

# **The Leopard Men of the Eastern Congo (ca. 1890-1940): history and colonial representation**

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This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the University of East Anglia, School of Art History and World Art Studies, Sainsbury Research Unit.

December 2013

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## Abstract

The research begins with a sculpture representing a “Leopard Man”, threatening to attack a sleeping victim, at the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium. Recently this colonial icon was criticised for presenting a racist image. Leopard men killed on behalf of chiefs in the east of Congo (ca. 1890-1940). The emergence of a mythology of leopard men is analysed in relation to its suppression as an anti-colonial movement in the colony. This research highlights the distinctive potency of ethnographic objects as proof, shaping experiences of the colonised in the colonial museum, in relation to the text-focused study of the colonial discourse.

The history of leopard men is reconstructed to break away from an exotic and de-historicised understanding. Two eastern Congolese varieties, *anioto* and *vihokohoko*, are studied, from which the RMCA display was derived. The micro-histories of conflict clusters are considered in the context of the Zanzibari slave trade and the Belgian colonisation as forms of empowerment. *Anioto* and *vihokohoko* are further studied in their cultural history. They are regarded as institutional developments in the context of political competition.

Mythologisation in colonial sources is regarded as a process of structuration underlying all expressions of human experience. While rooted in reality, such expressions are also shaped by what people desire to believe. This occurs in line with a cultural logic and the rhetoric of rumour with the most potent elements being singled out to support the colonial discourse, leaping into fiction. Leopard men accounts are structured after culturally effective traditions of narration, presenting the civilising project as a moral victory of good over bad. Leopard men became an epistemological category, a morally inferior, animal-like opponent threatening the colonial order. The use of costumes and claws for the killings was falsely exaggerated, because their form objectifies the colonial logic.

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## Preface

The inception of this research project occurred many years ago, while I was working as a researcher and curator at the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), Tervuren, documenting collections and curating an exhibition. This interest in the theme of leopard men was first raised when I was trying to find information about an iron diadem collected among the Bali population in the east of the Congo around 1900. It resembled a metal diadem worn by a warrior from the same region portrayed in the travel report of Henry Morton Stanley (1890: 179). Cekanowski (1924: 323) wrote that colonial officers had told him about such diadems being worn by Bali rebelling against the colonial occupation in 1907, because of the outrageous rubber quotas they were being forced to deliver. Colonial officers ascribed the rebellions to secret associations, of which the *anioto* or leopard men were the most feared by the Europeans (Czekanowski, 1924: 326, 325-326). This information triggered my interest, as it potentially put the RMCA's famous leopard man sculpture, embodying colonial clichés of African traditions as barbaric, in a new and complex historical perspective. This inspired me to unravel the history behind it, and the role of ethnographic objects therein. Initially the leopard men were to be one of several case studies in my PhD on the role of ethnographic objects in colonial representation, largely because scholars in Belgium were sceptical about the possibility of finding information about it. However, it soon became evident that such assumptions were unfounded.

This work was very strongly inspired by, and reflects, my working experience as a researcher and curator in two different museums. Prior to embarking upon the PhD, I worked at the RMCA as a research assistant and curator for nearly five years. While working on this PhD, I was also a curator at the Museum aan de Stroom (MAS) in Antwerp for nearly three years. Both are examples of how museums are reinventing themselves in order to meet new standards of public relevance in response to the postmodern and postcolonial museum crisis. During this time, the RMCA initiated a renovation project, and the MAS is a new museum which opened in May 2011. These developments affected research policies, as well as curatorial research preferences, in which ethnographic collections were often given lower priority, because they were recast as outdated, contaminated sources. Therefore, trained as an art historian and an anthropologist, I strongly felt the need to demonstrate the importance of collection based research, not only to debunk colonial mythologies, but also to reconsider objects as unique sources for studying societies and their histories, and to obtain a better knowledge of how the material world shapes people's thoughts and actions. This kind of research, which has suffered neglect over recent decades, is particularly relevant today. In this new museum age, new representational practices have arisen, making use of (or rejecting) objects along with other mediums in new ideologically charged ways, in which new biases may

occur.

I started my PhD in September 2007, after I completed my assignment at the RMCA. The Sainsbury Research Unit provided a tuition fees grant for the total period of study and a travel grant, which enabled me to do fieldwork in Kinshasa. I intercalated twice, firstly for 4 months when my second child was born in December 2007, and subsequently from May 2008 to September 2009, while working full-time as a freelance researcher and curator at the MAS. I resumed working part-time on my PhD in September 2009 and until July 2013 I continued to combine it with my job as a freelance curator and researcher, predominantly at the MAS, where I curated a thematic floor titled “Display of Power”, a theme also addressed in my PhD research.

The core of my research activities for the PhD consisted of archival and collection based research at the RMCA, to which I was affiliated from September 2007 to December 2012. In this position, I was able to study the leopard men objects in the museum collection, had access to the archives at the Ethnography and History Departments and to several libraries at the institution. At the end of 2009, I was also able to obtain funding from the King Baudouin Foundation to coordinate a research project to analyse the traces on leopard men objects in the RMCA collection. This research was voluntarily carried out by the National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology (NICC) directed by Jan De Kinder. The results of this work contributed significantly to my research.

