Ghent University
Master in African Languages & Cultures
Academic Year of 2014-2015

Space, Power and Identity in the Belgian Congo

The Colonial Territorial Homogenization of the Ngbaka

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. M. Meeuwis
Co-Supervisor: Prof. Dr. I. Brinkman

Master thesis, submitted to achieve the degree of Master in African Languages and Cultures
by MARGOT LUYCKFASSEEL.

In memory of sango Marcel (Zolder, 19th of May 1928 – Leuven, 13th of March 2015)

Table of content

Acknowledgments i

1. Introduction 1

2. Theoretical foundations and comparable case studies
    - 2.1. Spatiality 11
    - 2.2. Coping with complexity: 'Making sense' 17
    - 2.3. The ethnic scheme 20
    - 2.4. Comparable case studies: South-Africa, Kenya and the Congo 25

3. Methodology
    - 3.1. Reading the colonials and the missionaries: Elegant prose and biased positionalities 31
    - 3.2. Conducting fieldwork: The methodological interface of oral and spatial data collection 35
    - 3.3. Methodological difficulties: Combining the written and the oral 44

4. Contexts and backgrounds
    - 4.1. The Belgian colonization of the Congo
        - 4.1.1. Leopold's private property 49
        - 4.1.2. The Belgian government takes over 53
        - 4.1.3. The Belgian Congo and its unprepared independence 55
    - 4.2. Pre-colonial Ubangi 57
    - 4.3. Bolo Mbati 60

5. Pecheur's territorial homogenization
    - 5.1. "*La façon du lévain à la pate*": Pecheur's initial view of colonial interference 67
    - 5.2. Legibility versus reality: Pecheur's disillusionment 72
    - 5.3. Crabbeck's continuation 78
    - 5.4. Consequences: The narrative of a shared identity 84

6. Conclusions 93

7. Notes 95

8. Bibliography 97

9. List of attachments 111

Acknowledgements

First of all, I wish to thank the late Marcel Henrix, who has taught me a great deal about Ngbaka history. Not only his information but also his inspiring figure has been an important motive for the completion of this thesis. While writing, the idea that I could transmit his legacy kept me going in times of despair. Secondly, I would like to thank Jean-Paul Monzabana, who assisted me during my fieldwork and became a close friend as we went along. His enthusiasm about this research incentivized mine and I am still feeling honored by the last dinner his wife cooked for us. I would not have enjoyed the company of Monzabana if he had not been indicated to me by sango Aubrey, whose warm and radiant personality inspires the entire catholic community of Bokuda Moke. I want to thank him for the stimulating conversations and the practical help in the realization of my fieldwork. Other people who have turned this fieldwork into the interesting experience it has become are sango Joe, Viola Taximan, petit, Jules Dabia, Jacques, Roger and Olivier, the *bamama ya paroisse*, the cobbler at the market, the employees of the *territoire* and sœur Sylvie, *kulutu na ngai*. Special thanks goes to Monseigneur Senemona, whose analytical mind kept me on track, Bishop Philibert Tembo Nlandu, who gave me a wobbly ride to Bwamanda, and the two Americans and the Brit who took me to Bominenge. I also want to thank all my informants, especially Senge Augustin, Pele Ngamo and Manza. Without their stories, this thesis could not have existed.

For my pleasant time in Kinshasa, I owe gratitude to madame Kapaya, Bienvenu and all the others of Centre Bondeko who have welcomed me so warmly. My dear friends Jacques and Baudry should also be mentioned here, for their company and phone calls keep my connection with the Congo alive. I also want to thank Aristote for being such a wonderful guide and for the great time we spent together. I would not have crossed the path of these marvelous people without the help of Catherina Wilson, whose contacts and company made my days in *Kin la (pou)belle* unforgettable.

Back in Belgium, I want to thank my supervisor Michael Meeuwis for his support and guidelines. As the bibliography indicates, his profound knowledge of Belgian missionary ideology has been of crucial importance to understand the motives of the colonial actors at

stake. I also wish to thank my co-supervisor Inge Brinkman, the fresh female wind that blows through our department, for her thorough feedback and motivating suggestions. Gillian Mathys, who took some of her precious time to direct me at the beginning of my writing process, should also be mentioned here. I am equally grateful to all the employees of the archival institutions I consulted, for helping me find my way through the paper labyrinth.

When it comes to moral encouragement, I want to thank my parents, whose support has been invaluable, and Lut Lievens, whose pep talks kept me going. Special thanks goes to Dries Robbe, Godfried Roelant, Ryan and Marisa, because their company made my writing days less lonely. My sister, Katrien Dejonghe and my housemate Elias Devoldere are to be thanked for their Photoshop help with the map of Gemena. Finally, I am thankful to Hannah De Meyer, Lore Raport, Joosje Hendrikx, Laura Ramos, Margot Styfhals and “Sheki” Chandrasekaran for their proofreadings.

It should also be mentioned that considerable parts of this thesis have been written in function of three anterior papers I wrote this year. The theoretical linkage between psychological schemes and ethnic policy has been worked out for the seminar class on African languages and cultures, while the critical analysis of Foucault’s conceptualization of space was the main subject of my paper for an architectural course on non-Western architecture and planning. In my paper for the course on Africa and globalization, I investigated the figure of Jean-Pierre Bemba. The feedback of professor Brinkman, professor Lagae, professor Büscher and professor Cuvelier has thus been instructive for the further elaboration of these topics and their integration in the present writing.

Although this thesis is undeniably historically oriented, it is also ‘loyal’ to the interdisciplinary approach of African Studies. I consulted sources from libraries and journals of history, anthropology, development studies, geography, architecture, sociology, political science, psychology, art history, literary studies and philosophy. This broad spectrum of approaches was possible because my subject lent itself to it, but also because my academic background equipped me with and made me susceptible to such interdisciplinary proceeding; an aspect of the domain that has indeed formed the major contribution of African studies to the mainstream disciplines (see Bates, Mudimbe & O’Barr 1993).

1. Introduction

Academic literature about ethnicity is extensive. When it comes to Africa, one might even argue that the continuous hammering on its ethnic character keeps the continent chained to the persistent image of tribal primitivism that colonial ideology has framed upon its people. Why then continue on this beaten track? First of all, my choice for the topic of this thesis, the territorial homogenization of the Ngbaka[1], does not originate from a fascination for ethnicity as such, but from a broader interest in the way people perceive themselves and others as members of social groups. I wonder which features can be activated as sense making characteristics of these social demarcations and how they can be negotiated. Ever expanding topoi like space and time gain very concrete dimensions through their narrative activation by different actors. The demarcations people consider relevant for their experience of time and space provide insights in the way they make sense of their lives.

Secondly, and this is a post factum understanding, I appear to have felt the need to come back to the way colonialism has put its stamp on the formation of social boundaries in Africa. Claims have been made that the colonial yoke has been finally cast off and that scholars are now able to deal with its historical legacy in an uninhibited and detached way. I remember my professor of African history making this statement by saying that we, as Europeans no longer need to feel guilty for our ancestors' colonial activities in the global south. Although this might be true in a literal sense, it does not mean that the colonial legacy cannot catch up with us. Take the following excerpt from an interview I conducted during my fieldwork with Gbafo Ndate Antoine, a schoolteacher, born in 1955 and living in Bozoko, along the route between Gemena and Bwamanda (attachment 1). Accompanied by Monzabana, my research companion and translator and Viola, our motor driver, Gbafo started telling about the battle that had taken place between Ngbandi and Ngbaka:

Gbafo:	Ils [Ngbandi] avaient des armes, mais chez nous [Ngbaka], ils n'avaient pas d'armes. Ils avaient seulement armes… que dirais-je… tribales, armes tribales. C'est à dire que, la lance…
Viola:	Flèches, la lance. Seulement ça.
Gbafo:	Seulement ça. Vous comprenez?

Margot : Oui oui oui

Gbafo : Mais chez eux ils avaient armes à feu.

Margot: Et comment ça ce fait qu'ils avaient des armes?

Gbafo: Parce-qu' ils étaient soutenus.

Margot: Soutenus par qui?

Gbafo: Par vous non?

(general laughter)

Monzabana: Par le blanc… à cet époque… par Margot

(laughter continues)

Gbafo : Par Margot…on peut dire comme ça! Vous comprenez?

As this extract from our conversation shows, the connotations that accompany my Belgian identity could not be ruled out, and they inevitably interfered with the set-up of my research. I will come back to this issue in the chapter about methodology, but what I want to point out here is that this tension is not something I wanted to avoid, for example by choosing a topic that reminds less of these historical relations. On the contrary, I have felt the need to give it a central place in my thesis, since it defines my position as a researcher. Being Belgian, European and white entails implications when engaging in the field of African studies, because even though colonialism has formally ended, its legacy is still connected to global power relations that have not been wiped out. As such, the confrontation with this legacy and the awkwardness it instills has become a rather personal motivation for the choice of my research topic, namely the territorial homogenization of the Ngbaka in the 1920s.

The Ngbaka live in the Equatorial Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the city of Gemena and its surroundings (that is, diaspora not included). Although this region is generally perceived as their 'cradle', the Ngbaka have known a very particular past when it comes to geographical localization. At the end of the 19th century, the neighboring Ngbandi were the first in the region to give assistance to the newly arrived colonial representatives of the meanwhile notorious king Leopold II. Most of the Ngbaka quickly realized their spears and shields were chanceless against the fire arms the Ngbandi had been provided with by the Belgian delegates, and saved themselves by fleeing (Maes 1997). By the 1920's, the

colony had been reassigned from the King's private enterprise into an official colony of the Belgian state, and thus interests had changed. The first territorial administrator of the region, named René Pecheur, had been given the charge to return the Ngbaka to their original territory.

This event, the territorial homogenization of the Ngbaka, is the 'center of gravity' of my research, since its analysis can be a first step towards the understanding of the motives, strategies and goals of colonial undertaking in a very concrete and specific context. In this thesis, I wish to explore the Belgian motives behind such drastic measures. Why did the Belgian authorities believe the geographical reorganization was necessary? How did they effectuate it, and did it yield the desired results? More specifically, I wish to zoom in on the figure of René Pecheur, who's ideological and intellectual engagement in the task can be reconstructed quite accurately via archival sources. Why was he initially so enthusiastic about the territorial homogenization? And why did this keenness gradually decrease?

I have already briefly touched upon these research questions in my bachelor paper, but for the more final project of this thesis (insofar as speaking of finality is viable when it comes to research in humanities), my aim is to frame Pecheur's homogenization in a broader historical perspective. Bearing in mind Fernand Braudel's model of interacting time scales, every event merits its embedment in the complex fabric of the *longue durée* (Braudel 1958). Therefore, I have conducted fieldwork in July and August of 2014, which allowed me to gain some insights in the way the Ngbaka experience and remember this important episode of their history. The results are scattered individual narratives rather than an all-round survey of *the* Ngbaka perception, which is logic given the methodology I applied and the short time I spent in Gemena and its surroundings. Moreover, it has been my deliberate objective to stress the individuality of each of my informants, because the idea of a homogeneous and uniform 'tribe' would only confirm existing stereotypes about African societies. The same intention lies at the basis of the exploration of the figure of Pecheur, for it shows that the colonial encounter has been shaped much more by individual thought and praxis than is often presumed. In fact, the static and homorganic binary between colonizer and colonized wrongs the actual contingency of personal trajectories - Pred (1977: 208) describes them as "weaving paths through time space" - that form the dynamics of colonial history. Even

within the field of postcolonial studies, which critically deals with the ideological implications of the colonial inheritance, the rigid opposition between powerful colonizer and powerless colonized appears hard to surpass. Cooper phrases the issue clearly:

> The risk is that in exploring the colonial binarism one reproduces it, either by new variations of the dichotomy (modern versus traditional) or by inversion (the destructive imperialist versus the sustaining community of the victims). The difficulty is to confront the power behind European expansion without assuming it was all-determining and to probe the clash of different forms of social organization without treating them as self-contained and autonomous. The binaries of colonizer/colonized, Western/non-Western and domination/resistance begin as useful devices for opening up questions of power but end up constraining the search for precise ways in which power is deployed and the ways in which power is engaged, contested, deflected and appropriated. (Cooper 1994: 1517)

By combining both fieldwork and the analysis of archival sources, I have tried to create a zone of encounter between these two types of sources and the way they embody different conceptualizations of power. When it comes to methodology, this combination of oral and written history seemed indispensible from an ethical viewpoint, but tricky from a practical one. The easiest thing to do is to organize the topics of my thesis via analytical opposites which easily lend themselves for clear-cut categorization: colonizer versus colonized, modern versus primitive, powerful versus powerless, Europe versus Africa, Belgium versus Congo, written culture versus oral culture, and so on. Is it even possible to get passed these binaries while they often prove to be so crucial for the way we shape our world and make sense of our environment? Are we even capable of conceptualizing things differently? The question is whether the complexity that underlies our worlds matters if we aren't able to experience it.

An extraordinary effort towards a different perception of reality has been made the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1976) have been advocating an alternative model of theorization that is less simplistic and rigid than the archetypical tree model, namely: the model of the *rhizome*. A rhizome is a root structure characterized by

versatile and ever-developing entities. No main root can be detected: "*[N]'importe quel point d'un rhizome peut être connecté avec n'importe quel autre, et doit l'être. C'est très différent de l'arbre ou de la racine qui fixent un point, un ordre*" (Deleuze & Guattari 1976: 18). According to the authors, multiplicity should be seen as substantial and every (pseudo) point of fixation should be deconstructed. We shouldn't imagine one actor pulling the strings of a puppet, but various actors pulling a multiplicity of strings, *fibres nerveuses*, on their turn attached to networks of other dimensions. Thus, a rhizome does not know any genetic axis and Deleuze and Guattari propose the metaphor of the map to visualize their alternative mode of perceiving reality. Not one axis, but many, even indefinite ones with endings constantly expanding into new lines of new networks, like roads with points of convergence and divergence, points of more or lesser intensity. What appeals to me about the rhizome is the fact that it introduces a notion of dynamics, movement and change, whereas the tree-model implies unassailable stasis. In that sense, I hope Foucault (1970) was right when he suggested that this century would become known as Deleuzian.

The promise of the rhizome, namely that we would be able to allow complexity in its ever-expanding glory, is appealing but paralyzing at the same time. It might offer a way out of postmodern scepticism, yet it might also imply an even more radical continuation of the blind alley postmodern thinking tends to become by eliminating any analytical approach. The most valuable insight I wish to carry along, despite these reservations, is the meta-consciousness that every delimitation is arbitrary, and so is the choice of my research topic. Yet, in order to safeguard nuance (a highly valued concept in contemporary academia, and rightly so), it is important to demarcate an investigable research subject and to allow space for multiple perspectives. French postmodern tradition, with thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard and Michel Foucault at the helm, teaches us that we cannot know truth or reality. The past, additionally turbid because of its time dimension, seems even more out of reach. But by leaving space for multiple perspectives, we might be able to achieve a versatile analysis that respects the fragmented and discursive character of history.

A successful example of such undertaking is *Being Colonized* by Jan Vansina (2010). In his book about the colonial experience of the Kuba (DRC), he asserts that historiography about the colonization of Africa is characterized by a lack of attention for the perspective of the

colonized (and thus for African agency). Similar to Vansina, I wish to undertake an attempt to understand colonialism in (1) a demarcated setting and (2) with attention for multiple actors and their perspectives. In order to do so, he advocates a bottom-up method and explains that he has chosen to narrow down the focus of his research to the Kuba area in order to avoid overgeneralizations:

> This book introduces its readers to the colonial period from the side of the colonized, as far as feasible, by keeping its focus on their concrete experiences, by underlying their active rather than their passive agency where appropriate in the overall narrative, and by letting them tell their own story as much as possible […] Such an endeavor cannot fully succeed, mainly because "the colonized" is a collective noun that includes myriad points of views, experiences, voices, and agents, yet it is one that to my mind presents a history that is more concrete, more realistic, richer, and more meaningful than any top-down alternative. (Vansina 2010: 4)

On the one hand I admire Vansina's intentions because he wants to open up space for agency and narrative, thereby breaking off with dominant top-down historiography, but on the other hand I am bothered by that same effort because it reaffirms the problematic aspects of what Cooper has called the colonial binarism. As this quote shows, Vansina recognizes the trap of the essentializing category "the colonized", but struggles to surpass it. One way to do so, I believe, is to move beyond the persistent association of power/structure with the colonizer and resistance/agency with the colonized. I tend to think that the necessity of focus on agency does not only count for Africans, but also for colonial officers such as René Pecheur, who played a crucial role in the realization of the colonial confrontation in the case studied here. Perceiving agency as the strict monopoly of Africans is as fruitless as considering colonial Europeans as the unique executor of structural actuation: it tells us nothing about the intersectional meeting point in between. Its dichotomic reasoning leaves no space for the attention for complexity that Deleuze and Guattari have been advocating. To put it in Bourdieu's terms, all agents and groups of agents, irrespective of descent, age or gender, are defined by their relative position in "a set of objective power relations that impose themselves on all who enter the field and that are irreducible to the intentions of the individual agents or even to the direct interactions

among the agents" (Bourdieu 1985: 724). The concrete manifestations of the tension between these agents and their position in the social field are of course manifold, as there are indefinite positions imaginable, but no one can be exempted from this friction since it is inherent to social (and political) being. This 'democratic' principle, namely that every individual agency is confronted with the structural level of collectiveness, might be a crucial step towards an analysis that goes beyond the colonial binarism, because it levels the tenacious contrast between colonizing power and colonized resistance. The colonial encounter should be imagined as a multi-dimensional space of convergence and divergence, not as an incompatibility of two extreme poles.

In order to properly analyze the territorial homogenization, I will first develop a theoretical framework that helps to contextualize the four interacting topics at stake: space, time, power and identity. I will depart from the social construction of space, to gradually introduce a theorization of power that is mainly indebted to Michel Foucault. I will then link it to colonial practices of control and the accompanying interventions of structuration and surveillance of colonial society. As such, the notion of schemata, as conceptualized in social cognitive psychology, will be referred to in order to understand how ethnicity has become, and still is, an essential tool to pin down African social configurations. This has resulted in a fixation of social, political and spatial boundaries all over the continent, which I will illustrate by elaborating briefly upon three relevant case studies. One in South-Africa, a country notorious for its spatial implementation of segregationist policies, one in Kenya, which shows how ethnicity can be a negotiable aspect of identity, and one in the Congo itself, where the colonial encounter has privileged some groups over others.

Secondly, I will describe the methodology that I have applied for the gathering of my sources. This chapter might be more extensive than is common for methodological contemplations. Yet, especially because I have conducted fieldwork, I am convinced that it is important to elaborate on my position as a researcher and the type of sources this position has yielded. Besides the oral history that I gathered during this fieldwork, I have used archival and missionary documents to reconstruct the colonial history of the Ngbaka area. However, it is important to be aware of the pitfalls that this kind of sources can entail and to

approach them critically. The combination of written and oral history is also confronted with certain difficulties, which I will describe in section 3.3.

Then, I will sketch out the broader historical background of the territorial homogenization of the Ngbaka, which is of course the Belgian colonization of the Congo. This must be framed within the context of the late 19th century emerging nation state, which instilled the urge to enforce national esteem and international recognition by pursuing colonies overseas. In order to understand the impact of this divide and rule tactics on Congolese soil, I will first describe the negotiation of colonial power on the European continent. This chapter will also touch upon the pre-colonial migration patterns of the Ubangi region, for they provide an idea of the fluidity of social cohesion before the arrival of the colonizer. By the end of the 19th century, however, Belgian rule made its presence felt. In the Equatorial province, the Leopoldian era has been significant for the shaping of social and economic constellations in colonial and postcolonial times. The harsh rubber politics led to a period of socio-economic duress and an increased tension between the different indigenous groups that were played off against one another. This led to friction between Ngbandi groups that were provided with firearms, who were to invade the rubber forests inhabited by Ngbaka. These invasions are remembered as the Bolo Mbati, the war of the colonial allies, and still have repercussions for the sometimes problematic cohabitation between Ngbandi and Ngbaka.

In chapter 5, the main chapter of this thesis, the gathered data will be analyzed and put into use to concretize why and how Pecheur commenced his assignment. I will elaborate on his initial ideological attitude vis-à-vis ethnic organization. For Pecheur, the strict demarcation of ethnic boundaries was needed, because he believed that each group should maintain its own authenticity. After engaging in the territorial homogenization, however, Pecheur gradually came to realize that the desirability of authenticity was mainly a European construct, rather than an African reality. By 1928, after seven years of mandate, he was so disillusioned that he decided to resign. His successor, Gaston Crabbeck, continued with the territorial homogenization and is therefore remembered by the elder Ngbaka as the first colonial official who brought civilization by urging the local population to leave the forests and settle near the roads. Finally, I will comment on the implications of these historical

events upon contemporary socio-cultural identification patterns and postcolonial ethnic intra- and interrelations.

2. Theoretical foundations and comparable case studies

In this chapter, I will take abstract theorization, with references to canonical authors like Lefebvre, Foucault and the like, as the point of departure to work towards the concreteness of three other case studies of replacement based on ethnicity in colonial Africa. The relation between power and space can be looked upon as the centripetal force of this chapter (and, as a matter of fact, of this entire dissertation), yet I wish to stress that it has been my deliberate choice to touch upon notions of space *before* introducing power. Even though they are inevitably intertwined, I take the spatial consistency of social interaction to be more encompassing than the dynamics of power. For speaking of power is speaking of the powerful, and that is not my mere intention. Not only did my fieldwork yield too valuable, even aesthetical, a material to only look at social interaction from a bird's-eye view, it has also proven that those narratives that escape history all too easily have to be taken into account to understand what the colonial encounter truly entailed. As Bourdieu's quote in the introduction of this thesis indicates, we are all part of the same social field (indeed, a spatial term) and it is by departing from this equality that I wish to build up my argument.

2.1. Spatiality

Speaking of geographical homogenization is speaking of spatiality. The importance of the spatial factor is not to be neglected when looking at human behavior. Initially space and place have been topics of research in architecture and geography, but since Lefebvre's notion of space as a social product (1974), Foucault's discussion of space as a tool for disciplinary control (1977, 1980) and de Certeau's conceptualization of spatial tactics (1984), scholars in humanities have critiqued the fact that, all too often, space and place have been taken for granted as natural, neutral and static sceneries for human activity, while they demand for analytical dissection of and critical reflection on their seemingly self-evident character (Gabbert & Jordan-Smith 2007: 219). Soja (1989) even refers to the 'spatial turn' to describe how space and place gained more attention in social sciences since the 1960s, a tendency that was carried through in the 1980s. Schmid (2008: 28) argues that the great deal of attention paid to questions of space can be linked to the combined processes of urbanization and globalization, which have produced new geographies at every scale. Within

the field of African Studies, a similar tendency can be observed, as the considerable amount of publications on African urbanity and the appropriation of African urban space in recent years proves (see Salm & Falola 2005, Freund 2007, Locatelli & Nugent 2009 and Beeckmans 2013 amongst others). With their 2005 publication, *The spatial factor in African history*, Howard and Shain stood up for a spatial perspective on African history, for they believe it can offer refreshing insights on an explanatory, methodological and epistemological level, while also providing a conceptual bridge between African history and other disciplinary fields. Moreover, they assert that spatial analysis can shed light on "the way people have constructed mental maps, used discourse to organize territories, altered their location and physical surroundings in response to crises, and interpreted social landscapes" (Howard & Shain 2005: 4). As it turns out, these topical interests come very close to those that circumvent the present research on the Ngbaka territorial homogenization.

First of all, I should explain the conceptual difference between space and place that is maintained in humanistic geography, a discipline that has its roots in phenomenology and that has influenced cross-academic theorization about spatiality. The Canada-based geographer Edward Relph (1976, see also Seamon & Sowers 2008) and the Chinese philosopher Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) have described how the difference between space and place lies in the extent to which human beings have attributed meaning to a certain area. This attribution of meaning can occur in a direct way, through sensory experience, or in an indirect way, through conceptually mediated symbols. Any location without social connections or attribution of meaning that is more or less abstract falls under the denominator space, while place can be described as a location created by human appropriation. Place thus exists out of space that is charged with meanings and objectives by human experiences. It is not necessarily marked by observable boundaries and it can entail a visualization of a certain time period. In short, place is space with meaning. Both space and place are important constitutes of human experience, for "place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other" (Tuan 1977: 3).

As Howard notes, places have been literally and figuratively constructed and reconstructed, and "by examining the locus of action and meaning over time it is possible to understand how people shaped and thought about places as they were in turn being affected by them"

(Howard 2005: 26). In his recognition of place as a process and product of human interaction, Howard is indebted to the geographer Allan Pred, who, in his turn, refers to the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens[2] to point out that place "always involves an appropriation and transformation of space and nature that is inseparable from the reproduction and transformation of society in time and space" (Pred 1984: 279). This conceptualization of place as a historically contingent process – "the becoming of place, all the human elements of place, and all that takes place within a given area" (Ibid: 282) –shows quite some parallels with Lefebvre's concept of producing space (or 'place', if synchronized with the above-mentioned distinction between both), which is inspired by the dialectical insights of Marx and Hegel. For Lefebvre, time and space are fundamentally bound up with social reality, since they are both the result and the precondition of the production of society. If time and space are produced socially, they do not exist universally, but can only be realized and materialized in the context of a specific society, and, "[i]n this sense, they are not only relational but also fundamentally historical" (Schmid 2008: 29). Thus, social constellations, power relations and conflicts should be taken into account when we want to understand what space is about. This historical awareness dovetails with Foucault's instrumental association of space, knowledge and power (Soja 1989: 50).

