases, commit to cover the costs of the trip, the stay, and the needs of the indigenous individuals during their entire period abroad and the costs of their repatriation within the period fixed by authorization deed. To guarantee this commitment they must pay a sum, fixed by the governor-general or his deputy, as a security deposit. This sum will only be reimbursed after the return of the indigenous individuals to the Colony, except in the case of justified force majeure and deduction made in all cases of the costs advanced by the Colony. Second article – It is forbidden for all captains on boats passing the latitude of Cape Lopez or Cape Frio to transport or having someone else transport indigenous individuals outside the territory of the Colony, without an authorization to leave the territory issued by the governor-general or his deputy.*³⁸²

In anticipation of the adoption of this legislative act the governor-general of Belgian Congo in Boma Félix Fuchs, as the highest representative of the colonial administration in Belgian Congo, took action in August 1913. He *prohibited colonial agents provisionally to take indigenous people with them from the colony to Europe, without (prior) authorization.*³⁸³ The violation of this prohibition was subjected to disciplinary sanctions and the authorization would only be granted in very exceptional cases.

Similar to Van Eetvelde's proposal in 1894 to educate Congolese children in Congo instead of bringing them to Belgium, Budja, in his opinion piece titled *The rootless*, stated that *we need to look for better ways to civilize*

³⁸⁰ *La Meuse*, 04-11-1912, 1.

³⁸¹ "Loi du 18 octobre 1908 sur le gouvernement du Congo belge", *Bulletin Officiel du Congo belge*, 1908-1909, 65-72, consulted on the 5th of April 2022, <https://www.droitcongolais.info/files/1.02.-Charte-coloniale-de-1908.pdf>.

³⁸² *Journal de Bruxelles*, 22-07-1913, 2; *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 21-07-1913, 2.

³⁸³ *Journal de Bruxelles*, 24-08-1913, 3; *Le Vingtième Siècle*, 24-08-1913, 2.

*blacks...*³⁸⁴ Possibly inspired by Van Eetvelde's proposal in 1894, some newspapers formulated an alternative civilizing method to the practice of bringing Congolese children to Belgium and educating them there. When a newspaper interviewed former 'petit boy' Paul Panda in 1911 and asked him whether it had been a good idea to bring Congolese children to Belgium to civilize them he answered negatively.³⁸⁵ He stated that from now on it would be better to take Congolese children out of their native villages but raise them in Congo. He favored the idea to create 'chapel farms', artificial Catholic villages created by the colonizers to educate black children.³⁸⁶ Taking them away from their native villages, had to happen gently otherwise the children would become 'outcasts' when they returned to their communities.³⁸⁷ The advantage of this approach was that the Congolese children could stay in their familiar setting and did not have to travel as far, and could still be completely reeducated.

The newspapers offered a platform to whistleblowers, for example to an anonymous colonial agent who sent a letter to *Le Patriote* in 1913.³⁸⁸ Their criticism inspired the colonial administration to take legislative action, similar to the restrictions imposed during the CFS years. In addition, the critical discourse in the newspapers initiated the reformulation of the Belgian civilizing mission, relocating the place where the education of 'petits boys' had to take place from Belgium to Congo itself.

³⁸⁴ *La Meuse*, 04-11-1912, 1.

³⁸⁵ *L'Avenir du Luxembourg*, 29-12-1911, 1.

³⁸⁶ *L'Avenir du Luxembourg*, 29-12-1911, 1.

³⁸⁷ *L'Avenir du Luxembourg*, 29-12-1911, 1.

³⁸⁸ *Le Patriote*, 20-06-1913, 1.

Conclusion

The presence of educated ‘petits boys’ in Belgium challenged the sacred binary structure of colonial society, with inferior black colonized people on one side and superior white colonizers on the other. As a newly emerging intermediate group in colonial society, ‘petits boys’ were defying the established order, demonstrating that not all Congolese were complete savages. The prevailing colonial worldview was no longer undisputable and had proven inadequate to catch the full scope of imperial reality. This created friction and instability, raising questions about the status, character, and capacities of the ‘petits boys’, and resulted in an ambivalent discourse about them in the Belgian print media. During the CFS period as well as during the pre-World War I Belgian Congo period, both positive and negative themes were part of the discourse. This was the consequence of a lack of clarity about where exactly the ‘petits boys’ fitted in the colonial order.