I also did research in the Africa Archives of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which contains the administrative and legal archives of the colonial administration. These archives are difficult to consult as there is no publicly accessible electronic inventory, and the printed inventory only identifies larger sections in the archive. It took time and the assistance of some of the people working there to identify and gain access to specific documents on leopard men. However, a large amount of these files are subject to the laws of privacy and public security and limited accessibility applies to them. The Africa Archives, residing under the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are diplomatic archives of the state. The period of protection for legal documents in this archive is 100 years. Many of the legal documents related to leopard men murders, containing witness statements and details about the victims and perpetrators of leopard men killings, will not be accessible for consultation for several decades to come. Consultation can only be authorised when a positive recommendation is obtained from the Privacy Commission of the Belgian Federal State. It took time to identify documents of interest and gain insight into the procedures required, so that an initial request for advice on the consultation of the legal files was only sent to the Privacy Commission in the writing-up phase of this research project. I am currently pursuing subsequent steps in this procedure, and may be able to access these documents in the longer term. At the KADOC archives at the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL), I consulted documents specific to the development and history of the missions in the east of the Congo.

At the African Languages and Cultures Department at the University of Gent, I consulted the microfiches containing copies of the archives of the Centre Aequatoria, a documentation centre of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart at Mbandaka, DR Congo.

In February 2011, I spent a month in Kinshasa for archival and collection based research. At the Instituts Nationaux des Musées du Congo, I searched for objects and documents relevant to my research. I also spent time at the National Archives of the Congo at Kinshasa, researching leopard men history. Due to circumstances beyond my control, it was difficult to identify and access documents in these archives. Whilst in Kinshasa, I also looked into leopard symbolism in popular paintings, advertisements and Congo's political culture.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to do fieldwork in the east of the DR Congo, in accordance with the safety guidelines of UEA. Instead, I tried to do in-depth interviews with people originally from the region. While interviews regarding such a distant era can be expected to reveal fragmentary recollections, at best corroborating data from archives, these interviews have been most informative in terms of how people related emotionally to this history in connection with a regional identity. The informants' distance from the period studied amounts to three or four generations. Several people explained that their recollection was distorted because of their education in missionary centres or because they had left the region a long time ago. I only met one elderly informant in Kinshasa who had a very good knowledge of one regional conflict, which correlated with the archival data retrieved. Presenting my research to, and discussing it with, Congolese scholars, both anthropologists and historians, has been very illuminating. Conversations with the political scientist, Arsène Mwaka Bwenge, were of crucial importance. He analysed the history of leopard men in Beni in relation to his doctoral research on the history of rebellions in North-Kivu, his region of origin, based on interviews with local informants in the 1990s and research in colonial archives at Beni. Based on his testimony, among others, I do believe that further fieldwork would reveal much more important data on the history and recollection of leopard men.



## Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to thank the Sainsbury Research Unit for their financial support and for being a unique study environment which promotes the sharing of expertise and collaboration across disciplinary boundaries. This has inspired me very much both in my professional career and in this research project. My supervisor Prof. John Mack and second supervisor Dr Anne Haour have both guided me wonderfully and critically. They have been very supportive and open-minded, encouraging me to explore the topic in a diverse way. I would also like to thank other SRU staff and fellow postgraduate students, and especially Dr Karen Jacobs and Dr Abubakar Sule and their families for their hospitality and kindness. I am indebted to Mrs Lynne Crossland of the SRU for kindly proof-reading the drafts of my chapters.

The research affiliation to the RMCA has been very important to this project. I would like to thank the Director Dr Guido Gryseels for giving me office space and access to the collections and library throughout the time of my research. He has given me the opportunity to investigate the ethnographic collections more thoroughly, which has been a core aspect of this research project. My special gratitude goes to my friend and former colleague Hein Vanhee, Head of the Collection Management Department during the time of my affiliation. The team under his supervision, and especially Natalie De Wolf, Annick Swinnen, Lutgard Doutrelepon and Françoise Therry, have supported me in many ways and were so kind to share their office space with me. I also want to devote special thanks to Hannelore Vandenberg and Nancy Verlinden of the History Department.

I am grateful to the following institutions and their personnel who have hosted me and/or assisted me in my research: the National Institute for Criminalistics and Criminology (NICC), the KADOC archives at Leuven; the Priests of the Holy Heart congregation at Leuven; the staff of the Africa Archives at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially Raf Storme, the Central Library of the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL), the Aequatoria Archives at the African Languages and Cultures Department of the University of Gent (Ugent), under the supervision of Prof. Michael Meeuwis, and Nancy Daems, Librarian of the Ethnographic Division of the MAS library. For the archival and museum research I carried out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to thank Prof. Joseph Ibongo, Director of the Instituts Nationaux des Musées du Congo (IMNC) and his staff, and Dr Antoine Lumenganeso, Director of the Congolese National Archives.