In fact, when talking about this triadic relationship, Foucault's legacy seems so obtruding that his often-quoted maxim "power is everywhere" (Foucault 1978: 93) can by now be translated into "Foucault is everywhere". His influence on social sciences has been tremendous, yet before elaborating on his merits, I would like to touch upon some animadversions. One of the most prominent critiques on Foucault's legacy has been directed towards the fact that his conceptualization of power leaves little space for agency or resistance. Amongst others, Edward Said, who was initially greatly inspired by Foucault, has adopted a critical attitude towards his rather static and inhuman view of power, which he believed to be Eurocentric (Said 1986). By stating that power is everywhere, Foucault promotes a rather functionalist view, thereby preventing to a certain extent the recognition of resistance, denying the imagination of alternative orders and explaining all social phenomena by the structure of power. Although Foucault admits that power cannot exist without resistance, he barely elaborates on this theoretical statement. In fact, Foucault somewhat equates resistance to power by stating that both exist in the same place (Foucault

1980: 142). On the one hand, this claim can be interpreted as a crucial step towards an analysis that goes beyond the colonial binarism, since it levels the tenacious contrast between colonizing power and colonized resistance. On the other hand, it can also be read as an 'empty' statement, for it provides no insight in the concrete ways in which power is negotiated or contested. It emanates a functionalist residue that cannot account for social dynamics and it is a metonymical example of why, according to some, Foucault's conceptualisation of power erodes its own explanatory function (see Brenner 1994). Huxley explains why discipline and surveillance should not be perceived as the exclusive analytical topoi to understand how space is turned into place:

> [S]paces and environments are not simply delineated or arranged for purposes of discipline or surveillance, visibility or management. In projects of political subjectification or governmental self-formation, appropriate bodily comportments and forms of subjectivity are to be fostered through the positive, catalytic qualities of spaces, places and environments. These productive spatial rationalities operate in different modes, making use of different combinations of, for instance, geometric, biological, medical, environmental or evolutionary causalities. (Huxley 2007: 195)

As chapter 6 will point out, the Foucauldian framework will prove to be too limited to provide a viable theoretical background for practices of power appropriation and negotiation from below.

That being said, Foucault's notion of governmentality can be introduced here to understand how the colonial apparatus tried to control its subjects. According to Foucault, all issues related to questions such as "how to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, how to become the best possible governor" date back to the sixteenth century, when feudal structures started to collapse and the Reformation and Counter-reformation put to question what spiritual guidance should be followed (Foucault 1991: 87). As such, a shift emerged from sovereignty, which is territory-based, towards an art of government. Without going into detail about this assessment, it does clearly indicate that Foucault's reasoning emanates from a rather Eurocentric conceptualization of what government entails and how it emerged historically. This raises

the question whether his conceptual framework is applicable to a non-European setting. In a way, one could argue that the colonial state *was* European in essence, since it was led by Europeans, driven by European interests and built upon European notions of what power and governance should signify. Nevertheless, this hypothesis does not hold when what Foucault has named 'the ultimate end of government', namely population, is taken into account:

> [P]opulation comes to appear above all else as the ultimate end of government. In contrast to sovereignty, government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc.; and the means that the government uses to attain these ends are themselves all in some sense immanent to the population; it is the population itself on which government will act either directly through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions of activities, etc. (Ibid: 100)

As population becomes the core of what governmentality entails, the regulation of the bodies that comprise this population incentivize the emergence of a new technology of power: biopower. This biopower manifests itself in two ways. One way, which Foucault calls biopolitics, aims at the regulation of the population as a whole, as a social entity. Phenomena like reproduction, birth and death, health and illness on a more collective scale are at stake when it comes to biopolitical considerations. The other manifestation of biopower, anatomo-politics, is more concerned with the individual bodies that compose the population, which should be manipulated in such a way that their "utility and docility" is fully optimized via discipline (Inda 2005).

While Foucault's assumptions about the relation between governmentality and population are indeed applicable to a European context, they reveal an important contradiction when it comes to the colonial setting. For, which population are we talking about? The claim that the colonial population and its welfare can be considered as the ultimate end of government seems hardly tenable in a situation of colonialism. Instead, the conceptualization of

population as quoted above becomes less straightforward and homorganic, because the control of the *colonized* population is supposed to vouch for the benefits of the *colonizing* population. Ann Laura Stoler, for example, has pointed out how paradoxical the claim to augment life is, when the colonial biopolitical state actually administered the right to kill on a racial basis (Stoler 1995). According to Mbembe, who speaks of necropolitics rather than of biopolitics, race then becomes a technology to regulate the distribution of death and to "make possible the murderous functions of the state" (Mbembe 2003: 17). He goes on to explain that space is the 'raw material' to inscribe the sovereign occupation of colonialism, visualizing the distinctions between those who matter and those who do not (Ibid: 26-27). Similarly, Gordon has argued that "a rationality of government will thus mean a way or a system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government (who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed), capable of making some form of that activity thinkable and practicable both to its practitioners and to those upon whom it was practiced" (Gordon 1991: 3). One way of making that activity thinkable and especially practicable is by implementing it via spatial experience.

As Scott (1998), who departs from the Foucauldian legacy, has indicated, political control is unfeasible without spatial structuralization and schematization of the governed region and its inhabitants. In a context of imperialism, the linguistic and ethnographic research of missionaries and state functionaries was frequently brought in to substantiate the colonial project of tribalization. Yet, as the following paragraphs will point out, it is often overlooked or neglected that these researchers did not 'discover' what was already out there, but actually shaped, molded and demarcated the complex reality of pre-colonial Africa into legible units.

In order to understand this more general tendency to make complexity legible, I shall introduce the notion of the scheme. In cognitive social psychology, schemes refer to the mental constructions that order stimuli into coherent and understandable information sets. As such, they become normative tools that steer towards specific evaluation and appropriate behavior. I will apply the concept of schemes on the colonial practice of ethnic construction, not so much to insinuate a rigid one-to-one relation between the two, but to

illustrate how cognitive processes and mechanisms influence our perception on reality, both in an individual and collective way.

2.2. Coping with complexity: 'Making sense'

One of the main premises of cognitive social psychology is the assumption that people play an active role in the construction of their perception of the environment. In this (mostly automatic) process of 'sense making' we ignore some parts of information and supply other parts with our own knowledge, expectations and goals. In other words, there is a constant exchange between the observed (also called the *stimulus*) and the observer (Vonk 2001: 13). The information we gather about certain stimuli or categories of stimuli are cast into *schemes*, which we use in turn to process new stimuli of the same sort. Hence, we use these schemes to select, organize and fill up information in order to store it in our memory. New information is thus adjusted to the scheme, but the scheme itself can also be modified or expanded on the basis of new information. To a large extent, phenomena like prejudices, stereotypes, sexism and racism can be condensed into schemes. Nevertheless, we need schemes to process information; otherwise we would be surrounded by chaotic heaps of meaningless stimuli (see also Wilke 1995).

Since mental processes are very hard to grasp, it is obvious that their theorization does not go without dissension. The discipline of cognitive social psychology has been characterized by an ongoing debate about so-called 'hot cognition', which refers to "those mental processes that are driven by our desires and feelings – those cases where our goals and moods color our judgement" (Kunda 2000: 211). Until the late 1980's the existence of hot cognition, in contrast to its less subjective and affect-laden pole cold cognition, was contested, but nowadays there is a general consensus that judgment can be affected by motivation. The notion of hot cognition is important, especially for this thesis, because it counters the risk of neglecting human agency. Indeed, by acknowledging hot cognition, that is, judgment driven by motivation and affect, we are recognizing that people play a decisive role in the schematization and evaluation of their environment, rather than seeing them as the passive subjects of non-negotiable and pre-programmed mental schemes.

In her perspicuous introduction of cognitive social psychology, Vonk enlists the main features of schemes (Vonk 2001: 166-194). We will address them, briefly, below:

(1) ATTENTION. Schemes can be considered as spotlights: they function as selective filters for our observation. Most light is shed upon *scheme-relevant* information, while *scheme-irrelevant* information is mostly neglected. Within scheme-relevant information, we can distinguish *scheme-consistent* and *scheme-inconsistent* information. The latter draws more attention since it diverges from the expectation evolving out of the scheme.

(2) ENCODING. Schemes structure our observation. They influence our categorizations. Clearly visible characteristics of what we observe are more likely to evoke schemes than invisible characteristics. Schemes can be activated through the situation, our goals in that situation and its context. We look for a category that makes the obtained information fit into the scheme and we are willing to fill it up the in the most convenient way.

(3) ELABORATION. Schemes influence the velocity of data processing. The processing of scheme-inconsistent information consumes more time than scheme-consistent information. In other words, schemes improve the velocity of data processing, compared to situations where we have no schemes about a certain stimulus, but they lead to a delay when the information contradicts the scheme.

(4) MEMORY. Information will be remembered better when it is encoded into schemes. Scheme-inconsistent information will be better remembered than scheme-consistent information because it demands elaboration. Schemes also contribute to the reconstruction of the past: loose parts of information acquire meaning through embedding in narrative scripts.

(5) EVALUATION. Schemes help us to summarize the complexity and versatility of our environment. Sometimes this summarization goes hand in hand with misjudgment:

schemes charged with affect, such as stereotypes, color the evaluation of the observed. In this case, the scheme becomes a normative tool.

(6) BEHAVIOR. Because of this normativity, we can use schemes to orient and adjust ourselves in specific situations. When a scheme is activated, the activation of a specific behavioral reaction can come along. This activation can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy of both the self and the other. We aim for continuity and consistence in our schemes, including the self-scheme.

Thus, the advantages and disadvantages of schemes are two parts of the same medal: schemes lead to quick, efficient and mostly automatic reactions, but that is precisely why they deprive us of the overview of what we *could* have thought and done when the scheme would not have been activated (Vonk 2001: 194). Let us keep this in mind for section 2.3., when we introduce the paradigm of ethnicity in the context of African colonization.

Furthermore, schemes provide us with the possibility of classification, and as Ziva Kunda notes, "[c]lassification is important because it allows us to treat different objects as the same, and it enables us to use our knowledge about categories to make sense of individual members of these categories" (Kunda 2000: 18). Most of the time, classification is organized and conceptualized in a hierarchical manner. This hierarchy is often concretized through dendrograms and biologically inspired expressions such as "to stem from" and "branch off" and divisional categories such as "root" and "branch". We thus consider a tree model with a firmly fixed root as starting point, a trunk as its possible continuation and branches with sub-branches to specify internal subdivision. Since we are so convinced of and familiar with the accuracy of this model, we tend to forget that it *remains* a model, that is, a human-constructed template we use to fit in our information. Indeed, a scheme. Hierarchical structure is an organizing filter people apply to what they observe. It is no inherent feature of environment itself.

In the introduction of this thesis I referred to the rhizomatic model of Deleuze and Guattari (1976). Although he does not refer to the rhizomatic concept as such, Michael Moerman (1993) seems to propagate a similar perception of identity and ethnicity. He speaks of "a

great complex network", metaphorically replacing Ariadne's thread by Indra's net, to understand these socially determined and determining categories. For Moerman, ethnicity should be considered as a network of interacting social and historical processes and not as a clearly demarcated entity fixed in time and space. For identity, the same assessment prevails: "The pursuit of any single, stable always overriding, and constantly occupied social identity, ethnic or otherwise, is chimerical" (Moerman 1993: 97). These insights are crucial for our *a posteriori* theorization and conceptualization of identity and ethnicity (especially if we take the pre-colonial period into account) because they claim a place for complexity and relativity. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the next chapter, the prevalence of multi-layered and complex identities was not exactly a priority for colonial authorities.

2.3. The ethnic scheme

Among other things, I mentioned in the previous section that schemes structuralize the categorizations we apply to our observations (2), and that they help us to summarize the unwieldiness of reality (5). As Scott suggests, this tendency towards schematization and simplification is also at stake in the context of governmental management:

> Certain forms of knowledge and control require a narrowing of vision. The great advantage of such tunnel vision is that it brings into sharp focus certain limited aspects of an otherwise far more complex and unwieldy reality. This very simplification, in turn, makes the phenomenon at the center of the field of vision more legible and hence more susceptible to careful measurement and calculation. Combined with similar observations, an overall, aggregate, synoptic view of a selective reality is achieved, making possible a high degree of schematic knowledge, control, and manipulation. (Scott 1998: 11)

While Scott introduces the metaphor of artificial forestry - as opposed to natural and uncontrolled vegetation growth - to illustrate how categorization and schematization yield control and manipulative possibilities, the link with Foucault's conceptualization of power and cognitive schemata is easily made. Scott (1998:22) argues that "no administrative system is capable of representing *any* existing social community except through a heroic and

greatly schematized process of abstraction and simplification”. This of course comes close to Foucault’s focus on rationalities of government and the delineation of space to produce “grids of classification, order and discipline” (Huxley 2007: 195), and to the filtering function of schemata as conceptualized in cognitive social psychology as an essential tool for control and the processing of stimuli. Simplification into prefigured structures is necessary to yield categorical legibility and the promise of control. Without schemes, the state would not be able to have a grip on the dynamics of its people, just as the individual would not be able to grasp the environment that surrounds him or her. Yet it is not only a matter of (in)capability. The schematization implemented by state authorities is also driven by purpose. According to Scott taxation, political control and conscription were the main objectives of high-modernist states (Ibid: 23) and these objectives are not very different for the colonial state. As the following extract from the annual report of the Belgian colonial office shows, political organization was a necessary means towards economic benefit:

> *Aux fins d’éviter la désagrégation complète des sociétés indigènes et les dangers de l’anarchie politique, sociale et même familiale, les Commissaires de district et les Administrateurs territoriaux avaient reçu dès 1921 des instructions en vue de s’attacher en ordre principal à rechercher l’organisation familiale, sociale et politique des indigènes, une bonne organisation politique apparaissant constituer la base, indispensable à la permanence de l’ordre, de la prospérité économique et des recettes fiscales satisfaisantes.* (AA *Rapport Annuel* 1922: 43)

How could this political organization become legitimatized? What scheme would be best fitting for the colonization of Africa? As I mentioned before, a specific scheme impeaches us to see what we would have seen and done if it would not have been activated. Consequently, it becomes extremely hard to distinguish what was “out there” before its application, especially in a historical context. In the case of *the* Ngbaka for example, we do not know whether this ethnic category was relevant before colonial presence, and thus it is perfectly possible that it is a very anachronistic one. Yet I have to use it in the present research, for lack of something better (See also Mathys 2014: 51).

As Aidan Southall indicates, some nationalists tend to think that ethnic divisions were "the deliberate creation of a Machiavellian colonial policy of divide and rule" (Southall 1970: 33). Although this perception completely denies African appropriation and grants too much power to some sort of colonial super-engineer that has the capability to erect an African society from scratch, many of the demarcated ethnic categories used to be much more fluid in pre-colonial times. As Moerman puts it metaphorically, they were not "a full time job" but one of the many cloaks in people's wardrobes (Moerman 1993: 90). Nevertheless, we simply cannot assume that pre-colonial Africa was a blank page and that ethnic categories were implemented upon those poor African victims without any interests or expectations. This way of looking at colonization would deny "the domains of creativity, inventiveness and reflexivity" (van Dijk, de Bruin & Gewald 2007: 1). Ronald Atkinson phrases the point clearly:

> [C]olonialism (and its aftermath) have certainly shaped in major ways the nature and manifestations of modern ethnicity all across Africa. Still, as also noted, colonial rule in Africa did not occur on some continental tabula rasa, and its approximately sixty years neither erased nor totally overwhelmed all that had gone before. However powerful the colonizers, however distorted or manipulative their representations of ethnic identities, how often would (or could) these identities have been plucked from the air or created out of nothingness? (Atkinson 1999: 30)

Atkinson touches upon the danger of representing pre-colonial Africa as 'a continent without a history' and this emphasis on the importance of African agency was also one of the main critiques on Terence Ranger's contribution to *The Invention of Tradition* (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). In his contribution, Ranger asserted that neo-traditional frames were invented and implemented to serve the state. As such, the familiar association of tradition and the past is contested and reversed: tradition becomes a highly modern concept. In the context of colonization, traditions mostly refer to tribal identity, *droit coutumier* and traditional religion (Ranger 1993), and what used to be fluid and multiple thus got fixed in the arbitrariness of rigid categorization. If I come back to the previous introduction of cognitive schemata, it is arguable that the complexity and versatility of reality as described by Deleuze's and Guattari's rhizome, got fixed into schemes, enlightening some aspects of society but neglecting others. As said, a specific scheme is activated because there are

certain stimuli present which are relevant for its application. Thus, as the quote of Atkinson proves, pre-colonial society *did* carry aspects of ethnicity, but also other characteristics of social beloning. Yet, the latter, proper to the complexity of any community, got expelled by the rigidity of the ethnic paradigm, the ethnic scheme (see also Young 1976).

Moreover, tribalism carries a strong connotation of primitivism, and as I said before, the activation of schemes can be linked to the desires and objectives of the observer. Colonialism needed an ideology to legitimize its problematic imperial claim of superiority. If Africa was primitive, characterized by wieldy tribalism, it needed the European arrival to be delivered from its evolutionary retardation. This is where the sixth feature of psychological schemes plays a role: because of their normativity, schemes invite us to act in a specific way. In the colonial case, this behavioral reaction was the white men's burden to set Africa free from its supposed deplorable condition of backwardness. In the explanation about the behavior feature of schemes, I shortly referred to the idea of self-fulfilling prophecy: people start to behave according to the normative character of the schemes placed upon them. In the colonial context, the echo of ethnic discourse got and still gets easily adopted and embodied. Hence, its feedback assumes reality-constructing proportions. As Meeuwis (1997) notes, this feedback had severe consequences for the perception on self- and other-identity. Although his quote specifically relates to the case of the Belgian Congo, it reveals a tendency that accounts for colonial categorization mechanisms in general:

> 'Tribe', the administrator's major unit of classification in its relation with the colonized, figured on identity cards and birth certificates, and on registration forms used in schools and other institutions. As such, ethnic identity became a point of reference to which the colonized were obliged to turn in all their contacts with the Europeans superiors. In this way, it was gradually adopted as a relevant category in the Africans' construction of their own social world. (Meeuwis 1997: 79)

This idea of African appropriation of ethnic identity as a reaction on colonially shaped ethnogenesis is also present in Iliffe's famous quote about Tanganyikan history: "Europeans believed Africans belonged to tribes; African built tribes to belong to" (Iliffe 1979: 324). According to John Lonsdale, three processes intensified this creative role Africans played in

the construction of ethnically inspired group identity. Firstly, the colonially driven rise of the labor market led to competition for “the same resources of employment, urban shelter and security” (Londsdale 1994: 137). As such, linguistic and cultural differences became employable tools for economic and social advantage in urbanized and thus diverse spaces. Secondly, the introduction of the colonial system implied the introduction of new power structures. The way African police and taxation clerks were able to dominate their peers was of a different order than in pre-colonial Africa and consequently, ethnicity was deployed for political dependency. A third element Lonsdale cites is missionary education and the introduction of literacy. Since there was no nationally organized language policy, missionary teachers were free to promote local vernaculars and to produce, amongst others, Biblical texts about a chosen people struggling for its freedom. Historical imaginations about African tribal belonging and uniqueness could easily be pinned down to this Christian Exodus ideal.

As Lonsdale’s last point suggests, ‘cultural stuff’ was needed to validate these ethnic identities (see Barth 1969). Because, even if Barth is mostly acknowledged for his claim that ethnic groups are imagined societal structures rather than natural categories, and that boundaries are their most important binding agents, these boundaries need some filling up by means of distinctive backgrounds of experience. One of these markers of such communal imagination of homogeneity, and perhaps the most tenacious one, is language. As such, the schematic and unambiguous yet highly idealized Herderian unity of language, territory and people played a crucial role in times of absolute belief in the infallibility of science. The neat grid that positivist rationalism was believed to provide would convert Africa from a chaotic and confusing heart of darkness into a well-ordered continent, shaped on the basis of European templates. Since language was employed as a feature to establish this grid, experts were needed to study and fix linguistic boundaries and their content. Oftentimes, these experts were missionaries. Along with the quest to civilize the African ‘primitive’ went the implementation of the one true belief, namely Christianism. Since the missionaries in the field needed to make themselves understandable in order to transmit their Biblical ontology, they were often eager to explore and pin down African languages. Their linguistic and ethnographic fieldwork was a useful source for colonial categorization (see Harries (1988), Chimhundu (1992) and Meeuwis (2001) amongst others).

It is within this scope of colonial governmentality and control of population that we have to situate the territorial homogenization of the Ngbaka. The ethnic paradigm was applied throughout the entire colonization of the African continent, yet it is important to stress once more that Africans did not passively undergo this process. As their diverging spatial experiences and identification processes indicate, they actively negotiated and appropriated it according to their own benefits. The following case studies give an indication of how the construction of ethnicity took place in South-Africa, Kenya and the Congo.

2.4. Comparable case studies: South Africa, Kenya and the Congo

The country that might be most notorious for its white hegemonic use of ethnic categorization and relocation is probably South Africa. Of course South African history is very different from that of the Congo, since it has known a high number of white settlers and a unique political system of Apartheid. Throughout history, Khoi, San and Bantu speaking peoples lost most of their land to the white settlers who were penetrating the interior in search of land for their cattle and minerals such as gold and diamond. At the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the governments of the Cape and Natal installed reserves to deal with the masses of African refugees without losing control and white hegemony over land. Nevertheless, these areas were way too small for the amount of people that were supposed to live in it, and consequently many Africans continued to live on land that was said to be "white" African freehold land and unsurveyed state land (Platzky & Walker 1985).

In 1913, the Natives Land Act (NLA) was installed. It included a "Schedule of Native Areas" to delineate the borders of the areas that had been reserved by the governments of the provinces before. Moreover, the NLA prohibited Africans to buy, sell or lease land from a European and vice versa. Consequently, Africans could only obtain land within the scheduled areas, while Europeans could not. As such, the NLA, "repealed only in 1991, was so important because it was the first major piece of legislation that would later comprise the legal structure of apartheid" (Feinberg 1993: 66). Indeed, the NLA legally fixated the process of dispossession that Africans had to endure since the European arrival at the Cape. On the one hand, the NLA guaranteed a segregation of black and white, but on the other hand it

also led to geographically isolated units of the different indigenous groups. As such, the installation of the so-called Bantustans, a notorious means of the Apartheid divide-and-rule tactics, can be considered as a direct inheritance of the NLA. Although the division between Europeans and Africans did not play a role in the Congolese context, Maano Ramutsindela indicates what the implementation of the NLA has in common with the case of the Ngbaka:

> "Thus, territory became a discursive trope: it was used to constitute society in terms of race, ethnicities and tribes, and was also an important medium through which conceptions of society could be transcribed into tangible social, economic and political geographies of the country. Thus, the internal geography of South Africa manifests the pursuit of ideals of society and space, and the protracted struggles for territory and power that ensued." (Ramutsindela 2013: 290-291)

As Ramutsindela's quote indicates, the geographical patchwork that has characterized South-African history can be seen as a literal materialization of the social and political factors that influenced its realization. It is a clear example of why space is socially constructed. As in the Ngbaka-case, the schematic ideology of colonial power led to a very concrete and far-reaching outcome: the imposed geographical relocation of people.

In their book, *The Surplus People*, Platzky and Walker (1985) provide many examples of forced removals in South-Africa. A particular case is the creation of Gazankulu, one of the ten former Bantustans the Apartheid regime had installed, which was intended for the Tsonga-speaking population. The perception was thus that 'the Tsonga' formed one culturally, linguistically and hence ethnically homogeneous group that could be tied territorially. Yet as the authors indicate, Tsonga people had come across the Lebombo mountains from present-day Mozambique in different time spans during the nineteenth century. They became subject of many different chiefs, even Venda and Sotho ones, and "they did not speak quite the same language or have a common culture" (Platzky & Walker 1985: 126).

Harries (1988) also writes about the fact that Tsonga language and the borders that got established based on linguistic arguments, are highly artificial constructs. As such, "Tsonga

as a written language was a product of nineteenth century European discourse rather than a reflection of local reality" (Harries 1988: 26). Part of this discourse is the "intellectual grid" Europeans framed upon African complexity. By anchoring languages spatially, borders could be established and the entities within these borders could become more legible to those of interest. Missionaries played a crucial role in this linguistic establishment. Since the Bible was a powerful tool for evangelization, printing press was of great importance to make imagined communities more tangible. And the consequences *have* become more tangible: during the 1970's Tsonga people have been forced to move into Gazankulu, while "foreigners" had to shift to neighboring Bantustans in order to make these areas "ethnically pure". Once more, this mechanism is not free of political and economic interests of those in charge. Although their formulation might be a bit harsh and over-simplified, which might be due to the fact that their book can unmistakably be read as a pamphlet to eradicate Apartheid, Platzky and Walker clearly show the tartness of ethnic friction:

> Ethnic conflict makes government policy look prophetically correct, whereas it is the cause of the trouble. There are ethnic loyalties, but, particularly in the case of Gazankulu, these divisions are manipulated to keep blacks competing for local limited resources such as small business development grants or jobs in civil service. The very imposition of ethnic structures from above has resulted in ethnic conflict from below. (Platzky & Walker 1985: 127)

Another country where the relation between ethnicity and geography was strongly emphasized during colonial times is Kenya. An interesting case of constructed ethnicity is that of the Kikuyu, since Yvan Droz states that this ethnicity did not exist before the entrance of colonialism (Droz 1998: 261). Nevertheless, bearing in mind the important role ethnicity plays in contemporary Kenyan politics, the imagined character of this category has become very real in its consequences. As in the South-African context, Kenyan ethnic groups were believed to have their proper homelands, which got fixated into so-called reserves. According to Ambler, in an earlier stage "people identified themselves as residents of these local societies, not as members of any monolithic tribe or ethnic group" (Ambler 1988: 32). As Timothy Parsons points out, these reserves quickly proved to be insufficiently capable of accommodating the growing population and land claims of private entrepreneurs. As a

solution, colonial policy makers decided to 'transplant' people from overpopulated reserves to less crowded ones.

