The Politics of Apoliticality: Form and Process in a Lower Congo Régional Council

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INTRODUCTION

In 1958, three years after the 'politicization' of the Bakongo ethnic party ABAKO, just a few months prior to the catalytic January 1959 Leopoldville riots, and a short two years before national independence, an urban-based group of teachers, traders, workers, and lower-echelon civil servants,¹ all originating from the rural territoire of Luozi north of the Congo river—known as 'the Manianga'—formed an association called the Manianga Superior Council.² According to

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1. Although by 1958 the Belgian colonial government had begun to appoint Africans to the lower echelons of the 'upper grade' administrative level hitherto reserved for Europeans, the majority of the civil servants involved in the Manianga Council were still of the 'lower grade' or the 'auxiliary staff' not having completed their secondary studies (cf. Georges Brausch, Belgian Administration in the Congo, London, 1961, pp. 29-30).

2. The Conseil Supérieur des Manianga (CSM) is the most important in a sequence of titles used to identify various associations, movements, and proposals among Manianga élite, including more specifically the Coopérative des Produits Agricoles du Manianga (COPAM), the Société Coopérative des Manianga (SOCOMAN), the Conseil Supérieur des Manianga-rénové (CSM-rénové), the Forces Vives des Manianga, the Union des Intellectuels des Manianga (UDIMA), the Conseil Supérieur des Manianga-révolutionnaires (CSM-rév.), and finally, again the Conseil Supérieur des Manianga (CONSUMA), not to be mistaken with the CSM above. For the sake of clarity I refer to the quasi-corporative tradition of Manianga interest groups evident here simply as 'the Manianga Council' unless explicitly mentioning a particular group. A schematic table showing the historic connections of these groups is shown in Chart 1 (p. 595) in the conclusion.
the first statutes of the Council it was to be an "apolitical association," modeled after the early ABAKO, to promote economic, social, political, and moral development of the Manianga people."

As was the case with many other regional and/or ethnic associations that came into existence in the Congo at this time, the Manianga Council served more as a rallying emblem for the regional elite and an arena for political maneuvering in the immediate pre-independence scramble for legislative and administrative positions than as a tightly-organized corporate body with a disciplined programme of development for the rural Manianga. In its earliest phase the Council operated most clearly as a regional coordinating extension of the ABAKO ethnic party, similar to it, yet distinctly within it. Nevertheless, a specifically Maniangan regionalist sentiment evident in the very formation of the Council, became a growing reality. Personality conflicts in subsequent national-level politics, and an increasingly autocratic provincial government in the Lower Congo, brought to the surface latent forces created by the unique ecological, economic, and colonial experience of the Maniangans, to produce an extension of residual cleavages and the solidification of primordial regional attachments. In time, too, a characteristic pattern of political process emerged as the institutional form of this regionalist sentiment: a situational factionalism recruited variously along lines of social age gaps, differential participation in government, and the rural-urban interest dichotomy, marked by a sequence of internal coups reflecting the shift of power from one sector of the society to another.

Because regional level politics in Central and Equatorial Africa, whether it is focused in a council such as that under review here or not, is often rather far from the center of power, and therefore considered insignificant, because it is frequently shrouded in colloquial rhetoric, and therefore incomprehensible short of learning the language in which it is waged, and because it is usually not well documented, unless one goes to the main actors and their private files, it has understandably not received as much attention by outside scholars as it deserves. Particularly in fragile political contexts like that.

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1. This term was used by the colony to identify ethnic associations, although obviously it is a misnomer in any analytical sense. Later on, in the rhetoric of Congolese politicians, the 'apolitical' takes on the meaning of reconciliation, accord, and brotherhood among dissenting factions. It also becomes a convenient terminological covering for patently political activity when politician and political parties are in bad repute with the national government.


of the post-independence Republic of the Congo, the micropolitics of a region, demonstrating its own kind of institutional continuity in allocating authority, expressing and resolving conflict within a determinate section of the population, can show us a more authentic picture of deeply-ingrained political culture than the rarified air of national, regime-level, politics where institutions are affected at every turn of events by the recognizable style of a few individuals in power at the moment.¹

A closer analysis of regional micropolitics in the Lower Congo, Republic of the Congo-Kinshasa, begins with the rôle played by the Manianga Council, one of many similar groups, in provincial and national events at the time of independence. It will then be necessary to turn to the question of why the Manianga, although not a traditional ‘tribe’ even in the Equatorial African acephalous sense, became a self-conscious region in contemporary times. After a brief appraisal of the structural characteristics in the several corporate groups that both express and continue to propagate such Manianga regionalism, attention turns to the political process of three consecutive coups, from 1960 to 1965, within the Manianga community, or, more precisely, within the Manianga Council.

I. — EXTERNAL DETERMINANTS OF MANIANGA REGIONALISM

1. The Events of Independence.

From the 1959 Leopoldville riots on, ABAKO waged an active campaign for immediate independence under the leadership of Joseph Kasavubu. Before this time the idea of independence, although spoken about by a small group of elite, had no real transforming effect on the Lower Congo countryside population. But in early 1959, in the rural Manianga as in other rural areas in the general Kongo ethnic area, local party bureaus were opened, the party’s youth movements were launched, and, in what contributed more than anything else to political participation of the rural masses, significant amounts of financial contributions were collected. Every rural villager, for example, knew about Maître Croquez, the French lawyer hired by ABAKO to defend the imprisoned party leaders after the riots, because they had contributed to his plane fare and his legal fees. But the participation of the mass was at this time mainly symbolic, toward immediate effectiveness, rather than toward solid

¹ An analysis of immediate post-independence Congolese political culture offered in conversation with Benoît Verhaegen, Kinshasa, 1965.
organization. Emphasis fell on such things as membership cards, rally songs, local section bureau names such as kimpwanza ‘independence’, niembo ‘civilization’, mayala ‘governing authority’, and even more significantly, on the very person of Kasavubu. Despite the relatively superficial organizational depth of all this activity, it made a striking impression on the indigenous government staffs; secteur chiefs having earned many medals of honor for faithful service to the colony suddenly refused to collect taxes. In the Manianga, however, unlike other rural areas of the Lower Congo, all local administrative activity ceased after about July 1959, and even the colonially-sponsored elections of December were boycotted at the behest of the more radical ABAKO leaders, prompting Vice-Governor General Schöller to judge the Manianga as one of the most inhospitable regions of the entire Lower Congo, from the colonial government’s viewpoint.

Through 1959 it was thus not the urban-based Manianga Council but the all-embracing ethnic party ABAKO whose leadership was felt in rural areas. Daniel Kanza, a Manianga native son, was ABAKO vice-president, and any regional identification that may have existed was at this time fused into overall Kongo ethnic and ABAKO party recognition. It was the personal feud between Kasavubu and Kanza, rather, erupting in full scale at the Brussels Round Table talks in January 1960 that stimulated a cleavage between Manianga self-consciousness and ABAKO loyalty. Kanza openly criticized Kasavubu for having acted in an arbitrary manner with the party treasury, and also refused to join Kasavubu in walking out of the talks because he (Kanza) rejected Kasavubu’s policy of immediate independence. In addition, to contribute to the conflict between these two men, was the fact, not insignificant back in the Congo, that Kanza was a Protestant, and Kasavubu a Catholic. The Brussels incident gained for Kanza a curt eviction from the party and brought into prominence Vital Faustin Moanda, who later in 1962 would become Kongo Central provincial governor and influential vice-president of ABAKO.

1. In Durkheimian terms, the political integration of the Manianga mass was more ‘mechanical’ than ‘organic’, an explanation that goes far to clarify the sudden withering of ABAKO grass-roots support following independence, despite massive popular resistance to colonial government before 1960.


