

A SOLO EXHIBITION BY

Sammy  
Baloji

# A blueprint for toads and snakes

25 JUN—  
26 AUG  
2018

OPENING

24 June 2018

CURATOR

Vincent van Velsen

SCENOGRAPHER

Jean Christophe Lanquetin

FRAMER  
LEBAMED

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Framer Framed is happy to present the publication accompanying the solo exhibition by Sammy Baloji at Framer Framed, *A Blueprint for Toads and Snakes*, which is on show from 25 June – 26 August 2018. In the exhibition, artist Sammy Baloji (1978, Lubumbashi) presents a highly original commemoration of the painful history of exploitation and cultural formation in Congo. This publication features a curatorial essay by Vincent van Velsen, as well as important essays relating to specific artistic research interests by Sammy Baloji, contributed by Maëline Le Lay, Johan Lagae and Sofie Boonen.

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## INTRODUCTION

By Josien Pieterse, director of Framer Framed

Sammy Baloji's work is a complex set of insights which uses the destructive effect of the colonial infrastructure on local and social culture and geography as a starting point. The dichotomy of the Congolese mining town of Lubumbashi, which was implemented by the colonial administration in all facets of life – cultural, political, social and geographical – still gives shape to daily life. Baloji's research ranges from abstraction – studying archives and maps, anthropological analysis and political history – to recording local histories and contributing to a local artistic scene in Lubumbashi.

Baloji has an extensive repertoire of narrative skills that transcend artistic disciplines and enable him to both use and question dominant cultural imagery and structures. In the exhibition he strives for a critical and alternative narrative about the past and present, but does not escape the fact that local historiography has largely been erased and that colonial sources and structures dominate.

With *A Blueprint for Toads and Snakes* Framer Framed also aims to follow up on the organisation's multi-year research into the far-reaching consequences of raw materials policy on local infrastructure, culture and nature. In this research track we trace how (often colonial) powers created an infrastructure for the expropriation of raw materials, which led to a social classification that is often still visible today. The mines determine the entire economic and social life, leaving a huge void after their departure or relocation. The only thing that remains alongside old hierarchical structures is irreversible damage to nature and the environment, unemployment and a lacking economic infrastructure.

The research on the effects of mining started in 2015 with the exhibition *Koempels*, curated by Lene ter Haar. The exhibition questioned the relationship between the 'periphery' and the 'center' within the Netherlands, and how the contemporary society in Limburg was affected by the closure of the mines. This was followed in 2017 by a solo exhibition by the Vietnamese artist Tuan Mami during Art Rotterdam. His *In One's Breath - Nothing Stands Still* (2014 - 2017) was the result of a long-term research by Mami into a mining area in the north of Vietnam where industrial companies exploited natural materials (particularly stone) on an enormous scale, with far-reaching consequences for humans and nature.

In the most recent Framer Framed exhibition *Pressing Matters* (2018), compiled by Kevin van Braak, work by various artists such as Fitri DK, Agung Kurniawan and Muhammad 'Ucup' Yusuf was shown, which all deal with the expropriation of the raw materials of West Papua. Dutch colonial rule appeared to be a precursor for later domination by Indonesia, which was for a large part motivated by an economic interest in the gold and copper mines. The works address the historical context and the catastrophic consequences of the mines for nature and people.

The presented solo exhibition by Sammy Baloji, finally, shows his visually stunning *Tales of the Copper Cross Garden. Episode 1*, documenting the laborious process by which local workers melt raw copper into wires in a Congolese factory. The soundtrack of choral mass music reflects on how Church, state and enterprise converged in the Belgian colonial project. *A Blueprint for Toads and Snakes* looks at the extent to which the everyday has become imbued with these colonial and exploitative perspectives and structures, and assesses the possibilities within that context to reclaim the country's narrative and give direction to the future in the present.

# CURATORIAL ESSAY

By Vincent van Velsen, curator of *A Blueprint for Toads and Snakes*

The exhibition *A Blueprint for Toads and Snakes* presents the work of artist Sammy Baloji, whose practice deals with the cultural, social, architectural and industrial heritage of his home country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). With a background in photography, Baloji has developed a research-based practice in which archival material and cultural artefacts inform his work. By way of his art, he explores the histories, present-day realities and contradictions inherent to the formation of Congo in general, and its south-eastern province Katanga in particular: the resource-rich region which contains staggering amounts of mineral deposits. In some peculiar coincidence, over the past centuries every time an international demand for a specific material occurred, Congo turned out to possess significant amounts of it, whether it be ivory in the Victorian era, rubber when the inflatable tire was invented, copper in industrial times, uranium during the Cold War, alternative power during the oil crisis of the seventies, and coltan in the current days of mobile communication.<sup>1</sup> The colonial project together with the exploitation of these resources has marked the country and its people continuously. The exhibition presents a combination of pre-existing and new works, which as a point of reference share the effect of the Belgian colonial project; and the lingering impact of large-scale mineral exploitation on the geography, infrastructure and socio-cultural structures of Congo.

## *Chura na Nyoka*

Central to the exhibition is the theatrical play *Chura na Nyoka* (The Toad and the Snake). It was commissioned by the Belgian colonial regime and written in 1957 by the Congolese and Katanga native Joseph Kiwele (1912-1961). Kiwele created cultural incentives that supported syncretism and the forced adaptation of cultures. From his biography, soft power and methods of subtle influencing can be inferred. The background of Kiwele and his oeuvre, as well as the socio-historical context and several attributed meanings regarding the content of the play, are described by Maëline Le Lay further on in this publication (see page 16). Kiwele's play *Chura na Nyoka* tells the story of a toad and a snake, who are unable to maintain a friendship due to their inherent biological differences. Sammy Baloji links its metaphorical message of racial segregation to the blueprint and urban planning of the 'native city' of the mining capital Lubumbashi. He perceives *Chura na Nyoka* as an indicative part of a more elaborate Belgian endeavour to gain and maintain its power through a divide and conquer politics, in which educational and cultural formation collided with an imposition of lifestyle through 'civilising' and urban planning. As part of these politics, theatrical plays were performed by children: what is learned in the cradle is carried to the tomb. In addition to theatre, there was an array of church-related groups – including the Choir of the Copper Cross Garden which is featured in the film

of the same name by Sammy Baloji – to educate and entertain simultaneously. The message that could be derived from both *Chura na Nyoka* and the urban planning of Kamalondo (Lubumbashi's indigenous quarter), which also implied several ideas of ethnic segregation, was 'a social engineering of society via the built environment and cultural imposition' (see essay by Johan Lagae and Sofie Boonen, page 31) that explicitly suggested that 'toads' and 'snakes' do not belong together, while birds of a feather flock together.<sup>2</sup>

## Kasaïan commemoration

Congo consists of numerous larger and smaller ethnic groups which were set up as one nation by means of the Belgian colonial project.<sup>3</sup> When Congolese Independence was achieved relatively suddenly on June 30, 1960, the tension between the different regions and ethnic groups surfaced. Consequently, the province of Katanga proclaimed its own independence on July 11, 1960 with Moïse Tshombe as its prime minister. This separation, which is known as the Katanga Secession, was explicitly supported by Belgium in both diplomatic and military ways. The secession was accompanied by inter-ethnic conflicts in which a strong Katangan identity resulted in the expulsion of non-indigenous people – specifically Kasaïans. This same phenomenon occurred during the unstable years (1990-1993) prior to the fall of Mobutu (1996). Many families of Kasaïan origin were pursued, looted and driven out of Katanga. However, these violent expulsions have passed by fairly undocumented.

Sammy Baloji aims to create a commemoration of these events and their complex and grim history, by presenting a selection of historically laden paintings that were left or sold when people had to flee their homes (see page 6-9). He personally archived the paintings that are part of a collection brought together by researchers from the University of Lubumbashi and Father Leon Verbeek, under the guidance of Africanist Bogumil Jewsiewicki. The entire collection mainly consists of popular paintings and family portraits, of which Baloji photographed around 200, focusing on the latter.<sup>4</sup> Preserved under modest conditions, most of them have become close to irrecoverable. By photographing and consecutively displaying reproductions of these paintings, Baloji not only attempts to rescue this archival imagery from disappearing into oblivion without a trace, but more importantly he reinscribes them and thus (re) writes a recent history that went grossly undocumented.

