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Résumé

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Patriarchal Structures and Factional Politics
Toward an Understanding of the Dualist Society

In the literature on African politics, the status and position of traditional rulers in developing societies are conceived of as key issues in the process of modernization. Paramount chiefs, headmen and clanic leaders are said to represent custom-bound populations and to provide a vital linkage between governmental authorities, regarded as modernizers, and the people. They are thought to influence the success of economic and social change by serving as translators, interpreters and mediators of Government goals. In Miller’s words:

“This form of leadership is basically syncretistic, a leadership pattern among chiefs and headmen which is a synthesis and reconciliation of the opposing forces of traditionalism and modernism.”

If some balance between the demands of rural traditional constituencies and those of the modernizing bureaucratic groups (administrators, politicians, political party leaders) is maintained, a tendency to neo-traditionalism can be expected. In many cases, however, chiefs fail to serve as successful intermediaries. They are caught in severe role conflicts between the requirements of customs and modernizing goals. In this case, it is alleged, a condition of mutual hostility develops between themselves and modernizing authorities.

The purpose of this article is to question two basic points which underlie this kind of argument. First of all, the political elite does not necessarily represent “modernizing forces,” at least in the sense in which this term is generally understood. Neither do traditional authorities represent intermediaries—“good” or “bad”—between backward people.


and enlightened politicians. It will be argued that, in order to be fruitful, any discussion on the role and the relationship between traditional and modernist elites should be appraised in the context of historical materialism and class structure rather than in the perspective of acculturation and the modernity-tradition continuum. As Peel put it:

"The reactions of people to radical social change marked by the availability of totally new cultural systems are not best approached by theories of acculturation which aim to trace each item of behaviour to its cultural source, to add them up, and to pronounce the reaction more or less 'accultured' or 'traditional' along a single continuum [...]. This concern with the cultural origin of behaviour only makes sense if we wish to show the diffusion of ideas from a particular source, not if we want to explain why men act in a particular way. The mechanical assignation of cultural traits is no aid to understanding, for it is a purely external way of classifying behaviour [...]. Most people simply ask of a practice whether it is right or wrong, good or bad, wise or foolish, beneficial or harmful. Their choices can only be explained by situational analysis—asking why men of a particular kind interpret their situation in a particular way."

Secondly, "traditional" authorities are not necessarily in a syncretistic position but, like the "modernist" élites, might occupy a separate and autonomous social sphere possessing its own dynamics and interacting with its environment at a marginal level only. In this respect, a meaningful parallel could be drawn between what is usually termed "transitional" society and the Asian mode of production described by Marx. However, it is necessary here to define precisely the nature of "Asian societies" and to assess the extent to which any comparison on this point is valid. According to Marx, Wittfogel and others, Asian societies of the past included three interdependent characteristics: a planned and despotic organization of social labor centered upon a hydro-agricultural economy; possession by the State of a surplus applied to gigantic works of magnificence and utility; and unchangeableness of the society organized in autonomous communities, an unchangeableness in striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of States and the never-ceasing changes of dynasty. In this paper only the third feature will be dealt with; as will be shown, it is at this stage only that any parallel between the Asian mode of production and the contemporary relationships between patriarchs and the urban political élites is valid.

In both cases, one may observe a fundamental division between, on the one hand the political sphere which reproduces itself through con-

tinual power struggles and on the other tribal communities which form self-sufficient entities dominated by a gerontocratic clan of patriarchs ruling without hindrance from the political sphere. Very few contacts occur between the two milieux. They are only occasional and peripheral. They do not therefore produce the sort of contradictions and tensions which would characterize a system of syncretist relationships.

In order to illustrate these two points, I have chosen the example of the Bayaka of Kwango, who, like the Bashi of Kivu, the Lunda of Katanga, the Azande in Uélé and the Bakuba of Kasai, are said to have kept alive their traditional social structures and political organizations. Not so long ago, the Bayaka and their paramount chief, the kiamfu of Kasongo Lunda, used to inspire fear and prestige among their neighbors as well as in distant regions. In 1928, an anti-European fetish, named Muyaka, spread among the Bakuba of Kasai and, in 1931, one of the leaders of the Bapende revolters (Kwilu district) called himself “Kasongo-Lunda.”

I. — The Yaga and Bayaka-Lunda

The Bayaka of Kwango were first known under the name of Yaga, Yagga or Yages. These terms are used to designate a very old ethnic group of hunters and warriors who, coming most probably from Central Africa, succeeded in forming several small independent kingdoms near the Atlantic coast and along the Kwango and Wamba rivers by the end of the seventeenth century. The Yaga seem to have been the arch-type of conquerors living permanently on a war footing in fortified camps. They are known for killing their own children at their birth, while adopting the young men from the areas they overran and incorporating them as warriors (gonso) into their camps.1 The fortress in which the British sailor Battel was living around 1601-1603 numbered about sixteen hundred people, but only twelve men and fifteen women were of Yaga descent.

Their military superiority was to leave its mark on the history of the coast for fifty years to come. They were considered as invincible because they attacked by surprise:

“They knew all sorts of tricks, they practised better discipline than the local armies, and they were divided into bands which could be dispersed or concentrated at will. Finally they never attacked enemies whom they believed to be too strong. With a strong enemy, they would build a fortified camp, provoke him and battle him from their stronghold.”

Around 1568, they invaded the powerful and well organized kingdom of Kongo, destroyed its capital—San Salvador—and looted the coun-


tryside. They were eventually defeated and expelled after two years of strenuous war and only thanks to the military help the Portuguese governor of São Tomé was able to provide to the king of Kongo, Alvares I. According to Plancquaert, their defeat against the kingdom of Kongo, after which they would have lost most of their warriors, marked the end of their military supremacy. Thereafter, the Yaga spread around in several directions. Some of them went southeast; others went east and founded small kingdoms on the Kwango river.

The kingdoms they created in Kwango did not last very long. It is most likely that, exhausted by their military ventures, they went through a period of decadence, which, according to Denis, made Lunda penetration in Kwango easier. By the end of the eighteenth century, a wave of Lunda conquerors reached and peacefully subdued the areas that the Yaga had previously overrun by force. According to some Yaka traditions, the first wave of Lunda immigration was led by Kasongo, a nephew of the mwala-yamvu of Katanga, who wished to gain his independence from his uncle.

The most remarkable feature of the Lunda conquest was not its superiority in military operations. Unlike the Yaga who rarely settled for a long period of time at the same place and assimilated only the youngest people, the Balunda chiefs successfully penetrated the entire social and cultural fabric of societies with whom they came into contact. According to Vansina, this was made possible thanks to the remarkable capacity of their socio-political system to absorb and assimilate foreign cultures:

"The whole political structure rested on the twin mechanisms of positional succession and perpetual kinship. A successor inherited not only an office but also the personal status of the deceased, including his name and kinship relationships. Thus ancient kinship relations were re-enacted every generation and new links were created only after all the old 'positions' in the system had been filled. In practice, these mechanisms proved to be extremely useful; they divorced the political structure from the real descent structure since there were not bound to any principle of descent in particular. For example, the northern Lunda are bilateral but matrilineal with regard to succession for the 'mwaantaangaand,' elsewhere in the empire matrilineality would prevail or it might be, as in Kazembe or with the Yaka, that the people would be matrilineal but the chiefs patrilineal. All this did not matter, however, for the principles of positional succession and perpetual kinship could be applied everywhere. Therefore, the mechanisms could be diffused without necessitating any changes in the existing social structures, which explains why so many Central African cultures could take over the system with little or no cultural resistance.""
This process of assimilation was such that it led to a "Yaka-isation" of the Lunda structures rather than the other way around. Unlike other groups of conquerors, the Lunda chiefs did not sharply differentiate themselves from their "subjects" whose language and many other cultural artifacts they absorbed.