3. For full coverage of the Brussels Round Table conference between Congolese leaders and Belgian parliamentarians, and the Kanza-Kasavubu feud, cf. Congo 1960, Brussels, I, pp. 152-153. The Congolese independence mood at this time is summed up in the European news release stating that ABAKO supporters consider as traitor anyone who did not support Kasavubu’s bids for immediate independence; hence the subsequent difficult position of the Manianga Council (cf. ibid., II, p. 153).
In reaction, Kanza promptly organized his own dissident party, thereby somewhat polarizing loyalties among the Kongo people, particularly the élite. Most directly affected by this split at the top of ABAKO were the Leopoldville élite of the Manianga Council, who now had the option of either backing Kasavubu’s more popular call to ‘immediate independence’, or of supporting their countryman Kanza, whose leadership they also respected. Unlike ABAKO, the Manianga Council did not formally disown Kanza, and, although they did not fully support him either, they did attempt to save the day by arbitrating the differences between the two men. An arbitrating committee, comprised among others of the well-known Abbé Jean Loya, ‘speaker’ for Kasavubu, and Alphonse Baniengumuna, currently vice-president of the Manianga Council, as ‘speaker’ for Kanza, brought to bear the much-used Kongo reconciliation technique in which each of the dissident parties is represented by more dispassionate advocates.1 Hoping to offset Kanza’s potential support within the Manianga Council, ABAKO formally backed the Council. But many Maniangans, commenting later on this backing, felt that Kasavubu and Moanda had already at an earlier time foreseen their feud with Kanza over party leadership and possibly the control of the new government, and had actually sponsored the formation of the first pro-ABAKO Manianga Council to avert a movement of independence by the Maniangans.2 But whatever the original attitude of Kasavubu and Moanda may have been toward the Manianga Council, it is clear that the Brussels episode and its aftermath forced the Council into a more clearly defined position; external events, in effect, called for policy decisions and commitments.

The 1960 legislative elections once again prompted the Manianga Council to act in its own regionally-specific domain of policy. In May of that year, a delegation of the urban Maniangans met in Luozi, the rural ‘capital’ of the territoire, at the request of the local ABAKO officials, themselves Maniangans, and drew up a block Manianga list of candidates to be presented to ABAKO headquarters.

1. These are called the mpovi, ‘speaker, spokesman, go-between, etc.’, who, according to Kongo theory, need not necessarily be of one mind, in their own life, as their client. From Baniengumuna’s personal account of this arbitration attempt, however, it seems that it was not too successful.

2. Jean Dehasse supports such an interpretation, suggesting that the revocation of Kanza’s ABAKO vice-presidency and the 1960 incorporation date of the Manianga Council mark the ‘beginning’ of Manianga elitist political consolidation. ABAKO, operating through the Manianga Council, was able to retain the support of the Manianga masses, according to Dehasse, because the Council was composed of old traditionalists loyal to ABAKO anyway (cf. Jean Dehasse, « Le rôle des associations de ressortissants à Léopoldville », Lovanium University, unpublished manuscript, 1965, pp. 66-70). Dehasse’s interpretation however casts the Council and the Manianga population in a more pro-ABAKO position than is warranted.
The Council was further called upon to act as a corporate body in appointing Congolese to positions in the colonial administrative structure, for the time being taken over without change by the immediate post-independence provincial governments. It should be noted that according to the colonial territoire divisions, the Bakongo people were only a minority in the Leopoldville Province that was dominated numerically by other ethnic groups of the Kwilu. It was only with considerable reluctance that ABAKO participated in an initial government led by Kamitatu of the Kwilu, president of the Parti Solidaire Africain (PSA). Thus, in forming his government, the first independent post-colonial provincial government, Kamitatu was able to offset the influence of Moanda in ABAKO by negotiating directly with the Manianga Council and similar Lower Congo regionalist groups in the appointment of men to important offices such as territorial administrator and district commissioner. These dealings between Kamitatu, after 1960 governor of the large de jure Leopoldville Province, and individuals representing the Manianga, had the overall effect of alienating the Maniangans from the de facto Bakongo government being formed by Moanda, future governor of the predominantly Bakongo Kongo Central Province, following the application of the Tananarive resolution to divide the old provinces in August 1962.

There were other noteworthy occasions in which the Manianga Council acted as a concerted corporate interest group. It stepped in to sanction a member of the increasingly prominent class known as les élus, ‘the legislators’, when Bivuvu, a Maniangan deputy to the Provincial Assembly began to campaign for the division of the territoire, and the annexation of the ‘North Manianga’ to the Republic of Congo-Brazzaville adjoining it. The deputy argued that by reducing the number of secteurs in the territoire, a more efficient administration would result; annexing part of the territoire to Brazzaville would enhance economic progress. The idea of secession was, of course, held by ABAKO as tantamount to open rebellion; it was opposed by the Manianga Council too, but for different reasons. It was apparently not so much the prospect of transferring national loyalties that upset Council participants, as the implicit challenge to the territorial integrity which they represented. For very similar reasons another plan to subdivide the administrative territoire, but without switching provincial or national loyalties, was also opposed. But a few years later when a Luozu committee of clerks, merchants, and local bureaucrats advocated secession from the Kongo Central Province for the purpose of creating a ‘purely-Maniangan’ province, considerably more interest was shown, although this proposal too never went far beyond the stage of a scandalous petition.
This progression of explicit events, starting with the formation of the Manianga Council in 1958, and continuing with the Kanza-Kasavubu feud, the 1960 legislative elections, the appointment of Luozi territoire administrative officers, and finally the several schemes of secession or reapportionment of the Manianga region, elicited—more exactly, reflected—a rising political interest among Manianga élite, in particular, and a desire to share in the determination of policy affecting them and their region.¹ What it does not tell us is why the Manianga, as a social and geographic unit, emerged at independence to become a politically-active entity. For this we must turn to other historical factors.

2. Sources of Rural Manianga Political Consciousness and the Provenance of Models of Political Organization.

The Manianga, as a regional society, does not conform to anything in the early ethnographic literature that could conceivably be termed a ‘tribe’. Nor does it conform exactly to the administrative territoire of Luozi; the southern-most extension spills over into the territoire of Ngombe Matadi south of the Congo river. The name ‘Manianga’ was historically attached to a well-known market along the Congo river, midway between the coast and Stanley Pool on the important trade route;² the name also designated the chiefdom surrounding this market, and an eastern Mayombe clan.³ With respect to historic political entities the Manianga population was part of the Nsundi Province of the ancient Kongo kingdom to the south, and of the Teke empire to the north. Various smaller groupings such as the Bwende, the Lari, and the Mazinga, more important in earlier centuries, were in whole or in part coextensive with today’s

¹. The progressive politicization of Congolese society at the time of independence extended well beyond the élite, however. Within the context of Manianga society one may cite the series of secessions of several chiefdoms from larger groupements (subdivisions of the secteur) as examples of this politicization ad infinitum. In one North Manianga case of this type, the Kimpungu groupement, created in 1962, withdrew from the larger Kimata groupement, alleging that it had not been informed some three decades ago of the 1933 administrative reforms, and had not been given ample time to name a chief of its own, and was rather arbitrarily placed in the Kimata groupement. Now, in 1962, a chiefly genealogy was discovered by the Kimpungu group, linking up with a chiefdom (cheflere) artificially created in 1905 by the Congo Free State. Both the 1958 Manianga Council and the 1962 Kimpungu groupement have in common the development of an institutional form, territorially-defined, which embodies a regionalist sentiment. Neither structure has an exact antecedent in traditional Kongo society.