The portraits are placed around the theatre stage for *Chura na Nyoka*, the main piece in the exhibition, designed by scenographer Jean Christophe Lanquetin. The stage contains a map depicting the urban plan of Kamalondo and its street names that refer to different ethnic groups. The sound which surrounds the physical stage, allows for the text of *Chura na Nyoka* to be heard in the exhibition space, but also to metaphorically echo through the streets of Lubumbashi. The city-plan is surrounded by a depiction of the forest in the tradition of the Hangar School – specifically referring to the distinct personal technique of Congolese painter Pili-Pili Mulongoy.<sup>5</sup> This mixture of different elements with references to art, history and archival material is illustrative to Sammy Baloji's working method. The installation









Selection of portraits from Father Verbeek's collection of popular paintings, print on newsprint (2018)





brings together elements of the colonial project leading up to the later ethnic conflicts – specifically cultural formation and urban planning – and its victims, the Kasaïan people. Combined, they make the theatre a somewhat bitter representation and commemoration of Lubumbashi's recent history. Baloji renders visible both the physical and intangible traces of the Belgian colonial endeavour, which centred on prestige, control and wealth at the cost of the Congolese population. He shows how it was followed by a post-colonial period in which the Belgian influence was still explicitly present and the Congolese had to deal with its heritage and aftermath: an unstable basis for a society – and one with lethal consequences.

### The blueprint

In the second part of the exhibition, Baloji shows a blueprint of the 'native city' of Lubumbashi. This work is based on the original document, which shows how the residents had to make way for the creation of a new urban structure, hence, the land was expropriated. Goal of this new plan was the so-called *cordon sanitaire* – a neutral buffer zone inscribed in the landscape, in order to effectively separate the European and Congolese population.<sup>6</sup> Related, migration flows started due to the demand for labour in Katanga and the constant reclassification of the Congolese territory by the Belgian regime. Groups that had traditionally lived in certain regions were either driven out, or confronted with new residents. This resulted in ethnic tensions. However, this largely remained subcutaneous in the colonial era, only surfacing during periods of changes in power structures. Baloji has tackled this process of expropriation, along with the deprivation of control over the environment by the original residents, in his earlier film *Pungulume* (2016).<sup>7</sup> This time Baloji zooms in on how such expropriation of land was designed, by means of an original blueprint for the process; which he combines with the abstract image of a mineral. He connects this to how the disappearance of a character from a theatre stage is depicted within the theoretical treatment of scenography. Here, the artist implies a disappearing act in abstraction: as one is withdrawn from sight, the other emerges out of the symbolic blue. It is as much an interchange as an exchange: the body is swapped for the raw material. Through all this, the city that was built – in large part to accommodate the Congolese mining employees – metaphorically functions as a theatre stage: it is merely a backdrop to economic processes. The ways in which the exploitation of people and soil plays a role in daily life is also presented in Sammy Baloji's documenta 14 film *Tales of the Copper Cross Garden. Episode 1* (2017) in which the processing of copper is visualised as a choreography of black workers' bodies, as they transform raw material into a product for the global market. This process serves as a metaphor for the colonial endeavour in which church, state and corporations joined forces to mould the Congolese population into a docile workforce. The pivotal role of the Church in reshaping Congolese society is also reflected in the film's soundtrack, which consists of syncretic ecclesiastical music composed by the above mentioned Joseph Kiwele.<sup>8</sup> He was again acting on instructions by the Belgian colonial administration, who ordered a musical piece that would fit both the codes of the Catholic ecclesiastical masses and the Congolese musical tastes and traditions.



Filmstill from *Tales of the Copper Cross Garden: Episode 1* (2017)

### Church education

In the reshaping of Congolese society through the Church, the aspect of education cannot be left unaddressed. Schools were part of the first mission posts, and thus inherently entangled with the Church. The education material in these schools was, evidently, created by the Belgian settlers. This meant that the knowledge passed on to children in regard to their own country and population was for a large part based on ethnographic research by Europeans, in which the various inhabitants of Congo were described within a framework of separation and division. Moreover, the population and the people's identities were much more fluid and diversely structured than was comprehensible from a Western perspective. There were inherent prejudices in the descriptions, as well as misunderstandings and faulty perceptions. This created stereotypes and implied hierarchies that were described and disseminated through textbooks for the educational system, and thus passed on to the Congolese schoolchildren. The education contributed to the fashioning of identities and daily interactions and supported the segregational impositions.

In summary, education, cultural formation and urban planning made way for the ubiquitous project of shaping Congolese society according to Belgian preferences, then resulting in post-colonial conflicts. It is one thing to make a blueprint and plan a colonial city, yet, as Lagae and Boonen mention in their essay on the urban planning of Lubumbashi (see page 31), it is quite another to govern one. In the same vein, the blueprint for toads and snakes might have been drawn and imposed, yet its outcomes surpassed anything colonial imagination could have foreseen. The snake's venom still seems to be running through the Congolese society.

*A Blueprint for Toads and Snakes* emphasises the ways in which cultural foundations were constructed, and their continuing influence on ethnic tensions, urban segregations and mineral extraction. As pointed out above, over time the Belgian colonial government implemented different effective strategic cultural and spatial ethnic segregation methods combined with meticulously planned divide and conquer politics. Consequently, the Katanga region has suffered from several ethnic conflicts, serving both national and international forces. Sammy Baloji critically reflects on the different chapters of this history, which from the initial blueprint all the way through the metaphorical creation of Toads and Snakes, have given form to history; still haunt the present, and have laid the foundations for the allegorical stage on which the future is taking shape.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> David van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, 2010

<sup>2</sup> To elaborate on social structures: The church introduced the nuclear family. As a result, more extensive and traditional family relationships and lifestyles dissipated. Through the introduction of money and fixed employment, tribal structures and structures of solidarity eroded slowly but surely. Congolese civilians no longer depended on the soft structures, but on their employer and by consequence on the colonial administration. They no longer lived in villages with their peers, but in the planned city, either alone (bachelor workers: 'célibataires') or with one woman and their children (small workers' families). This influenced the basic relationships that had traditionally shaped identity and structured daily life. Similarly, when voting was introduced the young people obtained equal rights and say, while previously the power of judgement and knowledge was based on age and ancestry. These broad array of measures, impositions and influences caused radical and, above all, lasting changes in societal structures. Also, the positive valorisation of the former societal and cultural values was effectively destroyed. This included ways of living, language, dress, and technical knowledge that were devalorised while simultaneously introducing new ways of appreciation via Church-provided education.

<sup>3</sup> The borders had come about through the bluff poker of Leopold II during the Berlin Conference (1884-1885). He ingeniously used the colonial quest and contest of the larger European powers for his personal gains. Portugal, France and Germany perceived Leopold in an opportunistic and sceptical fashion and for strategic reasons, they more or less 'gave' Congo to a monarch of whom they had little to fear, as this (largely unknown) part of Africa that became Congo, lay strategically between their own spheres of influence. It became a free state for trade, hunting and shameless self-enrichment - a situation Baloji previously addressed in *Hunting & Collecting* (2016). Only after severe international pressure - including *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905) by Mark Twain, a widely distributed pamphlet against the brutal regime in the private colony - did Leopold II give in and transfer the ownership of his Congo Free State to the Belgian State.

<sup>4</sup> The pictures on display in the exhibition should not be considered a collection. Most of the works are not even paintings in the Western sense of the term. These portraits all were (re)made from photographs. Congolese languages refer to it as an 'image'. In the Swahili spoken in Lubumbashi the word 'picha' (from the English 'picture') is used. A photograph is also called picha. The painting's presence may, as is often the case, indicate belonging to an ethnic group. For example, the depiction of a presentation celebration for twins ('mwa mbui') is specific to Kasaians from Katanga. And more generally speaking, being from a Congolese village would likely be emphasised through a painting of a village scene. A painting has no value as an art object, but carries a high personal value. What people are looking for is what the painting represents, the image. In stable times such paintings are merely acquired through a commissioning process, which indicates there is no real art market, as paintings are not resold: thus scarcity or authenticity are not considered a premium. However, a market did occur when the Kasaians were expelled: they were selling their entire household, including paintings, as they could not take these objects with them. In his selection from The Verbeek collection, Baloji has focused on portraits only because there is a relation between photographs and paintings in the process of self-representation as human being and owner. By making a commission of a self-portrait to hang in his/her house, there is a sense of marking a presence of ownership in

ones interior. In the Katangese post-colonial context, painters had assisted citizens to fulfil citizens' wishes for self-representation, that carried similarities to the way white colonial houses contained paintings and photographs of kings, queens, important and famous people, or family members.