In the political realm, the Lunda practised what could be termed nowadays "indirect rule." The head of the political hierarchy, the *kiamfu* of Kasongo-Lunda, gave in marriage the members of his clan to the sons or daughters of the ruling families. As a result:

"Among the matrilineal populations, women, sisters and maternal nieces of these families gave the Lunda sons who were the legitimate successors of the original chiefs. Among patrilineal populations, the sons born from these marriages could not be considered as alien to the native ruling groups since they also belonged to the Kiamfu's family."¹

Moreover, it very often happened that the Lunda chief would take the name of the original ruler, though not necessarily his political prerogatives and titles. The latter would then add his titles to his own name in order to distinguish himself from the *kiamfu*’s lieutenant. This policy was largely practised in the northern chiefthaincies of the Kwango—Mambuku, Ngete, Munene, Dinga, etc. In the southern areas, the *kiamfu* governed through the members of his own clan—Swa Ikomba, Swa Ibanda, Swa Mbangi, etc.

This subtle assimilation of foreign chiefs into the Lunda’s system brought about some basic changes in the transmission of the *kiamfu*’s hereditary power. In principle, political succession passed down to the half brothers on a collateral basis. At the chief’s death, the elder brother or his children became the *kiamfu*’s legitimate successor. In practice, however, these rules were less and less enforced:

"Endless intrigues, the necessity for the Lunda conquerors to impose their will and the use of new procedures by the Kiamfu in order to promote the members of his family, have fostered many changes which, in the long run, have become ‘traditional’ [...]. As a matter of fact, the chief was practically elected by his peers, his accession to power depending on seniority."²

Constant reinterpretation of traditional norms as well as the close links existing between family relationships and politics suggests a political system based on a patriarchal type of authority. According to Weber, this form of traditional domination is featured by 1) a double emphasis on the arbitrary and quasi-absolute power of the master over his household, as well as the limitation of that power by sacred traditions, and 2) the absence of administrative staff and machinery to enforce the patriarch’s own will. The paradox between absolute power and its limitation by tradition was explained by Weber as follows:

2. Ibid.
"A Master who violated tradition without let or hindrance would thereby endanger the legitimacy of his own authority which is based entirely on the sanctity of tradition. As a matter of principle it is out of the question to create new laws which deviate from the traditional norms. However, new rights are created in fact but only by way of recognizing them as having been valid 'from time immemorial.' Thus his domination is divided into a sphere which is strictly bound by tradition and another in which arbitrary will prevails."\(^1\)

Many travel accounts by the first European explorers have stressed the absolute power of the kiamfu over his subjects. Kind and Tappenbech, who visited his residence around 1870, spoke about "a political regime which is a mixture of extreme severity and great liberty." Butner even asserts that "the Kiamfu was very cruel and that the shores of the Nganga river, down to the royal village, were covered with human bodies."\(^2\) The kiamfu's despotic authority was reinforced by many religious and magical devices which were his exclusive monopoly. In Plancquaert's words:

"To the individual, familial and collective witchcraft of the Bayaka, he [the kiamfu] superimposed a sort of 'state witchcraft' which, through palace witch-doctors, served to eliminate 'at distance' clients suspected of felony. A Yaka proverb refers to this occult power detained by the Kiamfu: 'Kasongo Lunda is a fetish; one does not eat his power; one dies from it'."\(^3\)

One of the best illustrations on the strength of the kiamfu's magical power is provided by the mythical story of Pelende. According to a Yaka tradition still very alive today, a quarrel is said to have broken during the eighteenth century between the kiamfu and one of his lieutenants, Pelende, whose wife had been injured or killed by the former. Following the kiamfu's refusal to offer some compensation, Pelende left Kasongo-Lunda with his followers and settled somewhere on the Bakali river. The kiamfu sent on officials after him to collect tribute, but Pelende refused to pay. In the ensuing war, the Yaka army was defeated and fled abandoning the kiamfu and his wife who were killed by Pelende. Following his death, however, Pelende started to pay out of fear for the spirit of the deceased kiamfu.\(^4\)

Despite the coercitive powers detained by its paramount ruler, the Yaka-Lunda kingdom neither became a centralized and despotic State nor succeeded in enforcing an administrative machinery. The system of domination rested entirely on the payment of tributes by the kiamfu's personal dependents. Thus, the refusal of Pelende to pay tribute to his master was considered as a declaration of war. In addition to these regular fees, the kiamfu owned hunting products and war captures throughout his territory. He was also the only one who could raise

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3. Ibid.: 87.
4. Vansina: 204. It is most likely that, as Vansina suggests, Pelende started to pay because he was defeated in a second battle.
cattle the acquisition of which was prohibited to his dependents and subjects by strictly regulated taboos.¹ Levying tributes and fees did not require a complex administration. At every level, chiefs and headmen were charged with collecting taxes of which they simply deducted a large part for their own use. Moreover, accumulation of riches by the paramount chief or his family was inexistant. The kiamfu did not seem to care much about material wealth; his way of living differed from that of his dependents and subjects only in degree, not in kind. Most of the first explorers who toured in Kwango at the end of the nineteenth century were struck by the simplicity, the lack of display and the material poverty which surrounded the kiamfu’s life, though he is described as “particularly eager for acquiring European manufactured goods.”² As Vansina pointed out, although the Yaka participated in the slave trade, they seem to have been motivated less by commercial motives than by their aim to build a Lunda-like State in Kwango.³

A final limitation to the kiamfu’s despotism rests on the fact that his interventions in local politics appear to have been occasional:

“The Kiamfu intervened only whenever the conflicting parties or local chiefs appealed to him [. . .]. Sometimes, that is, in some very important crisis or among some tribal groups, he took upon himself the right to decide. In this case, his decisions were undisputed.”⁴

His absolute power was in fact countered by his retainers’ demands for a reciprocity of obligations and the result was a distribution of rights and duties even though traditions fully endorsed the chief’s arbitrary and absolute use of his power.

II. — THE EFFECTS OF COLONIZATION UPON THE YAKA PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURES⁵

The process of European penetration in Kwango has been essentially marked by ambivalence. On the one hand, the colonial enterprise to which the Lunda chiefs resisted all along weakened the power basis of Lunda rule in Kwango. On the other hand, the penetration of modern economic and administrative structures was much too slow and haphazard to shake down irreversibly the framework of the patriarchal system of authority.

Resistance to colonial rule started very early in Kwango. Until the

¹ “Rapport ethnographique...,” M.F. A 569, no 6.
² PLANQUAERT: 115.
³ VANSINA: 180.
⁵ According to Max WEBER, the term “patriarchal” which refers generically to the authority of a master over his household designates the pure type of traditional domination. See The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, New York, 1947: 346.
end of the Congo Free State, the military-civilian administration and the trade companies were in a state of continual war with the kiamfu of Kasongo-Lunda. Here is a typical description of what was going on daily in the Yaka territories around 1900:

“Whenever a White man drew near [. . .], the inhabitants run away and, from far, insulted him. If he was an agent of the administration, the natives would lay down their merchandises in the middle of the village and would ask him to give the money and to leave. If he was a merchant, they would insult him much more and would refuse to give anything. Every day, agents of the trading companies were expelled from the villages and threatened with death.”

Everywhere, the Kwangoese populations refused to carry out the compulsory labor imposed to them by the State but kept trading with the Portuguese merchants who, coming from Angola, were still numerous in the area. This resistance lasted until the end of World War II, although it eventually took milder forms. During the entire period, the paramount chiefs of the Bayaka were clearly leading the movements of rebellion against the Europeans. As Table I illustrates, a majority among them was either dismissed by the administration or fled in Angola and in places where they could not be reached.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Succession of the Kiamfu’s since 1894</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Nsimba-Nkumbi Killed during battle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-1902</td>
<td>Lukokisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-1904</td>
<td>Mulombo Fled in Angola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-1915</td>
<td>Mwana Kobo Fled somewhere in the South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-1916</td>
<td>Mulumbi Mbisi Took refuge near the Wamba river thereafter was reinstated for few months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-1918</td>
<td>Mulumbi Mbisi Disappeared definitively in the forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-1925</td>
<td>Swa Kabeya Left Kasongo-Lunda to claim the succession of an other kiamfu in Angola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-1929</td>
<td>Swa Bangi Dismissed by the administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-1936</td>
<td>Kodipwanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-1944</td>
<td>Mukulu Dismissed by the administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-</td>
<td>Panzu Fumukulu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I — Succession of the Kiamfu’s since 1894

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Whereas elsewhere in the Congo, active political resistance to colonization had ended for a long time, the 1941 annual report on the territory of Kasongo-Lunda complained that:

“As a matter of fact, the Bayaka have never been submitted. It is a difficult and hard region which requires a strong capacity of resisting demoralization on the part of the European personnel [. . .]. The Kiamfu and his caste of dignitaries [. . .] are the most opposed to any progress whatsoever [. . .] and defend the actual social order.”1

Despite this resistance, the colonial administration succeeded in bringing about substantive changes in Lunda politics. Two significant examples can be provided on that respect. The first concerns changes within the succession pattern of the kiamfu. In 1894, after the death of kiamfu Nsimba Nkumbi, the administration of the Congo Free State designated a chief named Lukokisa as the new paramount ruler of the Bayaka. However, this designation, in addition to being arbitrarily imposed, was made against some elementary rules of succession which, for a long time, had been agreed upon by the contenders to the title. According to Plancquaert:

“In the Lunda area, ‘Lukokisa’ is traditionally a noble lady carrying the title of the Mwata-Yamfu’s mother who reigns on the side of the paramount chief and with the same honors. She cannot be one of his wives. She is the chosen with the new chief from among the children of the deceased Mwata-Yamfu and of his principal wives [. . .]. It is more likely—and this is confirmed by the Kiamfu’s genealogy—that this ‘Lukokisa’ was connected with the Kiamfu not by primo-geniture but through matrilineal descent. Accordingly, Chief Lukokisa had no right to the title and was thus considered by the natives as an usurpator.”2

Lukokisa’s nomination by the administration originated an unusual precedent and made more complex the problem of the kiamfu’s succession. During the colonial period, two other kiamfu, descending from Lukokisa’s branch, succeeded in being elected thanks to the support of the Belgian administration. In addition to conflicts opposing the two elder clans who competed for the chiefly knife (Muteba and Mawesi), third faction was now claiming its right to the title.

The Lukokisa “clan” appealed to ancient myths which, in effect, turned commonly held traditions upside down and produced a great deal of confusion among the Belgian civil servants whose credulity could be easily abused. Thus, the Mawesi and Muteba clans were presented by the Lukokisa faction as “hunters and foreigners” whose rights of succession were illegitimate. In their own words:

“Do foreigners, who settled on the land of other people and marry natives of their country, have any right to have access to power, merely because they have married these women? The Muteba and Mawesi people were hunters. They had

2. PLANCQUAERT: 93.
lost their way and were hungry. They heard noise in the forest where our people and the Kiamfu were celebrating. They joined them and took refuge among them. Our Kiamfu, who, at that time, was a woman, loved one of these hunters and wished to marry him [. . .]. How is it that our ancestors have never reigned since that time?"¹

Another example of crude intervention of the colonizer in traditional politics was the new regulations which enforced by the administration about the tax-levying system practised by the kiamfu, a system which almost by definition escaped any bureaucratic procedures. To the administration, these reforms were justified for several reasons. For one thing, the colonizer thought to reduce by this means the kiamfu’s ascendancy over his chiefs and subjects. On the other hand, the principle of customary tribute was said to be in contradiction with the main objective of colonization in the rural milieu, namely the transformation of chieftaincies into administrative entities and economic units of production. Thus, around 1950, collection of customary taxes by the kiamfu was declared illegal. In its place, the kiamfu received a fixed allowance which was taken from the treasury of circumscriptions where his authority was acknowledged. The kiamfu was authorized, however, “to levy an annual and symbolic tribute such as palm wine or other gifts of little value.”² At the same time, travels of the kiamfu’s vassals and sub-chiefs began to be severely controlled. Although the kiamfu was allowed to host his close children—the bana ba kiamfu of the South—, he could not hold meetings or receive chiefs from the northern country without permission of the territorial administrator. Any transgression to that rule could lead to heavy penalties such as relegation or dismissal.³

Nevertheless, it remains true that the frequent interventions of the colonial administration into “traditional matters” produced a twofold effect. If the bureaucratization of chieftaincies limited the kiamfu’s freedom of action, it could bring about, in some case, substantial benefits to the chiefly hierarchy. For instance, Chief Pelende succeeded in getting a far greater independence from Kasongo-Lunda than before. From the beginning of the twentieth century, he ceased to pay his tribute to the kiamfu. To other chiefs, the protection they were able to get from the colonial administration meant the reinforcement or reinstatement of their own personal authority which was often contested by several powerful contenders. This sometimes led to “embarrassing” situations in which some chiefs were upheld by different Belgian civil servants in the quarrels which opposed them. The support of the colonial administration was indispensable even to the kiamfu himself. The collaboration between him and the territorial civil service probably reached its peak in the 40s when Mvungism penetrated the Kwango area. In Kwango the mvunga (prophets) travelled from one village to another and initiated

³. Ibid.
followers who, in turn, became prophets. They preached the destruction of fetishes and encouraged people not to pay taxes and to refuse compulsory labor. Accordingly, Mvungism was threatening, not only law and order in Kwango, but also the kiamfu’s magical powers. The Kwangoles patriarchs reacted vigorously in order to stop the activities of that sect. On this occasion, Belgian territorial administrators exalted the “positive” and “courageous” attitude of the chiefs whom they usually despised in other circumstances. The kiamfu was particularly praised for his active participation in the banning of Mvungism throughout his chieftaincy.

Conflicts which opposed the administration to the traditional hierarchy were thus not critical antagonisms. For that and others which are going to be explored now, it would be a mistake to think that political resistance of chiefs involved total refusal of the cultural, social and economic artifacts of colonization. The weak level of socio-economic development in Kwango did not result from an allegedly unyielding attitude on the part of the patriarchal aristocracy, but from a deliberate neglect of this area by the colonial administration. In other words, the socio-economic “backwardness” in which Kwango was kept, together with continual rebellions of the chiefs, reinforced each other and contributed to maintain stagnation and status quo in that area.

The colonial administration itself acknowledged several times its own deficiencies in coping with political change in Kwango. The abnormally low level of administrative penetration was frequently considered as the chief factor for the meagre socio-economic achievement in that region. The Belgian civil servants regarded Kwango as “the end of the world,” as “one of the worst posts to be in.” Young civil servants and old irrécupérables were sent over there. Administrative continuity was almost inexistant since the young territorial agents who arrived in Kwango wished to leave as quickly as possible in order to continue their career elsewhere. Between 1948 and 1958, at least ten territorial administrators followed one after the other at the head of the territories of Kasongo-Lunda and Popokabaka. According to Denis, 25 civil servants administered a population of 325,000 scattered on an area of 54,000 km². Here is the way he summarizes the duty performed by a territorial administrator in the Kwango district:

"The administrator settles for a few days in a guest house and summons the village chiefs. Each of them, accompanied with a few men, has answered the call. Local problems are discussed together. Disputes are settled and population

1. Mvungism represents the mere extension of Kimbangism in the Kwango area.
3. Interview with Catholic missionaries in Popokabaka and Kasongo-Lunda.
The lack of administrative penetration in the Yaka region went with a complete absence of economic involvement on the part of private companies. In the beginning of colonization, economic prospects were relatively encouraging, however. Between 1908 and 1918, the Kwango district was the center of intense commercial activities. In June 1911, there were fifteen commercial enterprises of which two were important Belgian companies—the Compagnie du Kasaï and the Société des Comptoirs Commerciaux Congolais (CCC). Like all the major companies in the Congo, they bought rubber from the rural populations in exchange for manufactured goods. Two big industrial enterprises, the first drawing out rubber, the second treating palm oil, were operating in Kwango by that time. However, by 1917, a sharp commercial decline had already begun. Rubber, the only marketable resource in Kwango, dropped from 3,050 tons in 1916 to 2,660 tons the following year, and reached 739 tons only at the end of 1921. Since the withdrawal of Russia from the rubber market, preference was given to industrial rubber which never developed in Kwango. The various measures taken by the colonial government to maintain production—e.g. reduction of transport rates—were unsuccessful. By 1932, rubber had completely disappeared from the local market. This decline was accompanied with a sudden breakdown in the Kwango transportation network. Waterways, the only means of transportation utilized so far, ceased to be maintained and travelled upon. Attempts at restoring commercial activities were carried out the following years. In 1932, a vast economic program including the development of industrial cultures was launched, but it was rejected by the populations who considered them as “useless and fastidious.” The war period brought back an ephemeral prosperity in Kwango once again. Rubber, badly needed by the allies for the war effort, was exported in large quantity from Kwango. Then, without warning, recession came back again. In the beginning of 1952, the price of rubber dropped from BF 11 to 5 and the production from 4,353 to 1,510 tons. Commercial and industrial companies sold their installations and withdrew from the area.