Manianga region. The only pre-colonial regionally-extensive social entity that would qualify as an antecedent to contemporary Manianga solidarity would be the traditional elitist Lemba order which, in the late nineteenth-century acephalous society of disconnected hamlets, patronized trading in the rotating market system and bound together otherwise prestigious offices of judge, healer, and lineage headman into a coherent status system.

An examination of the ecological conditions of the area, as a backdrop to social and administrative structures, provides the most plausible causal explanation for Manianga regionalism. A majority of the Manianga population inhabits the zone lying north of an imposing mountain range closely paralleling the Congo river, on the plateau extending northward into Congo-Brazzaville. When this area was arbitrarily defined as belonging to the southern network of institutions that successively became the Congo Free State, the Belgian Congo, and the Republic of the Congo-Kinshasa, the ‘natural’ ties to commercial and administrative centers in the north were severely thwarted. Although the legal orientation of the Manianga remained in the south, the actual orientation continued to focus in the north. Secession of the North Manianga, although politically subversive, nevertheless made good economic sense. Even at the height of the 1965 tensions between the two Congo States, ‘illicit’ travel and trade continued back and forth as it always had.

Because of this artificially-created geographical isolation, the Manianga region received little early attention from the Belgian colonial government. Roads were opened in the area only as late as 1935 to 1950, even though as early as 1915 railways had already been laid from 20 to 50 miles beyond its borders on three sides. Until 1930 all exportation of agricultural produce, and until the present in many areas, was made by foot portage.

Paradoxically, however, a positive effect of this artificial isolation was that the demoralizing recruitment of labor, particularly for the railroads, that virtually destroyed entire communities elsewhere, did not adversely affect the Manianga. At the same time, lacking any agricultural, commercial, or industrial enterprises to speak of, the voluntary emigration of laborers was continuously high from an early time on. The Manianga emigrant laborer, however, never left home very far behind; there is evidence, in the form of permanent village housing, personal property, and vehicles, that a good percentage of the earnings gained outside returned eventually to the village.

Another paradoxical characteristic of the Manianga region was that, although drastically underdeveloped economically, it could

1. By the 1884-85 Berlin Conference.
boast of a high degree of literacy among common villagers, and by 1965 one of the highest ratios of students in higher education of any similar area in the Congo. To no small degree this was due to the long-time presence in the Manianga of the progressive Svenska Missionsförbundet, and the competition of the Catholics to offset its influence.

Because of the relatively late introduction of systematic colonial government and European commerce, and the immunity of the region to forced labor emigration, the Manianga presents the observer today with the anomalous picture of a well-integrated, progressively-oriented, traditional society. Significantly, it was by and large spared that 'middle generation' of men who received neither the traditional nor a modern education. A number of independence politicians of the area, including the Deputy Bivuvu mentioned above, participated in initiations to the Lemba order and retained the outlook of the landed élite to which they belonged. Although the Lemba order was to a degree replaced in the twenties by the new prophetic sects as an indication of regional integration, there was never whole-hearted cooperation in the Manianga with the colonial regime. It is hardly surprising, then, that the Manianga's close geographical proximity to large urban centers, juxtaposed with the dearth of market outlets for primary agricultural products, served to exacerbate regional consciousness to the point of critical sensitivity as early as 1950.

In order to understand Manianga regionalism at this point it is necessary to consider the rôle of European merchants and colonial agricultural policy. When, in the thirties, Portuguese and Flemish merchants followed the newly-opened roads into the Manianga, the colonial agricultural-economic policy designated the area as being suited for the cultivation of urena fibers. These would furnish a convenient cash crop marketable locally to European traders thereby allowing the Congolese to augment their income. Although the colonial administration expressed a recognition of the potential dangers of a regional economy based on a single cash crop, it became the urena fibers, often forceably cultivated, which eventually developed the Manianga economic superstructure. A government-sponsored paysannat¹ was opened in the fertile Luala valley to apply partial mechanization to fiber cultivation, and a cooperative—the Coopérative des Produits de Luala (COPAL)—organized among the resident

¹. This was one of several dozen similar collective farming enterprises launched by the Belgian colonial government. Although the Luala paysannat was able to survive the economic crises of independence with massive aid from the European Common Market and a diversification of its crops, many other paysannats elsewhere in the Congo were abandoned because of social problems among residents and the overall uneconomical operation with mechanized methods.
paysans to assure them a market. This combination of factors, with the Congolese providing the unskilled labor, and the European merchants acting as middlemen and buyers, may be said to have constituted the logical outcome of government policy on cash crops.

A drastic decline in the international fiber prices from 1951-52, to something near a two-thirds reduction from a few years earlier, revealed the weakness of this monocultural economy. In 1952 and 1953, many villagers opted for a jail term in lieu of following the government's forceable requests to harvest the fibers anyway. With the local economy thus cast into near chaotic condition, it was however not until 1956, and then with a 50 per cent increase in the head tax to finance local government, that the labor-intensive corvée fiber policy was abandoned. Overnight the Maniangans almost totally halted their cultivation of fibers.

Proof that the twenty-year experience with urena fibers as a cash crop had not been totally in vain came in the first semblance of organized reaction to it. The years from 1953 to 1955 saw the creation of an indigenous marketing cooperative, the Coopérative des Produits Agricoles du Manianga (COPAM), by a group of North Manianga merchants, teachers, and small-scale village farmers. In contrast to the fiber-specialized, colonially-supported paysannat-cooperative COPAL, the new COPAM was oriented toward the rural purchase of surpluses in food staples such as manioc, peanuts, and palm products, and their resale on urban markets in near-by cities, including Leopoldville. Although European buyers for these agricultural products, especially palm products, had been involved in Manianga commerce for some time already, it was not until the prospect for a cash advantage for Congolese merchants appeared, that any real influx in voluntary cash crop cultivation occurred, and with it the possibility that the full cycle of production and marketing gravitate into the hands of Congolese. Local response to COPAM was good, and by the peak operating year, 1958, more than 2,000 individuals had each contributed the minimal membership due of 500 francs.

Expansion and improvement of facilities were however handicapped from the start by a lack of capital, the kind required for the purchase of vehicles and processing machines, and the like. Although numerous applications for governmental loans were made in the rubric of 'Aid to indigenous enterprises', such aid was never forthcoming. It is clear today that between the various departments of the colonial administration, conflicting policies were operative in this regard. For although the COPAM received the technical assistance of a Belgian auditor-accountant, the local territoire administration did not see fit to qualify it for a badly-needed loan.
One plausible explanation for such local colonial opposition to the cooperative is, of course, that in the eyes of an overworked administrator one cooperative, in this case the COPAL, sufficed to serve the needs of the rural area. More correctly, perhaps, the colony at the local level opposed the creation of the COPAM because it threatened the security of the European merchants active in the area, who, as commercial middlemen, actually controlled the key link in converting local labor to cash, which in the form of a head tax, financed the local secteur government and encouraged the local sale of consumer goods.

From an examination of the secteur records, however, it is apparent that the opposition on the part of the local colonial officials persisted most of all because the COPAM constituted an organized political body and therefore a force to be reckoned with, however explicit its economic function may have been.¹

Although this particular cooperative eventually ended in financial chaos, as will be shown below, it, alongside the Manianga Council as a largely urban group, merits closer structural analysis. Through these two organizations was formed a hierarchy and alliance of Manianga élite which would provide the matrix of subsequent post-independence political activity.