<sup>5</sup> In Lubumbashi (then still Elisabethville), the French naval officer and amateur painter Pierre-Romain Desfossés set up the Academy for Indigenous Art, also known as Atelier du Hangar in 1946. Instead of asking Congolese artists to imitate European styles of painting, Romain-Desfossés encouraged the painters to freely use their imagination and draw inspiration from their own traditions and the world around them. He brought together people who before had been involved in murals, encouraging them to transpose their wall-drawing activity to the canvas. The Frenchman was interested in the procedures and motifs that the Lubumbashi painters introduced and wanted to overcome the perception and conception of culture that only respects Western paradigms. Here, Bela, Pili-Pili Mulongoy and Mwense Kibwanga individually developed a distinct personal technique and signature mode of working. Some of the hunting scenes painted by these artists are only available nowadays through photographic archival footage. Later, the term popular painting came about. It concerns works by a group of young artists who emerged in late 1970s Kinshasa and defined themselves as 'popular painters'. Most of them had worked as sign painters, and had made comics before - alike Baloji. Instead of imitating the European painting rules and being limited to the topics that were deemed proper for colonial subjects (nature, animal life, and religion) the popular painters drew their inspiration from daily life in Kinshasa and explored politics, society and worldly events. Their brightly coloured, candid paintings often incorporate humorous or satirical texts reinforcing their critical message. The value of popular paintings is defined by their visual power and its ability to initiate the performative part i.e. the extent to which they perform their intended function: to prompt reflection, debate, and discussion. They critically comment on historical and contemporary culture, economic, political and social developments; the messages they convey are instructive, pedagogic and sometimes moralising. (Bambi Ceuppens, Sammy Baloji, Bogumil Jewsiewicki, and Dirk Huylenbroek, *Congo Art Works: Popular Painting*, 2016)

<sup>6</sup> The created *cordon sanitaire* was previously the subject of Sammy Baloji's work *Essay for Urban Planning* (2015). This piece includes aerial photographs of the current situation in Lubumbashi and shows that even today the piece of land concerned is still largely free of buildings. It alludes to the effective colonial segregation policy that still is actively present in culture (*Chura na Nyoka*, Christianity), urban planning (Lubumbashi's Kamalondo quartier) and daily movement.

<sup>7</sup> In *Pungulume* we see a chief enumerate his ancestors from whom he derives his heritage, lineage and thereby traditional control over the territory. However, in practice he lacks this control, as the land is in private foreign hands. The international companies are allowed to sell the land and its resources without any (possible) intervention by any Congolese citizen, let alone that any benefits would be gained by Congolese civilians from such transactions.

<sup>8</sup> As an évolué, Joseph Kiwele had an elevated position in which he served as an intermediary between the government and the native people. He also was Minister of Public Instructions for the Katanga Region during the Secession.



Filmstills from *Tales of the Copper Cross Garden: Episode I* (2017)





# ESSAY: JOSEPH KIWELE IN ÉLISABETHVILLE (1946-1961) AND THE BIRTH OF AN URBAN CULTURE IN THE COLONIAL ERA.

Maëline Le Lay – CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research),  
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An enactment of the play *Chura na Nyoka* by Joseph Kiwele.



Where does it come from, this emotion that grabs us before the display of the glowing red copper flows of Katanga, rippling like strange reptiles in the Gécamiens warehouses filmed by Sammy Baloji in *Tales of the Copper Grass Garden. Episode 1*? This freshly processed material seems to reverberate with the copper songs sung by the children of the Copper Cross choir, echoing a childhood chipped away over the years.

Joseph Kiwele's music and plays resonate with us today in both an unusual and intriguing way. Kiwele was both an effective intermediary for the colonial government and a prolific and talented creator very much appreciated at the time – by the authorities and the public alike – and his works are still as original as they are inventive and sensitive.

## I — Joseph Kiwele and his works, between propaganda art and artistic indigenism

Joseph Kiwele was born in 1912 in Baudouinville (now Moba) in north-eastern Katanga, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. He studied philosophy and theology at the Grand Séminaire (theological seminary) and spent a year in Liège, Belgium, in 1940, to study harmony and the organ at the music academy. Upon his return, he was in charge of general education and music at Institut Saint-Boniface school in the district of Kamalondo, the first black town in the 'Centre extra-coutumier' (centre not subject to customary law) of Élisabethville (now Lubumbashi). He became the assistant organist of the director and founder of Saint-Boniface choir, Father Anchaire Lamoral, whom he would succeed in 1950. He continuously composed songs with the children's choir to meet various commissions, such as the jubilee of the priesthood of the Catholic curacy in honour of Mgr de Hemptinne in 1951. This experience would lead to the creation of *Missa ya Jubilé* released in 1952 by Decca éditions in Paris.<sup>1</sup> Thanks to these musical releases, his music was exported well beyond the borders of the Congo, although the choir was never permitted to give concerts abroad.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph Kiwele is still mainly known for his religious music, symbolic of the phenomena of the inculturation of Christian art, in other words the Christianisation of African arts in the colonial era,<sup>3</sup> but his works show a variety that reflects his many artistic collaborations. For example, he set the music to *Le sergent De Bruyne* by Auguste Verbeken, which is named after one of the heroes of the Belgian colonial conquest in the episode of the fight against the 'Swahili-Arab' slave drivers. This play, which was published in 1932 in the weekly *L'Essor du Congo*, was produced in 1946 under the direction of the author. It featured three Europeans in the roles of De Bruyne and his acolytes, while the 'Swahili-Arabs' were played by the members of the dramatic arts department of the Foyer Social Indigène (Native Social Club) and by pupils of Institut Saint-Boniface. This play was the first instance in Élisabethville of a show that featured black and white actors on the same stage, an eminently symbolic

co-presence, as it consisted of re-enacting the colonial conquest on the winners' side. He also composed the music of a song in honour of the Martyrs of Uganda, the Christians killed by those close to Mwanga, king of the Kingdom of Buganda, after they had actually been authorised to carry out the mission. They were asked to renounce their faith, and their refusal was fatal. This story, recounted in the song written by the first Congolese abbot, Stefano Kaoze, and adapted by Kiwele, inspired the play *Katikiro. Prémices sanglants de l'Afrique (Katikiro. The Bloody Beginnings of Africa)* (1926)<sup>4</sup> written by a Jesuit priest based in the Congo, Polydor Meulyenzer.

In short, by casting characters as heroic as the Martyrs of Uganda or the valorous Sergeant De Bruyne, Kiwele contributes towards writing an imperial mythology. What's more, he also wrote songs praising Belgium, including *Hymne à la Belgique* composed for King Baudouin's visit in 1955 and the song paying tribute to governor Pétillon.<sup>5</sup> He also wrote *La Katangaise* in 1960, which became the anthem of the secessionist state of Katanga.

Joseph Kiwele was among the first 'évolué'<sup>6</sup> Katangans – along with the students of Pierre-Romain Desfossés' indigenous art studio, the Atelier du Hangar – who were encouraged, in spite of the French state's assimilationist policy, to draw from the ancestral sources of the region's cultural heritage in order to 'regenerate' and avoid acculturation. The latter was seen as the symbol of 'perdition', as Lamoral explains so well:

'It would be disastrous, for black Africa's musical future, to want to ignore a past that is rich in traditions. [...] The civilising mission is above all an adaptation mission, often arduous, always slow and progressive, making the best use of the natural qualities of the primitive peoples. [...] It is doubtless because it understood this, that the Chorale indigène d'Élisabethville became a true focus of musical renewal in the south-east of our colony: because if we want beautiful Negro-inspired music, we have to supply the natives with the weapons – these perfected laws of our art – and let them fight their own battle in a field that is absolutely their own.'<sup>7</sup>

## II — *Chura na Nyoka (The Toad and the Snake)*

*Chura na Nyoka* is a 1957 musical play by Joseph Kiwele (see page 17 for the full text). It was played out for the first time on 9 March 1957 at the Cercle Saint-Pierre in Élisabethville by the Scout Unit of Institut Saint-Boniface, as part of the 'Challenge perpétuel d'art dramatique du Katanga' (Katanga Permanent Theatre Challenge) organised by Governor Paelinck. Beyond the great success it experienced during the Challenge, it's an important play in the literary and theatrical history of the Congo, as it was the first play to have been published in book form in two different editions – first in the Congo and later in Belgium<sup>8</sup> – three years even before the publication in Léopoldville of the first plays by Albert Mongita, an 'évolué' who is considered a pioneer in the field of theatre.<sup>9</sup>

## 1) Synopsis

*Chura na Nyoka* is the story of a toad who wants to make friends with a snake, ignoring the warnings of his brothers, who caution him about the dangerousness of the snake. He does what he wants and 'to a very lively theme' (preface), he offers to host the snake at his village to share some palm wine. The toad has trouble following the shrewder snake, who then offers the toad to hold his tail, so that the snake can pull him along the road. When they arrive at their destination, the snake is first politely welcomed. However, when he is asked to fold up and sit like a toad before he can quench his thirst, something he is unable to do, he is booed by the choir of toads. Naturally the snake's physique does not allow him to do this, which leads to mockery and jeers. The snake, furious and injured, leaves with his desire for vengeance provoked. He now maliciously invites the toad, who is welcomed to the snake's village by a menacing choir of snakes who promise to bite him, which, of course, they do. The toad's death is celebrated in a melancholy mourning song, the *kilio*.