Almost at the same time, a strong movement of migration from Kwango to Léopoldville began to take shape. It never ended. In 1958, Denis estimated that one man out of four had to leave his village to earn some money in town. According to the official census, the Bayaka formed the most important group at Léopoldville after the Bakongo. The pattern of Yaka migration was—and still is—unique in comparison

1. Ibid.: 26.
3. Ibid.: 827-829.
with many other ethnic groups. Most of those who left home to get a job in town did not intend to stay for a long time in the capital where they formed a socio-economic group living apart from the urban community. Since they were regarded as “backward” by the Bangala and Bakongo of Léopoldville, they found it more secure to live together in the same section of the cité indigène, while some of them settled in the suburbs or built new villages around the capital. For the same reason, they were only able to get the lowest socio-economic occupations. According to Denis, the Bayaka of Léopoldville were mostly employed as private servants or public workers in state parks, plantations and nurseries of the capital. Another group, relatively numerous, was hired in sand quarries or shipyards. Very few of them were working in the administration (4.4%) or engaged in commercial activities (6.3%) (see Table II).

Table II. — Employment of the Bayaka at Léopoldville (1958)

| Activities | Bayaka Total | Wage-Earners | Bayaka | Turbo
|------------|-------------|--------------|--------|------
| Agriculture | 126 1.7 | 528 23.9 | | 
| Quarries | 134 1.8 | 487 0.5 | 27.7 | 
| Industry | 1937 27.6 | 8439 9.1 | 4.2 | 
| Construction | 3073 41.5 | 22520 24.3 | 13.6 | 
| Commerce | 476 11 | 11 4.5 | 
| Transport | 736 9.9 | 15532 11.8 | 4.7 | 

Source: Denis Les Yaka du Kwango: Contribution une étude ethno-déwigraphique Tervueren 1964

Finally, Denis emphasizes that there was a very small number of educated Yaka living in Léopoldville. However, many prefered to establish their permanent residence in the small urban centers of Kwango. About eighty per cent of those who could be considered as the “Kwangoles intelligentsia,” that is, who had achieved a post-primary instruction, lived in Kenge, Popokabaka or Kasongo-Lunda, where they were employed in the administration, schools or commerce. They were going to form later on the new political bourgeoisie of Kwango.

To sum up, the process of socio-economic change in Kwango is an ambiguous and paradoxical one. At the threshold of independence, the

1. At the time of independence, such withdrawal might have been encouraged by several violent incidents opposing the Bakongo to the Bayaka in some section of the “cité indigène.”
2. Denis: 5.
Yaka social and political structures are not so much marked by “dualism” —that is, a “traditional order” and a “modernizing” sphere coexisting side by side—but rather by two social systems which both lack integration, structural coherence and autonomy. Thus, under the action of colonization, the Yaka chiefs lost their power basis and became more and more, if not the active agents of the colonial bureaucracy, at least its dependents as far as their legitimacy was concerned. On the other hand, although the overall cohesion of traditional political structures was threatened both internally and externally, these chiefs could reinforce their personal position or maintain exorbitant privileges, given the low degree of socio-economic differentiation and the weak administrative development in that area.

III. — PATRIMONIAL POLITICS IN KWANGO (1960-1965)

In the following section, I will attempt to show that postcolonial politics in Kwango was entirely defined in terms of factional power struggles which did not enable the élite to perform the “modernizing” tasks that were expected from them. As a result, they could not provide and employ effective local institutions which remained dominated by the class of patriarchs.

Political awakening was particularly slow in Kwango. No political organization had emerged in that area prior to 1959. A few Yaka intellectuals and évolués were scattered in political parties created in the neighboring districts of Kwilu and Lower-Congo. Among them, the PSA (Parti Solidaire Africain; Kwilu) was the most active in Kwango. At the end of 1959, a regional section of that party had been formed at Kenge by the Kwilu élite. Contacts had already been taken between the PSA leaders and the kiamfu in order to get his approval for the diffusion of PSA in Kwango. In the long run, these attempts were unsuccessful. The activities of PSA in the Yaka areas were seriously thwarted by the creation in 1959 of a political association which aimed at defending the tribal interests of the Bayaka—the LUKA (Union Kwangolaise pour

1. By lack of autonomy, I refer to the vulnerability of the social system to the disruptive forces and influences coming from within or/and from outside society. The lack of coherence is indicated by the weak level of consensus on the functional boundaries of the social system and on the procedures for resolving disputes on issues which come up within those boundaries. See P. HUNTINGTON, “Political Development and Political Decay,” World Politics XVII (3), Apr. 1965: 401-404.

2. Patrimonial politics is understood as a system of rulership characterized by appropriation of public offices as a prime motivation of the élite and by political and territorial factionalism arrived at through the development of relationships based on a mixture of primordial and personal loyalties. See A. ZOLBERG, Creating Political Order, Chicago, 1966: 141-143; and J.-C. WILLAME, Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo, Stanford (forthcoming).

l'Indépendance et la Liberté). Openly encouraged by the colonial administration who worried about the spread of PSA radicalism in Kwango, LUKA became the major rallying organization of the Bayaka clerks and intellectuals.

All its prominent leaders had been recruited among old-fashioned évolués who were usually more than forty years old and had family or clan links with Kwangolese chiefs. For example, Albert Delvaux, the forty years old head of LUKA, born from a Yaka mother and a Belgian father, had married one of the sisters or daughters of the kiamfu. He was one of the “favorite sons” of the Belgian milieu at Léopoldville and Brussels, for whom he symbolized political wisdom and moderation. Since the beginning of 1960, he had consistently stigmatized the “communist plot” in the Congo. During the 1960 mutiny of the Force Publique, he had actively protected Belgian families who were running away from Léopoldville. As the foremost patrimonial leader of Kwango, he was particularly praised for his concern with his own region and for the material benefits he succeeded in providing to the Kwango. When he became Minister of Public Transportation in the central government, he was highly instrumental in providing his district with a highway connecting Kenge to Léopoldville. He also had frequent contacts with some British and Belgian representatives of mining corporations and he kept repeatedly asking them to exploit the few mineral deposits which had been discovered in Kwango.1 Among the other most important patrimonial rulers of Kwango were Senator Mwaku, born in 1920 in a chiefly family of Kasongo-Lunda and a former clerk in the Health Department at Léopoldville, and congressman Henri Ilenda, son of Chief Ngowa and previously territorial agent at Popokabaka.2 At the next level of the political pyramid, there was a relatively small group of intellectuals and clerks who had been employed in the administration or in Catholic schools—Pierre Masikita, Pierre Kavunzu de Lunda, Alphonse Pashi, etc. They formed the followers of the patrimonial rulers and had been elected assemblymen in 1960. Finally the lowest stratum included the élite group of chieftaincies and secteurs (clerks, teachers, etc.).3 They generally belonged to a younger generation. At the end of 1960, they took over en masse the administrative posts which had been so far occupied by petty notables and small chiefs who had been dismissed for “their hostility to the local population.”4

From June 1960 to October 1962, the Kwango district was free from all the political disturbances which plagued the Congo. The Bayaka élites succeeded in appropriating peacefully all the major public offices

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2. Interview Kwango.
3. The secteur is the lowest administrative unit of the colonial bureaucracy. It roughly corresponds to the county in East Africa.
at Kenge.1 Although this was prohibited by the provisory Constitution, congressman Henri Ilenda served as district commissioner of Kwango. At Léopoldville, however, the Kwangoese representatives were caught in severe rivalries opposing the political leaders of Kwilu with those of the Lower-Congo. The intensity of these feuds was probably at the root of frustrations and discontent among the Bayaka who felt they were considered as inequal partners and quantité négligeable by the two factions. In the words of a Yaka politician: "ABAKO and PSA have fooled us for almost two years. So that political coexistence with them became impossible."2

Their first demand for institutional autonomy took place at the 1961 round tables of “national reconciliation.” At the Tananarive meeting, Joseph Kolumba (Musuku; Feshi), Minister of Internal Affairs in the provincial government of Léopoldville and a close friend of Albert Delvaux, headed a “delegation of the Kwango State.” The “State of Kwango” was also represented at the next conference (Coquilhatville) by senators Laurent Mbariko and André Mwaku, and by assemblymen, Pierre Kavunzu de Lunda and Pierre Masikita.3 However, rumors spread at the same time that Joseph Kolumba had already forestalled his colleagues by proclaiming the formation of a “State government in Kwango.”4 This act strongly antagonized the Bayaka leaders and marked the beginning of a virulent antagonism which, from 1962 on, opposed Albert Delvaux to Joseph Kolumba.