II. — THE STRUCTURE OF MANIANGA POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION

Recent comparative studies of institutions in the new States of Africa and elsewhere have usually proceeded by abstracting the functional subsystems—e.g., the political, economic, administrative, and so on—from a broader societal base.² Parsons, for example, sees

¹ Georges Burdeau, in his Méthode de la science politique précise (Paris, 1959), provides a convenient analytic frame for this development in Manianga politics. For him politics is a function of power and/or force arising out of pre-existing social circumstances. In such things as public opinion and class consciousness this power is poorly-defined although real; it is diffused. In organization it becomes concentrated power, implying that organization, per se, is political, whether goals are explicitly so or not, something the colonial officials here must have felt and understood.

the 'polity' as that "aspect of all action concerned with the collective pursuit of collective goals,"¹ comparable to, and holding the same theoretical status as, other primary subsystems as the 'economy'. Such systems do not correspond strictly to a particular concrete type activity of individuals. Rather, they are present in all institutions and organizations of society, particularly in the case of relatively undifferentiated societies such as the Manianga.

A comparison of the rural Manianga cooperative (COPAM) and the largely-urban Manianga Council in these foregoing terms establishes the presence of differential functional emphases of the two organizations. The cooperative was only derivatively political in function because of its concerted opposition to colonial agricultural and marketing policy; its primary function, organizationally, was economic and administrative, the successful transformation of rural crops into marketable produce. In its later stages, as its organizational network became nearly synonymous with the rural ABAKO hierarchy, the functional focus was shifted from the economic to the political, largely to the detriment of the former.

By contrast, the Manianga Council held a more explicitly political function from the start—its own statutes of 'apoliticality' notwithstanding. Its collective goals were aimed not so much at devising and instrumenting specific economic or social programmes, as to protect the regionally-linked representation of that collectivity in the new government. Although the Council's interests and actions were restricted to regionally-defined considerations, within that sphere its self-defined function was nearly unlimited. This feature brings the Manianga Council very close to fitting Almond's notion of the 'particularistic party' more concerned with 'interest articulation' than with 'aggregation', that latter potential being limited and prestructured by its identification with a particular ethnic group.² More concerned with articulation of interests than with actual aggregation of institutions, such groups formulate interests and demands, and transmit them to other political structures such as political parties, legislatures, and bureaucracies; in developing systems such as the Congo in 1960, Almond argues, they may also be concerned with presenting candidates in elections and with advocating policies.³

The principal functional tendency of each group or organization played an important rôle in determining further structural characteristics, for example that of recruitment to membership and significant

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1. Parsons, p. 72.
2. Almond, p. 34.
3. Ibid., p. 44.
Participation in the affairs of the Manianga Council, according to the statutes, was “open to all members of the Manianga people.” Recruitment was thus largely assumed, and the regional criterion brought to the fore in justifying membership and participation. The rural cooperative, by contrast, required the voluntary payment of dues, with women excluded. These differential modes of recruitment to the affairs and offices of the two organizations suggest that perhaps the Manianga Council was not really a voluntary association like the cooperative, but a category of voluntary political participation, and that the terms of real involvement lay elsewhere.

Obviously not all Maniangans, nor even all of the salaried, educational, occupational, and self-styled élite were concerned with the support and affairs of the Manianga Council. Participation throughout the years with which this article is concerned was periodic and sporadic; common affairs tended to be issue- and person-centered. Contingent on this, the authority (or representativeness) of the Council’s central committee to act on behalf of the Manianga regional population was itself sporadic and issue-oriented. This sketchy legitimacy of offices constituting the central committee, despite the overall legitimacy of the Council as a symbol and idea, made it necessary for the central committee to consult an ad hoc real constituency from within the Manianga population at every juncture and issue. It was difficult to find anything resembling an administrative hierarchy within the Council.

The central committee of a president, vice-president, and secretary, and supporting councillors, was made up of those individuals, usually, who at a given moment were politically most solvent, so to speak, who through local prestige or proximity to external foci of power in government, or by virtue of personal ties to prominent individuals of any kind, could offer political patronage to their co-regionalists. In other words, the central committee within the more amorphous Council constituted a system of ‘influence brokerage’ between government and party, on the one hand, and the rural and urban Manianga populace on the other. It goes without saying that in such a fluid context, the center of power and prestige could shift very quickly from one enclave, faction, social stratum, or age group, to another, as will be seen shortly in the next section of this work.

Quite another situation is evident in the rural cooperative. Support of the officials was provided by a voluntary and discrete membership as the most effective mode of recruitment and participation to facilitate a measure of faith in the cooperative’s administration and a ‘hands off’ attitude toward such routine bureaucratic responsibilities as buying and selling. The cooperative required consensus to get on with a specific job; other issues between kinsmen qua their kinship,
for example, could usually be circumvented and dealt with by other social mechanisms. Such consensual support in business operations occasionally required reaffirmation in the face of policy decisions and small-scale conflicts. More serious conflicts, however, which taxed the consensual basis of the corporate form, often paralyzed commercial operations.

It should be apparent, then, that the functional orientation of the organization may well determine its internal structure. This fact has a bearing on the manner in which the structure is made manifest through time. Functionally specific groups such as the Manianga cooperative COPAM, but also the religious sects of the Manianga, when faced with internal conflict beyond the limits of consensual resolution, tend to mutate around a new consensual charter or leader; or, seen from another angle, they may spawn dissident ‘hived off’ groups which again can proceed to order their particular affairs on the basis of consensus. Groups such as the Manianga Council, in contrast, which are not strictly-speaking voluntary associations, serve a more purely political function in that they embody a diffuse basis for the very cohesion of society (in the regionalist sentiment) and provide an arena for competition and conflict (in the aspiration for support and government office);¹ their interests are multiple, and largely contingent on current events. Internal conflicts are here expressed in a factional structure along the lines of the major cleavages, in society such as those of the rural-urban distinction, age groupings, educational differences, and occupational and governmental rôles. Over the course of time, as power shifts occur, the internal differentiation of the broad Council populace will give rise to a series of successive reversals of power, or coups, as factionally-formed cliques vie for control of central committeeship and the right to determine regionally-related interests.

In the following description of three such coups occurring in the broader Manianga Council from 1960 until 1965, it will become apparent that there is much in common here with the ‘hiving off’ pattern in sects and cooperatives and with segmentation of lineages in Manianga society.

III. — THE PATTERN OF POST-INDEPENDENCE
MANIANGA POLITICAL PROCESS

1. The First Coup of Townsmen over Countrymen.

As long as the rural cooperative of the North Manianga could retain support in reaction to colonial government policy, and as long as it experienced no major breakdowns with its vehicles, it continued to prosper financially. When, however, its chief administrators became involved in the 1960 election campaigns to the distraction of commerce, and its already untrustworthy vehicles faltered, the members began to question the efficacy of this particular cooperative.

But if economics had momentarily come to a standstill in 1960, the year of independence, the cooperative leadership was more successful politically. Bivuvu, the organizer and first president of the cooperative, became secteur section ABAKO party president, and later, of course, provincial deputy. Kamuna, his paternal kinsman and vice-president of the cooperative, replaced Bivuvu then as ABAKO secteur president, and inherited the management of the cooperative, a not altogether happy task since by mid-1960 it carried a large deficit.