Whereas some newspapers highlighted their function as future agents of assimilation and wrote about their successful reintegration in Congo after their Belgian training, others emphasized their evil spirit and insurmountably different nature. Consequently, the answer to the central research question of this master’s thesis, *how were the ‘petits boys’ covered in the Belgian printed press?*, is ambiguous. Conflicting narratives, of one ‘petit boy’ being driven crazy by European civilization and another turning himself into an educated black gentleman, stood side by side. Even the narrative about the life of a single ‘petit boy’ could be split and shattered, first presented as a success story, and later as a fiasco. The idea of ‘similar, but never fully equal’ is equivocal on its own. During both examined periods contradicting narratives were inherent to the discourse. The ambivalent character of the coverage of the ‘petits boys’ in the Belgian press reflects the fact that they were caught in between two worlds, never accepted as fully European, and ruptured from their previous way of life.

The ambivalence in the discourse must also be understood in the context of the constant reformulation of the European civilizing mission. Whereas the idea that Europeans were supposed to civilize the African continent was a given, how this idea had to be executed was not. As American historian James Eskridge Genova noted in his research about the ‘évolués’ in the French colonies in Africa, revising the strategy to achieve this civilizing mission was a constant throughout the entire colonial project.³⁸⁹ The content of the civilizing mission was continually redefined in response to the interactions between the colonial administrators, the metropolitan officials, and the ‘évolués’.³⁹⁰ A similar redefinition was caused by the interaction with the ‘petits boys’ in Belgium. The discourse about the desirability of bringing them to Belgium changed because the strategy of the colonial administration was altered. As explained, the criticism that was voiced in the press, denouncing the scandals surrounding the ‘petits boys’, contributed to this reformulation.

³⁸⁹ Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence*, 5.

³⁹⁰ Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence*, 5.

The part of the discourse that was characterized by fierce criticism and negativity concerning the ‘petits boys’ must be understood as a fearful and aggressive reaction against the rupture of the sacred colonial binary. By initiating them in the knowledge, language, and traditions of Europeans, the colonizer not only accomplished his civilizing mission but also gave them the tools to attack the system. It empowered them to think critically about the colonial system. The colonizer had a vested interest in keeping the colonized population obedient and uncritical.

The confrontation with the otherness of the ‘petits boys’ changed the colonizer, by casting doubt about his self-image and identity that was constructed in opposition to the ‘colonized others’. The interaction with the Congolese ‘petits boys’ had a destabilizing effect on the colonial powers in Belgium, causing the ambivalence that characterized the colonial discourse about them. If not all Congolese were completely inferior creatures, the uniqueness and superiority of the white colonizers were no longer an established fact. This observation leads to the general conclusion, as emphasized in Stanard’s recent book *European Overseas Empire*, that the idea that imperialism mainly affected the non-European world and not the other way around is a misconception.³⁹¹ Belgian colonial agents had such faith in their own superiority that they believed that individuals from other cultures, as the Congolese ‘petits boys’, could only have limited influences on their own society. The mere fact that ‘counterflows to colonization’ existed, such as the presence of the ‘petits boys’ in Belgium, demonstrates how imperialism was an exchange rather than a one-way outward projection of Europe. If there is one point that the ambivalent discourse about the ‘petits boys’ proves it is that the presence of colonized people in Europe had a disorienting effect on the colonizer’s binary worldview, demonstrating that influences went from Belgium to Congo, but also came from Congo to Belgium.