Since its creation in October 1962, the province of Kwango was characterized by a permanent state of institutional instability.5 Conflicts between the Yaka leaders, and between them and the minority factions—Basuku, Basonde, Cokwe, Bambala of the eastern part of the Kwango—progressively eroded the Yaka power basis in the province. From 1962 to 1964, the Kwango has known five successive governments the last two of which had been elected in irregular conditions. After Delvaux’s resignation as provincial president in October 1962, the presidency successively passed down to Alphonse Pashi who had been designated by Delvaux as his successor, thereafter to Pierre Masikita, Pierre Kavunzu de Lunda and finally to Joseph Kolumba. Legal government ended, however, when Pierre Masikita was dismissed from office in April 1964, without the required parliamentary quorum. The motion of censorship and the election of subsequent governmental teams took place with only eight assemblymen present out of the thirteen members who formed the

1. The Kwango is a multi-ethnic region; it includes not only the Bayaka but many other “alien” groups formerly repelled by the Lunda conquest.
2. Interview Kwango.
4. ARTIGUE: 163.
assembly. The group of Bayaka assemblymen could have kept its majority of nine members had not one of its members, Joseph Buloki, changed over to the opposition caucus led by Kulumba. The designation of Pierre Kayunzu de Lunda occurred without the presence of the “minority group,” whereas Joseph Kulumba was elected without the “majority faction.” From May 1964, however, Kulumba presided de facto, if not de jure, over the provincial institutions. His arrival in power coincided with the dismissal of the Bayaka from the provincial administration and with the spread of his own political organization—the PDC (Parti Démocrate Congolais)—in the Yaka constituency.

In prevision of the 1965 electoral campaign and presumably under the influence of Delvaux, who had nevertheless tried very hard to reconcile the two groups,1 the province was finally placed under a state of emergency at the end of 1964. But this measure produced the effect exactly opposite to the expected one. The designation of André Mwaku as extraordinary commissioner of Kwango was greeted with indignation by the opposition. The LUKA faction took advantage of Mwaku’s position and indulged in all sorts of irregularities during the electoral campaign. The aggressivity and intolerance of the Yaka politicians was all the more noticeable as their rivals of PDC had succeeded in rallying many young Yaka politicians. Unlike PDC which, as a newcomer, could capitalize on a latent discontent in Kwango, LUKA had lost all political cohesion and homogeneity. Personal rivalries existed at the top between patrimonial leaders (Delvaux-Ilenda). At the lower level, the Bayaka were divided into several factions of which some were campaigning against LUKA’s authoritarian gerontocracy.

As a matter of fact, these cleavages did not emerge from the 1965 electoral campaign, but were rooted in political discontent of some Yaka minority groups whose grievances had increased with the creation of the province in 1962. Four cleavages are worth to mention here:

1. The first opposed the Pashi government to the Pelende chief, Zacharia Mbuya, and the intellectuals of his chieftaincy. Since 1962, the Pelende had been reluctant in acknowledging the creation of the Kwango province. As a result, a sort of political quarantine had been established against Pelende by the Yaka-led government. In the beginning of 1963, provincial president Pashi took the initiative of creating, within the chieftaincy, a new administrative unit—the secteur Bakali—including all the “friendly” Yaka villages opposed to Chief Mbuya.2 This division originated a clear-cut polarization between “Yaka” and “Pelende” followers. Scattered incidents multiplied the following months. A full scale uprising eventually broke up at Kobo, the administrative center of the chieftaincy, during the visit of a Government delegation.3 Order was finally restored, but,

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1. The following paragraph is based on interviews the author had with the President of the Electoral Commission, an official observer of the electoral process in the provinces, with whom this author traveled throughout Kwango in April, 1965.
3. According to many witnesses, the fact that the delegation was accompanied
following a parliamentary investigation ordered from Léopoldville, Alphonse Pashi was forced to resign. A new provincial government, headed by Pierre Masikita and including a representative of the Pelende chieftaincy, was elected by the assembly. However, this government, was no more able than any other to cope with continual tension in the Pelende chieftaincy. At the end of 1963, the provincial Minister of Internal Affairs dismissed Mbuya and replaced him by an old and illiterate chief, Tsangala. This decision could not be enforced. "Chief" Tsangala complained that "nobody was willing to obey his orders." In August 1964, Chief Mbuya was reconfirmed in his function by the Kulumba government who was obviously exploiting political divisions between the Bayaka.

2. The second series of centrifugal movements occurred in the newly created *secteur* Bakali where the local intelligentsia complained "to be ignored by the provincial government" too. From December 1963, *secteur* chief Ambroise Lukengo kept asking that his constituency be represented "by a minister and a chief of police at Kenge." He never obtained satisfaction. During the 1965 electoral campaign, the candidate of the *secteur* Bakali, Mr. Mvungi, broke up from LUKA and organized his own personal campaign.

3. A third dissidence arose among the representatives of the *secteur* Yonzo in the territory of Popokabaka. Dissatisfied with the provincial government which they considered as dominated by the "Kasongo-Lunda people," two outspoken leaders of the *secteur*, Joseph Buloki and Jacques Katondi, left LUKA and joined the opposition. They justified their dissidence by arguing that "they were not Bayaka but Bambala from Kwilu." This argument allowed them to identify themselves with a neighboring ethnic group whose representatives were dominant in the provincial government of Kwilu.

4. The fourth movement of political discontent originated in the territory of Kasongo-Lunda, that is, right in the *kiamfu's* own State. Around May 1963, the intellectuals, civil servants and village chiefs of *secteur* Panzi unanimously asked the provincial government to detach their region from Kasongo-Lunda and to have their own territory. Since this demand was turned down by the Government, they joined the opposition too. In the 1965 election, the two parliamentary seats of the *secteur* were captured by PDC candidates.

Factionalism and centrifugal movements thus formed the stuff of "modern" politics in Kwango. They were more particularly exacerbated by power struggles which originated with the creation of the Kwango province in 1962. In such a context, it is difficult to see the relevance of any model that could appraise the Kwango political system in terms of modernization and input-output functions, or through decision-making analysis. Like many others, the political élites of Kwango have not been concerned at all with the modernist tasks—building a nation, creating favorable conditions for economic development, etc.—often considered as being their responsibility, unless, of course, one takes at face value their declamatory statements of intention. The problem is not just that

with a squad of the National Congolese Army contributed to aggravate the troubles in that area.

3. Interview Kwango.
the Kwango had insufficient resources to “develop” and to “modernize,” but that we deal with a kind of politics which is not centered upon the realization of such goals. Instead, one single objective has determined the behavior of the political leaders, namely, the appropriation of public offices conceived of as a major source of reward and prestige. A certain number of characteristics result from this process. First politics is defined in terms of feuds and personalized antagonisms. As Ralph Nicholas has pointed out, conflict is the *raison d’être* of factional politics.1 Second, corporate and institutionalized political groups are almost inexistent. Third, since there are no such groups and thus no clear principle of recruitment, leadership rests upon unstable patron-client relations. The political leader is not a person endowed with charisma which could motivate supporters on a level above self-interest; he is essentially a man with more political power than any of his followers. Obviously, none of these features do fit with what is usually considered as “modernity” (universalism, achievement, bureaucratic rationalization, etc.).