Analogously to the way in which the biblical figure tore down his old barns to build bigger, Kamuna set out to lay the groundwork for a Manianga-wide cooperative, a move which was spoken of as ‘economic politics’, to rescue a faltering, but otherwise sound, operation. The old cooperative members were given the option of either withdrawing their shares, or of doing nothing, and thereby automatically being transformed into the membership of the new organization, which would carry the new name of ‘The Cooperative Society of the Manianga’ (SOCOMAN). Opening solicitations brought in over 200,000 francs and nearly 2,000 members from the countryside alone. Although the renewed commerce of the new cooperative was slow in getting off the ground due to a shortage of vehicles, its bureaucracy was quite expansive, and offices plentiful.2

1. Already mentioned above in connection with the division of the Manianga territory (p. 575).
2. C. C. Wrigley’s “The Changing Economic Structure of Buganda” (in L. Fallers and A. Richards, eds., The King’s Men, Leadership and Status in Buganda on the Eve of Independence, London, 1964, pp. 58-59) suggests that in East Africa precisely such bureaucratic ballooning as this satiated the need for office-holding as a form of prestige, along with the economic functions it fulfilled in cooperatives.
In December 1960, Kamuna brought the evidence of his expanded organizing activities before an assembly of the Manianga Council in Leopoldville, hoping to gain the financial and political support of "the more experienced urbanites," as he put it. Their response proved to be ambivalent. Kamuna's attachment to the mismanaged COPAM blotted his prospects now.1 There was some question over the place of administration of this new expanded cooperative; Kamuna argued for its placement in the "heart of their common region," while certain Council members argued for the advantages of an urban administrative center.

The real issue beneath this debate over the best location of an administrative center lay in the threat Kamuna, with his extended rural and urban network of commitments and pledges, and the urban Council activists who felt that their influence among Maniangan was being replaced. For parallel events reflected an attempt on the part of the urban Council to extend its influence over the countryside.

An overall broadening of function within any kind of organizational activity was occurring; a politicization of the rural cooperative notion, and an economic inclination on the part of the Manianga Council activists. A rural-based Manianga palm oil processing plant that had been in the hands of a Portuguese colon was up for sale to the highest bidder for two million francs, a prohibitively high price for the Council. Nevertheless, seeing an opportunity here to invest in a seemingly solid business, and extend their influence over the countryside, and to benefit their rural homeland, the urban Maniangan led by the Council vice-president Baniengumuna,2 successfully appealed to ABAKO and to other colleagues for funds, collecting a million francs from ABAKO and the remainder from other sources. However loans from ABAKO at this time meant obeisance to party leaders, so once again party rebel Kanza was disclaimed. On the other hand, the judicious investment of public funds meant internal influence. Significantly, a strategic move 'outside' had given the central committee of the Manianga Council bargaining power and influence 'inside'.

In July 1961, the grand opening and first general assembly of the new cooperative (SOCOMAN) was scheduled to be held in Luozi, the rural 'capital town' of the Manianga. No other location could better accommodate a 'purely Maniangan' venture such as this, wrote

1. A citizens' council comprising the discontented membership of the COPAM, investigated the operations of the cooperative staff, and in 1965 announced that more than 60,000 francs of unpaid dividends should be returned to the members.
2. Cf. p. 574.
Kamuna inviting the rural communal (secteur) mayors and other prominent figures. As it turned out, Kamuna would need all the support he could muster, along with his dossier of members, collected dues, and evidence of renewed commercial activity. For when the assembly opened, a delegation from Leopoldville headed by Baniengumuna, carrying the ‘trump card’ of a successful purchase of the palm oil processing plant, had arrived to assert his claim to any ‘purely Maniangan’ economic venture such as this cooperative network. In the four-day meeting that followed, a virtual showdown developed between Kamuna, the self-claimed organizer of the rural countryside, and the urban Manianga Council leaders headed by Baniengumuna. In the process the urbanités succeeded in ousting Kamuna from his anticipated position of general head of the new organization. Rather, it was Baniengumuna with his palm oil refinery who managed to carry the day, and receive overwhelming support to become the new president of SOCOMAN, to be identified with the palm processing plant, while Kamuna now got only the lowly position of book-keeper. This then was the coup of town political organization over the rural beginning of self-help, just at that point where it threatened to become significant.1

Within the context of Manianga politics, this coup of Baniengumuna, the vice-president of the Manianga Council, over Kamuna, organizer of the cooperative, with respect to the control of economic and commercial activities in the Manianga, amounted to an overall consolidation of authority in the hands of a few men, and the overlapping of offices in various corporate organizations. By mid-1961 the president of

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1 The limited scope of this work precludes more than a sketchy description of subsequent Manianga cooperative organizations, in themselves excellent examples of structural ‘hiving-off’ as a mode of conflict resolution in functionally more specific groups. Kamuna, stunned by his political defeat, turned around to revamp the old COPAM, requesting that funds earlier appropriated to SOCOMAN now be returned to him. A new limited cooperative, gathering together Kamuna and a few close kinsmen and neighbors, called the Société Coopérative des Gens de Bonne Volonté (SOCOBONNE), would in essence be a continuation of COPAM, minus the dissenters and grumblers. This, however, never got beyond rather utopian drawing boards. Meanwhile, Baniengumuna, the new SOCOMAN general president, experienced a measure of success with the palm oil refinery, and was even able to buy a new 5-ton truck in 1965 with cooperative earnings. But despite this, large overhead expenses, an overly-expansive bureaucratic staff, and other excesses, made it impossible to return any dividends to the constituency. Few general assemblies were held, and by 1966 the membership was generally disgruntled. By late 1965 Baniengumuna had begun to organize a new group, the Société Coopérative Industrielle de Luozi (SOCODELI) around a nucleus of colleagues and an anomalous group of ‘Swiss capitalists’. Formally to be a subsection within the legal SOCOMAN, the new industrial group would focus on mining interests in the Manianga. Such independent planning, in the view of many, aroused widespread suspicion that Baniengumuna had ‘hived-off’, or as the Kongo idiom puts it ‘broken the circle’, in the interest of his own limited aspirations.
Luozi district ABAKO was also the president of the Manianga Council, and the vice-president of the Council was simultaneously the president of the cooperative of the countryside.

2. The Second Coup of the ‘Outs’ over the ‘Ins’ and the Youths over the Elders.

While the leading offices in Manianga associations consolidated around two individuals, these very individuals’ basis of support was diminishing. There was a marked centrifugal movement, after 1961, away from involvement in and concern with the Council’s affairs on the part of Manianga élite in positions of government and provincial and national legislatures. The Luozi territorial administrator and the Cataracts district commissioner, both Maniangans who had earlier supported, and to a degree relied upon, the Council to get into office, now opposed any intrusion by those remaining in the Council into their specific areas of competence. With respect to government, the Council had gradually been recast as an opposition group.

By late 1962 the Manianga Council itself had become the object of a provincial assembly investigation on the pretense that it was a subversive movement plotting to remove the territorial administrator of Luozi from office. It was at this time, also, that the territorial mayors council, comprised of ten rural Manianga mayors, was abolished by decree at the territorial level. The wings of the ABAKO youth movements were ‘clipped’ in 1963 for alleged morality disgraces, and their respective hierarchies made directly dependent upon the ABAKO central bureau and the Kongo Central government, by now nearly synonymous entities. Further, by 1963, all dissident political parties, such as that of Kanza, were ruled illegal in the Kongo Central Province. The office of the provincial governor, reflecting a similar direction of consolidation and defensiveness, sent out a confidential circular to all mayors in the rural areas requesting them to open dossiers on suspicious individuals and goings-on, and to report them immediately if anything developed.