One of these 'surplus people' were Kikuyu who were to settle in the Meru reserve. Most of Kikuyu migrants agreed to adopt the Meru ethnicity. The loss of wealth and status that comes along with the assimilation into a new community was a price they were willing to pay for the acquirement of land. Another group openly defied the colonial state by clinging on to their 'Kikuyu-ness', which "demonstrated that colonial tribal identities could express an entrepreneurial individualism that was defiantly at odds with state-sponsored tribal collectivism" (Parsons 2012: 68). Indeed, by creatively appropriating the colonial scheme of ethnic categorization, these Kikuyu were able to contest its artificial character, while those who adopted the Meru identity also did so because of personal 'opportunism'. As this case shows, colonial authorities could make their subjects speak in ethnic terms, yet they could not "dictate what these terms meant, nor could they dictate the nature of direction of the conversation" (Ibid 86). Moreover, Parsons provides us with a great example of how to conduct research that successfully faces the difficulty to recognize the effectiveness of European power mechanisms without assuming that they were nonnegotiable.

But also within the Congo, other cases of territorial relocation have been reported. Libata (1987) deals with a case study about Baluba migrants in the region of the state post of Luluabourg (present Kananga), which shows how the organization of the colony into *chefferies indigènes* not always turned out positively for the Belgian authorities. From 1890 on, groups of Baluba migrants have settled in the region, which was originally inhabited by Lulua. Characterized by a spirit of hospitality and fraternity, these Lulua tolerated the Baluba presence, for there was an abundance of unexploited lands available, and thus many Baluba submitted to Lulua chiefs. In 1906, with the arrival of the colonizer, however, the region was subdivided into four *chefferies*, which were meant to ensure a politico-administrative organization that made domination more efficient. Yet, these *chefferies* were artificially constructed and did not respond to historical realities: "*elles regroupaient des populations d'origine diverse sous l'autorité des Chefs pratiquement imposés par l'administration*" (Libata 1987: 107). Consequently, certain groups did not accept the authority of the imposed

leaders and boycotted the given orders. By 1938, the region was redivided into three *secteurs*, which were supposed to respond better to the existing socio-cultural patterns.

To turn these regroupings into reality, the displacement of certain Lulua clans, more specifically, the Bena Mukangala and the Bakwa Mbuyi, was needed. Before the regroupings, the Baluba recognized the authority of the Lulua chiefs on whom they depended. But due to the erection of the conventional chefferies, an urge arose among the Baluba to cast off the Lulua yoke. This Baluba obstinacy evoked the anger of the Lulua chiefs, because the Luba villages were no longer depending on them, and thus they lost a considerable amount of fruitful land. Libata describes how, from 1931 on, the Lulua chief Kalamba Tshikomo launched an action against the Belgian colonizer and their "*fidèles serviteurs Baluba*" (Libata 1987: 116). He incited his people to boycott fiscal and cultural impositions, threatened with a war against the Belgians and menaced the Baluba. As such, the minorities of Baluba, who had refused to leave the lands of Kalamba in 1925, did not agree to be incorporated into a sector of Luba majority: their loyalty lay elsewhere. A similar insubordination was to be found among the Lulua minorities that were supposed to join sectors of Luba, who longed for a restitution of their bygone autonomy or integration into another Lulua sector. In a letter to the Territorial Administrator of Luluabourg, these Lulua complain about the Baluba, who used to be considered as slaves and had now become the colonizer's main collaborators, saying that the Baluba mocked them, treated them as lazy and incapable and hindered them from executing more noble functions in order to keep them inferior:

> *[L]'administration colonial avait soulevé des tensions tribales au sein des secteurs périphériques de Luluabourg en accordant aux Baluba les postes les plus en vue, au détriment des Lulua. Ceux-ci, propriétaires des terres occupées par les Baluba, craignaient à raison de se trouver un jour devant une nouvelle administration colonial où les Baluba remplaceraient les Blancs.* (Libata 1987: 119)

As a matter of fact, this fear was not unfounded, for even early European explorers like Livingstone, Cameron and Wissman considered the Baluba more intelligent and more susceptible to Christian conversion than other Africans, and thus they became known as the

cultural brokers *par excellence* (see Jewsiewicki 1989 and Turner 1993 for a synthesis on the ethnogenesis of the Baluba).[3]

The South-African and Kenyan colonization differ strongly from the Congolese one, for they were characterized by a considerable migration flux of white settlers. In order to satisfy the property needs of these settlers, the territorial freedom of the indigenous population was restricted. As such, ethnicity proved to be a welcome feature to pin down local fluid categories of identification and to apply a manipulative divide-and-rule strategy. As the Kikuyu case shows, ethnicity used to be a negotiable and actively appropriated identity marker, but, over time, diachronic closure took place and colonial projections of tribal fixation turned into self-fulfilling prophecies. The Kenyan elections of 2007 and the accompanying acts of violence prove that ethnic boundaries can be associated with feelings of animosity. In the case of the Baluba of the Congo, colonial spatial intervention equally interfered with local social structures of hierarchy. This is no different for the territorial homogenization of the Ngbaka.

3. Methodology

This chapter deals with the methodological foci that informed the data collection of this research. First, I will introduce the consulted written accounts and the critical approach that the context of their creation demands. Secondly, my fieldwork will be elaborated upon by including logistic, ethical and financial considerations. To conclude, the possible difficulties that emerge when combing written and oral sources will be mentioned, analyzed and tackled. As it turns out, this chapter appears to be rather descriptive and anecdotic, yet I find it important to present my methodological trajectory in a detailed way, for it is as elementary and vital to my research as the results it has yielded.

3.1 Reading the colonials and the missionaries: Elegant prose and biased positionalities

The most extended written account about the history of the Ngbaka before the arrival of the Belgian colonizer is produced by the capuchin Vedast Maes (1909-1994), who lived and worked in the Ubangi region from 1933 until 1978 (Maes 1997: 5). According to the introduction of *Les Ngbaka du centre de l'Ubangi*, written by his colleague Kamiel Teuns, Maes postulated three priorities during his stay with the Ngbaka: firstly, the registration of their history, language and habits; secondly, the contribution to their Christian formation and thirdly - inevitably related to the two first objectives - the translation of the Bible into Ngbaka to make it accessible for his people. These preoccupations clearly indicate how language and religion were strongly interwoven for Maes' missionary execution, and this was not a singular case. Throughout the colonial history of Africa, missionaries have played a crucial role as explorers and fixators of African languages. Although Maes was still active as a missionary in post-colonial Congo, he started his career in a colonial context and this was not without consequences. As Fabian notes:

> The missions had tied their fate to colonial rule by accepting the monopoly of education. They had to participate in these centralizing efforts no matter how much they had come to identify themselves with local cultures and regional interests. This added another dimension to normative concerns in matters of language. Missions were involved with projects to control multilingualism and with the selection of those

> languages which were to be given privileged status in school curricula and administrative practice. (Fabian 1983: 175)

The relation between colonialism, language and religion is thus a very intermingled one. The so-called *mission civilatrice* cannot be dissociated from a certain idea of cultural Eurocentrism and a conviction of religious righteousness; a belief that 'the Other' is in need of 'Our' values and experience. Nevertheless, it would be rash to presume that Maes' interest in Ngbaka culture and language was driven by some sort of opportunistic instrumentalism for religious purposes. Apart from his Biblical translation, he also published a Ngbaka-Dutch-French dictionary, including a grammatical annex. Moreover, the capuchin indicates that the Ngbaka themselves insisted on the publication of *Les Ngbaka du centre de l'Ubangi*: "*Il est écrit à la demande de nombreux Ngbaka, curieux de connaître un peu plus de l'histoire de leur peuple et qui n'ont pas eu l'occasion de se procurer les premières œuvres* " (Maes 1997: 13).

Yet despite his undeniably thoroughly executed research and committed meticulousness, Maes did remain a missionary in the first place. In other words, he did not enjoy an education as historian, and this lack of scientific knowhow shows in his writings. His methodology, for example, is hardly described and quotation of sources is scarce. In contemporary research in humanities, great emphasis has been put on the biased position of the researcher, who is inevitably influenced by his or her own ideological and cultural background. In Maes' writings, this meta-scientific awareness of bias is rather absent, which makes it hard to distinguish personal narrative from historical fact.

Two other capuchins that made contributive writings about the history of the Ngbaka and the Ubangi region in general are Basiel Tanghe (1879-1947), who became the first Vicar Apostolic of the region in 1935, and Rodolf Mortier (1901-2000). Like Maes, they wrote for scientific colonial periodicals, such as *Kongo-Overzee*, *Annales Aequatoria* and *Congo* (Meeuwis 2001: 160). Tanghe and Mortier spent their time in the Ubangi region primarily with the Ngbandi, so when it comes to Ngbaka history, Maes can be considered as the greatest authority. He has clearly based himself on the writings of Tanghe and Mortier, but does not always agree with his predecessors. As Meeuwis writes, the Ubangi region can be

conceived as "*a mosaic of many different, mutually unintelligible, languages, representing diverse typological families (both Bantu and non-Bantu) and spoken in highly dispersed areas that often formed enclaves within enclaves*" (Meeuwis 2001: 158). Due to this complexity, it is not surprising that analyses about the possible historical explanations of this complicated geography diverge.

I gained access to Maes' writings thanks to Marcel Henrix (1928-2015), or, as he was called in Gemena, Sango Marcel, a missionary of the *Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae* (CICM), whom I visited several times in his rest home in Kessel-lo, near Leuven. Marcel lived in the DRC from 1954 until 2005, spoke the Ngbaka-language fluently and had been a close friend of Vedast Maes. He himself has also done research about the Ngbaka and has published about initiation rituals, name giving, proverbs and grammar. His knowledge of the Ngbaka language and culture was overwhelming, and I am extremely grateful for all that he has taught me. Unfortunately, Marcel passed away on the 13th of March 2015, and as such, a warm and extremely intelligent person has left us. Luckily, he had already shared great parts of his knowledge about the Ngbaka history with me, which makes him one of the main sources of my research. Being so familiar with Maes' writings and having lived for so long within the Ngbaka area, Marcel can be called a true authority when it comes to Ngbaka history. Just like Maes, Marcel was not trained academically, but this 'flaw' was strongly compensated by his passion for and impressive acquaintance with Ngbaka culture. Marcel's priesthood of course influences his positionality and particular subjectivity, and consequently, it also has its repercussions on mine. My position as a young Belgian researcher *vis-à-vis* a knowledgeable elderly man is without doubt one of reverence and gratitude. As such, my attitude towards the information Marcel has provided is partly inspired by the personal affinity and respect we came to establish during our conversations.

Besides the previously mentioned sources, the present writing is also based on archival material. One of the centerpieces for this thesis was provided by Marcel himself. During their joint time in the Congo, he and Vedast Maes had run into the report that Pecheur drew up in 1928, after his investigations to identify the different Ngbaka clans. It is preceded by three more general chapters about the Ngbaka society and history, which have been very instructive. In order to find out more about the figure of Pecheur, I contacted the archival

service of the Dominican order (hereafter referred to as DA), which provided me with some data of his priestly career. Based on these, I was able to track Pecheur down in the African archive of the Belgian department of Foreign Affairs (hereafter referred to as AA). In February 2014, I sifted through René Pecheur's personal file, which was quite extensive, and the Annual Reports, which provide a general outline of the colonial state of affairs. Especially the chapters about the *Chefferies Indigènes* were instructive because they related to the authorities' efforts to centralize and control the population of the Congo into 'readable' units.

During my fieldwork in Gemena, I also consulted the archives of the *térritoire* (hereafter referred to as AT), the local government office. The contrast between this archive and the way it was treated could not differ more from what I had seen in Brussels. Due to the plundering of Jean-Pierre Bemba's troops (see chapter 5.4), many documents had been lost and what remained were chaotic heaps of papers without any logical structuration. French documents from the early colonial period were intermingled with Lingala documents from the Mobutu age, and I was even given the permission to take the possibly relevant material back with me to the mission post; a huge contrast with the security measures and red tape in the Belgian department. Back in Belgium, I returned to Brussels for the personal file of Gaston Crabbeck, Pecheur's successor as *Administrateur Territorial,* and to find an enactment which indicated that the colonial population should be grouped into controllable units.

Although these archival documents give an impression of objectivity and even impartiality, Farge points out that we should distrust our natural sympathy towards them and that we should perceive them as an adversary that does not necessarily speaks its mind at a first reading (Farge 1989). Stoler, who has examined the nature of Dutch colonial governance in the nineteenth-century Indies as seen through its archival habits and conventions, warns for the same treacherous slipperiness:

> The official documents of colonial archives like those of the Netherlands Indies are so weighted with fixed formats, empty phrases, and racial clichés that one is easily blinded by their flattened prose and numbing dullness. Our readings are blunted by

> what often has been parsed as the seemingly panoptic glare of a vacuous, official gaze. But in these archives the panoptic is a frail conceit. Administrative overviews index conventional forms of assumed mastery less than comprehensive knowledge. (Stoler 2009: 23)

Stoler's reference to "the seemingly panoptical glare" ineluctably reminds of Foucault's biopolitical interpretation of power, in which the idea of constant surveillance plays an important role. In his Foucauldian dissection of the urban landscape of New Delhi, Stephen Legg defines the existence of files and dossiers that constitute the archival body as a meta-discipline, which partly replaces the direct gaze of the Panopticon (Legg 2007: 85). Yet it is important to notice that what is at stake here is not *actual* constant surveillance but the *idea* of it. When reading the colonial archive, one must keep the frailty of this ideally constructed dominance in mind and read between the lines of its shrouding literary vagueness and elegance. Just as the Foucauldian approach lacks attention for individual resistance or negotiation of power from below, the consultation of archival sources would be too one-sidedly focused on the structural dimension of the colonial encounter. Therefore, it is important to combine them with a more 'human' oral history.

3.2. Conducting fieldwork: The methodological interface of oral and spatial data collection

Thompson notes that "reality is complex and many-sided; and it is a primary merit of oral history that to a much greater extent than most sources it allows the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated" (Thompson 1984: 40). This statement is very true for my research and explains why fieldwork was indispensable to it. For, had I based this dissertation only on written colonial sources, my story would have been very one-sided and incomplete. By taking only official records into account I would not have been able to critically describe colonial history. I could not have registered the impact of this history on the contemporary situation without experiencing or at least observing it myself. I could not have written, that is, pinned down, the history of a people that I was only familiar with via books and archives. Although the experience I have gathered is still very partial and fragmented, it has proven to be vital to meet up with the complexity and many-sidedness that Thompson describes.

I conducted my fieldwork in July and August 2014. Based at the CICM mission post in Gemena, where Marcel Henrix had spent many years as a missionary, the fathers indicated Jean-Paul Monzabana as the most adequate candidate to help me with my research. Not only had Monzabana worked as a Ngbaka-translator for Marcel Henrix and my supervisor Michael Meeuwis before, but as a catechist of the Catholic community he also disposed of a broad network of fellow catechists in the surrounding villages. This implied that we could get access to a wide range of informants, but also that informants who were not part of or related to this religious network risked to remain invisible. However, I believe that the advantages of this network offset the disadvantages. For, during my stay in Gemena, it became clear that Christian mission posts or churches were perceived as pivotal places of encounter and community building, but also that the belonging to such community did not necessarily mean a fending off of more traditional beliefs and practices. In other words, Monzabana's position as a catechist and the worldview that accompanies this position did not prevent him from relating to elders who were less devoted to Catholicism. They all belonged to the same hybrid continuum of both catholic and more traditional religious beliefs and practices. Moreover, my stay at the mission post, a place with centripetal public values, made me visible to the community. Despite my initial unease to 'boss' someone twice my age, it should be mentioned that Monzabana's growing enthusiasm about the research topic and the mutual friendship we built during our many hours together have been invaluable to the final result of this thesis.

The way I conducted my interviews was deliberately random. I only used one parameter to guide my decisions about which sites to visit: the mental and physical map of the Ngbaka area. Given the central position of Gemena in the region, I considered the city as the core node of both the relevant material and imagined Ngbaka geography. Not only was this centrality inherent to the focus of my research, namely the territorial homogenization that instilled notions of spatial organization, it was also one of the practical implications of staying at the CICM mission post. In a way, my position was not that different from that of colonial administrators like René Pecheur and Gaston Crabbeck, using Gemena as my operating base, situated at the center point of an imaginary circle, to explore the surrounding villages. Despite the neo-colonial flavor of this comparison, it allowed me to

reach a spatial experience of the region similar to theirs. The five roads that depart from this node were my guidelines towards a multi-sited fieldwork that covered 'all directions' (attachment 2 & 3). As such, the importance of the spatial dimension in my research was extended from conceptual theory to experienced practice and methodology. Fieldwork implies a 'field' and 'participants'. However, oftentimes the 'field' is conceptualised as something fixed and static, and only briefly discussed without bringing it into relation with 'participants'. In my research, the field is not just a frozen scene for human activity; it is a dynamic and actively appropriated site of multi-layered importance. As Howard and Shain put it:

> Social space is not simply something that is "out there," nor is it a passive backdrop for events. Rather, the spatial component is, like time, constantly changing. Since it is the cumulative effect of past human action and thought, it impinges upon present-day action and thought. (Howard & Shain 2005: 4)

The intertwined relation between social identity and field, or place (as in 'space that has a meaning'), is the thread that connects all aspects of my research. When it comes to methodology, this implies a reciprocal influence between field and participants: the field indicates the participants and is, at the same time, the subject of my conversations with these participants. Similarly, Feldman, who has combined fieldwork and archival research in Gaza, a region notorious for its political sensibility and contested use of spatial segregation, claims that "research site and subject cannot be imagined as separate from research space and method" (Feldman 2011: 100).

Sometimes Monzabana and I made appointments with elders who had been indicated to us as possibly interesting informants; at other times we would randomly stop on properties to see what kind of information the occasion would bring. Sometimes we interviewed one person in a more formal setting, by means of a semi-structured topic list, recording and paying for the given information; at other times we would have a more unconstrained chat, en *passant*, with a group of people who were not necessarily profoundly attached to our research topic. By deliberately allowing a high variety in the contexts in which we gathered information, we intended to create a broad pool of differentiation that could tackle the

methodological pitfalls of each specific setting. According to Geertz, "doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior" (Geertz 1973: 10). I believe that the rather eclectic methodology I applied during my fieldwork was best fit to achieve what Geertz calls a 'thick description' of these transient examples.

The so-called 'snowball sampling', "in which trust is established by interviewing friends of initial contacts, then their friends, and so on" (MacGaffey & Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000: 24) has led to rich conversations with key informants. Yet, standardly, these informants were elder males. This is no coincidence. Domains of politics and history are conventionally associated with masculinity and gerontocratic power. When it comes to colonial history, the *chefs de village* often acted as cultural brokers (see Lawrance, Osborn and Roberts 2006) between their people and the representatives of the metropole. Key informants like Pele Ngamo and Senge Alphonse had held such political posts, therefore they disposed of relevant information and that is why they were indicated to us. To gain an insight in the experience of the broader Ngbaka population, it was necessary to carry out sample surveys, for example amongst women and youth. The association between my research subject and masculinity, however, was so persistent that I internalized it unintentionally. During our trip to Kalo, we interviewed an elder man named Kpalakumu (°1937), but, due to his age, he had difficulties to respond to our questions. An elder, more talkative lady came sitting next to us, but after a few questions we rounded up the interview because we had the feeling that the information she was giving us was not very useful. In retrospect, I realized that we might have dismissed her input too quickly, possibly because we unconsciously assumed that she could not dispose over relevant information as a woman. Later on I wanted to make up for this 'mistake' with the determined effort to interview an elder lady. But when we stopped in Bodiawa to have a conversation with a woman sitting outside the porch, a crowd quickly gathered around us, saying that she was but a silly old hag and that other people, that is, men, were more suitable informants. As such, the association between masculinity and political history proved hard to defeat. My own gender and age, I believe, were less of a problem because the 'lower' status that is attributed to them was partly ruled out by my

‘higher’ status as a Westerner. Moreover, I was always accompanied by men of certain social prestige, such as Monzabana, our motorbike taxi driver Viola and father Bonaventura (the head of the mission post), which lent my position as a researcher more credibility.

As time quickly ran out, choices had to be made whilst keeping financial and logistic viability in mind. On a singular occasion I rented the jeep of the fathers, but due to high fuel prices and the poor conditions of the roads during the rainy season (we once spent four hours to cover a distance of 75 km), this did not prove to be the most cost-efficient way to organize my displacements (attachment 4). Apart from two great opportunities to hitch a ride, Monzabana and I decided to organize our daytrips by *moto taxi*, a very frequent means of transport in the Equatorial province because it is more apt than a car to slalom the best trajectory out of the subsided and collapsed roads (attachment 5). We hired Viola, a young and cheerful Ngbaka who had built up a reputation of prudence and reliability as ‘*le chauffeur des sœurs*’, and his sidekick ‘Petit’ (I never learned his real name). After a while, I came to realize that travelling by *moto taxi* did not only prove a better financial and logistic option, it also had some methodological benefits to it.

First of all, the seclusion that a closed vehicle inevitably incorporates was omitted. This turned me from a white European researcher who could pay for a car into a student who used the same little luxurious mode of transport as most people in the region do. It should be mentioned that cars were rare in Gemena and its surroundings, and those who did pass by were adorned with eye-catching logos of NGO’s and international organizations such as the United Nations, thereby instantly referring to global dimensions of inequality. As such, my travelling by *moto taxi*, which I was advised against in the beginning because “too dangerous”, evoked some sort of leveling sympathy, especially when I practiced my few words of Ngbaka to address passers-by.

Secondly, a motorbike is easily maneuverable. Consequently, we often made small stops, for example to visit family members of Monzabana or to pay our condolences at a funeral. During one of our last trips, to Bodiawa, people were referring to an older man named Mbenga, who was living a bit further along the road, and Petit was quickly sent away to pick him up. As this example shows, the use of motorbikes meant more flexibility and more space

for contingencies. One of these contingencies was rain. As time went by, the rainy season manifested itself in more prominent ways, and consequently we were often forced to look for shelter. These 'dead moments' gave Monzabana, Viola and me the time to discuss our data and to talk things through in a profound and extensive way.

Thirdly, Viola's company and enthusiasm proved to be a treasured asset. During interviews with Monzabana as my sole interpreter, I often feared to miss out on crucial information, since informants were sometimes speaking for a long time, after which Monzabana would rephrase and summarize their words in a few lines. With Viola by our side, I had an extra translation reference to complete Monzabana. Thanks to their eagerness and interest in the research topic they also posed their own questions to our informants, which gave me interesting insights in the way they valued my research and what aspects should be highlighted according to them. For, being Ngbaka themselves, they obviously experienced our research from a different angle. Take the following excerpt from our focus group conversation in Bogo Wazi, where the informants blew the whistle to Monzabana's rather charged question (attachment 6):

Monzabana:	Bon, euh… une question. Mbanza, Ngbandi et Ngbombe, quelle tribu qui est trop brutale? Qui a souvent l'habitude de menacer l'autre?
? :	Ngbandi
? :	Je dis Ngbandi
Serge:	Bon, ça c'est une question aussi… pour éviter ce qu'on appelle l'ethnocentrisme. Hm… nous sommes des historiens, on met en sa réserve. Pour éviter l'ethnocentrisme c'est à dire c'est... Ici, quand il y a la brutalité, il y a aussi la cause hm. Il y a de l'avertissement hm… Si on manifeste des brutalités, il y a des causes. Mais nous ne serons pas, en tout cas, directes dans cette réponse
Monzabana:	ça va
Kazimir:	Le cas un peu, c'est un peu général
Serge:	Si il y a de la brutalité ça a des causes, parce qu'il y a toujours des causalités

Kazimir:	XXX clair et bref… Parce que, quand vous arrivez chez les Ngbandi, ils diront aussi ce sont les Ngbaka
Monzabana:	oui ce sont l'autre, ce n'est pas nous
Kazimir:	Chacun parlera de sa part qu'il n'est pas brutal. Mais, cette question, mettons un peu dans l'écart
Monzabana:	oui ça va, on comprend
(general laugther)	
Monzabana:	Si ça va, ça va, si ça ne va pas, on met à côté

By asking which tribe might be called the most brutal, while discussing the Bolo Mbati, the war with the Ngbandi, Monzabana was clearly aiming for a specific answer; he was deliberately leading the conversation towards a slanderous talk about the Ngbandi. Nevertheless, our informants discerned his biased approach, and thereby gave us an indication of their awareness of their position in our research, their subjectivity *and* ours. Their resolute rejection of this question contrasts with the often-repeated assumption that leading questions only provide affirming answers because informants have the tendency to play up to the researcher. Instead, this example shows how researchers should not underestimate the tenacity and 'bias-awareness' of their informants. These biases are not necessarily problematic, as long as we are conscious of the fact that they influence and shape our research in significant ways. As Luise White points out, the nature of the researcher's questions can be as liable to scrutiny as the answers they generate:

> The idea that oral historians can be neutral and be simply the recipients of volunteered information from which they will then be able to select a statistically reliable account avoids a key fact: oral historians generate our own data. Our data usually come from our questions. We may ask questions that we believe are open-ended and value-free, but these questions reflect our own research agendas and our methodological biases. (White 1990: 22)

Moreover, it is not suprising that our informants preferred to avoid such questions, as talking about a topic like Bolo Mbati in Bogo Wazi was politically sensitive. We visited the town because, a few months earlier, riots had taken place due to a border conflict between

Ngbandi and Ngbaka. A Ngbandi girl had been fishing in Ngbaka area and was therefore murdered. This event provoked a chain of violent acts of revenge. Many stories circulated about the numbers of victims and the way they were murdered, but it is beyond questioning that these events had evoked a rather gloomy atmosphere of distrust. This sensitivity was a recurrent leitmotiv throughout my fieldwork, and it was one that I had not factored in before arriving in Gemena. On the one hand it was encouraging to realize that the historical focus of my research could contribute to a better understanding of the contemporary social and political situation in the Equatorial province (and thus that it was not dusty and irrelevant), but on the other hand the dragging up of discordant historical events such as the Bolo Mbati could also sharpen a hostile atmosphere that was already present.