IV. — Patriarchs in the Postcolonial Period

It is particularly significant that neither the *kiamfu* of Kasongo-Lunda nor his delegates in the North were really involved in these patrimonial struggles. The point that I wish to develop now is that, except in occasional circumstances and for mere tactical considerations, no institutionalized and permanent pattern of relationship was ever established between “modern” politics and patriarchal structures in Kwango. Since June 1960, the Yaka chiefs completely withdrew from “civil society.” As soon as colonial structures broke down, they ceased to perform the tasks which were expected from them—levying taxes, building and maintaining roads, etc. This does not mean however that chiefs resumed their traditional roles or modified them to suit the times. In many respect, they continued to behave and to consider themselves as the “representatives” and the “successors” of the colonial State among the rural population. The “traditions” they wished to preserve were not immemorial norms but the few privileges they enjoyed during colonization.

I shall now provide two case studies which illustrate the role of patriarchs in the postcolonial period. They are based on intensive fieldwork conducted in the territories of Popokabaka and Kasongo-Lunda during September 1964 and May 1965. In the first section, I will describe the relationships between the *kiamfu* and the political élite as viewed from the chieftaincy of Kasongo-Lunda. In the second part, I will concentrate my analysis on factional politics at Popokabaka and

on the way the chiefs are “utilized” in cleavages and conflicts opposing the Yaka politicians.

1. A Visit to the Kiamfu’s Estate at Kasongo-Lunda

Chief Panzu Fumukulu was elected kiamfu of the Bayaka in 1947. His designation was hard to come out. Since the “notables” could not reach an agreement on whom was going to replace the former kiamfu dismissed by the administration, they asked the arbitration of Father Plancquaert who was considered as an expert in the problems of the kiamfu’s succession. Unlike the previous kiamfu, Panzu Fumukulu was appreciated by the Belgian administration for his “moderation and skillful diplomacy.” This does not mean, however, that he had no occasional conflicts with the administration. Crawford Young has mentioned that in the early 50s Chief Panzu succeeded in forcing the transfer of a Belgian administrator who was regarded as persona non grata in his chieftaincy.1

In 1959, his prestige increased markedly in Kwango after the travel he made to Belgium and his visit to King Baudouin. The following year, he was offered a seat in the Senate by Albert Delvaux, but declined that offer. Since independence, he went one or twice at Léopoldville, but is said to dislike such visits. Despite his very old age—he is almost eighty—he travels frequently in his constituency. He has completely surrendered his administrative duties, the “management” of which he left to the council of the chieftaincy and, above all, to his private secretary. The latter is a young man who is probably one of the most influent and wealthiest individual at Kasongo-Lunda. The council constitutes a group of modernist clients who are consulted because they speak French—very few people speak that language at Kasongo-Lunda—and are literate. Many of them clearly abuse their prerogatives and manipulate the kiamfu for their own advantages. In the words of Augustin Munipatu, one of the 125 sons of Chief Panzu and a territorial agent at Kasongo-Lunda: “The kiamfu is like a shoe that one wears in the morning; in the evening, one is glad to take it off back home.”

The kiamfu’s knowledge of politics does not extend beyond the goings-on in Kasongo-Lunda. He does not understand the quarrels opposing the politicians. Provincial ministers and assemblymen come frequently to him “for advice,” that is, to have him arbitrate their personal conflicts with one another. But he does not seem to be very interested and concerned by these matters. During one of these meetings, he is said to have told them that he was “sick and tired of politics” and that, in his opinion, “no politician was worth the ‘knife’ he had given them.”2

2. Interview Kwango. The knife is the symbol of power among the Yaka chiefs.
brief, the status and position of Chief Panzu can be best summarized by the following remark made to me by one of my informants:

"The kiamfu and all the other chiefs are god-like persons; in our villages, a chief is not somebody who 'works.' He is above politics. He is a chief and that is all. Even though he his Honorary President of LUKA, this title does not compel him to play an active role in the party. He is not even compelled to support it if he does not want to."

Hitherto, his intervention in local politics has been minimal too. He has been asked several times by the provincial government to throw the weight of his authority in the Pelende dispute. He went to Kenge, chatted with Chief Mbuya, but nothing came out from this encounter, except a vague promise made by Chief Mbuya that he was going to acknowledge the kiamfu's authority. This indicates that they most probably tried to settle their own personal dispute, but certainly not the conflict which opposed Chief Mbuya to the provincial government. The creation of the new territory of Panzi—right in the middle of his own estate—and the fact that its representatives had passed into the opposition did not bring any reaction whatsoever from Chief Panzu.

In Kwango, the prestige of the chief is not based on external manifestation of wealth and prestige. The kiamfu is no exception to that rule. All those who visited him have been impressed by the poverty which surrounds his daily existence. With the numerous gifts in money and in kind which he receives from his chiefs and subjects, the kiamfu should be the richest man in the province. A missionary told me that many families refused to pay school tuition for their children, but spent fortunes to bring gifts to the kiamfu.

The following account of my first visit to Chief Panzu in September 1964 illustrates this state of apparent poverty and lack of prestige; it also illustrates the nature and the source of his identifications, and the role in which he wants to be seen.

"The 'royal palace'—as it is called—consists in a series of small huts surrounding a bigger one: the residence of the kiamfu. The external appearance is extremely poor, though clean and orderly. While entering the courtyard, we—the territorial administrator and myself—saw dozens of children looking through the windows and disrespectfully jeering the kiamfu who was already half-drunk. On a guttural sound coming from the inside, they all spread around. After a while, we are allowed to enter into the kiamfu's hut. Chief Panzu is sitting inside, surrounded by old notables on their knees. We are the only ones having the privilege to receive comfortable chairs. The scenery around me is astonishing. The kiamfu's 'living room' is full of souvenirs from the colonial period—his decoration of chef médaille, a portrait of the Belgian king, another of the preceding kiamfu, a picture of the late Papal Nuncio, 'who was one of his best friends.' I introduce myself and explain the purpose of my visit, but he is only interested in everything which reminds him of the colonial past. Am I a Flemish or a Waloon? Did I meet such and such former Belgian administrator? etc. During the entire conversation, I shall have the impression of living ten or twenty years ago. In the eyes of Chief Panzu, I was the 'White Man' whose role in Kwango he praised an whose departure he deplored."
This attachment to the colonial period is not just a result of the *kiamfu*’s old age, but rather, I think, of a deliberate attitude on his part to show up the extent of his authority to his audience. To “know the Belgians,” to host them means being close to their power and thus sharing the prestige they and their successors carry. His reverence toward the Congolese territorial administrator is also typical on that respect; in his eyes, the “A.T.” is still the representative of *Bula Matari*—that is, the former territorial agent—and as such deserves the honors due to his rank.

The *kiamfu*’s main activity is to arbitrate the many private and petty conflicts—about land, divorce, etc.—which arise in his chieftaincy and to receive tributes from his subjects in exchange for protection against external disturbance. A typical example of the kind of protection the *kiamfu* is able to give to his subjects is provided by the conflict which opposed the people of Kasongo-Lunda to their territorial administrator, Noël Kikwa, in the beginning of independence. Kikwa, a former clerk in the colonial administration and a native of Pelende, arrived at Kasongo-Lunda at the end of 1961. His presence soon arose suspicion among the chiefs who disliked the intervention of a “foreigner” in their local affairs. In his report, Kikwa wrote:

“During my first trip of 20 days in the countryside I have been told all sort of stories against me. I was considered as a foreigner and I had to be replaced by a native of the territory. This is what the people say.”

The opposition to the territorial administrator reached its peak following a conflict between a Lunda chief of Kasongo-Lunda, Kafunzu Zotuna, and the newly elected *chef de secteur*, a young intellectual who had become one of Kikwa’s followers. The population of the chieftaincy was encouraged by the chief “to disobey administrative orders, to refuse census, not to pay taxes, etc.” Policemen and civil servants were beaten and chased, while Chief Kafunzu, supported by the *kiamfu*, prevented any civil servant from touring his territory. Kikwa’s position became soon impossible. Everybody, from the *kiamfu* to the last of his subjects, actively worked for his dismissal. In December 1961, he wrote:

“I have decided to leave Kasongo-Lunda, if I am not sent in another post [..]. Meetings and plots are daily organized against myself [..]. I have also been threatened with death by the Kiamfu.”