## 2) An intermedial, linguistic and semantic mille-feuille

*Chura na Nyoka* is an operetta, in other words a performance made up of texts, mimes, music and dance. This series of 'layers' was orchestrated, meaning: the choir was at the back of the stage, the dancers in the middle of the stage and the 'storyteller' and soloist Prosper Kabangu, playing the toad, at the front of the stage (see page 16). This orchestrated intermediality in the form of a stage with multiple backgrounds was common practice for shows in the colonial era, with the layers embodying interculturality (although at the time it was referred to as a 'mix/dialogue of races'). The show presented a juxtaposition of the theatrical devices accompanied by an intermediary invested with the power of moving across them and organising them, giving them a meaning, an interpretation. This intermediary, in this instance Kiwele, is not always on stage, but by taking on the role of adaptor ('adaptation' was the key word in colonial shows), he becomes the intermediary between the Congolese and the Europeans. This is a function that 'évolué' Congolese like Kiwele, even those placed centre stage, promoted to the rank of conductor, can only take on thanks to a higher authority that allows the show to be put on and thus makes it legitimate. In this operetta it is first Father Anschaire Lamoral, choirmaster, under whose direction Kiwele officiated (until the latter's death in 1950), then another priest, Father Dom Thomas More Weitz, who wrote the first version of *Chura na Nyoka* whilst explicitly attributing authorship to Kiwele in the preface and the commentary introducing the opera libretto.

The play is also layered in a linguistic sense. The multilingual text of *Chura na Nyoka* (Swahili title) presents itself as a superimposition of fragments of texts in three languages which share the same space on the double page: the opera libretto part is in French and Swahili while the words of the play are in Swahili, and sometimes in Kiyeeke (see page 20, 21).





*Le voilà brûlant, rouge, rutilant. Il coule,  
ce cuivre, vers son sort : croissette des an-  
ciens, croix de cuivre des plus jeunes, scin-  
tillant sur leurs vibrantes poitrines ils te  
chantent " ô cuivre " dans ton pays un  
hymne reconnaissant. Maintenant tu ser-  
pentes docile au lamineur ; tu te durcis au  
tréfilage ; mais à la fonderie tu vas... tu  
t'abandonnes, dompté par ce maître qui te  
modèle. De son creuset ta lave rouge cou-  
le vers son destin. Le cuivre brillant,  
d'un flot vivant se déverse sans arrêt chez  
STAQUET. ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖*



LE MINERAI EST PORTÉ AU LIEU CHOISI POUR LA GRANDE OPÉRATION DE LA FUSION. LES FOURNEAUX SONT CONSTRUITS EN BLOCS DE PETITES TERMITIÈRES. LES « SOUFFLEURS » CHANTENT L'EXPÉRIENCE DU FONDEUR QUI POSSÈDE L'ART DE CONDUIRE LE FEU ET D'ARRIVER A LA FUSION. LES « SOUFFLEURS HABILES » CHANTENT POUR CONJURER LES MAUVAIS SORTS QUI S'AVISERAIENT DE BOUCHER LA SOUFFLERIE. QUAND LE MINERAI ENTRE EN FUSION, ET QUE LE MÉTAL RUTILANT APPARAÎT, LA FOULE JOYEUSE ENTONNE LE CHANT A LA GLOIRE DE LA MONTAGNE DE KALABI. LES MANES DES ANCÊTRES ONT ÉTÉ FAVORABLES AU TRAVAIL. CE CHANT CÉLÈBRE LA VERTU MYSTÉRIEUSE DE LA « TERMITIÈRE » QUI EST LA GRANDE COLLABORATRICE DU FONDEUR. ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖



In addition, the preface informs us that the play *Chura na Nyoka* was adapted from a Kongo tale collected by Father Ivo De Struyf, ‘translated’ from Kikongo into French and published in his collection *Fables et légendes congolaises*<sup>10</sup> (Congoese Fables and Legends). The multilingualism attests to the plurality of languages present in the Congo, and thus contributes to the recognition of these languages. Although French had the privilege of being the scholarly language, this play shows that an opera, an elitist form par excellence, can be composed in African languages. While this multilingualism may surprise the reader today, it was nothing unusual for Élisabethville readers, who were accustomed to the French/Swahili bilingualism of printed matter, most notably newspapers, and in particular *Mwana Shaba* (Child of Copper), the monthly newspaper of the UMHK mining company.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, at a semantic level, *Chura na Nyoka* is a play rich in symbolism. It lends itself to several interpretations, linked to the socio-historical context in which this play was adapted and produced: Élisabethville in the 1950s, during which aspirations for independence were beginning to be heard. This tale features two ‘communities’ living in different spaces, who meet in a transitional space (the bush or the forest that leads from one community to the other). At first the companions turn their difference into their strength (the snake pulls the toad along on his tail to move through the grass) which allows them to establish a certain complicity. However, this difference becomes unsurpassable when the snake is challenged to first sit like a toad before he is allowed to drink the palm wine. Spitefully tested, he fails and things turn sour in the inverted mirror of the tale, where the toad visits the snakes. This visit costs him his life, as a result of the snake’s vengeance. The moral of the story, although it is curiously not spelled out here, could be this: differences between communities are insurmountable and assimilation impossible, at the risk of perishing. Another interpretation could be to see this animal duo as the symbol of Black and White, the toad representing Black and the snake White. Although the toad is warned by his family of the snake’s (lethal) power, he persists in inviting him to his village. The snake’s technical performance is demonstrated very early on in their exchange, as they make their way to the toads’ space. The snake’s fatal vengeance could be interpreted as a warning addressed to the Congoese, warning them not to dare to mock the Europeans. However, these are merely two interpretations to be taken with the precaution required by our reading, which is of course marked by the post-colonial sensitivity of our modern era.

#### Kiwele by Baloji or the echo of the copper songs

*Chura na Nyoka* – and more broadly, the works of Kiwele – are symbolic of the urban culture that flourished in the 1950s in Élisabethville and in the urban conurbation of the Katanga Copperbelt. Here Congoese artists and their Belgian ‘promoters’ forge an urban identity tied to the plans of colonial modernity, according to which all social transactions and collective representation systems had to be correlated to the economy of technical and industrial progress (with the Church’s blessing), making this economy, if not a relay, then an echo of these transactions and systems.

It is thus striking to note the extent of the artistic collaborations in this period. For example, the Atelier du Hangar illustrated the sleeves of the records released by the Chorale indigène d’Élisabethville (see below), and Kiwele composed the music for several plays with Gabriel Kitenge, a playwright and musician who was very active in the Katanga scene.

Like the copper that glows red and reverberates with Kiwele’s copper songs (see page 22-23), Sammy Baloji’s work highlights the work of one man, a key actor in the Belgian colonisation of the Congo, by revealing the full complexity reflected in the hybridity of his works, as he hovered between a classical European education and a ‘reprise’<sup>12</sup> (revival or taking up) of the Bantou artistic tradition.



LES CHANTEURS A LA CROIX DE CUIVRE

MUSIQUE BANTOUE

Record sleeve illustrated by Atelier du Hangar.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> There are two releases of his records: 1948, Société belge du disque, African series, Brussels, including two booklets with a letter of introduction by Georges Duhamel; 1952, Decca éditions, Paris.

<sup>2</sup> In the Archives Africaines de Bruxelles (Brussels African Archives), the bundle of documents dedicated to the 'Chanteurs à la croix de cuivre' (Copper Cross Singers) consists of correspondence between the general colonial government in Léopoldville and the office of the Minister for Colonies in Brussels, which reported three invitations to Europe for the Chorale indigène d'Élisabethville (Native Choir of Élisabethville) between 1947 and 1953: in 1947 (plans for a Belgian tour), in 1950 (participation in the first Musical Olympiad in Salzburg), in 1952 and 1953 (3 relaunches of the plans for a Belgian tour). In 1947, Mgr de Hemptinne firmly opposed the tour, under the pretext of repercussions on the smooth running of the school in the absence of the accompanying teachers. In 1950, following the death of Lamoral, it was considered that the choir's training had been 'severely neglected'. In 1953, the minister's office wrote to the governor general that the 'current artistic value of Joseph Kiwele's choir is quite insufficient to envisage it undertaking a Belgian tour, particularly in order for it to stand alongside other choirs.' (Archives Africaines, GG, Inventaire Info (102), Bundle 17 – Petits chanteurs à la croix de cuivre).

<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon could be observed in all artistic disciplines in the colonial era: music, theatre and visual arts: Cakpo (Erick), *Art chrétien africain : Caractéristiques et enjeux*, Paris, L'Harmattan, Coll. *Etudes Africaines*, 2013 ; Muikilu Ndaye (Antoine), *Topique des représentations théâtrales en R.D. Congo de 1905 à 1960. Fondement de l'histoire théâtrale de la République Démocratique du Congo*. Saarbrücken: Presses académiques francophones, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Brasseur-Legrand (Brigitte), 'De l'histoire à la légende dorée : le récit des Martyrs de l'Ouganda et sa diffusion en Belgique', in Halen (Pierre), dir., *Approches du roman et du théâtre missionnaires*. Bern, Berlin, Oxford, Frankfurt, NY, Vienna: Peter Lang, coll. *Littérature religieuse et spiritualité*, 2006, p. 55-102.