This ambivalence raised a crucial ethical dilemma about the impact of my fieldwork, namely the appraisal between my research goal and the historical awareness it could evoke, and the impact it could have on social and political pressure points. In these matters I allowed to be guided by moral considerations. After all, the welfare of my informants is of greater importance than my own academic goals. When we visited Bogo Wazi, for example, it was my initial plan to organize a focus group discussion about the recent hostilities with informants from both the Ngbaka and the Ngbandi villages, but once we arrived there, it became clear that the atmosphere was too tense to fulfill these plans. Although the results would have been very interesting for my research, ethical concerns were of primary importance. Joan Cassell refers to the Kantian categorical imperative, which should be the guideline towards ethical assessment, detached from any practical objectives, to explain why researchers should consider their informants' autonomy of paramount importance:

> Because of the asymmetry between subjects and the relatively powerful investigators, who control the setting (if not the context) of research, and who control, to a certain extent, the direction of interaction, a conscious and careful effort must be made not to treat subjects as means alone and to respect their autonomy sufficiently that they feel able to decline the research situation or able to leave it at any time. If the categorical imperative were applied to such fieldwork, certain situations might be judged in advance as too coercive. In such cases, it should be possible for field-workers to alter their research designs in order to minimize their

> perceived power and their control of the setting in which research is to take place. (Cassell 1980: 35)

Another potentially informative track that we had to leave due to ethical considerations was that of the protected offspring of Kanganyani in Bozoko. At the end of our conversation with Gbafo Ndate Antoine, he told us that there were still some descendants of this legendary Ngbandi leader living in their Ngbaka midst. When I asked whether we could have a conversation with them, Gbafo replied that part of their protection was to prevent nosey outsiders from bothering them. Similar to what Cassell states in the above-mentioned quote about the possible impact of researchers on the context of their subjects, Monzabana and I decided that it would be too intrusive to cut across these protective structures. We wanted, at all costs, to avoid that our research would destabilize the already unsteady peace in the region.

The practice of naming is another issue that should be considered from an ethical perspective. Dorothy Hodgson describes how, within the discipline of anthropology, "the normative methodological practice is to mask the identity of most people and places in order to "protect" them from the risks of political backlash, personal embarrassment, and other possible threats to their physical, emotional, and social security" (Hodgson 2011: 257). For historians, on the contrary, the practice of naming is of great importance to provide an idea about the relation between people, places and stories, because this information is crucial to erect "a permanent, reconsultable archive of taped and transcribed words by named individuals whose stories are not yet part of the historical record" (Lederman 2006: 485-486). For my research, which could be situated at the interface between anthropology and history, I decided to name my informants. First of all because my work can indeed contribute to the creation of such broader historical record, and secondly, and more importantly, because most of my informants were proud of their contributions to it. The promise that their name would appear in academic writing about the history of their people seemed to please them a lot, and thus it would be immodest to deny them their authorial voices. As Bradley argues, not naming subjects might contribute to and sustain "the marginalization of people by relegating them to the status of anonymous objects of study" (Bradley 2007: 346). Especially in the case of the Ngbaka, an ethnic group that is

characterized not only by social, economic and political marginalization in the DRC, but which has also remained rather unexposed within scientific research, it would contravene the objectives of my research to deny my informants the recognition they deserve as contributors (and even co-authors) of this dissertation. That is why I also included some of their pictures: I want to give a 'face' to the people that made this thesis with me. After all, my story would not exist without theirs.

In the introduction I mentioned how my identity inevitably intervened with the practice of fieldwork. One of the other ethical issues I struggled with, which also results from my Western identity, was the question whether to pay my informants. On one hand it felt weird and uncomfortable to be paying for information; on the other hand, it felt even less ethical to just stop by in a village, take from the people what I needed and leave without them also being able to benefit from my visit. After all, these people had not asked for my arrival and it would be arrogant to consider their contribution as self-evident. So one good turn deserves another. The fact that my research is historically oriented and that my time was short automatically resulted in interviews that needed triggering: participant observation can be a rich methodology for research that focuses on the contemporary, but when digging into the past one needs to incite people explicitly to do so. Consequently, the researcher longs for a very specific effort, and not rewarding that effort would almost come down to taking advantage of the informant. I once tried to give people soap, since giving money affirms the economic discrepancy between Europe and Africa in a very explicit way, but I did not feel that it was up to me to decide what products their remuneration should be spent on. The respect I owed to my informants did not permit such patronizing.

3.3 Methodological difficulties: Combining the written and the oral

White, Miescher & Cohen describe how, from the late 1980s and early 1990s on, African oral history became "a way to access a more true, more accurate and more authentic colonial experience than that which could be teased out of the writings of white male administrators and their official reports" (White, Miescher & Cohen 2001: 15). Despite this 'noble' effort to bring more African agency into historiography, the combination of oral history and official colonial reports is not without difficulties. Official documents provide us with seemingly hard

and objective data about the management of the colonial encounter, while oral testimonies yield rather personal and subjective narratives. For example, Senge Augustin (°1935), one of my main informants, proudly stated that he still remembered territorial administrator Crabbeck's first name Albert (attachment 7). Later on, I found Crabbeck's personal file in the Belgian archive, which stated that Crabbeck's actual first name was Gaston. During our interview with Pele Ngamo (°1926), another key informant, Monzabana noted an inconsistency in the man's story:

> Monzabana: Bon, excusez, il est né en 1926, mais il a dit qu' il a vu, il était à côté de son papa, il a vu le dégât qui est fait à Kalo, en 1924, tandis qu'il est né en 1926…

These contradictions make us doubt about the genuine value of the interviews and lead back to the fundamental question of what historical truth entails. Do these inconsistencies mean that we have to distrust these informants and that we should discard all information they provide? If we look at historiographical shifts in the valorization of oral research, postwar enthusiasm about oral history has been criticized in the early 1970s by skeptics who targeted the 'unreliability' of memory by asserting that it was "distorted by physical deterioration and nostalgia in old age, by the personal bias of both interviewer and interviewee, and by the influence of collective and retrospective versions of the past" (Thomson 2007: 53). However, these criticisms were contradicted by a growing interest in memory, not only as method but also as subject. From this perspective, the so-called unreliability of memory turned out to be its strength rather than its flaw, for it tells us a great deal about the relation between historical experience and the narrative of individual and collective identity. When dealing with human interaction, we might as well embrace its inevitable subjectivity, rather than striving obstinately for its inexistent absolute objectivity. As such, oral history can be "a powerful tool for discovering, exploring and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory – how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the presence, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them" (Frisch 1990: 188). Their usefulness thus depends on what kind of information we want our sources to provide.

Moreover, the actual schism between oral and written sources appears to be quite small if we consider their influence on one another. Vedast Maes has based his writings primarily on oral accounts, while his work, in its turn, has influenced the historical knowledge of many Ngbaka. During our conversation with Senge Augustin, Monzabana suddenly remembered where he had heard the name Makasi before:

Margot:	Et est-ce que le nom Makasi Monene lui dit quelque chose?
Monzabana:	Makasi…
Margot:	Makasi Monene, c'est un autre mondele
Monzabana:	hm… Makasi, grand Makasi
[…]	
Monzabana:	Euh, je me souviens, ce nom là, euh, il y a un cahier de mon papa. Euh… qui était sur le banc à Bwamanda. Parce que c'est le père Gaston qui était comme leur professeur à Bwamanda. Père Gaston à donné l'histoire… Et, le nom Makasi ce trouve dans ce cahier là. Je peux toutefois vous montrer.

Père Gaston was Maes' common name among the Ngbaka. He had taught history in the Capuchin mission post at Bwamanda and Monzabana's father had been one of his students. When he showed me the notebook later on, it came close to a handwritten Ngbaka version of *Les Ngbaka du centre de l'Ubangi*, Maes main publication. This reference to Maes was not a singular case. In fact, oftentimes people told me to "just read the book of the missionary" when I explained what our research was about. In Bogo Wazi, one of the historians that participated in our focus group conversation even gave page references about where to find a certain topic. Besides these more general references to Maes' work, père Thomas, a close friend with a passion for the history of his people that I met in Bwamanda, gave me an indication of how Maes' writings could be deep-seated in the historical perception of some. Père Thomas explained that he wanted to conduct research on the Ngbaka initiation cult, because he believed it symbolized a profound recognition of 'being human' that could not be found with other ethnic groups in the region. To him, the title *Les Ngbaka du centre de l'Ubangi* referred to a literally spatial notion of centrality that placed the surrounding peoples in a peripheral position, both physically and culturally. In his interpretation, the

semantic field that surrounds the word "*centre*" had such a strong resonance that it led to a particular form of spatially interpreted ethnocentricity. This case thus provides an example of how space can be transformed into place via the attribution of socially constructed meaning.

Feedback, the phenomenon in which oral tradition is 'contaminated' by written accounts of history, has been represented as a reflection of "a dearth of knowledge of the remoter past and a propensity to overvalue the written word" (Henige 1974: 499). Others have contested this identification of feedback from literary sources as a problem. Willis, for example, has argued that this interpretation starts from the false assumption that oral history exists in some sort of pure, authentic and uncontaminated form (Willis 1993: 357). He sides with Vansina, who suggested that written sources are but one of many possible influences in the making of oral history (Vansina 1985: 152), while Cohen (1989) has indicated that the recognition of African agency in producing and transforming (colonial) history should be considered as a relevant and meaningful subject for historians, rather than being seen as an obstacle. As such, feedback should not necessarily be perceived as a problem, but as an ineluctable reality that can be instructive about the complex way in which people integrate extraneous information into their own story. Moreover, if we look at the intertextuality paradigm of poststructuralist thinkers like Julia Kristeva (1969) and Roland Barthes (1974), it becomes clear that this process of narrative influence is no unique oddity of oral history but a fundamental characteristic of human communication (see Nicholson 2013 for an application of an intertextual framework on oral history).

During my fieldwork, a contrast became apparent between the sources of information of different generations. Elder people, from 50 to 60 and up seemed to get their information about the colonial times through proper experience and oral transmissions from their ancestors, while younger, people – especially those who enjoyed higher education – mostly referred to Maes' writings. When I asked why younger generations did not consult the elders to learn about Ngbaka history, I was told that their company was avoided because they were believed to be witches. These accusations stemmed from the suspicion that, if these people became this old, while their contemporaries had passed away long ago, they must have been eating the spirits of their peers to accumulate human vitality. The rather romanticizing

view of African gerontocracy and ancient generational transmission of oral tradition thus seems to have been gained upon by contemporary tendencies of witchcraft suspicion, which many authors have linked to an increased feeling of abjection in globalizing times (see for example Comaroff & Comaroff 1993 or Geschiere 1997 and Geschiere and Meyer 1998 for the local appropriation of globalization). I will return to this idea of being 'left out', with Kinshasa and the supposed promising lands of the West far out of reach, when I discuss how the Ngbaka appropriated spatial features installed by the Belgian colonizer.

4. Contexts and backgrounds

4.1. The Belgian colonization of the Congo

The Ngbaka history of replacement cannot be discussed without referring to the broader context in which it took place, namely that of Belgian – and by extension, European - colonialism. Long before the so-called 'scramble for Africa' crystallized in the notorious Berlin Conference of 1985, European presence on the African continent was already assured through costal settlements, which emerged as early as the late fifteenth century, initially to explore new access to the Saharan gold trade and the Indian continent. With the emergence of the industrial revolution in the 19th century, economic changes were taking place in Europe, and mercantile strategies were replaced by a more industrially oriented global capitalism. Consequently, European interests in Africa shifted from a slave-exporting continent to a growing market for manufactures and a source for raw materials and agricultural commodities. It is within this context of growing European aspirations of global conquest and expanding markets that the colonization of the Congo is to be understood.

4.1.1. Leopold's private property

Already as duke of Brabant, and later as king of Belgium, Leopold II (1835-1909) cherished colonial ambitions. Coolsaet notes how, according to Leopold, the growing industrial character of the country demanded for new markets, and the most certain way to assure these was to provide for a proper colony (Coolsaet 1998: 142). Initially, his effort to acquire power overseas was not only directed towards Africa. He has been quoted by Daye to say "*Si la patrie demeure notre quartier général, le monde doit être notre objectif*" (Daye 1934: 309), and this proves that his ambitions were global. These colonial aspirations and the desire to turn Belgium into a great imperial nation stood in contrast with what Leopold called the *petit esprit* of his citizens. The splendor Leopold had in mind for his country was supposed to take shape in the architectural development of Brussels:

> Economic prosperity and social stability, territorial security and political "concentration" were subsumed in what one might consider Leopold's final

> objective: to turn "little Belgium" into the capital of an empire and to transform the Belgians from a people of "grocers" and "lawyers" into "an imperial people." The deficit in "national feeling" (or "public spirit") would thus be filled. It is from this perspective, too, that we may see the more "ideal" aspects of architectural "embellishment" and a "civilizing mission" in Leopold's vision. Brussels was to become the center of an imperial metropolis, "the principal and the most beautiful agglomeration of Belgium, which will itself have become the capital, the center of the Belgian Empire." (Viaene 2008: 756)[4]

During his time as crown prince, Leopold aspired to establish trading companies after the example of the British and Dutch East India Company to gain sovereign concession rights. Amongst others, attempts were made to by the Philippines from Spain and Mozambique from the Portuguese, but success remained forthcoming (Massoz 1989: 72). Leopold's colonial enthusiasm, moreover, was shared neither by his government nor by the Belgian business world: they believed the European market was cost-effective enough and saw no temptation in reckless and adventurous investments overseas.

After his failures in the East, Leopold redirected his attention towards Africa and in 1877, he wrote that it was about time to obtain a piece of "*ce magnifique gâteau africain*" (Stengers 1989: 29). After an initial interest in the unstable and near-bankrupt Transvaal province, he targeted the largely unexplored basin of the Congo River (Anstey 1966: 1-2). International attention for this *terra incognita* had increased thanks to expeditions of European explorers, although most of them did not believe that the area was suited for lucrative practices. Yet Leopold was so convinced of his imperial plans that he set up the *Association Internationale pour réprimer la traite et ouvrir l'Afrique centrale* (abbreviated to *Association Internationale Africaine* or *AIA*) during a geographical conference in Brussels in 1876. The AIA was presented as a philanthropic enterprise that had the scientific and humanitarian goal to map out the unexplored region as its main raison d'être. In reality, however, the AIA could function as Leopold's Trojan horse, guaranteeing Leopold's personal economic interests but hoodwinking public opinion at the same time to avoid constitutional hindrances and international competition (Coolsaet 1998: 146). He appointed Henry Morton Stanley[5] (1841-1904), who had made himself a reputation by seeking out for Livingstone, to lead the *Comité*

d'études du Haut-Congo (*CEHC*), which was installed to open up stations along the Congo River (Vangroenweghe 1985: 15).

In the meantime, other more significant European players like France and Portugal extended their imperial ambitions on the African continent, and as such, Leopold was forced to display his procurement of sovereign rights in the Congo basin more openly if he wanted to assure them. He renamed the *AIA* to *Association Internationale du Congo* (*AIC*) and placed colonel Strauch at its head. Additionally, Leopold put his mercantilist trading monopoly aside to assure international support for his colonial aspirations. In 1883, he proposed complete freedom of trade to Great Britain and Germany if they rejected Portugal and France's claims on the Congo basin. A year later, the United States of America were the first to officially recognize the AIC as the legitimate authority of the region. Yet European competition for African exploitable areas continued to increase, which led Bismarck to organize the Berlin Conference in 1885. Leopold's proposal to turn the Congo basin into a free trade zone under his unofficial surveillance was appealing to most attendant parties because it implied that they could still enjoy the economic advantages of the region, without seeing it falling into the hands of a more significant protectionist regime. The final act of the conference stated that the Congo basin and estuary were to be neutral trading zones with the same commercial conditions for all, free of levy on imports. During the conference, which ended in February 1885, all parties spoke of the *AIC*, with Strauch as its leader. On the 1st of August of that same year, however, Francis de Winton, Stanley's successor, declared the '*Etat Indépendant du Congo',* announcing that Leopold would replace Strauch and become its sovereign (Cornelis 1991: 53-54).

However, Katzenellenbogen emphasizes that the importance of the Berlin Conference should not be overrated. It was but one, however significant, event in a long course of political bargaining: "The most one can legitimately say about the Berlin Conference and colonial boundaries is that it marked a significant stage in a process which had begun much earlier and continued long after, using its provisions when convenient" (Katzenellenbogen 1996: 22). Leopold's following challenge was to persuade the Belgian parliament to ratify the Berlin Act and to allow him to become the head of another state at the same time, for which he needed a two-thirds majority. The Belgians continued to be wary about Leopold's colonial

ambitions, but they believed it was too late to oppose since Leopold had already obtained international approval, and they were reassured by the prime minister's assurance that the king's personal venture would not imply any financial risks for the state. Moreover, the royal family was in need of a prestigious project to distract the population of republican agitation and social unrest (Coolsaet 1998: 149).

The political and economic purposes of the Berlin Conference, and the colonial project in general, were interlarded with a moral and philanthropic discourse. The attending parties claimed that it was also their goal "to 'help in suppressing slavery and especially the slave trade', to 'watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for their moral and material well-being', to practice religious tolerance and to protect missionaries and others who aimed at 'instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessings of civilization'" (Ewans 2002: 98). This *mission civilatrice* was also directed towards the eradication of Arabic slave trade, which was organized along caravan routes departing from the East-African coast. Between 1892 and 1984, Belgo-Arab wars have been waged to contest the domination the Congolese interior. The eventual Belgian victory turned its army, the *Force Publique*, into one of the most significant colonial armies of Africa, and Leopold would not hesitate to make us of this military force to assure his sovereignty in the Congo basin. Since the final act of the Berlin Conference stated that the dominated areas should be effectively occupied, the king erected various expeditions to have sway over his newly acquired territory, thereby destroying uncooperative villages, killing its people and putting its best men into shackles (Coolsaet 1998: 151).

Moreover, the presence of these Afro-Arab slave traders contained a hindrance to Leopold's further plans: the expansion of his territory to get access to the Nile. For fifteen years, he would try to connect the Congo basin with Egypt through the Nile. But once it became clear that these 'faraonic' ambitions were in vain, Leopold searched for other ways to make his colonial project remunerative. Based on the Dutch colonial system in Java, which he had always held as an example, he claimed a monopoly for the state on economical activities, thereby excluding all private enterprises from trade in ivory and rubber. Within this so-called 'domainal' politics, Leopold continued to leave economic sectors that demanded more investments and risks, such as the railways and mining industry, in the hands of private

companies (Stengers 1989: 96). In 1890, military posts were erected where the population had to deposit its harvests of rubber and copal. Thanks to the increasing global demand for rubber, the Congo Free State became the largest rubber exporter worldwide and turned into a prosperous endeavor, against all odds. Without a separation of powers and with agents who had both administrative and productive obligations – sometimes rewarded with bonuses based on production rates – the domainal regime led to abuses, especially in the areas controlled by charter associations (Coolsaet 1998: 153). These cruel practices, which also took place in the Equatorial province, were condemned for the first time in 1895 by British missionaries and would lead eventually to the Belgian take-over of the colony.

4.1.2 The Belgian government takes over

In 1908, the Congo Free State turned into a Belgian colony under international pressure, yet it was not the first time a take-over was suggested. Already in 1895, Leopold got into financial difficulties because he was unable to pay his debts to Browne de Tiège, a banker from Antwerp. Political dignitaries in the king's entourage like baron Greindl, who had been Leopold's delegate in Berlin, started to fear that his ambitious imperialism would lead to difficulties for the Belgian state. A bill to take over the colony was introduced, but it met with fierce opposition both in and outside parliament. The enactment was withdrawn and, simultaneously, Leopold's endeavor started to pay for itself thanks to the rising demand for rubber (see Stengers 1949). In 1901, the then head of the Government Beernaert proposed another take-over, but Leopold refused to cede the Congo and was therein supported by parliament (Senelle & Clément 2009: 145).

In the meanwhile, however, international protest against the exploitation of the Congolese population increased. During the 1890s, the British government had already protested sporadically against the treatment of British West African laborers in the Congo. From 1903 on, both national and international anti-Leopoldian initiatives happened in quick succession. With the pressure augmenting, the British government could no longer evade the demand of the House of Commons to undertake action and thus they addressed a note to the powers represented at the Berlin Conference, calling for the reconvening of the Conference to consider whether "the obligations undertaken by the Congo State [under the Berlin Act] in

regard to the natives have been fulfilled; or, if not, whether the Signatory Powers are not bound to make such representations as may secure the due observance of the provisions contained in the Act" (Ewans 2002: 202). No significant answer of the Powers followed due to successful Belgian diplomacy work, but a tendency towards international criticism was set. In that same year, Roger Casement (1864-1916), British consul in Boma and former participant of *AIA* expeditions, started an investigation on the abuses on behalf of the British government. In September 1903, he wrote a famous letter to the Governor-General of the Congo to express his revulsion:

> I am amazed and confounded at what I have both seen and heard; and if I in the enjoyment of all the resources and privileges of civilized existence know not where to turn to, or to whom to make appeal on behalf of these unhappy people whose sufferings I have witnessed and whose wrongs have burnt into my heart, how can they, poor panic-stricken fugitives... turn for justice to their oppressors. (Roger Casement's letter of 12/09/1903 to the Governor-General, as cited in Louis 1964: 106)

A month after the publication of the Casement Report, Edmund Dene Morel (1873-1924), editor of the journal *West African Mail*, who had already been contending with the Leopoldian regime heretofore, set up the Congo Reform Association, which quickly gained a lot of support in the Anglo-Saxon world. In 1904, Leopold sent his own research commission to the Congo, but this indulgence to international criticism was not enough to stop Morel from publishing *Red rubber: The story of the rubber slave trade flourishing on the Congo in the year of grace* in 1906. Leopold depicted the book as a crystallization of the British effort to deprive him of his fruitful colonial project and subsequently, he set up press agency to launch more positive coverage on the Congo (see Louis & Stengers 1968 and Marchal 1996).

But even on a national level, criticism kept cropping up. Also in 1906, Félicien Cattier, professor in colonial law at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, published a study in which he concluded that the immediate take-over of the Congo by the Belgian state was the only way to stop the ongoing reprehensible rubber system (Cattier 1906). Consequently, the annexation was put on the political agenda once more, and, still in that same year, a motion

concerning the modalities of a take-over was ratified by the Belgian parliament. Leopold, aware that public opinion was swinging the other way this time, did everything he could to limit the baleful outcomes of his economic and political reckoning. Yet by the end of 1906, under the threat of an international conference on his subject, Leopold had to agree to the subsidence of his private enterprise (Gérard-Libois & Verhaegen 1985: 10). In 1908, after two more years of the king's lingering, the annexation was effectuated: three documents, the actual act of take-over, a compromise concerning two funds to replace the Crown Property and a charter that dealt with the organization of the new colonial governance were approved on the 20th of August by the Chamber and on the 9th of October by the Senate. On the 15th of November the Congo Free State became an official Belgian colony (Danniau 2005: 49).