In the Congo, at large, a similar process of defensive consolidation of administrative offices was occurring, already before, and possibly one of the contributing causes of, the widespread rebellions that broke out in the Kwilu in January 1964, and elsewhere during ensuing months. On all fronts there was a ‘resurgence of bureaucracy’, as Crawford Young has called it,¹ not so much a withering of political

interest, as a gathering mood of defensiveness on the part of those who had since 1960 secured themselves in the colonial legacy of bureaucratic decorum and parliamentary self-centeredness. Congo scholars were beginning to write of the new ‘administrative bourgeoisie’ and the ‘formative bourgeois class’, founded on that group the colonial literature had called the *évolués*

The very process of alienation that had caused government officials to think of the Manianga Council as subversive, did not escape the Manianga Council internally, or within the Manianga population. Having grown less effective as a mechanism to gain a proximity to real power in government, and to alleviate some of the problems that four years of independence had not resolved, the *de jure* Council central committee itself became the object of a highly vocal criticism. Already by mid-1963 a group of teachers and students, mainly in the city of Leopoldville, organized into what they called the Union of Manianga Intellectuals (UDIMA), demanding the total renewal of the central committee of the Manianga Council. This group was led by the man who had filled the office of district commissioner until it was abolished, for greater centralization, in 1962. Another movement calling itself the Vital Forces of the Manianga, comprised mainly of school directors, a few journalists, and administrative ‘drop outs’, such as the leader who had been censured as Minister of Public Works of the Kongo Central Province. These two groups were joined by a third, if smaller splinter, calling itself the Revolutionary Manianga Council.

The charge of all three opposition movements against the established Manianga Council central committee was that of patrimonialism, or as the Kikongo neologism, so often read in the press and heard in conversation, put it, *mbutisme*. This allegation is drawn from the politics of lineage affairs and applies to situations where the youths feel that their elders have for too long rested on their laurels of seniority and age, a condition of paralyzing tension euphemistically spoken of as their having “sapped the vitality of the organization.”

None of the three opposition movements within the Manianga

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2. Benoît Verhaegen and Maurice Loven, “La fonction politique des villes au Congo”, *Cahiers Économiques et Sociaux*, 11, 3, 1964, p. 277. By “classe bourgeoise en formation” these authors mean particularly government functionaries, but also the employees of various firms, and the privately-employed entrepreneurs and merchants.
3. From *mbuta ‘elder’, the complement of which is *nieke ‘status inferior’ or ‘junior’. The relationship between the two, in other contexts, is subject to extravagant ritual lacing because such matters as inheritance and succession to office are involved, and colored by the inuendos of witchcraft.
Council achieved its aim of renewing the formal central committee, at least not at first. Their vocal opposition was met with the mute sullenness of the incumbents, who put them off with the charge of being ‘power thirsty’. Warning the rural mayors to arrest on sight any of the urban agitators, the Manianga Council president could defend his position in early-1964 with the following words:

“The ABAKO, and its right arm, the Manianga Superior Council, are in existence for the general interest of all the Manianga. Thus it is useless to introduce other movements simply to sow disorder and misunderstanding in the Manianga to satisfy their course au pouvoir.”

It was not until the three opposition groups merged, under the title of the Renewed Manianga Superior Council (CSM-rénové), no longer merely to oppose, but to usurp the function of the central committee, that their bargaining power can be said to have increased appreciably. Significantly, their position was acknowledged to be contra-ABAKO, particularly contra-Moanda, the governor, although they still considered themselves solidly within, and citizens of, the Kongo Central Province.

The flourish of activity in Manianga politics that led to this stalemate between the old guard central committee of the Manianga Council and the ‘rebel’ Renewed Manianga Council, may be considered in part a prelude to the legislative elections originally planned for late 1964, but eventually held in 1965 following Moïse Tshombe’s return to the Congo. Thus, already before the date of the election had been set, there were petitions by various ad hoc Manianga committees demanding a strictly Manianga electoral list, to be drawn up by the Manianga people, and not by a political committee in an unrepresentative party. The most active rural committee of this sort stood in loose contact with the Renewed Manianga Council; the old guard Council committee, for all its talk, did very little campaigning.

With the official opening of the campaign by the then Prime Minister Tshombe, the incumbent central committee of the Manianga Council, together with the provincial and national legislators of Manianga origin who collectively called themselves les élus, ‘the elected’, joined voices and called for the immediate dissolution of all splinter Manianga groups, “by force if necessary, in accord with Congolese and international law!” With the legislative stakes high, and vested interests strong, all the various factions among Maniangans were brought together by this rhetoric in what was perhaps one of the most heated general assemblies ever held in the history of the Council. Against the threat of not being represented at all in the next legislative period, Manianga regionalist sentiment was strong
enough to compel to momentary unity all the dissident groups: the old central committee, the 'elected', the renewed council, the revolutionary council, and all the non-aligned individuals.

What had seemed to constitute intractable and conflicting factions, and cliques within factions, dissolved during this meeting into a consensual accord which granted the clique at the head of the former Intellectual Union (UDIMA) the mandate to lead a newly consolidated central committee, now labelled CONSUMA, to avoid any confusion with the old abbreviation CSM! That this transfer of office should constitute a significant coup any more legitimate than the earlier usurped offices by the 'renewed' council, is verified by the actions following this meeting of the incumbent central committee members. Baniengumuna, acting as spokesman of the pro-ABAKO faction and the incumbent Council officers, capitulated in writing a few days later with these formal phrases:

"Upon examining my conscience, I put aside all secretive aspirations and jealousies. Everything has its beginning and its end. A true Manianga is not a traitor who betrays his patrie. But since the Manianga Council of notables and sages has éclaté, even though it was a movement of peace and a trump card [sic] for ABAKO and not a particularistic propaganda instrument for anyone, we have become the object of criticism and insidious comments from friends here and there. Consequently [. . .] in order not to disappoint or sadden the Maniangans of good will, I ask you, the [new] president general, to call together the heads of the dissolved associations in order to proceed with a public remission and reassignment of duties before the former president of the Council, thus to accord your committee priority."

If the developments of this 'second coup' are analyzed, the outstanding characteristic is that the regional Manianga ethos appears to have become, if anything, more compelling than it was in the earlier 1960 elections. While the 1960 elections were held with the idea that the Manianga Council was within ABAKO, now the campaign was being defined 'as over against ABAKO'. The points of greatest unanimity corresponded to the points of greatest perceived threat, in this case that of not being adequately represented in the second legislature.


With a clear mandate from most Manianga interest groups, the new central committee could plan its election strategy. To avert the defection of rural leaders to the regional ABAKO campaign being waged by a few diehards, it was resolved: 1) to grant priority in choosing provincial assembly-men to those secteurs —now called communes—that had not gotten 'their man' into office in the first legisla-
ture (1960-1965); to gain a maximum support from the ‘big men’ associated with the Manianga; 2) to invite Kanza, who meanwhile had been head-mayor of Leopoldville, to explain his intentions before the Council (a cell of Kanza supporters had already joined the new committee contingent on this eventuality); 3) to campaign actively for the Manianga candidates for mayorships in Leopoldville, so as to integrate the urban Manianga populace with the Council (this resolution was the most successful; two of the mayors chosen in the 1965 communal elections were Maniangans); 4) finally, it was decided that the new committee would sponsor a ‘primary’ election among the rural Manianga leaders to choose provincial deputy candidates, one from each secteur, to make up the list that would be handed over to the ABAKO as a closed package (it was correctly anticipated that in the Lower Congo the voters might be faced with a ‘single-party’ ballot). As will be seen shortly, this last resolution was the least successful of all, thus paving the way for the third coup within the Manianga Council.

Not long afterward, in January 1965, a delegation of urban Maniangaans, comprised of prominent men such as Kanza and others representing the new Manianga Council central committee, made their pilgrimage to the rural homeland to hold the primary election or referendum in concert with the rural mayors and other figures such as teachers, pastors, and other customary figures. Kanza was fêted, in traditional Kongo style, with genuflections and given the meeting’s total support as first candidate for national senator. The rural leaders drew up a slate of provincial assembly candidates. Unaltered, this list would be presented to the Kongo Central provincial government’s pre-election arbitrating board, an ad hoc committee put together by the governor to draw up a final ballot.