Despite the unanimous support he received from other officials who tried to intervene in his favor at Léopoldville, Noël Kikwa left Kasongo-Lunda in the beginning of 1962 and was replaced by one of the *kiamfu*’s son, Inana Melage. A similar conflict occurred three years later when President Kulumba sent another “foreigner” as territorial administrator at Kasongo-Lunda. This time, the *kiamfu* himself went to “greet”

2. Ibid.
the new administrator at the airport and ordered him to leave his territory immediately, which he did.

The extent of the kiamfu's authority and his ability to provide security to his subjects was once more tested during the Kwilu rebellion. Taking advantage of a local conflict between two chiefs in the territory of Feshi, small bands of Bapende rebels infiltrated in Kwango. Once they came into contact with the Yaka populations, they ran into considerable difficulties. Chief Panzu had ordered all the warriors of his constituency to stand on a war footing and to be stationed at every ferry landings, bridges, roads and rivers, ready to push back the invaders. His command was followed to the letter. The military mobilization of the entire population almost certainly saved Kwango from the rebellion and prevented its expansion further west.

2. A Look at the Ngowa Chieftaincy

Our second case study will take us, further north, to the Ngowa chieftaincy. Its center is a small village, Ngowa, located five kilometers from Popokabaka, the territorial chef-lieu, along the road leading to Kenge. It includes approximately sixty to sixty-five villages. The present chief of Ngowa is the nephew of the "Great Chief Ngowa Maweshi." The latter, born around 1863, was brought up at the residence of the kiamfu. Appointed as a "decorated chief" in 1907 by the Congo Free State, he was destituted in 1908 by the colonial administration. However, when the situation had completely deteriorated at Ngowa, he was re-instated in 1910 and appointed chef de secteur in the district of Popokabaka. He died twelve years later leaving more than thirty sons, only three of whom had received a primary education (Henry Ilenda, congressman; Mathieu Mbemba, school principal; and Pascal Mesengo, a mechanic in the Department of Public Works at Léopoldville).

A number of concrete facts illustrate the ambiguous position of the present Chief, Ngowa. Thus, when the time came to renew the conseil de secteur of Popokabaka in August 1964, Chief Ngowa managed to place at its head a young candidate who had obtained only three out of thirty votes during the deliberations of the council. What is more, in 1961, when he nominated one of his followers as vice-president of the tribunal de secteur, this man likewise got the position. The chef de secteur himself comes from the same village as Chief Ngowa and has occupied this function since independence. In these three instances, Chief Ngowa's authority was claimed and utilized by young followers and relatives striving for public offices. On the other hand, Ngowa's authority over his notables seems to be slowly eroded by factional politics. Some among his subchiefs, manipulated by local would-be politicians, have attempted to become directly dependent upon the kiamfu. Since 1963, Chief Ngowa has become politically more and more isolated from the
other chiefs of Popokabaka—Ikomba, Lusanga, Kabama and Nkosi-Moyo—who, under the pressures exercised by young “intellectuals” and civil servants, have recently organized to claim a ‘secteur’ for themselves. Chief Ngowa did not even react to that dissidence. He only insisted that he should be permitted to “continue crossing the river [Kwango] in order to visit his villages and collect taxes from them.”

Political life in Popokabaka was, at the time of my visit, dominated by a relatively small élite, generally French-speaking. It was divided into two factions the limits of which were rather fluid and unstable. I shall review successively the behavior of the main political actors at Popokabaka, with special reference to those aspects which shed lights on my central concern: the reciprocal influences of patriarchal structures and factional politics.

a) Congressman Henry Ilenda

Congressman Henry-Ernest-Désiré Ilenda is without a doubt the person who has the greatest political influence in Popokabaka. Thirty-eight years old, he is one of the sons of the renowned Chief Ngowa Maweshi. He studied first at the Catholic Mission of Popokabaka (six years of primary instruction), then at Lemfu, at the Seminary of Kisantu (six years of humanities), and finally at the School of Administrative Sciences at Kisantu (two years). He was in the territorial administration from 1949 to 1959 (in Kwilu and Kwango). In 1959, he was elected president of the territorial council of Popokabaka. His political career began that same year when he was elected provincial president of LUKA. In January 1960, he was a member of the delegation of traditional chiefs at the Belgo-Congolese Round Table where he represented the kiamfu. In May 1960, he was elected congressman for Kwango with a preferential vote of 9,357. When Parliament closed, he went back to Kenge where he held the position of district commissioner. In July 1961, he returned to Leopoldville until President Kasavubu sent Parliament on vacation in September 1963.

At Popokabaka, where he often resides, his influence is based on three factors. He is the only Congolese merchant there; he is congressman; and above all, he is the son of the “Great Ngowa Maweshi.” It is the latter role that he was to perform before me each time I went to visit him at his place. During the first interview I had with him, and without any prodding on my part, Henry Ilenda spoke of himself as the representative of a prestigious chiefly family and not as the vice-president of LUKA nor as a congressman. He related at length the story of his father; he spoke of the famous kiamfu of Kasongo-Lunda, claiming to be his private counsellor. Since I came to see him “from the country of the lower Congo,” he boasted of the kingdom of the Bayaka which had no equal, in his mind, except for the Bakuba of Kasai. He claimed that the ancient kingdom of the Lower Congo was a fake, that it was a kingdom
located in Angola and not in the Congo. On the other hand, he spoke glowingly of the Lunda, “a conquering and warlike people spread out as far as the borders of Kwilu.” Ignoring all interruptions on my part, he talked endlessly about the fine qualities and the fascinating history of the Bayaka. The facts he quoted were chosen at random from his readings on the subject (Father Planquaert, Father Henry De Decker, etc.).

He explained the present political difficulties of the Congo, and especially those of Kwilu which he knew best due to his long residence there, by that fact that “these regions do not know the predominance of customary chiefs.”

I returned the following days to see Henry Ilenda again. This time, I found him in the presence of his main opponent—territorial administrator Jacques Katondi—and his followers—the school principals and the chef de secteur of Popokabaka. The discussion turned immediately to the behavior of the territorial administrator whom his political opponents accused of “playing politics, which is incompatible with his administrative duties.” Here, Ilenda spoke no longer as the representative of the chiefly hierarchy, but in the context of age-group relationships which in Kwango, oppose the Bambuta—those who embody “traditional” values, the elders—to the “youngsters.”

“The latter—he declared—do not know anything and have no experience [. . .]. They think everything is permitted [. . .]. Politics must be left to older people, not to them. The young people, today are too arrogant [. . .]. They must only execute what we, the Bambuta, tell them.”

I was left out of the conversation, which continued in Kikongo, until the chief of the center entered (I was later to learn that he had joined the politics of the territorial administrator.) The discussion continued without any emotion, interrupted from time to time by laughter and joking. It was a friendly conversation over a glass of beer, and no one could suspect that violent antagonisms were played one against another.

The third and fourth times I saw Ilenda, he was alone. I then tried to sound him out on his knowledge of traditional politics. However, he did not reveal very much that I did not already know. His view was limited and encumbered by “colonial” stereotypes. Finally when I asked him to see Chief Ngowa, he vaguely promised to “arrange something,” but carefully avoided returning to the subject.

b) Territorial Administrator Jacques Katondi

Jacques Katondi belongs to the “new wave” of territorial agents, whose rapid promotion is due to the creation of the Kwango province. Numerous positions in the territorial administration were left vacant when those who are now ministers and high public officials left for Kenge. Since he is new in Popokabaka, Katondi does not have the same prestige as Henry Ilenda. Compared to the latter, who feels very secure and complacent, the administrator is hesitant and timid, and wary of those
who surround him. His extreme prudence made me immediately feel the weakness of his status at Popokabaka, though he seems to enlist some support from the young.

His career is similar to, though not as successful as, that of Henry Ilenda. Born around 1938 in the secteur Yonzo, he did his elementary schooling at Popokabaka. In 1951, he attended the Seminary at Lemfu, where he completed three years of Latin humanities. After having obtained his diploma, he entered the administration. In 1954, he was successively clerk at the Juridictions Indigènes of Léopoldville and section chief at the Centre Extra-Coutumier of N'Djili. In 1959, he returned to his region where he assumed the function of first member of the Collège Permanent, a consultative body of the secteur. Both he and Henry Ilenda were candidates for the territorial elections of Popokabaka (1959); Jacques Katondi remained clerk in the territorial administration until the creation of the Kwango province. In October 1962, he was promoted to the rank of attaché to the cabinet of the provincial Minister of Economic Affairs. After having been appointed principal assistant to the territorial administrator at Bakali in May 1964, he was sent by the Kulumba government to Popokabaka as territorial administrator.