4.1.3. The Belgian Congo and its unprepared independence

Belgian citizens and skeptical policy makers did not welcome the annexation of the Congo with great enthusiasm. Expectations were high about the redressing of errors committed by the Independent State, and thus the absolutism of Leopold's domainal system was to be put to an end as soon as possible. The Colonial Charter, adopted by parliament in 1908, rigorously separated Belgian and Congolese financial resources and granted legislative power to the minister of colonies, who was made accountable for the management of the Congo and who had to cooperate with a colonial council. No efforts were made to introduce some sort of governmental system, for a governor-general was appointed to lead the colony in situ (Vanthemsche 2012: 28). On the territorial level of power execution, Belgium opted for a form of indirect rule that recognized indigenous chiefs as auxiliaries of the colonial apparatus. Wauters describes how the administrative system was initially plagued by lack of experience and inefficiency, but gradually adopted local hierarchical networks to establish its power:

> There is not much to be said regarding the administrative policy in the Belgian Congo. At the start, it was seriously tarnished by such mistakes as are made by all who try their 'prentice hand at colonising, and (in some directions) the evils inflicted by the system of direct government have not yet passed away. It was then very wisely

> decided to adopt a mixed system, partaking both of direct government properly so called and of indirect government. Thus, wherever the native social cadre had not been unskilfully thrown out of gear, a return was made to native usance and the restoration of native chefferies (Wauters 1930: 56)

Meanwhile, the living conditions of the indigenous population had improved, for taxes were no longer imposed in the form of labour but collected moneywise, although forced labour did not actually disappear. By 1913, after years of meticulous control on the field, the Congo Reform Association wound itself up as trust in the Belgian government increased (Ewans 2002: 236). The colonial trinity, as the combination of economic enterprises, Christian missions and colonial governance was called, provided for a remarkable institutional stability. Nevertheless, the essential goal of the colonial administration was the pursuit of profit. The state relied on colonial enterprises to execute infrastructural plans, to recruit labour forces and to train employees. Almost all economic power was in the hands of a few capitalist firms of the Societé Générale group, such as the Union Minière du Haut Katanga, the Compagnie de Chemin de Fer du Bas-Congo' and the 'Société Internationale Forestière et Minière du Congo'. These undertakings had their agents within colonial administration and had a decisive influence on the economic policy within the Congo (Anstey 1966: 43-44).
Another aspect of the colonial approach and rhetoric that did not differ that much with the Leopoldian era was the emphasis put on the *mission civilatrice*. The task to 'civilize' the indigenous population was attributed to the missionaries, who were responsible for education and Christianization. Stengers writes that, for the Belgians, material and moral 'amelioration' were inseparable: *"[b]ien-être, santé, éducation morale et religieuse, instruction, tout cela, pour eux, formait un tout*" (Stengers 1989: 188). On the level of health and Christianization, the Belgian realisations have been considerable, but when it comes to education, it is remarkable that the Congo only counted 16 university graduates at the time of its independence in 1960. [6]
The last 15 years of Belgian domination in the Congo were characterized by a decline in economic benefits of rubber exportation due to disappointing harvests and the upcoming presence of Southeast Asian competitors, which made prices on world markets fall away. Simultaneously, however, Congolese living conditions and housing were improving, primary education was massively installed and urban centres started to flourish. The class of the so-

called *évolués* emerged, but regardless of their adoption of Western values and lifestyles, the colonial authorities had always prevented the indigenous population of access to property and autonomous economic activity. Speaking of blatant South-African style Apartheid would be rash, but the Belgian Congo did have a colour bar that only began to break down shortly before independence. From 1956 on, moderate political associations began to emerge, gradually radicalizing and eventually demanding for immediate and complete independence, which was finally celebrated on the 30th of July 1960 (Vanthemsche 2012: 31-32). Yet, as the bloody events of that year have proved, reasons to rejoice appeared to be premature, for the country was totally unprepared for its sudden independence. After five years of chaos, mutiny and rebellion, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu seized power and installed a one-party system that kept him in power until 1997.

4.2. Pre-colonial Ubangi

Now that I have sketched a general history of the colonial epoch in the Congo, I will focus on the events taking place in the Equatorial province. In order to understand why Pecheur believed the Ngbaka were to be seen as an ethnic unity, it is necessary to look at the pre-colonial situation in the Ubangi area. The reconstruction of this situation, however, is no easy task: the authors of the few available sources often contradict each other or are left clueless themselves. During my fieldwork, oral testimonies proved to be little enlightening, for most information was inspired by feedback from Maes' work. Moreover, the temporal scope that oral history can encompass to provide detailed information about migration flows and settlement patterns that took place at least 150 years ago should not be overestimated.

As Maes provides the most in-depth research on the subject, I will mainly elaborate on his insights. Interestingly, Marcel Henrix has presented Maes writings to Jan Vansina, the eminent scholar in African history, for some editorial advice. According to Vansina, Maes' notions of substrate and migration are not realistic, for human societies cannot be reduced to eternally fixed geological layers. He argues that mass migrations are very rare, and that, in this case, it is more appropriate to speak of intergroup marriages and the search for new lands to understand the dynamics of the relations between communities (Vansina 1997). As such, it is important to stress that more historical research based on diachronic linguistic

studies and archeology are needed to gain a better understanding of the pre-colonial configuration of this composite region of encounter. Nevertheless, the available material is presented here to provide an idea of the complex migration history of the Ubangi area, because it is relevant to understand how ethnic categorization has been negotiated over time, both by historical actors and by those who have written about them.

Both written and oral sources do seem to agree on the fact that the Ubangi region, like many Central-African areas, was first inhabited by populations often referred to as pygmies.[7] Maes (1984, 1997) and Mortier (1937) confirm that the Ndenga, as the pygmies are called in the region, were the first inhabitants of the Ubangi forests. These Ndenga speak a Bantu language, which, according to Mortier, is due to the fact that they lived with the first Bantu migrants (coming from the south) and adopted their language (Mortier 1937: 211). Maes, however, claims that there has been a migration prior to the Bantu one; that of the *Substrat Ubangi-Uéléen*, named after the Ubangi and Uélé Rivers (Maes 1984, 1997). Mortier thus speaks of three main migration clusters (pygmies, Bantu's and Sudanese), while Maes, who is supported by Henrix in this assumption, claims that the pygmy presence in the region was followed by that of the *Substrat Ubangi-Uéléen*, and only thereafter the Bantu and Sudanese migration have taken place.

Each of these migrational superclusters consists out of subgroups, which are characterized by their own geographically and historically rooted particularities. The Ngbaka are one of these. Yet, an important distinction should be made between the Ngbaka-Minagende, living in Gemena and its surroundings and subject of this thesis, and the Ngbaka-Mabo, living on both banks of the Ubangi River and extensively documented by Jacqueline Thomas (1963). According to Tanghe (1930) and Mortier (1937) the Ngbaka-Minagende have wrongly been called Ngbaka (or Bwaka) by the colonizers:

> *De Bwaka daarentegen van linker oever der Lua uit, heel die streek Gemena en Karawa inbegrepen, werden vroeger geen Bwaka genoemd. 't Is de blanke die hun gezegd heeft dat zij Bwaka zijn! Hun oude naam is Gbaya. Wij zijn Gbaya zeggen zij. Historisch zou heel de bevolking die onder het beheer staat van Gemena niet mogen heeten: Bwaka, maar wel Gbaya. […] Heeft de blanke die de Lua opvaarde, de taal*

hier terugvindend der Bwaka, oeverbewoners van de Ubangirivier, door misverstand, heel die bevolking die achter de Yango en de Gbindiri zat, met dienzelfden naam Bwaka bestempeld?? (Tanghe 1930: 182-183)

In a later article, however, Tanghe (1946) asserts that both Ngbaka-Mabo and Ngbaka-Minagende are related, an assumption that is shared by Maes: "*Les Ngbaka-minagende, quoique distincts de langue et de culture des Ngbaka-Mabo, ont sans nul doute une commune origine avec ceux-ci"* (Maes 1984: 75). He provides a convincing explanation for this Ngbaka-Gbaya confusion: the Ngbaka-Minagende would originally consist out of a combination of Ngbaka-Mabo and Gbaya-Mandja. Thomas (1963: 255) describes how, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Ngbaka-Mabo crossed the Ubangi River, partly because the available food resources were too scarce to support demographic growth, which divided them internally, and partly because they were under pressure of immigrating Bantu groups such as the Lisongo. Since they were unable to defend themselves, they were forced to "*une migration silencieuse […] au Nord de l'habitat Ngbaka par le passage de la rive gauche à la rive droite pendant de longues années*" (Maes 1997: 22). Consequently, they sought for protection with the inhabitants of the right bank, who spoke Mandja and were probably of Gbaya-Mandja origin. The approach between both groups would have been such that, according to Maes, marriages between Ngbaka men and the women of their hosts of the Ubangi right bank took place. This would also have entailed consequences for food acquisition:

La principale raison pour laquelle les Ngbaka se sont mêlés à un peuple étranger est sans doute la nécessité de survivre. Mais ce qui les a alléchés est probablement aussi le bon accueil de la part de leurs hôtes, et l'avantage qu'ils ont expérimenté du passage d'une vie incertaine de chasseurs et pêcheurs, vivant de la cueillette des produits naturels, à une vie sédentaire d'agriculteurs. (Maes 1997: 23)

This transformation explains why the name and language of the Ngbaka-Minagende do not coincide: the name Ngbaka was maintained via patrilinearity, while language was passed on through motherly education. Maes refers to the Ngbaka proverb "*Obe Ngbaka-Mabo, wa 'bana pala tõ nu yaa wa; obe Ngbaka-mi-na-ge-nde, wa tõ nu yamba wa*"[8] (Ngbaka-Mabo

children speak the language of their ancestors, Ngbaka-Minagende children speak the language of their mother's brother) to substantiate this argument, which is also confirmed by Burssens:

> *Les Ngbaka forment une partie assez distincte du grand groupe culturel, linguistique et peut-être ethnique des Mandja et des Gbaya de l'A.E.F. ; il fut un temps où ils vécurent tous ensemble sur le même territoire. Ils forment un bloc qui comporte au moins 300.000 individus*. (Burssens 1958: 25)

Around 1830-1850, the Ngbaka-Minagende would have returned to the area of the Lua and Libala basin, where Gemena is situated (Maes 1997: 31). According to Maes (1984, 1997) and Pecheur (1928), the Ngbaka fled from attacks of the Yangere (also called Nzangere or Angeru) by gradually returning to the left bank of the Ubangi River. The precise crossing-place, however, is uncertain. Since their occupation of the Lua basin, both the Ngbaka number and geographical occupation enlarged steadily, until colonial presence made its entrance in 1890 (Maes 1997: 35).

4.3. Bolo Mbati

In chapter 4.1.1., I described how Leopold made efforts to turn his private property into a profitable enterprise. In what later became the Equatorial province, these efforts were translated in a harsh and relentless greed for rubber. By 1889, the Belgian officials occupied Banzyville (today Mobayi-Mbongo), at the bank of the Ubangi River, which served as an operation base to develop the rubber exploitation of the region. This location was no coincidence. Since the Belgians conducted their exploration of the colony via the only navigable entrance option, namely the network of waterways, their first contact was made with people living along the riverside, such as the Ngbandi. Ngbwakpwa Te Mobusa, however, describes how the Ngbandi were initially victimized in order to meet the European rubber standards. He mentions the occurrence of punitive expeditions under the leadership of the Belgian lieutenant Arnold and the Italian captain Aiuti, in which several people were killed. In the entire region, "*[l]'exploitation du caoutchouc a ébranlé partout l'unité des villages, soit par la mort du chef de village lors des représailles militaires, soit par la fuite, ce qui entraînait la dispersion des habitants*" (Ngbwapkwa 1993: 302). Out of despair, the local

population even started to buy rubber from the right bank of the Ubangi River, which was colonized by the French in a less brutal way. *Due* to the pressure that was put upon them by Brussels and the bonuses they were promised in case of successful harvesting, the Belgian officials started to apply cruel methods to force the locals to go deeper and deeper into the woods. From 1902 until 1908, the region provided 156.646 kilograms of rubber, a huge amount that was only possible because the exploitation of the Congolese population and natural resources was put to an extreme. By 1904, the forests in the surroundings of Banzyville were exhausted, and groups of Ngbandi were supplied with firearms to explore the more remote areas (Ngbwakpwa Te Mobusa 1993). The rubber forests most situated to the southwest, i.e. near the Lua-Vindu River, were at that time inhabited by the Ngbaka. Crabbeck also describes how the indigenous groups near the waterways were supplied with arms to collect rubber and ivory:

> *Les populations riveraines de l'Ubangi, les premières qui entrèrent en contact avec l'Européen, furent aussi les premières à être pourvues de fusils à piston. Grâce à la supériorité que leur conférait un tel armement, ces riverains purent aisément razzier et rançonner les populations de l'intérieur afin de leur arracher l'ivoire qu'elles détenaient et leur imposer la fourniture du caoutchouc*. (AT Rapport en vue de la création du secteur de la Bari by Crabbeck: 22/10/1938)

These successive raids are still remembered by the Ngbaka as the Bolo Mbati, the war of the colonial allies. *Bolo* means 'war' in Ngbaka, and initially, *Mbati* referred to another ethnic group that, like the Ngbandi, sided relatively early with the Belgian colonizers (Maes 1997: 44). Over time, however, the term lost its ethnic connotation and came to refer to all colonial allies. Nowadays *mbati* is used as an attributive modifier to designate all that is related to the state, and to Europe or the West. Monseigneur Senemona (2014: 10) gives *tulu mbati* (Western clothing) and *nyongo mo mbati* (Western food) as examples to indicate how the semantics of the word has currently shifted.

Maes (1997: 46) describes how these Ngbandi invasions turned into "*une incursion de pillards*" due to power abuse of its leaders. Villages were plundered, houses put to fire and women and children captured and sold as slaves. Although the Ngbaka outnumbered the

Ngbandi invaders considerably, this numerical preponderance did not compensate the most significant difference between the two groups: their weaponry. While the Ngbandi troops had been equipped with firearms by the Belgians, the Ngbaka had to defend themselves by using traditional spears and arrows only. In his report of 1928, Pecheur describes how the Ngbaka had to flee due to their inability to cope with the military ascendancy of the Ngbandi troops that were under the leadership of the legendary Baya:

> *Baya s'appliquait à procurer des récolteurs de C.T.C [caoutchouc]. Les Bwaka n'étaient pas d'humeur à lui donner satisfaction, mais n'employèrent pour lui résister que leurs armes habituelles: la fuite, la lute par le vide… En face des colonnes du chef Baya, les Bwaka se dispersèrent dans différentes directions. Une notable partie descendit vers le sud, franchit la Libala et pénétra dans la forêt des sources de la Sumba où ils ont vécu jusqu' á maintenant à l'abri de toute intervention. (Pecheur 1928: 9)*

Maes (1997: 47) indicates three directions of escape. According to him, a part fled to the forests south of the Libala River, another one went westwards, towards the north of the Lua, but the largest part of the fugitives is said to have gone in southwestern direction, across the Nguya and Mbari bassins, where they met up with Mbati who also collaborated with the colonizers. Whatever the case may be, the military inequality has turned the Bolo Mbati in a traumatic experience for many Ngbaka, and consequently, it has left its mark on Ngbaka-Ngbandi relations until present day. During my fieldwork among the Ngbaka, I was repeatedly struck by the perception of the Ngbandi as arrogant, because they were said to see the Ngbaka as their inferiors. Monzabana's leading question about brutality, which I quoted in the chapter about methodology, is but one of the examples that indicates how the Ngbandi military dominance of the early colonial age is still associated with a hierarchical relationship these days. In Bogo Wazi, I was told that Ngbandi and Ngbaka cannot be put in the same office, while père Thomas told me that the surveillance of CDI Bwamanda, a development association created by the Capuchins, was supposed to be led by a Ngbandi and a Ngbaka, but that the first refused to work together with the latter out of 'tribalist' motivations. Interethnic marriages do occur, but can become sensitive topics when tensions arise. Since I conducted my fieldwork among the Ngbaka, I have not been able to verify this

attitude with Ngbandi themselves, but it is clear that the Ngbaka still suffer from some sort of inferiority complex and a certain frustration towards the Ngbandi population. One of my informants commented "*C'est quoi leur supériorité? C'est l'arme*", which displays a fixation on the possession of firearms that was formulated repeatedly. Take the following extract of a Ngbaka initiation song for boys:

Ngumbe a nwa ee, ngumbe a nwa ee
Baba bana nza a ba ngumbe ha o

Fusil c'est l'autorité, fusil c'est l'autorité
Si mon papa était en vie,
il allait me donner le fusil

As the lyrics of this song indicate, firearms are related to authority. According to my informants, this association can be traced back to the period of the Bolo Mbati, when the lack of firearms led to pernicious consequences for many Ngbaka. Manza, my oldest interviewee, who claimed to be "an age and a year old", explained how the deceased mother of Noengo, a notorious Ngbaka leader that was said to eat little children (attachment 8 & 9), returned from death to show her son some fetishes to combat the Ngbandi invaders:

Monzabana:	Parce que les Ngbandi attaquaient souvent les Ngbaka. C'est ce qui a fait que cette maman qui est décédée, la maman de Noengo, a montré ses fétiches à Noengo, de pouvoir construire une maison et dans cette maison vous trouverez des chambres différentes, des différentes chambres. Il y a une chambre que vous trouverez le poisson. Il y a une autre chambre, vous trouverez des… Il y a un fusil. Et ce fusil a commencé à produire d'autres fusils.
Manza:	Hmm
Monzabana:	Et maintenant, Noengo a pris ces fusils pour aller attaquer les…
Margot:	Les Ngbandi
Monzabana:	Les Ngbandi, c'est ça.[9]

Throughout my interviews, the use of fetishes was a recurrent topic, which, like in many African societies, is seen as a manifestation of power (see for example Comaroff & Comaroff 1993 and Geschiere 1997). This story, in which the power association of both guns and fetishes is combined, can thus be read as an accumulative claim of authority and supremacy. The attribution of 'true' power to magical customs can be understood as a practice of resistance in itself, for it negates the absolutism of the political power of colonialism. In this respect, Noengo is an interesting figure because he has been described by my informants as a brave, valiant warrior, but also as a malicious and cruel anthropophagus. On the one hand, his cannibal and magical activities instill fear, but on the other hand he also incarnates the desire to cast of the Ngbandi yoke and the colonial humiliation. Because he appropriated their foreign military advantages, Noengo can thus be seen as a personification of Ngbaka resistance against the colonizer and its allies. For many of my informants, including Monzabana, Noengo's notorious reputation coincided with a certain feeling of proudness. In the archives, he is referred to as a criminal who provided some hundred allies with guns to organize a revolt in the region of Karawa. During an offensive in the jungle, however, Noengo was killed and his associates were arrested. As such, it is concluded that "*l'insoumission du chef Nengo n'a pas eu de répercussion sur l'état d'esprit des populations*" (AA *Rapport Annuel* 1926: 69).

Both Pecheur (1928) and Maes (1997) – the latter probably inspired by the former – mention three other Ngbaka leaders that became well known for their resistance to the Ngbandi attacks: Bwado, Bwamanda and Dambwi.[10] They managed to obtain firearms, which they used to protect their people. According to Maes (1997: 50), especially Bwado's counteraction was particularly significant as his stronghold has remained the core of the Ngbaka area. In 1907, Bwado surrendered and in 1908, a Belgian state post with his name was founded. During my fieldwork I visited Bwamanda, which was equally named after a famous Ngbaka leader. In the theoretical framework of this paper I referred to the difference between space and place, in which the latter can be understood as space laden with meaning. This appropriation of meaning can occur in the form of sensory experience or through conceptually mediated symbols. The historical references these place names entail, exemplify how places are the products of human intervention and historically contingent

processes. Moreover, the importance of leaders such as Noengo, Bwado, Bwamanda and Dambwi underlines the fact that it is inaccurate to conceptualize colonial history without taking into account African agency. Similarly, the collaboration of Ngbandi chiefs such as Baya and Kanganyani exemplify how African cooperation facilitated the colonial enterprise.

Maes indicates that a part of the Ngbaka had already returned to their pre-colonial positions before the arrival of Pecheur, because the Belgian annexation in 1908 already yielded more stability in the region. The pacification, however, was no smooth process: families did not reunite easily and related clans no longer wanted to cohabit due to dissensions that arose during the period of migration. Rivalry and tyranny amongst Ngbaka leaders, including Bwado, occurred, and oftentimes chiefs indicated by the colonial state enjoyed no local authority. In the next chapter, it will become clear how Pecheur struggled with the fundamental consequences of this historical stage of divergence and disaggregation.

5. Pecheur's territorial homogenization

This chapter deals with the evolution of René Pecheur's attitude towards his colonial task. I was lucky to find a letter from Pecheur to the Minister of Colonies of 1917 (attachment 10), because this rich document allowed me to gain insights into his psychology and ideological convictions. Gradually, however, his belief in the need of a Ngbaka regrouping decreased because he came to realize that European ideality and African reality were incompatible. After Pecheur's dismissal in 1928, his successor, Gaston Crabbeck, continued to structurize the territory of the Ngbaka by opening up roads and installing settlements. These interventions are tangible until today and have consequences for the way Ngbaka ethnicity is experienced.

5.1. "La façon du levain à la pâte": Pecheur's initial view of colonial interference

In 1921, the Belgian government entrusted one of its colonial officials with the task to reunite the Ngbaka after their dispersion due to the Bolo Mbati. This official was René Pecheur, who, according to his personal file in the African archives, was born on the 29th of January 1876 in Awenne, in the Belgian province of Luxembourg. As mentioned in the methodological itinerary of my research, the figure of Pecheur can also be found in the archive of the Dominican order. For, in 1899, he was initiated as a priest, after which he stayed in Texas and Mexico until 1908. Thereafter, he obtained a degree in tropical medicine and left for Isiro in the Congo (AA Pecheur's personal file). In 1816, he returned to Europe and started working as a trader in England and France. As such, he left the Dominican order, according to Marcel Henrix, to marry a French woman. In 1921, he was nominated as *Administrateur territorial de 2e classe*, after being exempted from the obligatory courses of the colonial school (most likely due to his experience in the Congo as a missionary). Interestingly, in his letter of the 26th of October of that same year to the General Governor, the representative of the Minister of Colonies demanded that Pecheur be nominated in "*une région où les inconvénients qu'on pourrait entrevoir soient réduits au minimum*", referring to the sensibility that his religious resignation could evoke among the (Dominican) missionaries (attachment 11). When nominating officials and designating them to a specific region, colonial authorities were thus aware of and cautious about the interpersonal frictions that

could have affected the efficiency of these public servants' job execution in an unfavorable way. In this case, efforts were made to isolate Pecheur from missionary ex-confreres who might have opposed to his position. Ultimately, after seven years of duty, he returned to Belgium and in 1936, probably after the death of his wife, he reentered the Dominican convent. He died on the 6th of March 1954 in Houtain-le-Val (AA Pecheur's personal file).

Already during his time in Isiro, Pecheur developed a strong opinion about the way the colony and the missionary work that supported it should be organized. As his letter of 1917 to the then Minister of Colonies Jules Renkin (1862-1934) indicates, Pecheur was very critical about the assimilationist approach of the Belgian colonial enterprise:

> *En fait notre présence en Afrique comporte trop souvent la désagrégation des populations sans arrêter leur diminution en nombre. Les protagonistes de notre civilisation se présentent auprès de noirs les mains pleines de gracieux cadeaux qui s'appellent le progrès et le travail; l'égalité et la conscience de leur individualité mais ne signifiant quelquefois qu'augmentation de la mortalité, causée par les maladies qu'ils ont propagées; ruine de leur identité morale provoquée par la politique d'assimilation qui arrive à faire avec des congolais [sic] des Européens ratés et des Africains avariés.* (Pecheur 1917: 1-2)

Iliffe indeed describes how diseases introduced by Europeans like cholera, yellow fever, cerebrospinal meningitis and especially Spanish influenza had disastrous effects on African demography and, even though reliable demographic data are scarce, he argues that "the early colonial period was probably most destructive in equatorial Africa, where violence, famine, smallpox, sleeping sickness, venereal diseases, and influenza coincided" (Iliffe 2007 [1995]: 217). According to the same author (2007 [1995]: 218), estimations have been made that, in the Belgian Congo, the population fell by one-third or one-half between 1880-1920, which explains Pecheur's indignation on the demographical impact of European interference on the continent. When it comes to the dissolution of the indigenous 'moral identity', he argued that the Congolese population was too dissimilar from its white colonizers, not only physically but also psychologically, socially, politically and morally, to be placed on the same track of evolution. Therefore, he continued, it is inadequate to speak of inferiority and

superiority, which he called expressions that "*ne font que satisfaire notre vanité hypocrite et dévoilent notre étroitesse de vue*" (Pecheur 1917: 3). For Pecheur, assimilationism and the accompanying "normative discourse of cultural homogeneity" (Belmessous 2013: 2) was problematic because it did not recognize the fundamental differences between European and African culture. As such, he believed that its political implementation was doing nothing but harm, by leading the indigenous population away from its cultural authenticity and by guiding them towards an unachievable Westernization that besmirched its true African nature.

Pecheur's critical attitude was remarkable, but not unique: it belonged to the rising group of voices that, from circa 1900 on, condemned the implicit assimilationism of early Belgian rule in the Congo. Due to the impact of these criticasters, the assimilationist political strategy was eroding gradually during the first two decades of the nineteenth century until Louis Franck (1868-1937), Minister of Colonies from 1918 until 1924, replaced it at the beginning of his term with an adaptationist policy (see Frank 1920, 1926). In other words, the desire to "turn the Congolese into "black-skinned Belgians" and rapidly change them into citizens understanding European customs, obeying Belgian laws, accepting Belgium's institutions, assimilating our technological, individualistic and Christian civilization" (Rothschild 1936: 577), was substituted with a political ideology that came close to the British system of indirect rule, in which a selection of tolerated indigenous societal structures were incorporated into the colonial management. As such, the colonial epoch, which is often regarded as a static and monolithic period, was in fact characterized by constant negotiation and adaptation. As Comaroff (1989: 662) phrases it, "its moments of incoherence and inchoateness, its internal contortions and complexities" are often overlooked, while they might actually be most instructive. That is why it is significant that, within the scope of 33 years, the Congo has been under the rule of an authoritarian and greedy monarch, an inexperienced assimilationist government and a more strategic adaptationist one.