This master’s thesis is an addition to the limited existing scholarship about Congolese presence in Belgium before World War I. It contributed to the literature by identifying approximately thirty cases of ‘petits boys’ (see annex 2), including some that were never studied before, and by conducting a discourse analysis about this specific group of Congolese in Belgium. This master’s thesis opens the way for more research opportunities. The scope of this master’s thesis was limited to the period 1885 until 1914, however, it could be extended to the period after World War I. Other groups of Congolese that were present in Belgium could also be studied by means of a discourse analysis, for example the neglected Congolese marines who worked on the ships between Congo and Belgium and fought for better labor conditions and their representation as black laborers in the socialist press. The restricted source base of this master’s thesis, only focusing on Belgian newspapers, could be expanded to the personal archives of the colonial officials who brought ‘petits boys’ to Belgium, for example Charles Lemaire’s archive preserved at the Africa Museum in Tervuren.

³⁹¹ Stanard, *European Overseas Empire*, 9, 138, and 216.

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<i>Het Laatste Nieuws</i>	20-05-1893, 1. 27-10-1893, 2.	20-02-1920, 2.	<i>Le Bien Public</i>
19-02-1894, 2. 31-03-1895, 3.	09-11-1893, 2. 20-02-1894, 2. 24-06-1894, 1.	<i>La Meuse</i>	06-02-1886, 2.
<i>Het Nieuws van den Dag</i>	08-11-1894, 2. 14-03-1895, 2. 19-12-1895, 2.	13-08-1885, 2. 24-12-1885, 2. 30-12-1885, 2. 21-01-1886, 2. 24-01-1887, 2. 15-03-1887, 2. 15-10-1887, 5. 21-02-1888, 3. 17-12-1888, 2. 24-04-1889, 2. 19-12-1889, 2. 18-06-1890, 2. 01-05-1891, 2. 24-08-1891, 3. 07-06-1893, 3.	<i>Le Courier de L'Escaut</i>
21-02-1894, 2. 24-07-1910, 1.	11-11-1897, 1. 16-08-1905, 5. 20-07-1910, 2. 22-07-1913, 2. 24-08-1913, 3.	21-02-1888, 3. 17-12-1888, 2. 24-04-1889, 2. 19-12-1889, 2. 18-06-1890, 2. 01-05-1891, 2. 24-08-1891, 3. 07-06-1893, 3.	18-12-1889, 2. 28-10-1891, 1. 28-10-1893, 2.
<i>La Gazette de Charleroi</i>	<i>L'Émancipation</i>	15-10-1887, 5. 21-02-1888, 3. 17-12-1888, 2. 24-04-1889, 2. 19-12-1889, 2. 18-06-1890, 2. 01-05-1891, 2. 24-08-1891, 3. 07-06-1893, 3.	<i>Le Patriote</i>
18-12-1889, 2. 29-10-1893, 2. 10-04-1895, 2. 26-09-1896, 1. 20-10-1908, 2. 15-05-1913, 2. 03-12-1920, 1.	12-04-1890, 2. 21-02-1894, 2.	06-02-1888, 3. 17-12-1888, 2. 24-04-1889, 2. 19-12-1889, 2. 18-06-1890, 2. 01-05-1891, 2. 24-08-1891, 3. 07-06-1893, 3.	10-02-1895, 2. 20-06-1913, 1. 27-10-1893, 2.
<i>L'Avenir du Luxembourg</i>	<i>L'Étoile belge</i>	06-02-1894, 3. 19-02-1894, 2. 21-06-1894, 2. 17-08-1894, 3. 15-03-1895, 2. 22-12-1910, 3. 15-07-1912, 1. 04-11-1912, 1. 17-07-1913, 1.	<i>Le Petit Bleu du Matin</i>
26-09-1908, 1. 25-07-1910, 3. 29-12-1911, 1.	12-02-1898, 3.	19-02-1894, 2. 21-06-1894, 2. 17-08-1894, 3. 15-03-1895, 2. 22-12-1910, 3. 15-07-1912, 1. 04-11-1912, 1. 17-07-1913, 1.	09-08-1895, 2. 15-03-1911, 1. 26-06-1897, 2. 26-07-1910, 6.
<i>Le Journal de Bruxelles</i>	<i>L'Indépendance belge</i>	<i>La Nation</i>	<i>Le Peuple</i>
09-07-1885, 2. 14-12-1885, 2.	18-09-1885, 2. 27-02-1886, 3. 25-10-1887, 2. 16-02-1888, 1. 21-10-1888, 1. 16-02-1892, 1. 16-02-1892, 2. 31-08-1893, 1.	14-03-1887, 1. 24-02-1886, 1.	02-09-1897, 1. 04-11-1893, 2. 17-06-1890, 3. 19-02-1894, 3. 23-06-1897, 1. 24-06-1894, 3. 30-12-1893, 3.