In order to understand the mechanics of Lower Congo electioneering, it is necessary to backtrack to the 1963 ABAKO party congress at Thysville, the last time the various dissident elements within ABAKO had met. There, against a rather firm opposition by the governor of the Kongo Central Province, who was acting head of the party, the congress had resolved to constitute the ABAKO ‘single party’ ticket for 1964 through rural and urban primaries. But in 1964 the rebellions broke out in other parts of the Congo, and along with any elections, the primaries were also shelved until Tshombe’s ‘national salvation’ plan could be brought into effect.

Partly due to the haste in which national elections were called by Tshombe, and partly due to the recalcitrance of ABAKO to open primaries, the formal ABAKO campaign before the people hardly got off the ground. Luozi Territory ABAKO, for example, formally
opened its campaign about the time of the Manianga Council's own primary, with nothing more than a circular letter; eventually the territory ABAKO president himself was the only individual originally recruited by ABAKO to appear on the Luozi (Manianga) ballot. In order to meet the formal exigencies of representativeness, ABAKO leaders at the provincial level—i.e., the governor and his immediate supporters—were forced to recruit their candidates somewhat arbitrarily and at large. Dissatisfaction with this procedure produced an opposition wing within ABAKO, which with the backing of Tshombe's CONAKO party, secure for the time-being in the national government, emerged to present an alternative ballot in some of the territoire elections.\(^1\) In the Manianga and a few other territoires, however, the voters were met on election day with the ABAKO 'old guard' single party list, and, to satisfy those who demanded an open 'democratic' election, several inconsequential independent individual tickets.

The failure of ABAKO to recruit its nominees in primary elections, and the adamant campaigning of several regionalist councils similar to the Manianga Council,\(^2\) necessitated some method of paring down of the many conflicting lists through some process of elimination. Thus, several weeks before the elections of March 1965, the pre-election arbitrating board of ABAKO and the Lower Congo provincial government, met, in what came to be known as the Binza Conclave,\(^3\) essentially to take a final pre-election count of those nominees loyal to the incumbent governor. Journalists were barred from the sessions, but word soon leaked out that the governor had asked all those wishing to appear on the ABAKO ticket to swear fidelity to his government. It is in this process that the Manianga Council's list, drawn up in the passion of regionalist solidarity, was altered, and where the new central committee itself came into bad repute not only with the governor, but with its own constituency.

Kanza refused to bow to the governor, and was once more, as in 1960, eliminated from any possibility of representing the Manianga on the ABAKO ticket. The remaining Manianga nominees, submitted by the Council, might not have fared too badly even after this, except for a slight irregularity of not so slight consequences. The man charged with presenting the Manianga Council list to ABAKO appar-

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1. Under the leadership of Émile Zola, a prominent Lower Congo politician, this group called itself the ABAKO-Mwinda, mwinda in Kikongo meaning 'light', 'illumination', or simply 'the new enlightened alternative'.

2. An unnamed group centered in Tshela in East Mayombe and the AREBA group among the Ndiba on the left bank of the Congo river were the main contenders of this type.

ently had his own name inserted in the place of another candidate for the provincial assembly. To make this alteration acceptable to ABAKO, several more changes toward a more conciliatory, pro-ABAKO Manianga list were made, so that by the time the voters were confronted with the printed ballots, four of the original ten ‘unalterable’, ‘purely-Maniangan’ names had been altered. The alterations of the Luozi-drawn list during the Binza Conclave aroused a mild furor among Manianga Council activists, and introduced once again a formidable opposition to the Council’s central committee that had in the final analysis permitted the distortion of the referendum’s will to occur. This opposition was particularly strong among urban Maniangan civil servants in the employment of the Central Government and among teachers, most of whom were in their twenties and thirties, members of the ‘second generation’ élite, so to speak.

Such general disgruntlement created the crisis mood within the constituency of the Manianga Council that on other occasions had given rise to a transfer of office of central committeeship. The occasion for a renewal of ‘legitimate’ authority within the Council and informally the Manianga people, supplied in 1961 by the opening general assembly of the cooperative, and in late 1964 by the pre-election general assembly of the various dissident branches of the Manianga Council, was created now, in mid-1965 by a legality in government bureaucracy requiring such associations as the Manianga Council to renew their statutes every five years. Having been given civil status in 1960 (although informally organized in 1958) the expiration date of the Manianga Council’s statutes fell in late 1965. With the original central committee having been removed in 1965, and the subsequent committee having come into disrepute over the election, there was some question as to just who would be entitled to write and submit the revised statutes and gain the authority of a legally-recognized document.

National events surrounding the military coup of November 1965 were indirectly to determine these issues. First of all, a presidential decree abolishing all political groups called into question the very right of existence of such marginally ‘political’ entities as the Manianga Council. Formally considered as ‘apolitical’, but analytically and popularly held as ‘political’, what would their status now be? A second event, of perhaps more significance to the outcome of the Council’s statute renewal, was that the formation of the new national cabinet brought a prominent Maniangan and erstwhile ABAKO member (not a close supporter of the governor) into the post of national Minister of Justice, and with him a secretary, an experienced young Maniangan civil servant, who happened to be one of the leading
participants of the current opposition to the Manianga Council central committee.

Acting in his rôle, on the one hand, of Maniangan, the secretary of the Ministry of Justice submitted the newly drawn-up statutes of his clique in the Manianga Council for legal recognition by the ministry in charge. Acting, on the other hand, in his rôle of officer within one of the national ministries, he was able without much delay to have these statutes validated, and, in effect, unseat the incumbent Council central committee. It must be said in all fairness that this set of statutes was the only one submitted; the incumbent committee had not yet ‘gotten around’ to writing its version, although reports are that it fully intended to do so. This coup by bureaucratic fiat, then, constituted the third succession of central committees in the eight-year history of the Council, and to all appearances legitimately so, because it was followed by the permissive support of a vaguely-defined Manianga constituency.

The new statutes generally repeated the earlier ones of 1960, with a slightly more radical tone. The Manianga Council was again, as in 1960, defined as a non-profit, apolitical association for the benefit of all Maniangans. Where the 1960 version used the term ‘Manianga peuple’ the 1965 version spoke of the ‘Manianga tribu’. While in the earlier version full support had been pledged to ABAKO, in the new version a line of neutrality in this regard was espoused, although privately the authors told me that they were both contra-ABAKO and political, as, they admitted, were all other regional councils.

There is no appropriate, clearly-defined, closing to this history of the Manianga Council. When I left the Congo in March 1966, the new committee was preparing to call a general assembly. Beyond that, even they could not predict what would happen. Successive events in the Congo have no doubt altered conditions affecting regionalist politics, but the total lack of documentation of regional politics makes its study most difficult from afar.

IV. — Analysis and Conclusion

This study has so far sought to describe process and pattern in a Congolese micropolity through the optic of one particular regional council. The eight-year history of cleavages, coalitions, and transformations within the Manianga Council, seen against the backdrop of broader Lower Congo provincial political and economic institutions, can be summarized in a rather highly impressionistic visual fashion, as follows:
One of the most striking features in this account is the recurrence of factional cliques which at intervals have asserted their claim to legitimate leadership in a specific context or overall of a determinate population. Such phenomena are of course not unique to Manianga politics. What is identifiably unique here, and characteristic perhaps of Central and Equatorial African political group formation, is that set of historically-conditioned factors allowing, for example, merchants and civil servants, or the secretaries of national ministries and rural peasants, to emerge together within a single regional identification.