The above-mentioned shift in colonial ideology, which can easily be 'sold' as an attempt towards more respect for the indigenous population, was not necessarily based on philanthropic considerations, but was actually driven by the conviction that it would render more economic profit and that it would respond to the necessity of keeping the missionary apparatus favorably disposed (see Meeuwis 2011). Already since the Christianization of the

American continent in the sixteenth century, missionaries' faith in the universalism of Christianity did not necessarily coincide with a westernization of the indigenous people. Like many others, Pecheur believed that the evangelization and education of the autochthonous population was to remain as loyal as possible to the ethnic differences that marked the Congolese cultural and linguistic landscape:

> *Les groupements en nations tribus et clans sont des réalités appréciables, les différences de coutumes et de langues ne sont pas des quantités négligeables. Fonder l'administration et dresser des méthodes d'éducation sans tenir compte de ces distinctions c'est s'exposer à provoquer la désagrégation sociale des populations Congolaises.* (Pecheur 1917: 4)

As such, Pecheur can be considered an adherent *avant la lettre* of what after 1945 would be called indigenism, which Meeuwis (2002: 698) defines as "the Belgian version of indirect rule which stated that at all political, administrative and educational levels, the "civilization" and "management" of the colonized was to be accomplished preferably on the basis of their own ethnic and cultural structures and institutions". It is striking that Pecheur was convinced of the a priori existence of these ethnic entities, which, in the case of *"les peuples qui n'ont pas d'histoire*" (Pecheur 1917: 4), he believed to be formed by the one-on-one relation between race and language. His attitude towards African ethnicity is thus strongly inspired by a Herderian ideology in which nation, language and territory coincide. This German philosopher held a genetic-historical conception of language and claimed that all *Völker* on earth have a unique, unrepeatable nature (Zammito 2002: 156, see also Spencer 2007). Space then becomes an important outline to fixate these supposed authentic absolute categories. To many missionaries, "[t]hese categories were like stones in the fields, created separately by God or by nature, which were simply "discovered" by scientists" (Vinck 2012: 229).

The ethnic scheme that I introduced in the theoretical framework of this paper and the way it has molded European perception on African societies clearly structured Pecheur's point of view on tribal divisions. His strong emphasis on the importance of maintaining and cherishing ethnic cultural and social microstructures went hand in hand with his disapproval of the use of vehicular languages for evangelization and education. Like other missionaries in

the Belgian Congo – Gustaaf Hulstaert (1900-1990)[11] is a famous example – Pecheur was critical about the communicative benefits of languages that were constructed and introduced artificially:

> *Il semblerait que dans certains cas les propagateurs de l'Evangile se sont donnés pour mission d'effacer toutes les distinctions de langues, races et tribus. Prétendant s'adresser à tous à la fois ils sont réellement peu compris par qui que ce soit. On se contente d'un jargon véhiculaire ou ce qui est pire on utilise un langage conventionnel. Tout en se lamentant sur la multiplicité des dialectes indigènes, ils compliquent cet état de chose par l'introduction d'un idiome de caractère artificiel.* (Pecheur 1917: 7)

In this argument, Pecheur expresses his discontent about the promotion of regional vehicular languages, of which Lingala, Swahili, Kikongo and Ciluba are the most widespread in the Congo. It is true that the large scale distribution of these languages, especially Lingala and Swahili, was partly the result of colonial interventions that have started as early as the 1880s and 1890s (see Fabian 1986 and Meeuwis 2006, 2011), but so was the tribal fixation that Pecheur believed to be so authentic and 'truly African'. As argued in the theoretical framework of this thesis, the need for control always coincides with simplification and categorization. Given the hierarchical nature of the colonial relations, it would be utopic to believe that the colonial enterprise could have been effectuated without interfering in the social and cultural configuration of the colonized. While the use of *linguae francae* resulted in more homogeneity and simplicity on a macro-level, Pecheur's ideal ethno-linguistic landscape was equally aiming at a clear-cut simplification, be it by suggesting a micro-level homogenization of supposed 'pure' categories. As such, both approaches are characterized by what Meeuwis (2011: 199) calls "the typically colonial blind faith in the top-down malleability of African society".

Pecheur continued his letter to the Minister of Colonies with some propositions to free the colonial *mission civilisatrice* of the use of "*un jargon véhiculaire dont le vocabulaire est de plus en plus rudimentaire et la grammaire fait défaut*", which would lead to "*une régression vers l'amorphisme psychologique*" (Pecheur 1917: 13-14). Defending his conviction that the vernacular languages should be preserved at any cost, he suggested that it would be better

to effectuate the evangelization of the indigenous population by selecting clearly demarcated groups of converts successively, by learning their language, instead of reaching heterogeneously combined individuals of scattered origin. Interestingly, Pecheur himself indicated that this strategy is not inspired by "*une préoccupation exagérée d'esthétique ethnographique et linguistique*", but that he genuinely believed that "*l'avenir du christianisme dépend de son adaptation à la mentalité des peuples évangélisés et en conséquence de l'adaptation de leur idiome*" (1917: 10). As this quote suggests, Pecheur was fully aware of the tactical benefits of the projected approach, which were to serve his primary goal, namely the continued spread of Christian faith. To explain why the use of local languages is crucial to embed religion mentally, he referred to the Coptic resistance to the expansion of Islam in Egypt, which he argued to have been more successful than that of other regions in Northern Africa, where Latin was used as liturgical language. He proposed to appoint African teachers in small local schools and argued that Belgian intervention needed to be reduced to a minimum, while local assets, not only in terms of equipment but also in terms of human resources, must be made use of in order to install "*un régime d'auto-éducation de ces races, l'élément blanc n'intervenant qu'à la façon du levain dans la pâte*" (1917: 12). He finished his letter by arguing that "*les différences entre eux et nous sont trop profondes pour nous les assimiler et les distinctions entre eux sont trop visibles pour les soumettre logiquement et utilement à un régime trop uniforme*" (1917: 17). Consequently, Pecheur can be called a racialist, for he was convinced that culture (including language) is determined by race and that each of these culture-race constellations should preserve their pure and uncontaminated condition. Bearing in mind this ideological background, it is not surprising that he became engaged in the reunification of the Ngbaka population.

5.2. Legibility versus reality: Pecheur's disillusionment

In accordance with the switch from an assimilist policy to an adaptionist one, measurements were taken to facilitate the cooperation with local systems of governmentality. As indicated before, this mobilization was inspired by a pragmatic belief in the intermediary advantages of local chiefs: "*Nos fonctionnaires territoriaux semblent tous convaincus de la nécessité de greffer notre organisation politique sur l'organisation coutumière indigène, de façon à amener insensiblement les natifs à se plier aux obligations que nous leur imposons sans jeter*

la perturbation dans leurs communautés" (AA *Rapport Annuel* 1918: 18). But, as a decree of the 6th of October 1891 indicates, similar considerations were already taken into account during the Leopoldian era. In the elucidations accompanying this decree, the desirability of regroupings is formulated:

> *Dans une grande partie des territoires de l'Etat, les populations de même race, au lieu d'être groupées sous les ordres de quelques Chefs puissants, sont divisées en un nombre fort considérable de petites agglomérations, peu peuplées, indépendantes les unes des autres et souvent hostiles entre elles. Cet état de choses est de plus préjudiciable au bien être des indigènes et à leur transformation morale, à cause des efforts multiples que la division des populations exige de la part des fonctionnaires de l'Etat. C'est à modifier progressivement cette situation, que les Commissaires de district doivent s'appliquer, en ne négligeant aucune occasion de grouper, sous un petit nombre de chefs reconnus, les populations de même race dont les besoins, la manière de vivre et les intérêts sont identiques.* (AA *Recueil Administratif* 1894: 159-160)

In the theoretical framework of this thesis, I referred to the Foucauldian conceptualization of power. According to Foucault, the main interest of a governmental system is the regulation of its population. The situation of dispersion and fragmentation was not expedient for colonial political control, and as such, Foucault's observations are quite accurate to understand why the maximized efficiency of locally embedded political organizations was opted for (see also Magotte 1949 and Gille 1953). The above-mentioned quote holds that the division of populations demanded too much effort of colonial employees, and thus the creation and regulation of legible units of population was required. In other words, "officials took exceptionally complex, illegible, and local social practices […] and created a standard grid whereby it could be centrally recorded and monitored" (Scott 1998: 2).

In the case of the Ngbaka, this desire to control and structure was effectuated by regrouping them on the same territory. Tanghe (1946: 200) indicated that all speakers of the Ngbaka language were 'invited' to reunite in order to form an ethnic super cluster with language as its common feature. This formulation is evidently euphemistic, as the centripetal tendency

of this regrouping was compulsive in essence. Interestingly, I also found some documents in the archives about the draft of the design of a decree that regulates the displacement of local populations, in which it is stated that indigenous villages cannot translocate without the permission of the colonial authorities (AA *Affaires indigènes* C28 dossier 10: 1904). Not only did the colonial state thus impose certain replacements, it also forbade the effectuation of others, thereby fully optimizing its monopolist control on the migration patterns of local populations.

Pecheur's assignment, the territorial homogenization of the Ngbaka, can thus be perceived as a local realization of a more general Belgian intervention. Nevertheless, I agree with Mathys (2014: 15) who argues that, despite the fact that such a thing as a colonial 'project' is distinguishable, local processes turned the Belgian colonial state into a regionally diverse one. As Pecheur's case shows, individual and locally embedded praxis was as crucial for the shaping of the process of colonialism as top-down conceived master plans or anonymous manifestations of power with a capital P. So even though Foucault's understanding of the mechanisms and technologies of power is applicable to this case, it does not come up to the mark to acknowledge the organic and individually shaped nature of its functioning. As I mentioned when introducing the concept of cognitive schemes, the conceptualization of the individual processing of information is not complete without the recognition of the flaws of individual tendencies to categorize, those elements that slip through the mazes of human tendency to control, such as the difficult processing of scheme inconsistent information and the misjudgment that can accompany schematic evaluation. When projecting this insight on the more collective, 'faceless' system of colonial power, it equally becomes clear that, despite its authoritarian claim on control of information and population, it is never without leakages or imperfections that lead to the loss of its ideal capacity on a micro level. Consequently, "[t]he focus on the totalitarian nature of the Belgian colonial state, which often was imagery and wishful thinking from the colonial administration rather than a lived reality, has obfuscated the messiness of colonial rule and the complex nature of power relations on the ground" (Mathys 2014: 15). The itinerary of René Pecheur, notwithstanding his initial enthusiasm for the ethnic fixation of Congolese society, is an example of such 'grassroots hitch'.

Pecheur's job was twofold. He had to regroup the Ngbaka that lived dispersedly due to the consequences of the Bolo Mbati, and he had to reunite them by clan. Sources about the practical effectuation of his task are scarce. According to Marcel Henrix and Tanghe (1946), many Ngbaka returned voluntarily. The *Rapport Annuel* of 1924 seems to suggest the same willingness of the fugitives to return to their last pre-colonial whereabouts: "*De plus, diverses fractions de la peuplade Bwaka qui vivaient dispersées en deux districts sur des terres non héréditaires, ont rejoint volontairement, celles qu'ils avaient abandonnées, à la suite de certaines erreurs administratives*" (AA *Rapport Annuel* 1924: 5).[12] Gerebern (1935: 101), on the contrary, claims that the Belgian state had to invest a lot of effort to reunite the 'forest tribes' in the same area. Senge, one of my main informants, suggested that local chiefs were involved as intermediaries to facilitate the communication with the Ngbaka population:

Margot: En pratique, comment est-ce que Crabbeck et Makasi[13], surtout Makasi, ont fait ça? Ils sont partis dans les forets pour dire "venez, venez" ou ils avaient des militaires qui les ont aidé ou… C'était comment qu'on a réalisé ça?

[Monzabana translates the question to Senge, who responds in Ngbaka]

Monzabana: Il n'avait pas utilisé des militaires, c'est à dire, il a nommé des chefs de village. Alors c'est à lui, le chef du village, de partir à la foret pour ramener sa population. Parce que une fois que les militaires entrent, les prendre par force, ces militaires risquent d'être tués.

This mediation explains why the efficiency of indirect rule was highly estimated during the later colonial period. Through the deployment of local figures of authority, colonial objectives could be indirectly transmitted to the population at stake. As such, the internalization of a pro-settlement discourse was instrumentalized to avoid military confrontation. According to Senge, many Ngbaka were willing to settle near the roads because they saw how the Belgians brought 'civilization'.

By 1924, the territorial homogenization on a macro level seems to have been finalized and, according to Marcel Henrix, this intervention even led to an enlargement of the initial

Ngbaka area. The second aspect of Pecheur's task, however, remained unexecuted. Until his dismissal in 1928, he struggled with the effectuation of the regrouping of the clans on a micro level. Whereas his work was positively evaluated during the first years of his appointment, his wavering organization of clans gradually started to provoke irritation amongst his superiors, who blamed his lack of professional training. In 1926, Pecheur's pending promotion as *Administrateur Territorial Prinicipal* was postponed due to this rising discontent: "*L'inspection à laquelle j'ai procédé, du territoire des Bwaka qu'administre M. Pêcheur, m'a donné la certitude que ce fonctionnaire, intelligent et averti, est trop théoricien et fort peu réalisateur, il y a lieu de surseoir à sa promotion*" (AA personal file Pecheur, letter by Gouverneur Duchesne: 6/11/1926). A year later, Pecheur's inefficiency was pilloried by means of the publication of the *Rapport Annuel*, in which it was stated that he had been exempted of all other duties in order to focus fully on the reorganization of the indigenous population (AA *Rapport Annuel* 1927: 81).

From Pecheur's personal writings, however, it becomes clear where his lingering hesitation stemmed from. In his final report of 1928, Pecheur denoted the artificial character of his duty. Despite his initial enthusiasm about the maintenance and reinforcement of ethnic boundaries, Pecheur came to realize that the social cohesion between clans was practically inexistent. It was more of a European ideal construct than an African reality. The quotes that can be extracted from his expostulation are numerous and demonstrate his despair:

> *Comment identifier la collectivité qui peut constituer une unité politique distincte et lui attribuer tous les éléments que requière son intégrité? Autant vouloir préparer le lotissement des vagues de la mer […] Nous n'avons plus de mains que des débris poussiéreux et misérables résidus qui nous restent après un cataclysme qui pour eux a été quelque chose de décisif.* (Pecheur 1928: 115-116)

This elegant, almost literary prose slumbers on disillusion. In chapter 2, I mentioned that cognitive schemata render the processing of scheme consistent information more efficient, but that they complicate the incorporation of scheme-inconsistent information. In the case of Pecheur, it is arguable that he was confronted so intensely with the social disaggregation between clans, that this scheme-inconsistent information led him to question the accuracy

of the scheme itself. In other words, the stimuli proved to be so incompatible with the summoned scheme that the latter was no longer tenable, despite its deliberate activation. Pecheur realized that the colonial tendency to categorize and structure Congolese society could not make up for decisive moments of disintegration of the past. This awareness also appears in his resignation letter (attachment 12):

> *[E]st-il rien qui épuise d'avantage la vie mentale que cette sensation de vide, cette auscultation de néant, cette manipulation de formules et alignements de mots, auxquels, rien (ou si peu de chose) ne correspond dans la réalité objective? […] il est assez démoralisant, de devoir travailler à la réalisation de formules à la possibilité d'application desquelles on ne croit plus, Dieu sait pourtant combien j'étais persuadé du bien fondé de ces règles! [D]ans l'ordre spéculatif, elles apparaissent belles et généreuses. Mais dans la réalité qui nous touche en ce moment, l'homme, en l'occurence [sic] le Bwaka, n'est pas dans les conditions qui puissent justifier un tel crédit! Encore autant d'illusions qu'il faudra semer sur la route! Et se résigner à bruler ce qu'on a adoré!* (AA personal file Pecheur: resignation letter 26/06/1928)

As I have described throughout chapter 5.1., Pecheur was indeed most convinced of the necessity of the implementation of the ethnic scheme when he commenced as a colonial official. Yet, as this quote indicates, he gradually became aware of the discrepancy between African reality and what Mafeje (1971: 253) calls 'the ideology of tribalism', that is, the European predispositions about an assumed tribal Africa "which made it difficult for those associated with the system to view these societies in any other light". The latter proved to be much more susceptible to contingencies of time and space than the fixationist formulas European authorities tended to place upon it. So even though people generally aim for continuity and consistence in their schemes, and even though schemes can be adjusted on the basis of new information, Pecheur realized that the divergence between stimuli and scheme was so inconsistent that his disillusionment led him to resign. In their writings on Ivory Coast, Chauveau and Dozon (1988) have argued that the colonial state produced efficient ethnographic representations that turned into self-fulfilling prophecies. They write that "*une telle assertion ne veut pas dire que les administrateurs coloniaux ont créé de toutes pièces les ethnies ivoiriennes; elle indique simplement la manière selon laquelle ils les ont*

identifiées et classées dénote une part importante d'arbitraire véhiculant des représentations dont l'Etat colonial avait besoin pour contrôler le territoire et pour légitimer ses pratiques d'intervention et de mise en valeur (certains administrateurs ont du reste explicitement reconnu cette part d'arbitraire" (Chauveau & Dozon 1988: 734). Pecheur was one of these officials who denounced the arbitrariness of ethnic schematization. In his case, "*l'Etat ethnographique*", which he represented, failed, and the implementation of ethnic schemata hardly materialized into social reality. This of course led to frustration and disillusion from Pecheur's part: the ideal and the real hardly coincided. As I will come to show in the chapter 5.4, however, the materialization of these ethnic self-fulfilling prophecies did take place during the course of history.

5.3 Crabbeck's continuation

Only very few Ngbaka whom I spoke to during my fieldwork knew about Pecheur and his assignment. His successor, Gaston Crabbeck, however, was still remembered as the colonial official who invited the previous generations to leave the forests and settle near the roads (attachment 13). When I asked Monseigneur Senemona, who, like Marcel Henrix, can be considered as a 'walking library' when it comes to Ngbaka history and culture, why so many of my informants attributed the homogenization to Crabbeck instead of Pecheur, he referred to a Ngbaka proverb: "*Gàlà lì dɛ́ ngɔ, kɔ bàgɔtɔ dĩlĩ nɛ̀= mɔ dɛ́ tóé 'dà mɔ, nɛ̀ wí kpásá dò mâ a gèlé wi"*, which Marcel Henrix has translated as "*si on écope la rivière (pour capturer du poisson), c'est l'aval qui on profite*" (Henrix 2006: 58). In other words, Pecheur had organized the reunification of the Ngbaka, but it was his successor who reaped the benefits and the recognition for it.

Crabbeck remained in the service of the colonial state from 1921 until 1947. Initially, his superiors were very satisfied about his work and in 1930, he was nominated *Administrateur Territorial de première classe*. In a report of 1938, he critically comments on Pecheur's laxity: *Malheuresement, l'exode des populations Bwaka ne fut pas dirigé; Monsieur l'Administrateur Territorial Pêcheur ne put profiter de l'occasion qui lui était donnée de réunir ces retardataires à leurs frères précédemment installés; ils les laissa se fixer au gré de leur caprice et de leurs préférences* (AT *Rapport d'enquête en vu de la création de secteur de la*

Lua-Dekere by Crabbeck: 14/8/1938). Crabbeck was thus irritated by the seemingly chaotic settlement of the Ngbaka clans, which Pecheur had described as an irreversible event. In 1944, Crabbeck's wife passed away during her stay in Karawa and from then on, the satisfaction about his duties started to decline. In October 1945, District Commissioner Dubuisson wrote: "*N'étant plus en mesure d' exercer un contrôle minutieux de l'activité de ses agents, il se produit fatalement du laisser aller des ruptures de contact avec les milieux indigènes et de la stagnation dans leur évolution politique"* (AA personal file Crabbeck *notes biographiques* by Dubuisson: 10/10/1945). By 1946, Crabbeck asked to resign so he could educate his grandson in Belgium and a year later his dismissal was granted (AA personal file Crabbeck). Similarly to Pecheur, he thus commenced his career as a successful colonial official, but gradually started to neglect his duties to finally withdraw.

In the theoretical framework I mentioned how biopower is concerned with the discipline of bodies, in order to guarantee control over the population. Legg (2007), who has done research on the spatial implementation of colonialism in New Delhi, explains how this need was translated into a tendency to make the city knowable and visible. One of the apparatuses of the disciplinary regime of government was police: "By creating the impression of constant surveillance, disciplinary tactics sought to interpellate a self-disciplining subject that would be politically docile yet economically productive and socially secure" (Legg 2007: 84). He goes on to explain how surveillance was made tangible both in a direct way, through patrolling, and in an indirect way, through the erection of a corpus of dossiers and files. He refers to these two practices as 'an interstitial discipline and a meta-discipline'.

Like the territorial homogenization itself, these disciplinal technologies had one main objective: maximizing the legibility of and control over local populations. When I asked Senge if he had ever seen Crabbeck, it became clear that his encounter with the colonial official coincided with manifestations of the two above-mentioned disciplines. As Monzabana's explanation of the '*appel*' indicates, the obligation of a daily role call can be understood as a form of interstitial discipline:

Monzabana:	Il a vu Crabbeck lorsque leurs papas partaient pour faire l'appel. Parce que chaque jour on faisait l'appel.
Margot:	C'est quoi, l'appel?
Monzabana:	L'appel, c'est à dire, on veut connaître l'effectif de la population.
Senge :	Eeh
Monzabana :	Pour que, bon, ils étaient 85, mais demain, l'effectif c'est 70. Où sont partis les 15 autres? Donc, ils ont fuit?
Margot:	Donc chaque jour ils devaient se présenter pour les Belges?
Monzabana:	Oui, pour le contrôle, disons.

Senge also commented that those who would cut the role call were punished by whip or thrown in jail. As Monzabana's explanation indicates, the recurrence of the call can be interpreted as a clear technology of Foucault's biopower. By forcing the indigenous population to present themselves on a daily basis, colonial authorities controlled their subjects in a seemingly panoptical way, which made them internalize a discipline that would turn them into docile and productive bodies. On a more collective level, the same tendency to monitor the colonized was effectuated by grouping them into *chefferies indigènes* and tribal entities. The interstitial discipline of the call and the census it provided led to a meta-discipline that still has its traces in the materiality of the colonial archive. As attachment 14, a page from the *Rapport Annuel* of 1927/1928, shows, the data gathered at such calls were used to produce demographic tables that rendered the colony even more visible and legible, a warehouse of which one can 'take inventory'. However, Stoler (2009: 23) reminds us of the fact that this panoptical impression is a frail conceit rather than an absolute proof of effective mastery.

Senge further explained that Crabbeck commanded the people to leave the forests and to come and live near the roads he was opening up. The construction of these roads was another essential tool for colonial surveillance. By 'drawing lines' in a seemingly chaotic landscape, the colonial authorities were able to produce a spatial imprint that made their presence tangible and experiential. These interventions explain why we cannot conceptualize space merely as static scenery for the enactment of history. "Rather, the

spatial is an actively changing dimension of all aspects of life, a dimension that affects how people act and think" (Howard 2005: 25).

It was not unusual that colonial officials were given local names. Crabbeck's nickname was Kangakolo. Interestingly, three explanations circulate about the meaning of this name. In the case of Crabbeck, all three of them are instructive to gain insights in the way white domination was experienced by the Ngbaka at the time. The first etymological meaning is explained as the combination of *kanga* ('to stop' or 'to close' in Lingala) and *kolo*, which can be interpreted as a local adaptation of the French 'colle' (collar). It was said that Crabbeck always wore shirts with a tightly closed collar, and that he demanded of his associates that they did the same. This interpretation gives an indication of the way European habits were implemented into African society. As the Comaroffs (1997: 321) argue, "colonialism was always as much about making the center as it was about making the periphery" and, as such, the colony was one of the instruments to create the idea of a modern society. The introduction of Western dressing formulas, but also the implementation of domesticity and the creation of roads, were methods to evoke this colonial societal ideal. Just like the territorial homogenization itself, it all coheres with the desirability of the implementation of European frames of knowledge, familiarity and control.

The two other explanations are related to the morphological contraction of *kanga* ('to stop' or 'to close' in Lingala) and *kolo* (lightning in Ngbaka). One argumentation, which I only heard once, was that Crabbeck always spoke loudly and passionately, thereby using his fist to enforce his argument. As such, he was compared to thunder and lightning because of his expressive way of talking. The third explanation, however, is the most 'rich' one, for it provides an idea about the local experience of the historical context of colonialism. Before the installation of Gemena, the initial Belgian state post was located in Kalo, some 26 kilometers northwards. Due to the rocky subsoil, Kalo was often hit by lightning and during the early 1920s the administrative gravity point of the region was reoriented towards Gemena. Even though it is rather unlikely that Crabbeck has actually lived in Kalo, the nickname Kangakolo is said to refer to his capability to stop and suppress lightning strokes. In this version, the noun prefix of Lingala class 1, *mo-*, is sometimes added, and thus

Mokangakolo (‘he who stops the lightning’) also appears as a variant. This explanation gives an indication of the local dissatisfaction about the restrictive character of colonial presence:

Senemona :	Ce sont les Ngbaka qui, ayant des pouvoirs magiques, font tomber ces coups de foudre pour manifester leur mécontentement de vivre ensembles avec les colonisateurs qu’eu trouvaient comme dominateurs oppresseurs.
Margot :	Oui, parce qu’on avait beaucoup de travaux…
Senemona :	Voilà, beaucoup de travaux. Quand on arrivait dans les villages, la nuit, les gens ne peuvent pas parler. La nuit, les gens ne peuvent pas chanter. La nuit, on ne peut pas entendre le son des tamtams parce qu’ ou bien madame dort, ou bien parce que monsieur dort. Et alors, toute la journée aussi, il fallait faire de telle manière-ci que, les coqs, les chèvres, ne puissent pas trop crier parce que monsieur ne veut pas de bruit. Et toute homme qui enfreignait ces directives, était soumis à des sanctions très sévères : amende, emprisonnement, fouet, chicotte. Alors tout ça, c’était quelque chose qui n’est pas de nature à favoriser la cohabitation, à favoriser le fait de rester ensemble. C’est ainsi que les gens voulaient dire ‘non’, nous ne voulons pas de vous ici chez nous, allez ailleurs. Alors ils envoyaient le foudre.