A newcomer to the job, Katondi does not know the territory which has been assigned to him. Lacking means of transportation, he has not yet been able to visit his constituency. He spent a lot of time classifying the records of the territory and trying to establish his authority through the creation of PDC, the political party of his patron, J. Kulumba.

Jacques Katondi became very reserved and cautious when I asked him his opinions about the traditional chiefs in Kwango. He was willing to admit that Kwango remained quiet thanks to the strength of its traditional structures, but he criticized the “ambition” of some politicians who used to hide behind the authority of the chiefs. He frequently opposed the progressist behavior of the youth to the conservatism of the Bambuta. He aimed these words at his principal opponent, Henry Ilenda. His attitude, however, remained prudent and reserved. Indeed, he is isolated in a political milieu hostile to him.

I saw Katondi a second time in Ilenda’s bar. Probably irreconcilable enemies—the more so since their careers run parallel—the two men spoke like old friends. Yet, almost imperceptibly, the territorial administrator seemed dominated by Ilenda’s stature. Only once the latter had left did he relax.

c) The Other Political Actors

Around these two men gravitate a series of lesser figures most of whom are Ilenda’s followers.

— The group of schoolteachers of the mission: “Master” Emmanuel Lufwa and “Master” Thomas Vunzi, related to each other by marriage, are the
grandnephews of Chief Ngowa Maweshi. About thirty years of age and established for a long time at Popokabaka, they are regarded as Bambuta. They are the most active supporters of Ilenda. Their extreme and sometimes naive confidence in chiefly authority is accompanied by a certain uncanniness vis-à-vis the success of the Kwilu rebellion for which most of the “non-established” people of their age have a secret admiration. Representatives of the “Catholic élite” of Popokabaka diocese, they enjoy a privileged status in the local social hierarchy.

— The chief of the urban center: The chief of the urban center of Popokabaka is an old man of about fifty. He seems to have taken side for the territorial administrator when he chose to support PDC. Since then, however, his public appearances have become less frequent. He clearly does not want to be too deeply involved on either side.

— The chief of the secteur: Antoine Mazunda belongs to Ilenda’s faction. He is about thirty years old and has occupied his present function since June 1960. He has little experience and no education and speaks French with difficulty. He has no authority in his own secteur, but he has the full backing of Chief Ngowa. The only thing he has done so far has been to summon the assembly of the secteur in order to nominate Chief Ngowa’s relatives and followers to administrative posts in the chieftaincy.

— The postmaster: Paradoxically, the postmaster in Popokabaka represents a political force that is not to be ignored. Mr. Mathieu is the oldest public official around. Practically immovable since he has been appointed to his function by the central government, he has remained at Popokabaka since independence and knows everything and everybody. Mr. Mathieu desires to keep his neutrality in the conflict between the territorial administrator and Henry Ilenda. He is a “good friend” of the former as well as of the latter. Some time ago, he organized an apolitical youth movement—the Red Cross. “Master” Lufwa and “Master” Vunzi referred to it as a gathering of all the young delinquents in the area. Indeed, the movement is strongly criticized by the chiefs and by the Catholic missions.

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Three major points emerge from the observations and interviews made at Popokabaka and Kasongo-Lunda. All of them are related to the central question which is developed in this paper, namely, the relationships between patriarchal structures and factional politics.

1. First of all, the “universe” of politics is conditioned by cleavages between Bambuta and youngsters. These conflicts are not determined by chronological age only; they essentially oppose those who possess a socio-
political status and those who do not. This universe is also marked by situations which are eminently fluid and ambivalent. Patron-client relationships which constitute the dynamic principle of that universe lack permanence and stability. A wide range of choice exists for the personal “dependents” who can change patron and faction at will. This was clearly demonstrated at Popokabaka where some of the political actors tried to avoid any deep commitment or suddenly broke with their faction.

2. Because of all the uncertainties which surround these power struggles, the political actors feel compelled to appeal to more stable and external sources of legitimacy. Some of them may use ethnic and tribal stereotypes. Others may take for granted the structures and institutions inherited from the colonial period. In Kwango, most of the élite in power called upon the “traditional prestige” of chiefs to whom they were related by familial links or otherwise. The point that must be stressed here is that this “alliance” between chiefs and politicians is merely incidental and marginal to the exercise or acknowledgement of authority. It does not threaten, in any way, the autonomy of the socio-political spaces in which both the patriarchs and the patrimonial élite are evolving. At Kasongo-Lunda as well as at Popokabaka, the paramount chiefs never attempted to use factional struggles to gain some political advantages. This is mostly due to the fact that they chose to protect the parochial and conservative interests of the rural populations and to channel, for their own advantage, latent popular discontent against “inefficient politicians.” On the other hand, the “modernist” élite lacked the skills, the resources and the willingness to exercise control over the patriarchs and their constituencies. They did not depend either on the chiefs or on the rural populations to gain or lose their political games.

3. A third fact which is worth mentioning here, is the progressive emergence of the “non-established” youth as a third socio-political force. The youth do not belong to the sphere of politics since they do not have the necessary resources to constitute their own network of dependents. They do not have a meaningful place in the patriarchal system either for they are too young to be listened to. Frustrated and disenfranchized, they actually reject the twofold gerontocratic system of domination which is imposed upon them by the chiefs and the politicians. Elsewhere in the Congo, they joined the Simba and the rebellions. In Kwango, many of them found an outlet to their discontent by militating into the ranks of an “established” party—the PDC.

The nature of dualism in the Kwangolese society needs to be clearly reassessed at this stage. As a matter of fact the term “dualism” might be confusing insofar as it is used to designate two social systems located at both ends of the “modernity-tradition” continuum. I would rather
prefer the term “bipolarity” in order to emphasize the common origin of the two socio-political spaces we dealt with. Both the urban political class and the paramount chiefs, each in their own way, represent the direct offspring of colonization.

On the one hand, factional politics are rooted into the process of appropriation of public offices which were left vacant by the sudden collapse of the colonial bureaucracy. So far, this political class has been engaged neither in production, nor in invention, building, or labor, but into activities of intermediary level of which politics represent the largest part. In Fanon’s words:

"It was quite content with the role of the western bourgeoisie’s business agent. This lucrative role, this cheap-jack’s function, this meanness of outlook and this absence of ambition symbolize the incapacity of the national middle class to fulfill its historic role of bourgeoisie. Here the dynamic, pioneer aspects of the inventor and of the discoverer of new worlds which are found in all national bourgeoisies are lamentably absent."¹

On the other hand, the so-called “traditional” status and power basis of chiefs have been less eroded than reinterpreted by colonization which provided them with new identifications and roles. Despite their active resistance to European penetration, the Yaka patriarchs were in basic agreement with the colonizer about some basic goals and issues (maintenance of law and order). Moreover, the fact that the Belgians did not impose a parallel political organization in the rural areas gave the chiefs a considerable freedom of action. This tends to demonstrate that, far from suffering from severe role conflicts, these chiefs could very well accommodate to colonial rule and were able to draw substantial benefits from it.

This situation has important consequences from a theoretical and practical standpoint. Indeed, the state of alleged “backwardness” of rural populations in Kwango results less from their isolation and traditionalist outlook than from the structures and development of decolonization in the Congo. Unlike what is suggested in the very notion of dualism, these populations were fully integrated into the political system, but as overexploited, though unconscious, victims of neocolonial structures. Any attempt which would aim at “integrating” them into national politics through community development or other “neotraditional” experiments is vain and meaningless. Similarly, it is a fallacy to argue that patriarchal structures constitute the principal obstacle to political and economic change. In the main, failures in the modernization process rest upon internal contradictions within the “modernizing” sector itself. The main challenge which the African rural populations have thus to cope with is to free themselves from both their own parochialism, which is embodied in the caste interests of their patriarchal rulers, and the irrele-

vant power struggles of the urban political élites. This means in fact to create favorable conditions for the development of class struggles and, so far as the social scientist is concerned, to disclose the twofold exploitation which these populations are facing.