<sup>5</sup> 'For the municipal consultation, the Congolese composer Joseph Kiwele composed a folk song that he dedicated to Mr Pétilon, Governor-General. The theme of this song, entitled 'Kongo ni moja', is the following: 'we must be united, with our only concern being the progress of the Congo': extract from *Dépêches Belga, Nouvelles d'Afrique*, N° 24/12/1957 (Archives africaines de Bruxelles, Fonds COPAMI 4796 – Bundle 1957-1960). The songs recorded also contain several passages praising the colonists, like Bwana Kawayi, translated as 'The chief who is everywhere' (in 'So Mwenda Kongo nani ?' and 'Elea Mutumbi Kazobole').

<sup>6</sup> Évolué ('evolved' or 'developed') was a French label used during the colonial era to refer to a native African or Asian who had 'evolved' by becoming Europeanised through education or assimilation and had accepted European values and patterns of behaviour.

<sup>7</sup> Lamoral (Arnold), 'La Chorale indigène d'Élisabethville et la renaissance de la musique bantoue', *Bulletin des missions*, (Abbaye de Saint-André, Bruges), April 1947, p. 230-250 (p. 230).

<sup>8</sup> The first was published in the Congo (Élisabethville, éditions CEPSSI – Centre d'étude des problèmes de la société indigène 1953), the second in Belgium (Gembloux: Duculot, 1957).

<sup>9</sup> Mongita (Albert), *Mangengenge*, Musée de la Vie Indigène, 1956. Mongita was also a painter and host of radio programmes on Radio Congo Belge.

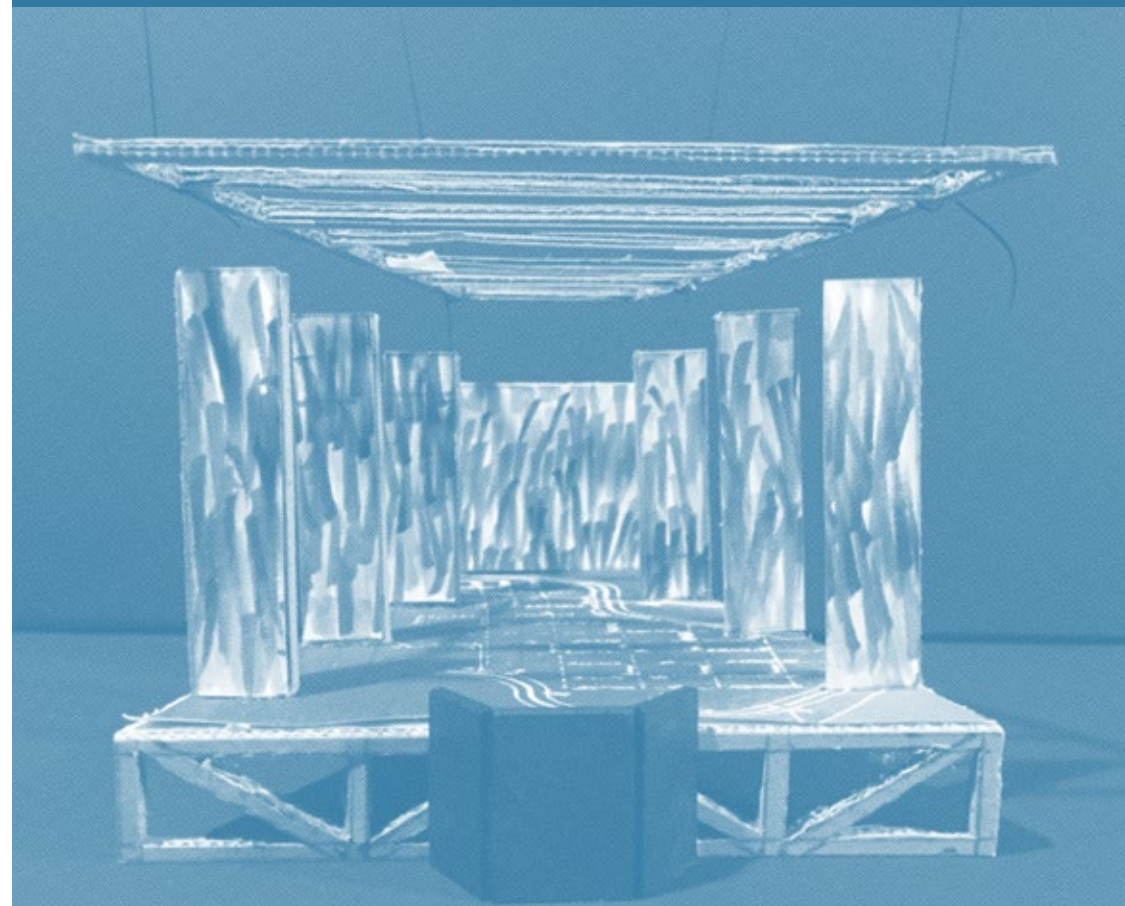
<sup>10</sup> Struyf de (Ivo), *Fables et légendes congolaises*. Volume 2. Leuven: Xaveriana, coll. Xaveriana-Brochures, 2nd series No 53, 1928, 32 p. This type of creation is a common device in African literature. Numerous African authors have 'repris' (taken up/revived) and re-written 'African tales and legends', supposedly collected 'from the mouths of the natives' by Europeans who then published collections, the idea being to help build a cultured record canonising the texts re-written by authors who could already boast a certain legitimacy in the literary field.

<sup>11</sup> Johannes Fabian, in his essay *Language and Colonial Power. The Appropriation of Swahili in the Former Belgian Congo 1880-1938* (University of California Press, 1986), recounts the colonial language policy, consisting in giving Katanga Swahili an official existence, legitimised with a publishing presence.

<sup>12</sup> To paraphrase Mudimbe in his famous text 'Reprendre': 'The word *reprendre* (...) I intend as an image of the contemporary activity of African art. I mean it first in the sense of taking up an interrupted tradition, not out of a desire for purity (...) but in a way that reflects the conditions of today': Mudimbe (V.-Y.), 'Reprendre' in *The Idea of Africa*. Indiana University Press, 1994, p. 154-213

# OPERETTA: CHURA NA NYOKA BY JOSEPH KIWELE

Maquette of theatre stage,  
designed by scenographer Jean Christophe Lanquétin.







# CHURA na NYOKA

Le crapaud et le serpent.

par

Joseph KIWELE

CETTE FABLE EST INSPIRÉE DU CONTE "Le crapaud  
et la grenouille", DE J. STRUYF, SJ. publié dans  
"FABLES ET LÉGENDES CONGOLAISES. Collection Xavériana."



## LIBRETTO:

*The storyteller Mungole opens the dance:*  
Mungole, we will dance with you.  
And if someone among us does not dance...  
then his mother is a witch!

*I'm going to tell you the story of the toad and the snake. Master Toad wanted to take a walk  
with his companion the snake, but he was not allowed to do so, because it was said that  
the snake was a bad animal. Flouting his father's advice, the toad invites his companion the  
snake...*

Croak! Croak! calls the toad... and the snake hisses in reply...  
Let's go, let's take a walk...  
Hey! says the toad, come and visit my family and friends.  
There we'll drink the good palm wine and we'll take some back with us to drink at home!  
Ok! Let's go! answers the snake.

*Master Toad and Master Snake set off together to the toads' friends to feast there!*

Let's go faster, we must hurry!  
But I don't know how to walk, says the toad...  
So slide along in the grass, it's easy!  
No it isn't! For a toad it's complicated!  
So hang on to my tail and we'll save some time!  
Oh! Oh! Thank you companion!  
This time... we'll dash!  
But let's go faster still!  
Because it's good wine... palm wine that we'll drink!

*After having walked much longer still, they reach the tribe of toads who were heading off to  
the fields! Without stopping, straight away the toads give the two companions a gourd of  
palm wine... There's a warm welcome... just listen...*

Cries of welcome from the toads!  
We're happy that you came to visit!

*While Master Toad empties the gourd he was given down to the last drop, his friends present  
another to the snake. But in order to drink, they impose a condition: In order to bring the  
wine to his lips, he will have to sit like a toad! So it's impossible for him to quench his thirst...  
poor snake... And the toads have a laugh at his expense and make fun of him!*

Master Snake... you will only taste our wine if you sit like a toad!  
But for me it's impossible! says the snake  
Come on, fold up, curl up! Idiot, imbecile!  
Come on... get on with it, curl up!

Come on... so go back home... without drinking! since you're not one of us! Leave!

*You've seen how angry Master Snake was... He returned to his village alone... But sometime after that, the toad, even though he hasn't forgotten what happened, wants to have another adventure with the snake... You can hear him... he is calling his friend:*

Croak! Croak! calls the toad... and the snake hisses in reply...