Once more, a story like this emphasizes the importance that is attributed to magical practices. Although the forceful impact of colonial presence was felt physically, mentally and politically, it was not the supreme manifestation of true power for the local population. Just like the story about Noengo and his arms, this plot shows that the Ngbaka turned to alternative spheres of power to resist and negotiate the colonial one. Interestingly, the narrative of the road between Gemena and Kalo also has a sequel. The colonial officials were said to have behaved so badly that the people of Kalo wanted to make sure that they would never return. In order to do so, they appointed an elderly lady, who installed two pots of powerful medicine at both sides of the beginning of the road from Gemena to Kalo, to make sure that white people would never come back. These days, however, the blocking effect of the pots turns out negatively, because it prevents ONG’s and Christian missions from

developing the towns along the road. As *chef de secteur*, Pele Ngamo had done everything to retrace the pots and to undo their magical effects, but his efforts were in vain. According to the Ngbaka living along the route to the north, that is why their area has not received any humanitarian help and why it is less developed than others.

As this anecdote proves, geographical interventions that testify of colonial presence were not merely elements of passive scenery for human encounter. The introduction of roads had very concrete consequences for the way colonial subjects experienced their environment, but this does not mean that they willingly accepted the imposed situation: they actively appropriated and negotiated space and used it for practices of resistance, even if these practices are not empirically observable. This shows that experience of place and space is not only constituted materially but also involves crucial social features. Therefore, it is necessary to move away from Foucault's rather biological fascination for governmental power as an all-absorbing mechanism, to look at lived spatial experience of agents who produce and reproduce the environment they inhabit. In fact, Foucault's conceptualization of governmentality leaves little space for such practices of resistance. His approach might be too one-sidedly focussed on the structural and material effectuation of power to produce a relevant framework for analysing individual agency. Moreover, the belief in magical practices, which is of great importance in the African experience of power relations, cannot be accounted for in Foucault's rather static and Eurocentric perception on power and what it is constituted of, because it leaves little space for the imagination of alternative orders. This invisible dimension, which might seem fantastic and irrelevant from a Western perspective, has a very 'real' impact on the experience of true power of many Africans. Because even though this anecdote clearly resonates a feeling of 'being left out', it entails an appropriation of the source of power that is responsible for their disadvantaged situation. Not colonial political power, but local magical power is at the basis of the economic exclusion of the Ngbaka living in the north. As such, they are no passive victims of colonial forces but they attribute the experienced feeling of abjection to local power mechanisms, thereby taking charge of their own position and denying absolute colonial submission. I thus agree with Thomas when he argues that antithetical resistance led to new forms of synthesis:

> [E]ven if resistance on the part of the colonized seems to entail merely a return to former circumstances, of indigenous sovereignty and cultural autonomy, the struggle to recreate such conditions nevertheless engenders novel perceptions of identity, action and history; even what appears to be simply reactive or retrogressive thus amounts to a project, to a whole transformative endeavour. (Thomas 1994: 105-106)

The imagination of alternative narratives on power have also been analysed by James Scott (1990), who distinguishes public transcript from hidden ones. The first are based on the norms and interests of the dominant, while the latter gives the dominated the opportunity to question the right to rule. As Brinkman puts it, “the creation of an off-stage space, which escapes supervision of the more powerful is often an important area of contest between dominated and dominant” (Brinkman 1996: 6). In the above-mentioned case, this off-stage space has magical dimensions that allow the dominated to appropriate the cause of their marginalized position.

5.4. Consequences: The narrative of a shared identity

Although Pecheur’s awareness of the artificiality of his job provoked personal disappointment, its impact remains tangible until today. Put differently, the territorial unification was artificial in its essence, but real in its consequences. The macro homogenization has led to the confirmation of the ethnic category ‘Ngbaka’, which has become a relevant indicator of identity and belonging. The following quote of Monseigneur Senemona exemplifies why Pecheur has definitely left his mark on the imagination of Ngbaka ethnicity:

> Senemona : Ce que monsieur Pecheur a fait, moi je trouve que c’est admirable pour le groupe Ngbaka. Parce que, si tu prends par exemple la carte politico-administrative de notre province, et bien, c’est encore le seul groupe avec un seul territoire très homogène. Et l’effort que monsieur Pecheur a fait, c’est formidable, arriver à ramener les Ngbaka qui sont à Bosobolo, qui sont à Libenge, qui sont à Kungu, qui sont un peu partout. Non, vous devez rejoindre vos frères qui sont à Gemena, vous

devez aller rester ensemble avec vos frères qui sont à Gemena. C’est un travail qui mérite vraiment beaucoup d’éloge.

As this quote proves, the process of homogenization has led to an intensification of the relevance of ethnic belonging. The Herderian constellation of language, territory and nation thus became adopted (attachment 15). Although Pecheur no longer believed in the viability of his assignment, over time, the ethnic schematization did turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. I thus agree with Chauveau and Dozon (1988: 737) when they argue that the roles and characteristics that are attributed to ethnicities have materialized *au fur et à mesure*. In fact, in the theoretical framework I briefly mentioned that the activation of a certain scheme could lead to scheme-consistent behavior. This scheme-consistent behavior can turn the scheme into a self-fulfilling prophecy, because it affirms its relevance. In other words, the activation of a specific scheme can have behavioral consequences, which on their turn sustain the supposed accuracy of the scheme. Hence, a vicious circle of scheme affirmation takes place. Moreover, in a country like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is often referred to as a ‘failed state’, it is not surprising that people look for alternative categories of belonging besides national identification. Take the following excerpt from my focus group conversation in Bogo Wazi, in which my informants explain how the violation of limits can be at the basis of ethnic conflict:

Abraham: C’était seulement du a ça: la violation des limites. Cela fait qu’il ait Bolo Ngbaka comme vous avez parlé.
Margot : Et ces limites dont vous parlez, c’était établi par qui?
Abraham: La limite, normalement, quand… Nous sommes ici, tu vois, dans les tribus différentes
Margot : Hmm
Abraham: Alors, là nous sommes dans le tribu Ngbaka. Alors, nous savons que Ngbaka commence ici jusqu’à ici. Alors, là c’est le tribu…
?: Ngbandi
Abraham: Ngbandi. Cela aussi commence là-bas pour terminer ici. Et jusque, surtout la limite qui séparait, les rivières.
Serge: Il y a des limites naturelles.

Abraham:	Il y a les rivières qui sont comme limites naturelles
Monzabana:	Comme bornes
Abraham:	Celui là ne peut pas…
All:	traverser!
Monzabana:	Une fois traversée…
Abraham:	Voilà!
[all make agreeing sounds]	
Monzabana:	ça provoque des conflits et la guerre continue
Serge:	Il y a des limites naturelles géographiques

During the rest of the conversation, the men continued to stress the importance of limits. It is striking that the rigidity of colonial ethnic division has turned into reality. Monzabana even gives artificial boundary markers as an example of natural limits. The artificiality of ethnic demarcation has thus become so deeply part of spatial experience that it has gained the status of naturalness. This shows how important the transformation of space into place can be for the affirmation of categories of identity: by implementing division materially, its relevance is more easily imagined. When I asked these informants what ought to be done in order to avoid conflict in the future, they told me that the colonial demarcations of ethnic territory should be reaffirmed. That way, doubt and discussion about trespassing boundaries could be eradicated. Over time, the clearness of division installed by the "*Etat ethnographique*" thus became desirable, not only for the colonizer but also for the colonized. This statement was made in a context of successive acts of violence between Ngbandi and Ngbaka, which all started because a Ngbandi girl went fishing in Ngbaka area. In essence, scarcity of fertile land and food is at the basis of the conflict, but it quickly took on ethnic dimensions. As such, ethnicity can be understood as an easily applicable lens to frame any kind of friction and place it within a wider historical scope.

While 'Ngbaka-ness' evokes a sense of belonging, especially when placed in opposition to 'Ngbandi-ness', unification on the basis of clans seems to be less prominent. Given the failure of Pecheur's assignment to reunite these clans, this is no surprise. Numerable examples can indeed be given about their dispersion. The parish in which I stayed in Gemena was called Bokuda moke (little Bokuda), whereas Manza, my oldest informant, lived in

Bokuda monene (big Bokuda). Manza told me about Gbase, an ancestor who married a women he encountered in the rocks during a promenade in the forest. Their son was called Sembakuda, who gave his name to the Bokuda villages. Bokuda moke, however, is older than Bokuda monene, because, at the time of the displacements, one of the elders refused to relocate his settlement. As such, he stayed in Bokuda moke, while others founded the bigger one. Manza explained that he belongs to the clan of the Bokobanda, one of the five clans in Bokuda. This clan was named after Kobanda ("to start" in Lingala), who founded the village and commenced its development. As this story shows, the history of the Ubangi region should be understood as a constant displacement and decomposition of social groups, rather than a static and ahistorical juxtaposition of tribes and clans. This explains Pecheur's frustration when he tried to pin down the unity of all Ngbaka clans:

> *Pratiquement, la peuplade des Bwaka c.à.d. l'ensemble des populations ainsi dénommées, à tort ou à raison (ce nom leur appartient-il vraiment? Ils sont tellement peu de chose qu'ils n'ont probablement qu'un nom d'emprunt) englobées dans les limites actuelles du territoire n'ont pas de passé. La combinaison de ses éléments a subi tant de modifications au cours de ces derniers temps qu'il est impossible d'identifier la collectivité qui servirait de point de départ.* (Pecheur 1928: 118)

Similar to Manza's story, Marcel told me that he lived with the Bogirima of the northeastern region. Yet, in the west, along the route to Zongo, lay a big settlement that was equally called Bogirima. According to Marcel, these Bogirima still know that they are related to those of the east. Southwards of Gemena, however, is another village called Bogirima, but its inhabitants claim to be Mbanza instead of Ngbaka. During the early 1990s, Marcel went down there to investigate this particularity. The Bogirima of the south appeared to be related to the other two, but they had been living for so long among the Mbanza that they had forgotten about their Ngbaka roots and had adopted the ethnicity of their associates (Marcel 30/6/2014). Hence, this 'ethnic shift' exemplifies how ethnicity used to be a fluid marker of identity, open to diachronic adaptations. In the theoretical framework I referred to Moerman (1993), who argues that ethnicity was not "a full time job" but one of the many cloaks in people's wardrobes. Over time, however, diachronic closure took place. This modern phenomenon turned negotiable ethnicity into competitive tribalism (see Lonsdale

1997), thereby eradicating the possibilities to change identity. Within the new ideologies of 'tribe', "ethnicity ought to span a lifetime, stronger even: it became hereditary" (Brinkman 1996: 33).

In postcolonial times, ethnicity thus remained and remains an important marker of identity. The discordant relation between Ngbandi and Ngbaka underwent certain transformations, but continues to carry remnants of the colonially installed hierarchy. Yet representations have changed. While Pecheur constantly referred to the Ngbaka as cowards ("*leur émotivité est à la merci d'un seul sentiment: LA PEUR*" (Pecheur 1928: 13)), they are now seen as an assertive, combative people. Already on the plane from Europe to Kinshasa, my neighbor, who was originally from the Kivu and now living in Belgium, told me to be careful when I said that I was going to Gemena to investigate Ngbaka history, because "*ce sont des guerriers*". This bellicose reputation stems from the Ngbaka affiliation with two men who have shaped Congolese political history in a significant way: Mobutu Sese Seko and Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo.

Mobutu, who seized power in 1965, was Ngbandi. According to Fulu Kele, one of my informants and a descendant of Bwamanda, Kanganyani captured a girl called Madelène Yemo during one of his raids amongst the Ngbaka (attachment 16). Later on, she fled to Lisala and met Albéric Gbemani Mobutu, who would become Mobutu's father in 1930. This story seems to be confirmed by Wrong (2009: 69), and it implies that Mobutu's mother was of Ngbaka descent. As a matter of fact, her tomb is situated in Gemena and Mobutu inaugurated a statue in the city to celebrate her legacy (attachment 17). Among the Congolese population, it is well known that many Ngbaka operated in the army of the *Maréchal*. Yet, especially during the last years of his regime, Mobutu's army did not enjoy a good reputation, which explains the rather negative association between 'Ngbaka-ness' and violence:

> Public employees were not receiving their salaries for months or even years, and the army and police that were supposed to protect citizens, became, on the contrary, citizens' nightmares. On many occasions, soldiers harassed and terrorized the masses

> while public services were performed on the basis of briberies or kickbacks. (Naniuzeyi 1999: 669)

It seems that, on a national level, interethnic tensions between Ngbaka and Ngbandi were counterbalanced by their shared legacy as *Equatoriens*. During my last night in Gemena, however, Monzabana and I visited a local politician who told us about a notorious document from 1963, which he referred to as "*le bréviaire*". In this secret document, the Ngbandi would have stated their superiority over Ngbaka people. According to the man, some Ngbaka officials complained to Mobutu during the mid 1970s because their numerical preponderance in the army was not accompanied by the occupation of important key posts. This dissatisfaction would have led to revolts, and subsequently, Mobutu would have arrested the Ngbaka insurrectionists. Yet he did not kill them because he knew how important the Ngbaka support was for the viability of his army. I was not able to check the veracity of this story, but the fact that it goes around can be understood as another manifestation of the troublesome hierarchical relation between the two ethnicities. Moreover, on repeated occasions, I was told that Kanganyani was Mobutu's father, which immediately evoked the continued association of Ngbandi arrogance and domination. Yet it also becomes clear that the representation of the Ngbaka-Ngbandi relationship shifted from an unwanted Ngbandi dominance to an unequal yet deliberate cooperation between the two ethnicities. As Enloe argues, the relation between ethnicity and militarization is rarely left to coincidence, but orchestrated deliberately by the state:

> As ethnic groups and militaries both change over time, so do the political relationship between them. Sometimes, […] the change enhances state consolidation as well as perhaps (though not often) nation-building. In most instances, alterations in military ethnic relationships are not left to chance. They are affected by deliberate state policy decisions. Exploring the phenomenon of ethnicity from the vantage point of state militaries spotlights the importance of state power in the socio-cultural evolution of ethnic groups. (Enloe 1980: 3-4)

Mobutu indeed instrumentalized ethnicity, for his divide-and-rule tactics kept him in power for over twenty years. He installed a system of patronage that enabled him to "bribe

politically pivotal groups off the equilibrium path" (Acemoglu, Robinson & Verdier 2004: 164), thereby destroying the possibility of cooperation between these distinct groups. In the 1990s, when Mobutu's power began to falter, his former puppets used ethnicity, which could withstand institutional collapse in times of state failure, as "a sensible means to take direct control over commercial opportunities associated with their old positions in Mobutu's patronage networks" (Reno 2006: 51). The late Jeannot Bemba Saolona, a prestigious Congolese-Portuguese businessman and Mobutu's confident, was one of them. The Bemba family now occupies the former palace of Mobutu Sese Seko in Gemena and one of Bemba Saolona's daughters is married to Nzanga Mobutu, son of the marshal (Tshitenge Lubabu 2009). As such, the Ngbaka population holds the Bemba family in high esteem, since it represents the political and economical elite of the region.

Although his status as a wealthy self-made-man seems to be nostalgically associated with the former relative economic prosperity of the Equator province, Bemba *le père* was not the only family member to make himself a name in economic and political milieus. In fact, his son, Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, former vice-president of the DRC, now in custody in The Hague, has played an even more crucial role in the country's history. As the leader of the *Mouvement de Libération du Congo* (MLC), Bemba has conducted fierce resistance against Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who brought down the Mobutu regime in 1997 with the help of the Rwandan regime. The MLC, supported by Uganda, operated from Kisangani, from where it gradually marched on Bemba's native region, the Equatorial province. During 1998, the city of Bumba was captured and the MLC urged on to Mbandaka, the provincial capital (Ngolet 2011: 32). By July 1999, Bemba's troops took Gbadolite, Mobutu's former 'Versailles in the jungle' and defeated the government troops, the *Forces Armées Congolaises* (FAC), in Gemena, Bokungu and Zongo, thereby violating the Lusaka ceasefire negotiation that was going on. Bemba was able to avoid tension with the civilians in his zone of operation, since "both he and his movement were popular among the Bangala, who were hoping for a return of "the good old days" of Mobutist northern domination" (Prunier 2009: 208). During 1999 and 2000, the fights continued; Kabila vainly offered Bemba *le père* a ministerial post to reach his subordinate son, while the MLC had to cope with serious air attacks by the governmental forces, but also pushed its advantage thanks to the support of former Mobutu officials and the Angolan UNITA (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*).

When Joseph Kabila seized power after his father was murdered in 2001, peace negotiations started and by 2003, a transitional government was inaugurated with the support of the United Nations mission, which had arrived in the country in 1999, in order to "draft a new constitution, rebuild the national army, and organize national elections within three years" (Carayannis 2008: 2). Jean-Pierre Bemba was nominated one of the four vice-presidents. Meanwhile, the MLC had become a political party and Bemba proved himself a solid opponent to Kabila during the elections in November 2006. In general terms, Kabila had the support of the Swahili-speaking East, while Bemba was more popular in most Lingala-speaking provinces and the capital of Kinshasa, where sporadic shout-outs took place between Bemba and Kabila loyalists. Eventually, Bemba lost with 42 percent to Kabila's 58 percent during the second round (Prunier 2009: 314). After violent protests at the Supreme Court, which affirmed Kabila's victory, Bemba publically accepted his defeat on the 28th of November and continued to serve as a senator in parliament. Kabila, in turn, was not waiting for the fierce opposition Bemba had announced and, on the 21st of March 2007, Bemba's television stations CCTV and Ralik were cut off by the government. The next day, serious fights started between Kabila and Bemba troops in the diplomatic heart of Kinshasa. After three days of severe combat, Bemba fled with his family to the South African embassy, to leave two weeks later for Portugal (Deibert 2013: 102). According to a report by Human Rights Watch, Kabila took advantage of the opportunity to finally crush one of his most fearsome opponents (HRW 2008). About one year after the post-election March incidents in Kinshasa, the Belgian authorities arrested Bemba to deliver him to the ICC. The warrant of arrest was not based on the role of MLC troops during the second Congo war, but on their presence in the Central African Republic in 2002-2003.

This concise biography explains the associations that exist between the figure of Bemba, his militarist reputation and his Ngbaka origin. The Equatorial province has not yet fully recuperated from the violent activities that took place between the governmental military and Bemba's troops. Consequently, opinions about Bemba are diverging, and, to a certain extent, they can be compared to those about Noengo. Both Ngbaka leaders instill fear and disapproval for their violent practices and the instability they caused in the region. Yet, on the other hand, this fear also translates into a certain proudness, because it is believed to be

shared by the oppressive enemy: the colonizer and its allies in the case of Noengo, an unwanted ‘foreign’ Swahili-speaking president and its army in the case of Bemba.[14] Within the same analogy, I thus agree with Boone when she argues that “[d]ifferent configurations of rural authority have consequences for modern state-building trajectories, with enduring implications for the political autonomy of the local, the nature and accountability of local elites, and the capacity of localities to organize for political engagement with the state” (Boone 2003: 3).

6. Conclusions

This thesis deals with the context, implementation and consequences of the territorial homogenization of the Ngbaka in the 1920s. René Pecheur, the colonial official who was responsible for this task, showed great enthusiasm at the beginning of his term, but gradually realized that his intervention was characterized by a high degree of artificiality. By means of the analysis of his letter to the minister of colonies, I have tried to explore the convictions that underlay his colonial commitment. Pecheur initially believed that ethnic authenticity was to be maintained and instrumentalized to render colonial dominance and Christian conversion more effective. In doing so, he ignored the fact that the image of a rigidly demarcated tribalism is in fact a colonial construct *par excellence*. Yet, as his term proceeded, he became aware of the schism that existed between European ideals of African society and Congolese reality. By 1928, the deception that accompanied this understanding led him to resign.

In order to understand the colonial tendency to categorize and structure, I introduced the notion of cognitive schemata, which turn chaotic stimuli into comprehensible information. In a context of state control, a similar mechanism has been described by Scott (1998), who argued that legibility is of crucial importance for the exertion of power. One of the ways in which this power can be made tangible is by implementing it spatially. Foucault (1977, 1978, 1980, 1991) has made major contributions about the activation of space for means of control. His notions of governmentality and panoptical surveillance have proved to be instructive to analyze the colonial inclination towards the structuration of population, but they do not come up to the mark to theoretically substantiate other orders of power than those implemented by the supposed powerful. That is why I agree with Lefebvre (1974) and Pred (1984) when they argue that place is socially constructed by all involved actors. This interpretation of spatial experience is more open to multiple perspectives and alternative power relations. As I have come to show, the use of magical practices is an important indicator of true supremacy for many Ngbaka, which also allows them to reappropriate their political and economic condition. Moreover, is has become clear that colonial paradigms and colonial praxis tended to diverge. This discrepancy was due to the partial incapability of the colonial system to turn the 'amorphous' Ngbaka population (and others, see chapter 2.4)

into legible units that fitted colonial interests. The recalcitrance of African reality displayed the limits of colonial power (to Pecheur's frustration), while simultaneously testifying to Ngbaka perceptions of socially relevant categories and the relation between both.

Therefore, I hope that I have been able to deconstruct, at least partly, the ready-made binary between colonizer and colonized. After all, both categories appear to disintegrate when diachronic dynamics, internal discordance and individual praxis are taken into account. The ambivalent relation between Ngbaka and Ngbandi proves that there is no such as thing as a homorganic, static colonized, while Pecheur's eventual deception deviated from what his superiors had in mind. But even though Pecheur no longer believed in the materialization of the ideal ethnic division that underlay the territorial homogenization, it had an impact on the way Ngbaka ethnicity is experienced nowadays. As a matter of fact, it can even be put to question if this category of belonging would exist without the colonial intervention that molded it: the implementation of the 'ethnic scheme' was artificial in essence, but real in its consequences. The active manipulation of ethnic ties by postcolonial figures like Mobutu and Bemba indicates that these consequences not only apply to a local level, but also to a national one. Hence, I hope that the demarcation of my research subject meets up with Boone's argument "that social forces have gone far in shaping and constraining patterns of state formation since the end of the nineteenth century, but that the full significance and implications of this are only revealed through development of appropriate spatial and temporal frames of analysis" (Boone 2003: xi).

I tend to believe that the strength of this thesis lies in the combined consultation of written and oral sources. This method offers a multi-perspectival insight in the way the colonial encounter was experienced by the different actors at stake. However, further research among the Ngbandi could give an even more nuanced image of *their* perspective on Ngbaka-Ngbandi relations. Especially its pre-colonial history and its development during the Mobutu era deserve further investigation. The main goal of my research, however, was to gain some insights in the way colonial spatial interference has shaped the social and political features of what it means to 'be Ngbaka'.

7. Notes

[1] Other typologies are Bwaka, Gbaga, Mbaga, Gmbwaka, M'Bwaka, Bakka, Ngwaka, M'Baka, Mbooaka, Baka, Bouaka, M'baka, Gbaka, Gmbwaga, Gwaka, Buaka" (Burssens 1958: 24). The most recurrent typology in older texts is Bwaka.

[2] Giddens has made himself a name by stating that the rules and power relations of social structure not only constrain and enable human agency and practice, they also emerge out of them. As such, Giddens has provided a tremendous step forward to narrow down the gap between social structure and individual agency by acknowledging that they are inevitably intertwined and mutually compliant (see Giddens 1984 and Jacobs 1993).

[3] A similar process took place in Burundi and Rwanda, where colonial authorities created a Tutsi elite, based on supposed ethnic superiority. The postcolonial consequences of this hierarchically constructed society are at the basis of the genocide during the 1990s (see Uvin 1999).

[4] As this quote shows, the image of the metropole was just as much shaped by the colonial encounter as that of the colony. Representations of the colonized inevitably implied an evocation of an ideal colonizer, and vice versa. That is why Cooper and Stoler (1997: vii) have argued that "what was imaginable in terms of social policy reflected histories of distant metropoles as well as the immediate opportunities and constraints of conquest while the colonial experience shaped what it meant to be "metropolitan" and "European" as much as the other way around".

[5] After his travel in pursuit of Livingstone, Stanley made a second journey and 'discovered' the course of the Congo River. Initially, Stanley refused Leopold's offer because he wanted Great Britain to explore the region. Despite Stanley's propaganda, London was not interested in an expansion of its African interests because the imperial focus was to remain on Egypt and South Africa.

[6] On the level of primary education, efforts were made. Yet when it comes to higher education, only the strictly necessary was provided, in order to keep the colonial system intact.

[7] The term "pygmy" is not without difficulties. Maes writes: "*Les Pygmées, hommes de petite taille, étant une autre race que les hommes de grande taille, vivent en forêt*" (Maes 1997: 17). This separate human category is mostly constructed within Western imagination (see Ballard 2006).