It is significant, furthermore, that although in this eight-year history of such a regionally-linked micropolity no less than six cliques aspire to influence the renewal of Council leadership or actually to gain control of the Council offices, only three cliques, or potential central committees, are 'successful' in their bid for power. Our definition of such successful politics by coup, then, must remain the seizure of office in such a way that it is binding upon, and recognized by, a majority of the regional constituency.

Each of the thus defined successful coups occurred in the context of a specific issue: the control of an economic and commercial facility, the determination of an electoral list, and the right to author and submit the corporate statutes of the Council. Discernible beneath each of these issue-provoked factional oppositions were more general, although often latent, structural categories of internal differentiation within the broader society. These internal differntia of the Manianga society, as reflected in the oppositions of each coup, may be summarized (Chart 2). While this type of categorization may gloss over a good number of exceptions to the rule, it does take note of social differntia that may well have been common in Congolese society at large. The first coup of 1961 made explicit certain cleavages created by residence,
in particular the rural-urban distinction. At that time, and earlier during the colonial era, the Congolese merchant was the one occupational group that most easily bridged both categories. One Manianga merchant, in fact, regarded his political rôle as that of mediator between the two groups; idiomatically expressed, as the ‘door’ between the two halves of Manianga society. The second coup, of 1964, brought to a head the cumulative alienation of the population from entrenched rôles of authority, reflected at large in Congolese society by the widespread rebellions of that year. And the third coup, of 1965, may well have reflected the widespread distrust of the career ‘politician’ and the desire for a more secure basis of authority evident in the military coup of that year.

![Chart 2]

The type of factionalism evident here in the Manianga Council is described by Ralph Nicholas as a “segmentary factional political system.” It is characterized by a series of crosscutting alignments such that, depending on the nature of the particular issue provoking conflict, two individuals may be united today, but over another issue tomorrow, they may be opposed. To apply more exactly to the situation here, Nicholas’ phrase should be amended to read “situa-tional segmentary factional politics,” because it permits, and may actually be a function of, the common participation in a council, or ‘arena’ of conflict of many different professions, rôles, and types, despite the several mutually-exclusive sets of rules drawn alternately from traditional kinship and modern bureaucracy, or, age-related codes of conduct and the largely ad hoc principles of political clientage. What thus appears in the larger national framework to be various mutually-exclusive and incompatible life commitments such as the proponents of ‘class’ would emphasize, are within the framework

of regional politics merely issue-focused factions, which, although no doubt a hindrance to effective concrete economic programs, for example, actually allow the primordial attachments to one’s home region to remain intact.

A dilemma of sorts is thus created in that the stronger such factional disputes become—based on the mutually-exclusive principles of operation such as traditional kinship and bureaucracy—within the arena of Council politics, the more necessary becomes the psychologically satisfying reification of primordial regional identity. This dilemma is due, in large part, to the fact that authority ‘within’ is usually based on an effective use of connections ‘without’ in such entities as government, political parties, or other prestige-granting institutions. Dependent on outside sources for real support, anyone asserting himself within the microsystem of regional politics must, on the one hand, remain true to the overall goals of the regional group, and on the other hand, actually achieve concrete results in, for example, economic development, without transferring his own loyalties too far beyond the range of regional peers and thereby losing their support.

This dilemma of coordinating authority with significant action can perhaps best be seen in the framework of resources and resource allocation, a regional patrimony comprising both human and material aspects. In article 6 of the second statutes of 1965 the Manianga Council defines and lays claim to such a patrimony in the following words:

“The association reserves for itself the prerogative of organizing all activity susceptible of achieving cooperation toward the resolution of economic, social, and cultural problems [of the Manianga].”

Rephrased, this means principally the political power resulting from any organization, cooperative endeavor, or consensus itself the prerequisite of concrete (e.g., economic) action.

The dynamics of such a patrimony, consisting of the interplay of political action and the ongoing redefinition of a common material resource, may be restated in the form of a set of propositions: 1) The greater the conceived resource potential, the stronger also the incentive toward consensus which is prerequisite to effective action. As an example of this one may cite the sudden acquisition of the rural palm oil processing plant in 1961 and the subsequent move to consolidate cooperative structures with ‘competent’ urban leadership. But, 2) the less effective the realization of resource potentials (i.e., the greater the frustration of unrealized goals), the more ‘unrealistic’ or ‘utopian’ the conceptualization of the overall patrimony. As illustrative of this second point one might consider the manner in
which the merchant Kamuna, having failed to convince the Manianga populace and the Council of his cooperative ventures, reorganized the few leftover 'men of goodwill' close to him with a rather unrealistic assessment of economic possibilities, involving the loans he hoped to receive from some vaguely stated outside source. In another example similar to this, one might consider how, after the relative failure in the 1965 legislative race, the Manianga Council's most recent central committee portrayed the ideal Manianga countryside in its document *Programme d'action*. Every home in Luozi, the rural 'capital' of the Manianga, would be made 'very modern'; rural villages, similarly, would be 'totally modernized'. And with the help of outside finances from some benevolent foreign source, all major roads across the Manianga would be hard-surfaced.

However, because a union of interests such as the Manianga Council represents may indeed succeed in promoting political consensus within a determinate population, it may on occasion (fulfilling postulate (r) above) serve as an alternative to a theoretically rationalized, rôle-specific, hierarchy of chains of command common in modern governmental bureaucracy. It must be acknowledged that the manner in which the 'economic politics' of Baniengumuna accomplished the transfer of a million francs from the ABAKO treasury into the purchase of the palm oil processing plant, and the manner in which the 'purely-political politics' of the secretary in the Ministry of Justice was able to achieve incorporation of the Manianga Council statutes, effectively created an *ad hoc* hierarchy of command from positions high in government and party organization right down to the villager, and this in a far more immediately efficient manner than one has come to expect of Congolese bureaucracy.

It would seem that the predominance of the utopian, or perhaps it should be called the ritualistic, mode of socio-political integration in Manianga society, permitting the alternative reliance sometimes on one, sometimes another, type of relationship, is largely a function of the continuing holistic and segmental character of the social structure. To the extent that the social differentiation of rôles inherent in modernity¹ is not present, nor effectively institutionalized, there will continue to be an effort at the political and *ad hoc* mode of organization for the most small-scale effort at concrete programs of economic and social action. There will also, predictably, be no elections with temporary short-term victors and obliging minority losers. Within a specific context, such as the Manianga Council, the prevalent mode of coordinated action will be that of factional

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dispute and reconciliation. It is this holistic quality of the political culture, I believe, which compels people like the Maniangans to seek to unite into councils, and then to become authoritarian, exclusivist, and regionally-bound, in making consensus forthcoming. But it is precisely at this juncture of consolidating alliances, without a legal support or military backing to speak of, that such groups as the Manianga Council experience the greatest likelihood of an internal coup.

The ever-recurring, major problem with this kind of micropolity that endeavors to serve as both an arena for the expression of conflict and the institution of concrete programs of action, is that to the extent to which it serves the former function, it becomes ineffectual as a stable administrative hierarchy, essential in any complex economic program. It is for this reason that the participants in the Manianga Council and its affiliated organizations remain preoccupied with the semantics of politics—‘economic politics’, ‘pure politics’, but ideally, the complete absence of ‘politics’. The authors of the 1960 Manianga Council statutes were therefore far more astute in their apparently paradoxical self-appraisal than they perhaps thought, in stating that the Council is an “apolitical association [. . .] to promote [. . .] political and moral development of the Manianga people.”