Let's go, let's take a walk...

Hey! says the snake, come and visit my family and friends.

There we'll drink the good palm wine and we'll take some back with us to drink at home!

Ok! let's go! replies the toad.

*Master Toad and Master Snake set off together, but this time their walk will take them to the snake's friends!*

*The two friends arrive out of breath and thirsty at the village of the snakes! The snakes come back from the fields when they see the two companions... Listen to the welcome they are given.*

Cries of welcome from the snakes! We're happy that you came to visit!

*Repeating the bad joke that the toads played, the snakes bring two gourds of palm wine. Our snake rushes to finish his in one go, while they force the toad to drink his in the same way as the snakes! And obviously our friend the toad can't manage this... still thirsty and angry... while the tribe's mockery and the snakes' jeers ring out on all sides.*

So off you go... Toad, go back to your wife thirsty!

What a disgrace! A guest who doesn't know how to behave like his hosts!

*So the angry toad goes away. And the snake says to him: Hey, you're getting angry! The other day we were together, you drank palm wine and I had to go home thirsty. And today you're furious with me? The toad's anger continued to grow; the snake says to him: now it's finished between us! And if you quarrel with me again, I'll kill you!*

*You, kill me? says the toad*

*So the snake bites the toad.*

*The mourning chorus of the toads.*

I will bite you, nasty toad...

Chwi — there!

I can't see him any more... I'm looking for him, but I can't find him...

I can't see him any more... and the sun's already setting!

If you die by the hand of a man, come back to tell us!

If the snake kills you, come back to take your revenge!

You who goes to his mother... tell her...

Your son, the toad is dying, murdered by the snake!

Toad, we're crying, we're all in a state of affliction...

But you, sleep... sleep toad, sleep!

# ESSAY: MAKING AND SHAPING A DIVIDED CITY. NOTES ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF LUBUMBASHI'S FIRST PLANNED 'NATIVE TOWN', THE COMMUNE KAMALONDO, 1919-1929

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## An emblematic example of a ‘colonial city’?

Among the urban centres in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lubumbashi, situated in the southern province of Katanga, is the most emblematic example of what scholars since the 1970s have defined as a ‘colonial city’: founded in 1910 as one of the major mining cities in Central Africa’s Copperbelt zone, Lubumbashi was, first and foremost, a site of extraction of raw materials and, well-connected to the outside world via railroad, a crucial node in Belgian Congo’s economic network. Moreover, Lubumbashi is an urban centre built *ex nihilo*, on land which of course belonged to African customary chiefs but where no pre-existing indigenous settlements were to be found. And finally, Lubumbashi is an example par excellence of a ‘divided city’, whose urban form is binary in nature, with the ‘European town’ neatly separated from the African quarters. Far from being unique, as many other urban centres in Congo were founded and planned along similar lines, Lubumbashi forms an interesting case to highlight the principles of a colonial city, and how these were part and parcel of urban planning practices that were shared across sub-Saharan Africa in the interwar period. In fact, all the main principles of colonial urban planning that would be advocated for at the international conference on *Urbanisme aux Colonies*, organised in Paris in 1931 in the context of the famous *Exposition Coloniale Internationale*, already found their application in Lubumbashi in the preceding decade: the obsession with hygiene, the search for a disciplinary and racially defined organisation of space, and the application of a social engineering of society via the built environment. This early introduction of such principles in Lubumbashi preceded practices in Kinshasa by almost ten years, the then-capital of the Belgian Congo, illustrates how colonial urban planning was very much informed by discussions that emerged within economic and medical spheres. In many respects, the colonial ordering of urban space in Lubumbashi was directly informed by spatial practices in Johannesburg’s mining compounds, with which Belgian officials were highly familiar.

Yet, as historian Carl Nightingale has convincingly argued in his seminal 2012 book *Segregation. A Global History of Divided Cities*, ‘putting a coerced residential color line in place is fundamentally a political act – it involves enormous amounts of power. But wielding that power always involves negotiation and conflict’. This was especially the case in Lubumbashi, an urban centre founded in 1910 which because of its promising economic prospects, immediately attracted people from far and away. Many seeking fortune in the ‘Far West’-like city of Lubumbashi arrived via the railroad coming from Southern Africa, even all the way from Cape Town, passing through what was then called Rhodesia and cities like Bulawayo. Others travelled by train from Beira on the East African coast, or, from the 1930s onwards, from Lobito on the Atlantic Coast. As a result, Lubumbashi’s white urban society was very cosmopolitan. The heterogeneous composition of its African population largely resulted from the recruitment policy of the *Union Minière du Haut Katanga*, which brought in workers from surrounding regions and provinces in the Belgian colony, as well as from former Rhodesia, and even Rwanda and Burundi. A survey conducted by urban planner Noël Van Mallegheem of Lubumbashi in the late 1940s demonstrates this complex

demography, with the presence of Belgians, French, British, Italians, Greeks, a Jewish community, but also of traders from India, Pakistan and some Middle Eastern and Asian countries, alongside a large African population stemming from various origins and ethnic backgrounds. The master plan Van Mallegheem proposed for Lubumbashi nevertheless continued the principle of the divided city with its binary structure of a ‘white’ and ‘black’ town, the origin of which goes back to the early 1920s. It is this foundational moment of segregating Lubumbashi along racial lines we will focus on in this essay by discussing, albeit briefly and in three ‘acts’ or ‘scenes’, both the planning and the ‘messy’ implementation of introducing a ‘*zone neutre*’ between the city’s European and African quarters from 1921 onwards, and the construction of what was to become the first planned ‘*cit  indig ne*’ or ‘native town’, the *commune Albert Ier* or *commune Kamalondo* as it is still known today.

## Act 1 — Erasing the ‘informal’ city

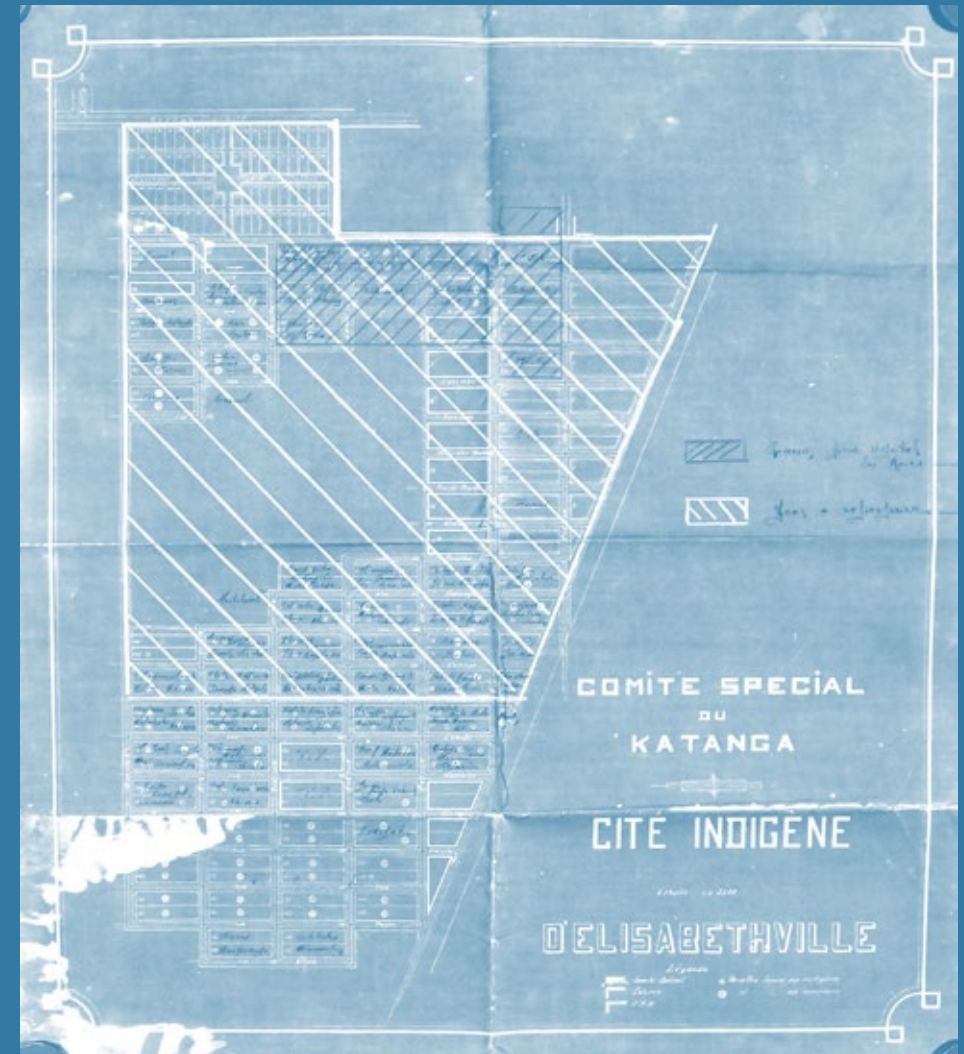
In 1910, a first urban plan for Lubumbashi’s European quarter was established according to a grid pattern of orthogonal avenues dividing the city’s 450 hectares in equal blocks of 250 by 120 metres that testifies to the economic logic underlying the spatial organisation of the urban territory. The early urban planning practice in Lubumbashi indeed can be understood first and foremost as a real estate operation. Soon an African quarter emerged next to the European ‘*ville*’, separated by a buffer zone of 170 metres wide in which, tellingly, the city’s prison was built. Already in 1912, local legislation induced a segregation along racial lines, ordering that all Africans living in the city centre were required to relocate to this new ‘*cit  indig ne*’, which official sources declare was planned according to the same principles as ‘*en ville*’. The rare existing plans indeed show a settlement with spacious lots and wide avenues, organised along a grid structure. Yet, reality proved quite different. The sloping and swampy nature of the terrain limited the inhabitable area to a large extent, resulting in a very incomplete grid pattern, while basic urban infrastructure was lacking. Throughout the 1910s, local doctors would lament the deplorable sanitary conditions in Lubumbashi’s first African quarter and contemporary sources describe this part of town in terms of what we today would call an ‘informal settlement’, or slum area. After a 1921 visit to Lubumbashi by the governor general at the time, Maurice Lippens, things would change drastically. Having visited the workers’ camps of the mining industry in Johannesburg before arriving in Katanga, Lippens advocated to demolish the African quarter of Lubumbashi, as he had been shocked by its ‘*salet  repoussante*’ (‘disgusting filth’). Following the South African example, he favoured the construction of a new ‘*cit  indig ne*’ at a significant distance from the ‘*ville blanche*’, so that a buffer zone could be incorporated in between. This decision was in line with the principle of the ‘*zone neutre*’ or ‘*cordon sanitaire*’, which was already being introduced in quite a number of colonial urban centres in Sub-Saharan Africa, such as Lagos, Dar es Salaam or Dakar. Its role in urban planning was clearly stipulated by the provincial engineer of Katanga, when he stated in 1931 that ‘the neutral zone prohibits promiscuity between the white and black population. It separates the two cities by an almost completely open space of at least 500 meters, a distance that corresponds with the regular range of the flight of a mosquito that transmits malaria’.