<i>Le Soir</i>	17-02-1888, 3. 18-12-1889, 3.	
01-09-1897, 2. 10-07-1891, 2. 17-06-1890, 2. 18-12-1889, 2. 19-02-1894, 2.		
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Annex 1. (overview newspapers CFS)

Catholic	Liberal	Socialist
<i>Le Patriote</i>	<i>La Réforme</i>	<i>Le Peuple</i>
<i>Le Vingtième Siècle</i>	<i>La Nation</i>	<i>Le Journal de Charleroi</i> (after 1890)
<i>Le Courrier de L'Escaut</i>	<i>Le Journal de Charleroi</i> (before 1890)	
<i>L'Emancipation</i>	<i>La Gazette de Charleroi</i>	
<i>Le Bien Public</i>	<i>L'Étoile belge</i>	
<i>L'Avenir du Luxembourg</i>	<i>La Dernière Heure</i>	
<i>Le Journal de Bruxelles</i>	<i>Le Soir</i>	
	<i>Le Petit Bleu du Matin</i>	
	<i>La Meuse</i>	
	<i>L'Indépendance belge</i>	

French-language newspapers, CFS (1885-1908)

Catholic	Liberal	Socialist
<i>Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen</i>	<i>Het Laatste Nieuws</i>	<i>Vooruit</i>
<i>Ons Vaderland</i>	<i>De Koophandel</i>	
<i>Het Nieuws van den Dag</i>		

Dutch-language newspapers, CFS (1885-1908)

Congolâtre (extreme)
Congolâtre (moderate)
Congolâtre and Congophobe
Congophobe (extreme)
Congophobe (moderate)

Annex 2. (names found via Belgica Press Online (KBR))

<i>Before 1908</i>	<i>Name of 'petit boy'</i>	<i>Name of master</i>
	Albert Makwanga	?
	Annique	?
	Arthur	A.-R. Legros
	Babilasse	Alphonse-Jules Wauters
	Baudouin Bida	?
	Bouladale	Francis Dhanis
	Clément	Oscar Gustin
	Djouma	Gustave Renier
	Jack	Fernand Allard
	Joseph Mavambo	?
	Katanga	Léon Rom
	Koulou	Francis Dhanis
	Léopold Kassongo	Jules Jacques de Dixmude
	Léopold Vidi	Oscar Gustin
	Mabsbassé	?
	Mawamba	Émile De Keyser
	Max Makwangwa	Ernest-Jean Freitag
	Montontai	Francis Dhanis
	Pioca	?
	Sakala	Fernand Allard
	Sakala	Liévin Van de Velde
	Sita	J.-J. Van Dorpe
	Tobie/Tobig	Van de Velde
	Tonio	Charles Alexandre Lemaire
	Tossica	?
	?	Van Lint
	?	Hanriot
	?	Léon Goetgeluk
	?	Dehaut
	?	Louis Valcke
	?	Arthur Taquin
<i>After 1908</i>	<i>Name of 'petit boy'</i>	<i>Name of master</i>
	Lusambo Tchibanda	Paul Le Marinel
	Jacques Molendi	?
	Moanga Antoine	?
	Paul Panda Farnana	?
	Pédro Kungwe/Kungive	Lucien Ledoseray