[8] Since Marcel passed away before the completion of this thesis, I have not been able to verify Ngbaka orthography.

[9] According to the archives, Noengo's revolt dates from the early 1920s. As such, he has not been combating the Ngbandi invaders sent by the Leopoldian regime, but Belgian government troops.

[10] Maes uses a different typology: "Bado, Gbwamanda et Dambui" (Maes 1997: 50).

[11] Hulstaert's radical indigenism was mainly driven by his Flemish nationalist conviction (see Meeuwis 2002, Ceuppens 2003 and Vinck 2012). This 'imported' ideological baggage of Flemish emancipation has played a crucial role in the shaping of colonial language policy in the Congo (see Meeuwis 2015a, 2015b (in press)), but it is unlikely to have been at the basis of Pecheur's language ideology, as he was a Walloon. Hence, there is no one-on-one relation between Herderian ideology and Flemish identity.

[12] It is remarkable that the cause of the Ngbaka dispersion is determined in this quote as "*certaines erreurs administratives*". In the year report of 1922, the Belgian share in the disaggregation of the Equatorial province is equally minimalized. The report states that the demographic destabilization of the area is owing to the raid of Arabized groups and internal wars (AA Rapport Annuel 1922: 43). This rhetoric reminds of the Leopoldian discourse on Arab slave raiders that served as a moral argument to extenuate the intrusive nature of the colonial project.

[13] Makasi Monene was the local name given to Pecheur, meaning 'the strong, big one' in Lingala. When using this name during my fieldwork however, he was often confused with Makasi Moke ('the strong, small one'), an official that arrived after Crabbeck whose real name I never discovered.

[14] In Kinshasa and the Lingala-speaking areas of the country, Kabila's 'Congolese-ness' is questioned because he spent a considerable part of his youth in Tanzania. It is often presumed that Kabila is unable to express himself fluently in Lingala. Bemba's campaign slogan of 2006, "*100% Congolais*", "overtly challenged Kabila's citizenship and autochtony" (Büscher, D'hondt & Meeuwis 2013: 532).

8. Bibliography

Acemoglu, Daron, James Robinson & Thierry Verdier
2004 Kleptocracy and divide-and-rule: A model of personal rule. *Journal of the European Economic Association* 2(2-3), 162-192.

Anstey, Roger
1966 *King Leopold's legacy: the Congo under Belgian rule: 1908-1960*. London: Oxford University Press.

Ambler, Charles
1988 *Kenyan communities in the age of imperialism: The central region in the late nineteenth century*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Atkinson, Ronald
1999 The (re)construction of ethnicity in Africa: Extending the chronology, conceptualization, and discourse. In Paris Yeros (ed.), *Ethnicity and nationalism in Africa: Constructivist reflections and contemporary politics*, 15-44. New York: St. Martin's.

Ballard, Chris
2006 Strange alliance: Pygmies in the colonial imaginary. *World Archeology* 38(1), 133-151.

Barth, Fredrik (ed.)
1969 *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Barthes, Roland
1974 *S/Z: An essay*. New York: Hill & Wang.

Bates, Robert, Valentin Mudimbe & Jean O'Barr (eds.)
1993 *Africa and the disciplines: The contribution of research in Africa to the social sciences and humanities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Beeckmans, Luce
2013 *Making the African city: Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Kinshasa; 1920-1980*. Doctoral dissertation, Ghent University.

Belmessous, Saliha
2013 *Assimilation and empire: Uniformity in French and British colonies, 1541-1954.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Boone, Catherine
2003 *Political topographies of the African state: Territorial authority and institutional choice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre
1985 The social space and the genesis of groups. *Theory and society* 14(6), 723-744.

Bradley, Matt
2007 Silenced for their own protection: How the IRB marginalizes those it feigns to protect. *ACME: An International E-journal for Critical Geographies* 6, 339-349.

Braudel, Fernand
1958 Histoire et sciences sociales: La longue durée. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 13(4), 725-753.

Brenner, Neil
1994 Foucault's new functionalism. *Theory and Society* 23(5), 979-709.

Brinkman, Inge
1996 *Kikuyu gender norms and narratives*. Leiden: CNWS.

Burssens, Herman
1958 *Les peuplades de l'Entre Congo-Ubangi: Ngbandi, Ngbaka, Mbandja, Ngombe et Gens d'Eau, Annalen van het Koninklijk museum van Belgisch-Congo Tervuren, Reeks in-8: Wetenschappen van de mens. Etnographische monographieën 4.* Tervuren: Royal Museum for Central Africa.

Büscher, Karen, Sigurd D'hondt & Michael Meeuwis
2013 Recruiting a non-local language for performing local identity: Indexical appropriations of Lingala in the Congolese border town Goma. *Language in Society* 42(5), 527-556.

Carayannis, Tatiana
2008 *Elections in the DRC: The Bemba surprise*. United States Institute of Peace. http://www.usip.org/publications/elections-in-the-drc-the-bemba-surprise (29/11/2014)

Cassell, Joan
1980 Ethical principles for conducting fieldwork. *American Anthropologist* 82(1), 28-41.

Cattier, Félicien
1906 *Etude sur la situation de l'Etat Indépendent du Congo*. Brussels: Larcier.

Ceuppens, Bambi
2003 *Congo made in Flanders? Koloniale Vlaamse visies op blank en zwart in Belgisch Congo*. Ghent: Academia Press.

Chauveau, Jean-Pierre & Jean-Pierre Dozon
1988 Ethnies et état en Côte-d'Ivoire. *Revue Française de Science Politique* 38(5), 732-747.

Chimhundu, Herbert
1992 Early missionaries and the ethnolinguistic factor during the 'invention of tribalism' in Zimbabwe. *The Journal of African History* 33(1), 87-109.

Cohen, David William
1989 The undefining of oral tradition. *Ethnohistory* 36(1), 9-18.

Comaroff, John
1989 Images of empire, contests of conscience: Models of colonial domination in South Africa. *American Ethnologist* 16(4), 661-685.

Comaroff, John & Jean Comaroff
1993 *Modernity and its malcontents: Ritual and power in postcolonial Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Coolsaet, Rik
1998 *België en zijn buitenlandse politiek: 1830-2000*. Leuven: Van Halewyck.

Cooper, Frederick
1994 Conflict and connection: rethinking colonial African history. *American Historical Review* 99(15), 1516-1545.

Cooper, Frederick & Stoler, Ann Laura (eds.)
1997 *Tensions of empire: Colonial cultures in a bourgeois world*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cornelis, Sabine
1991 Stanley au service de Léopold II: La fondation de l'Etat Indépendant du Congo (1878-1885). In Philippe Maréchal (ed.) *H.M. Stanley: Explorateur au service du Roi*, 41-60. Tervuren: Royal Museum for Central Africa.

Danniau, Fien
2005 *Il s'agit d'un peuple: Het antropologisch onderzoek van het Bureau international d'ethnographie (1905-1913)*. Master's dissertation, Ghent University.

Daye, Pierre
1934 *Léopold II*. Paris: Fayard.

De Certeau, Michel
2000 [1984] *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Deibert, Michael
2013 *The Democratic Republic of Congo: Between hope and despair*. London: Zed Books.

Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Félix
1976 *Rhizome: Introduction*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

Droz, Yvan
1998 Genèse d'une "ethnie": Le cas des Kikuyus du Kenya central. *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 32(2), 261-284.

Enloe, Cynthia
1980 *Ethnic soldiers: State security in a divided society.* Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Ewans, Martin
2002 *European atrocity, African catastrophe: Leopold II, the Congo Free State and its aftermath*. London: Routledge Curzon.

Fabian, Johannes
1983 Missions and the colonization of African languages: Developments in the former Belgian Congo. *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 17(2), 165-187.
1986 *Language and colonial power: The appropriation of Swahili in the former Belgian Congo, 1880-1938*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Farge, Arlette
1989 *Le gout de l'archive*. Paris: Seuil.

Feinberg, Harvey M.
1993 The 1913 Natives Land Act in South Africa: Politics, race, and segregation in the early 20th century. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26(1), 65-109.

Feldman, Ilana
2011 Working in the in-between: Archives, ethnography, and research in Gaza. In Edward Murphy and others (eds.) *Anthrohistory, unsettling knowledge, questioning discipline,* 97-109. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Foucault, Michel
1970 Theatrum philosophicum: Review of Différence et répétition and Logique du sens by Deleuze. *Critique* 282, 885-905.
1977 *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Pantheon Books.
1978 *The history of sexuality, an introduction: Volume I*. Pantheon Books: New York.
1980 *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings*. New York: Pantheon Books.
1991 Governmentality. In Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon & Peter Miller (eds.) *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality,* 87-104. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Franck, Louis
1920 Dans nos possessions africaines. *Le Flambeau* 3(11), 662-678.

1926 *Congo: Land en volk*. Brugge: Centrale Boekhandel.

Freund, Bill
2007 *The African city: A history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Frisch, Michael
1990 *A shared authority: Essays on the craft and meaning of oral and public history.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Gabbert, Lisa & Jordan-Smith, Paul
2007 Space, place, emergence. *Western Folklore* 66 (3/4), 217-232.

Gérard-Libois, Jules & Benoît Verhaegen
1985 *Le Congo: Du domaine de Léopold II à l'indépendance*. Brussels: CRISP.

Gerebern, P.
1935 *Pioniers 25 jaar in de Ubangimissie der Belgische Capucijnen*. Antwerpen: Franciscaansche Standaard.

Geschiere, Peter
1997 *The modernity of witchcraft: Politics and the occult in postcolonial Africa*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Geschiere, Peter & Birgit Meyer
1998 Globalization and identity: Dialectics of flow and closure. *Development and Change* (29), 601-615.

Giddens, Anthony
1984 *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Cambridge: Polite Press.

Gille, A.
1953 La politique indigène du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi. In *Encyclopédie du Congo Belge, Tome III,* 709-748. Brussel: Editions Bieleveld.

Geertz, Clifford
1973 *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Gordon, Colin
1991 Governmental rationality: An introduction. In Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon & Peter Miller (eds.) *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality* PAGNRS. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Harries, Patrick
1988 The roots of ethnicity: Discourse and the politics of language construction in South-East Africa. *African Affairs* 87(346), 25-52.

Henige, David
1974 Kingship in Elmina before 1869: A study in 'feedback' and the traditional idealization of the past. *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 14(55), 499-520.

Henrix, Marcel
2006 *Proverbes Ngbaka*. Ghent: Recall.

Hodgson, Dorothy
2011 The politics of naming: ethical dilemmas and disciplinary divides in anthropology and history. In Edward Murphy and others (eds.) *Anthrohistory, unsettling knowledge, questioning discipline,* 257-272. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Howard, Allen
2005 Nodes, networks, landscapes, and regions: Reading the social history of tropical Africa 1700s-1920. In Allen Howard & Richard Shain (eds.) *The spatial factor in African history,* 21-140. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

Howard, Allen & Richard Shain
2005 Introduction: African history and social space in Africa. In Allen Howard & Richard Shain (eds.) *The spatial factor in African history,* 1-19. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

Human Rights Watch
2008 *"We will crush you": The restriction of political space in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*.
http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/drc1108web.pdf
(29/11/2014)

Huxley, Margo
2007 Geographies of governmentality. In Jeremy Crampton and Stuart Elden (eds.) *Space, knowledge and power: Foucault and geography*, 185-204. Farnham: Ashgate.

Iliffe, John
1979 *A modern history of Tanganyika*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2007 [1995] *Africans: The history of a continent*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Inda, Jonathan Xavier
2005 Analytics of the modern: An introduction. In Jonathan Xavier Inda (ed.) *Anthropologies of modernity: Foucault, governmentality, and life politics*, 1-20. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Jacobs, Dirk
1993 Het structurisme als synthese van handelings- en systeemtheorie. *Tijdschrift voor Sociologie* 14, 335-360.

Jewsiewicki, Bogumil
1989 The formation of the political culture of ethnicity in the Belgian Congo, 1920-1959. In Vail, Leroy (ed.) *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa*. 324-349. London: James Currey.

Katzenellenbogen, Simon
1996 It didn't happen at Berlin: Politics, economics and ignorance in the setting of Africa's colonial boundaries. In Nugent, Paul & Asiwaju A.I. (eds.) *African boundaries: Barriers, conduits and opportunities*. 21-34. Londen: Pinter.

Kristeva, Julia
1969 *Semeiotike: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. Paris: Seuil.

Kunda, Ziva
2000 *Social cognition: Making sense of people*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Lawrance, Benjamin, Emily Lynn Osborn & Richard Roberts
2006 *Intermediaries, interpreters, and clerks: African employees in the making of colonial Africa*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Lederman, Rena
2006 The perils of working at home: IRB "mission creep" as context and content for an ethnography of disciplinary knowledges. *American Ethnologist* 33, 482-491.

Lefebvre, Henri
1974 *La production de l'espace*. Paris: Anthropos.

Legg, Stephen
2007 *Spaces of colonialism: Delhi's urban governmentalities*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Libata, Musuy-Bakul
1987 Regroupement des Baluba et ses conséquences géo-politiques dans la périphérie de Luluabourg (1891-1960). *Annales Aequatoria* 8, 99-129.

Locatelli, Francesca & Paul Nugent (eds.)
2009: *African cities: Competing claims on urban spaces*. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

Lonsdale, John
1994 Moral ethnicity and political tribalism. In Preben Kaarsholm & Jan Hultin (eds.) *Inventions and boundaries: Historical and anthropological approaches to the study of ethnicity and nationalism*, 131-50. Roskilde: International Development Studies.
1997 [1991] The moral economy of Mau Mau. In Bruce Berman & John Lonsdale (eds.) *Unhappy valley. Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, 265-504. London: Currey.

Louis, Roger
1964 Roger Casement and the Congo. *The Journal of African History* 5(1), 99-120.

Louis, Roger & Jean Stengers
1968 *E.D. Morel's history of the Congo Reform Movement*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lovejoy, Paul
1982 The volume of the Atlantic slave trade: A synthesis. *The Journal of African History* 23(4), 473-501.

MacGaffey, Janet & Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga
2000 *Congo-Paris: Transnational traders on the margins of the law*. Oxford: Currey.

Maes, Vedast
1984 *Les peuples de l'Ubangi: notes ethno-historiques.* Kinshasa: Pères O.F.M. Capucins.
1997 *Les Ngbaka du Centre de l'Ubangi.* Kinshasa : Pères O.F.M Capucins.

Mafeje, Archie
1971 The ideology of 'tribalism'. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9(2), 253-261.

Magotte, J.
1949 *Les circonscriptions indigènes: Organisation politique et administrative des population indigènes.* La Louvière: Impr. Louvièroise.

Marchal, Jules
1996 *E.D. Morel contre Léopold II: L'histoire du Congo 1900-1910*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Massoz, Michel
1989 *Le Congo de Léopold II: Récit historique*. Liège: Solédi.

Mathys, Gillian
2014 *People on the move: Frontiers, borders, mobility and history in the Lake Kivu region*. Doctoral dissertation, Ghent University.

Mbembe, Achilles
2003 Necropolitics. *Public Culture* 15(1), 11-40.

Meeuwis, Michael
1997 *Constructing sociolinguistic consensus: A linguistic ethnography of the Zairian community in Antwerp, Belgium*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Antwerp.
2001 Missions and linguistic choice-making: The case of the Capuchins in the Ubangi mission (Belgian Congo), 1910-1945. *General Linguistics: African Language and Culture in Historical Perspective* 38, 157-188.
2002 Flemish nationalism in the Belgian Congo versus Zairian anit-imperialism: Continuity and discontinuity in language ideological debates. In *Mouton*

Classics: From syntax to cognition, from phonology to text, 2 volumes, 675-717. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
2006 The Lingala-Kiswahili border in north-eastern Congo: Its origins in Belgian colonial state formation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Africana Linguistica* 12, 113-135.
2011 The origins of Belgian colonial language policies in the Congo. *Language Matters* 42(2), 190-206.
2015a Language legislation in the Belgian Colonial Charter of 1908: a textual-historical analysis. *Language Policy* 14(1), 49-65.
2015b From the Cape to the Congo and back: Afrikaners and Flemings in the struggle for Dutch in Africa (1874-1960). *Language Matters*. (in press)

Moerman, Michael
1993 Ariadne's thread and Indra's net: Reflections on ethnography, ethnicity, identity, culture, and interaction. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 26(1), 85-98.

Mortier, Rodolf
1937 Volken en volksverhuizingen in Ubangi (Belgisch Kongo). *Kongo-Overzee* 3, 209-214.

Naniuzeyi, Mabiengwa Emmanuel
1999 The state of the state in Congo-Zaire: A survey of the Mobutu regime. *Journal of Black Studies* 29(5), 669-683.

Ngbwakpwa Te Mobusa
1993 L'exploitation du caoutchouc par l'état indépendant du Congo dans le territoire de Banzyville, district de l'Ubangi (1900-1908). *Civilisations* 41, 291-306.

Ngolet, François
2011 *Crisis in the Congo: The rise and fall of Laurent Kabila*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Nicholson, Nigel
2013 Cultural studies, oral tradition and the promise of intertextuality. *American Journal of Philology* 134(1), 9-21.

Nora, Pierre
1984-1992 *Les lieux de mémoire*. Paris: Gallimard.

Parsons, Timothy
2012 Being Kikuyu in Meru: Challenging the tribal geography of colonial Kenya. *Journal of African History* 53, 65-86.

Pecheur René
1917 *Observations sur la mentalité des populations du Congo.* Letter to the Minister of Colonies.

Platzky, Laurine & Cherryl Walker
1985 *The surplus people: Forced removals in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Pred, Allan
1977 The choreography of existence: comments on Hägerstrand's time-geography and its usefulness. *Economic Geography* 53 (2), 207-221.
1984 Place as historically contingent process: Structuration and the time-geography of becoming places. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 74 (2), 279-297.

Prunier, Gérard
2009 *Africa's world war: Congo, the Rwandan genocide, and the making of a continental catastrophe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ramutsindela, Maano
2013 The enduring spatial legacy of the Natives Land Act. *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* 39(2), 290-297.

Ranger, Terence
1983 The invention of tradition in colonial Africa. In Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The invention of tradition*, 211-62. London/New/York Lagos: Cambridge University Press.
1993 The invention of tradition revisited: The case of colonial Africa. In Terence Ranger & Olufemi Vaughan (ed.) *Legitimacy and the state in twentieth-century Africa. Essays in honour of A.H.M. Kirk-Greene*, 62-111. London: Basingstoke.

Relph, Edward
1976 *Place and placelessness*. London: Pion.

Reno, William
2006 Congo: From state collapse to 'absolutism', to state failure. *Third World Quarterly* 27(1), 43-56.

Rothschild, Robert
1936 Trends in native policy in the Belgian Congo. *The Journal of Negro Education* 5(4), 577-590.

Said, Edward
1986 Foucault and the imagination of power. in David Hoy (ed.) *Foucault: A critical reader*, 149-155. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Salm, Steven & Toyin Falola (eds.)
2005 *African urban spaces in historical perspective*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

Schmid, Christian
2008 Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space: Towards a three-dimensional dialectic. In Kanishka Goonewardena, Stefan Kipfer, Richard Milgrom & Christian Schmid (eds.) *Space, difference, everyday life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*. New York/London: Routledge.

Scott, James C.
1990 *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden Transcripts.* New Haven: Yale University Press.
1998 *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Seamon, David & Jacob Sowers
2008 Place and placelessness (1976), Edward Relph. In Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin & Gill Valentine (eds.) *Key texts in human geography*, 43-51. London: Sage.

Senelle, Robert & Emile Clément
2009 *Léopold II et la charte colonial (1885-1908): De l'Etat Indépendant du Congo à la colonie belge*. Wavre: Mols.

Sewi Tolowego, Senemona
2014 *Les arbres refuges Ngbaka*. Kinshasa.

Soja, Edward
1989 *Postmodern geographies: The reassertion of space in critical social theory*. London: Verso.

Southall, Aidan
1970 The illusion of tribe. In Peter Gutkind (ed.) *The passing of tribal man in Africa*, 28-50. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Spencer, Vicki
2007 In defence of Herder on cultural diversity and interaction. *The Review of Politics* 69(1), 79-105.

Stengers, Jean
1949 La première tentative de reprise du Congo par la Belgique (1894-1895). *Bulletin de la Société Royale Belge de Géographie* 73(1-2), 43-122.
1989 *Congo mythes et réalités: 100 ans d'histoire*. Paris: Editions Duculot.

Stoler, Ann Laura
1995 *Race and the education of desire: Foucault's history of sexuality and the colonial order of things*. London: Duke University Press.

2009 *Along the archival grain: Epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tanghe, Basiel
1930 De Bwaka van het Ubangi gebied. *Congo, Algemeen Tijdschrift van de Belgische Kolonie* 11(3), 182-183.
1946 Overzicht van de volken en stammen in Ubangi (Belgisch-Kongo). *Kongo-Overzee* 12/13, 193-203.

Thomas, Jacqueline
1963 *Les Ngbaka de la Lobaye: le dépeuplement rural chez une population forestière de la République Centrafricaine*. Paris: Ecole Pratiques des Hautes Etudes.

Thomas, Nicholas
1994 *Colonialism's culture: Anthropology, travel and government*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Thompson, Paul
1984 History and the community. In David Dunaway and Willa Baum (eds.) *Oral history, an interdisciplinary anthology*, 37-50. Nashville: the American Association for State and Local History.

Thomson, Alistair
2007 Four paradigm transformations in oral history. *The Oral History Review* 34(1), 49-70.

Tshitenge Lubaba, M. K.
2009 Jeannot Bemba Saolona. *Jeune Afrique*. http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAJA2530p040-041.xml0/-deces-senateur-homme-d-affaires-Jeannot-Bemba-Saolona-Jeannot-Bemba-Saolona (29/11/2014)

Tuan, Yi-Fu
1977 *Space and place: the perspective of experience*. London: Arnold.

Turner, Thomas
1993 "Batetela", "Baluba", "Basonge": Ethnogenesis in Zaire. *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 33(132), 587-612.

Uvin, Peter
1999 Ethnicity and power in Burundi and Rwanda: Different paths to mass violence. *Comparative Politics* 31(3), 253-271.

van Dijk, Rijk, Mirjam de Bruijn & Jan Bart Gewald
2007 Social and historical trajectories of agency in Africa: an introduction. In Mirjam de Bruijn, Rijk van Dijk en Jan Bart Gewald (eds), *Strength beyond structure:*

Social and historical trajectories of agency in Africa, 1-15. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Vangroenweghe, Daniel
1985 *Leopold II & Kongo*. Brugge: Van Groenweghe.

Vansina, Jan
1985 *Oral tradition as history*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
1997 Letter to Marcel Henrix concerning Maes' writings (1st of February).
2010 *Being colonized: The Kuba experience in rural Congo, 1880-1960*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Vanthemsche, Guy
2012 *Belgium and the Congo 1885-1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Viaene, Vincent
2008 King Leopold's imperialism and the origins of the Belgian Colonial Party 1860-1905. *The Journal of Modern History* 80(4), 741-790.

Vinck, Honoré
2012 Ideology in missionary scholarly knowledge in Belgian Congo: Aequatoria, centre de recherches africanistes; The mission station of Bamanya (RDC), 1937-2007. In Patrick Harries & David Maxwell (eds.) *The spiritual in the secular: Missionaries and knowledge about Africa*, 221-244. Michigan/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Vonk, Roos
2001 *Cognitieve sociale psychologie: Psychologie van het dagelijkse denken en doen.* Utrecht: Lemma.

Wauters, A.
1930 Belgian policy in the Congo*. Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* 9(1), 51-62.

White, Luise
1990 *The comforts of home: prostitution in colonial Nairobi*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

White, Luise, Stephan Miescher & David William Cohen
2001 Introduction: Voices, words and African history. In Luise White, Stephan Miescher & David William Cohen (eds.) *African words, African voices*, 1-27. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Wilke, H.A.M.
1995 *Oriëntatie in de sociale psychologie: Het individu en de groep.* Houten/ Diegem: Bohn Stafleu Van Loghum.

Willis, Justin
1993 Feedback as a ‘problem’ in oral history: An example from Bonde. *History in Africa* 20, 353-360.

Wrong, Michela
2000 *In the footsteps of Mr Kurtz: Living on the brink of disaster in the Congo.* London: Fourth Estate.

Young, Crawford
1976 *The politics of cultural pluralism*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Zammito, John
2002 *Kant, Herder, and the birth of anthropology.* Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.

9. List of attachments

1. Interview with Gbafo Ndate Antoine, Bozoko
2. Map of the *territoire de Gemena* 1959, scale 1/200:000 (Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren)
3. Detail: multi-sited fieldwork in the surroundings of Gemena
4. Bad conditions of the roads between Gemena and Bodanganya
5. Bad conditions of the roads between Gemena and Boketa
6. Focus group conversation, Bogo Wazi
7. Interview with Senge Augustin, Bombawili
8. Manza and his family, Bokuda monene
9. Noengo, found in Gemena (authenticity not verified)
10. Pecheur's letter to the Minister of Colonies, AA 1917
11. Letter of the General Governor, AA 26/10/1921
12. Pecheur's resignation letter, AA 26/06/1928
13. Crabbeck and his wife, AA personal file
14. Statistics of the indigenous population, AA page 70 of the *Rapport Annuel*, 1927/1928
15. Uniformity of Ngbaka area, Mortier 1937
16. Interview Fulu Kele, Bokuda moke
17. Statue of traditional warrior for Mobutu's mother, near the lake of Gemena