One historical map of Lubumbashi's first African quarter dating from 1921 enables us to measure the consequences of Lippens' decision (see page 35). First, it indicates the area to be expropriated: the largest part of the settlement, over about the prescribed width of 500 metres. Second, it shows the zone reserved for the future hospital for Africans, which according to planning guidelines of the time was one of the public facilities that should be situated within the 'zone neutre'. Thirdly and most importantly, the document points out those immediately affected by the planned expropriation by presenting a detailed account of the owners and/or occupants of plots in Lubumbashi's first African quarter. The document is telling in that it lists not only many African names like Sindanu, Susika, or Bapindu, but also those of members of the city's 'white' and 'coloured' communities: Van Craenenbroeck, Rosari, Rivera, Lombard, etc. (see a fragment of the map, page 31). The lived reality within the African quarter was thus more complex than legislation prescribed. Not surprisingly, the implementation of the whole project proved less smooth than anticipated and archival sources reveal that reshaping the city was indeed subject to complex negotiation and conflict.

## Act 2 — Structuring a terra nullius

At Lippens' specific request Lubumbashi's new African quarter, then named *commune Albert Ier* and today known as *commune Kamalondo*, was to be erected around a small, already existing workers' camp belonging to the *Union Minière du Haut Katanga*, the so-called *Camp Robert Williams*, for in the eyes of the governor general it offered a model environment where discipline and hygiene reigned. Not surprisingly, the first plans for this new settlement again followed a grid pattern, but here it no longer referred to a real estate logic as it did 'en ville'. Rather, it was based on the spatial organisation of the *Camp Williams*, where considerations of economy, efficiency, hygiene and discipline were at the forefront. By necessity, this generic pattern was then adapted to local constraints (see page 36-37). On the northern side, where Kamalondo touched the 'zone neutre', the grid was adjusted to the local topography, which resulted in its stepped configuration. The contours on all other sides were defined by the curved trajectory of the already existing railway lines, with a track on the eastern side leading to the central railway station near the city centre, and another track on the western side going to the mining compound of the UMHK.

Contemporary photographs of Kamalondo's construction reveal how this new rational ordering of space was implemented in an area which, apart from the existing camp, was considered terra nullius. However, a blank spot on a map does not of course necessarily reflect the reality on the ground. Tracing the grid in fact required quite a radical transformation of the existing landscape by clearing the land from existing vegetation and, more importantly, flattening the terrain by destroying the many, sometimes very imposing termite hills that up to the present day dot Lubumbashi's surroundings. Contemporary sources indicate that local authorities were forced to use up to 50 prisoners to help prepare the site (see page 38).



Comité Spécial du Katanga, The native town of Elisabethville, scale 1/2500, ca. 1921.  
Africa Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brussels.



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de l'archevêque, de la ve. j'en ai été avisé  
le 1<sup>er</sup> janvier.

For the signature

The Commission on the Status of Women



Land registration map of the native town, scale 1/2000, 14/07/1921.  
Africa Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brussels.



Roadworks in the new native town, period photograph, 30/09/1921.  
Africa Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brussels.

Not only the overall spatial organisation of Kamalondo was modelled on the camp typology, but also that of each section within the grid, as well as the housing accommodations themselves. Typically, each section measured 115 by 100 metres, and could contain either housing for bachelor workers (*'célibataires'*) or for small workers' families. Sections for bachelors would consist of 10 elongated volumes containing a double row of six rooms, each 3 by 3 metres large and accommodating up to four workers. Sections for families would generally contain 59 individual pavilions with two rooms each, one of 3 by 3 and one of 3 by 1,5 metres. For both sections, kitchen, washing amenities and toilets of the *'fosses fumantes'*-type were planned as shared facilities. Conceived to be built out of durable materials, mostly brick, this infrastructure provided only minimal comfort. Even doctors involved in the debates

occurring at the time within the technical services of the colonial administration were voicing their concern about what they considered housing conditions prone to incite discontent among the labour force. In the early days, cost efficiency and disciplinary considerations were still considered to be of more importance, however, than those of hygiene and the workers' well-being.

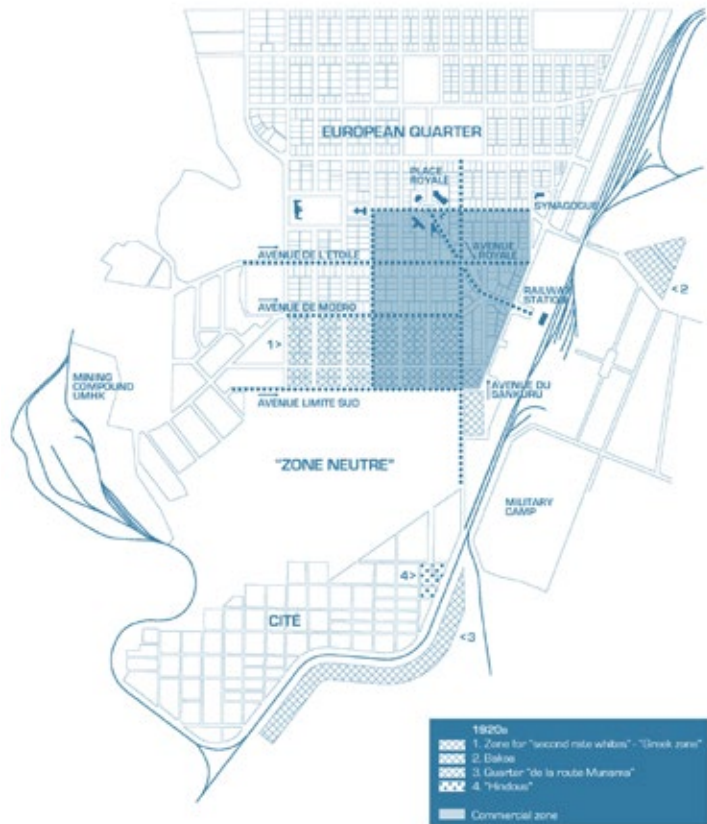
### Act 3 — Allocating and controlling space

It is one thing to plan a colonial city, yet, as urban geographer Stephen Legg reminds us, it is quite another to govern one. Several archival sources linked to the planning and construction of the *commune Kamalondo* speak of the colonial authorities' concern to control and police the city. Tellingly, the first plans of Lubumbashi's new *'cité indigène'* already indicate the provision of street lighting on strategic locations, a crucial instrument for securing control of the African quarter after dusk. On a larger scale, it was not a coincidence that the military camp was located along the one street that, by crossing the *'zone neutre'*, linked Kamalondo to the European city center. Spatially separating the city in a 'white' and 'black' part indeed only made sense if those in power would also be able to control mobility in the divided city.

Early plans of Kamalondo contain some clues indicating that a more subtle strategy to protect the white community from the rapidly expanding African population and workforce in the mining city seems to have been applied in response to a growing anxiety of African promiscuity among Lubumbashi's European population. The elaborate caption of the *Plan parcellaire de la cité indigène*, dating from July 1921, for instance, hints at a particular form of allocating sections of the grid to specific groups within the population (see page 36). Remarkably, some sections were reserved for *'hindous'* and *'noirs civilisés'*, vague and rather open categories which in local parlance were used to refer to those members in colonial society that belonged neither to the white elite nor to the large black community. Originating from India, Pakistan, or West Africa, and sometimes being practicing Muslims, they constituted an intermediate social class, involved in small trade that directly targeted the large African workforce and population. Situating them in the most eastern sections of the grid of the *commune Kamalondo*, directly adjacent to the one street leading to the European city centre, could be understood, we suggest, as a way of introducing both a racial and a social stratification in Lubumbashi's overall spatial distribution, via which an extra distance and safety buffer could be introduced between the two main constitutive communities of the divided city: the white colonisers and the black colonised (see page 40).

Yet, colonial policies and practices in Lubumbashi at times seem more ambivalent than such a binary, Foucauldian interpretation of planning suggests. For how are we to understand, for instance, the toponymy of the *commune Kamalondo*, as it appears on early 1920s plans? Is not naming streets after specific ethnic groups, such as the Basange, Basonge, Baluba, Lunda, Babembe, Bayeke, Bakusu and Kaonde a way of stressing their presence in Lubumbashi society? No indications exist that colonial authorities were planning to have specific sections of Kamalondo allocated





Lubumbashi/Elisabethville, situation late 1920s,  
with an indication of the commercial zone and zones reserved for 'gens de couleur'.  
Drawing by Sam Lanckriet, Department of Architecture & Urban Planning, Ghent University, 2015.

to particular ethnic groups. In fact, the whole labour policy of the mining industry was actually oriented to do exactly the opposite. For dismantling ethnic identities in order to create one overarching, neutral category of the 'African worker', was seen as a *strategy par excellence* to undermine organised forms of contestation, which authorities feared could be fuelled by intra-ethnic encounters and associations. This colonial strategy was largely unsuccessful and to a large extent, African social life in the vibrant and dynamic *commune Kamalondo* still occurred and was performed along particular ethnic lines, thereby deviating from the prescribed colonial order and forcing local authorities to adapt their policies in order to maintain some form of control. authorities were planning to have specific sections of Kamalondo allocated to particular ethnic groups. In fact, the whole labour policy of the mining industry was actually oriented to do exactly the opposite. For dismantling ethnic identities in order to create one overarching, neutral category of the 'African worker', was seen as a *strategy par excellence* to undermine organised forms of contestation, which

authorities feared could be fuelled by intra-ethnic encounters and associations. This colonial strategy was largely unsuccessful and to a large extent, African social life in the vibrant and dynamic *commune Kamalondo* still occurred and was performed along particular ethnic lines, thereby deviating from the prescribed colonial order and forcing local authorities to adapt their policies in order to maintain some form of control.

### The Divided City's afterlife

The planning and construction of the *commune Kamalondo*, that most foundational moment in shaping the colonial city of Lubumbashi, remained a far from fully successful project. Most importantly, it was too little, too late. The new African quarter was immediately confronted with an explosive demographic growth of the African population it was unable to accommodate. Between 1930 and 1960, three more 'native towns' would be constructed in Lubumbashi. Moreover, its infrastructure proved less permanent than colonial authorities had hoped. Throughout the 1930s, 40s and 50s, Kamalondo's urban landscape was subject to operations of demolition and reconstruction, each one of which created particular moments of negotiation, conflict and contestation. Similarly, the 'zone neutre' changed over the course of time from a largely empty area with only a select number of public facilities, to the quite dense area one can experience today, with significant pockets of informal settlements as well as new landmark structures such as the *temple Kimbanguiste*. All of this testifies of how colonial urban space has been appropriated over time by the city's inhabitants, or *Lushois*, and how the making and shaping of cities, including divided ones, is always a 'messy' process, as Nightingale has argued.

Nevertheless, the past is still present in Lubumbashi. As the tourist guide *le Petit Futé* proclaims, not without reason, its architectural landscape is still pervaded today by a certain '*colonial luxury*'. And if Lubumbashi may no longer be a city divided by a clear-cut separation along racial lines, than it is precisely in its urban form, and more in particular in the remaining traces of the former '*zone neutre*' as well as in the still palpable grid pattern of Lubumbashi's first planned '*cité indigène*', the *commune Kamalondo*, that one can observe the endurance of the legacy of its colonial urban planning.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This essay is based on research conducted within the context of an FWO-funded project entitled City, architecture and colonial space in Matadi and Lubumbashi, Congo. A historical analysis from a translocal perspective (project G.0786.09N), and the related PhD-research of Sofie Boonen, which will be submitted at Ghent University in autumn 2018. Our analysis is based on very substantial archival research in Belgium and Congo, as well as many fieldwork observations conducted since 2000. We would like to thank all our informants in Lubumbashi, and especially Sammy Baloji for inviting us to write this essay. For this particular essay we also made use of a select number of scholarly studies, the most important of which are: Luce Beekmans, *Making the African city: Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Kinshasa: 1920-1980*, unpublished PhD, Groningen, 2013; Liora Bigon, *A history of urban planning in two West African colonial capitals: residential segregation in British Lagos and French Dakar (1850-1930)*, Lewiston, 2009; Bruno De Meulder, *De kampen van Kongo. Arbeid, kapitaal en rasverdeling in de koloniale planning*, Antwerpen, 1996; Véronique Klauber, Donatien Dibwe dia Mwembu & Bogumil Koss Jewsiewicki (eds.), *Le travail, hier et aujourd'hui: mémoires de Lubumbashi*, Paris, 2004; Stephen Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities*, Oxford 2007; Carl Nightingale, *Segregation. A Global History of Divided Cities*, Chicago, 2012.

## — ARTIST

**Sammy Baloji** (1978) is an artist who was born in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and lives and works in Brussels and Lubumbashi. He holds a bachelor degree in Literature and Social Sciences. Baloji started his artistic career as a cartoonist, after moving on to the practice of photography. Since 2005, the artist employs a multidisciplinary practice in which he combines media like photography and video with historical and artistic research. In his research Baloji explores the memory and history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, specifically the Katanga region, and examines the impact of the Belgian colonisation. Baloji's use of photography archives enables him to manipulate time and space, thus comparing old colonial narratives to contemporary economic imperialisms. His critical look on contemporary societies are warnings about how cultural clichés continue to shape collective memories, thus allowing social and political power games to keep on dictating human behaviours.

Baloji recently participated in amongst others the Venice Biennale in 2015, the Dakar Biennale in 2016 and documenta 14 in 2017. He has exhibited at places such as the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren, the Tate Modern in London, the Africa Center in New York and the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington DC. Baloji received several awards, including one from the Prince Claus Foundation in The Netherlands. Sammy Baloji is a co-founder of the Picha Encounters, a photography and video biennale in Lubumbashi.

## — CURATOR

**Vincent van Velsen** (1987) is an Amsterdam based writer, critic and curator with a background in art and architectural history. He regularly writes for individual artists, institutions and magazines; amongst which Frieze, Flash Art and Metropolis M – where he also holds a position as contributing editor. He curated exhibitions for Castrum Peregrini, Framer Framed, Kunsthuis SYB and Museum Flehite, among others. In collaboration with Alix de Massiac, he won the second edition of the curatorial prize of the Dutch Association of Corporate Collections (VBCN, 2014). In 2015/16 he was a resident at the Jan van Eyck Academy, Maastricht. Currently he is working on forthcoming exhibitions for TENT, Nest, and De Brakke Grond. Van Velsen is a board member at Frontier Imaginaries and De Appel.

## — SCENOGRAPHER

**Jean Christophe Lanquetin** is an artist and scenographer, living between Paris and Dakar. He teaches at La Haute École des Arts du Rhin in Strasbourg, and is co-founder of the Urban Scénos residency project. His practice shifts constantly between choreography, theater, installation, curatorship and experimental processes, via multiple collaborations with artists. His practice, whether collaborative or solo, uses video, drawing, photography and installation, and seeks to unpack the notions of the stage, (re)presentation and spectatorship, via context based projects and art based research in various urban places over the world. In 2017 he co-developed Ordinary fictions, a theater and visual project in urban space based on the stories of inhabitants in an area of Medellin, Colombia, and then in the Caribbean (Port au Prince and Fort de France), and France (Strasbourg). His texts are regularly published by Chimurenga (Capetown, South Africa).

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