My special gratitude goes to the Belgian-Congolese film-maker Jean-Michel Kibushi Ndjate Wooto for kindly letting me stay with his family in Kinshasa, and for his assistance in organising and recording interviews. Further I would like to express my thanks to his mother Henriette Alomba Mboka, his brother Emile Lokondo, Patrick Shako, Joseph and Lucy Luhuma and their daughter Milka for their kindness and hospitality. Many thanks also to Michel Apanza Âdemotiyî, André Ipakala (*La*

*Référence* newspaper), and Michel Botoro for sharing their knowledge with me. I was also very happy to spend time at Dr Katrien Pype's home in Kinshasa with the family of Mrs Antoinette Kongo, Benzi Joseph Kongo, Ketty Kongo and their friends. Dr Kristien Geenen (Ugent/KUL) was kind enough to share her expertise and contacts with me, among whom the popular artists JP Mika, Sapin-Makengele and Cheri Benga, with whom I was in touch during my stay in Kinshasa and whose paintings have been an inspiration. I also want to thank Prof. Johan Lagae (Ugent) for introducing me to his contacts in the Congo. All these people have contributed to making my stay in Congo a very enjoyable and fruitful time.

In the course of my research, I was able to present parts of it at guest lectures. The discussions and feedback I received have been significant for the development of this project. First and foremost I would like to thank the Congo Research Network (CRN), and its representatives Dr Katrien Pype (MIT/KUL) and Dr Claude Sumata (Catholic University of the Congo, UCC ), who invited me to present a paper while residing in Kinshasa. I also want to thank the History Department of the University of Kinshasa (UNIKIN), and more particularly Prof. Jacob Sabakinu Kivulu, Prof. Sindani Kiangu and Prof. Obotela Lingule for inviting me to give a presentation at their department. Prof. Ann Cassiman of the CADES (Culture and Development Studies) and Social and Cultural Anthropology programs at the KUL, gave me the opportunity to present a part of Chapter 4 in a guest lecture on material culture studies. Prof. em. Daniel Vangroenweghe (Ugent) gave me useful advice for the consultation of archives. Prof. Koen Bostoen of the African Languages and Cultures Department, Ugent, has advised me on linguistic matters. My colleagues at the MAS, the curators Mireille Holsbeke and Els De Palmenaer, have been colleagues and friends throughout this project and I have shared many crucial moments with them. Willy Durinx, also a colleague at the MAS, has helped me tremendously in putting together all the maps in this work.

This work would not have been possible without the friendship and support of my friends and family. Special thanks go to my friend Geraldine Reymenants, to my sister-in-law Kerstin, and to the teachers, fellow-parents and friends of my children's school for making them feel at home whenever I was absent or busy. To my parents-in-law for their support which came in many forms. I am very grateful to my sister Stephanie and my cousin Barbara De Leenheer for helping me to get everything in the right place and shape in the lay-out. Finally, I am largely indebted to my partner and soul mate Matthias, for his inexhaustible love, optimism and support, and for being the best father to our children. To our children Aster and Juno who have inspired me in many ways and unknowingly provided me with an endless source of courage.



**Illustration 1: *The Leopard man of Stanley Falls* by Paul Wissaert, 1915.**

**Plaster figure, decorated with ethnographic objects.**

**RMCA A.371**

**Photographer unknown; Sofam ©**



## Introduction

The point of departure for this research is the sculpture group known as *The Leopard Man* or *The Aniototo* (Illustration 1). It stood in a central place in one of the large exhibition halls of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (hereafter RMCA) for about 100 years. The “Africa Museum” as the institution is known today, has its historical roots in the Belgian colonisation of the Congo.<sup>1</sup> Its architecture refers with celebratory symbolism to the Belgian civilising project. The leopard man display was one of the sculptural scenes of the interior design, until the museum closed for renovation in November 2013.

The sculpture at the RMCA was commissioned by the Ministry of Colonies from the artist Paul Wissaert and was first displayed in the museum in 1915. The costume worn by the leopard man figure originally consisted of ethnographic objects, including a bark-cloth tunic and hood, iron claws with which leopard men supposedly killed their victims and wooden sticks with which a leopard paw impression could be made in the soil. The bark-cloth tunic and hood were later replaced with replicas. The fact that the sculpture originally contained ethnographic pieces distinguishes it from other sculptural scenes in the museum building, crossing the boundary between interior design and ethnographic display.

The events to which the display refers are leopard men killings in the eastern part of Congo between ca. 1890 and 1940 under the Zanzibari slave trade and Belgian colonisation. The phenomenon of leopard men was poorly understood by the colonial administration. They were generally imagined as anonymous men attacking innocent victims for no clear reason, dressed in a particular costume and using claws as the predominant murder weapons. The Territorial Administrator Brandt gives a rather canonical description of leopard men attacks, but is also one of the few to question the presumed *modus operandi*:

*“According to the notions of indigenous people of aniotos, these can be recognised from their robes and hoods of bark-cloth, which are spotted like the leopard hide. Armed with knives in the form of claws, which they use to behead their victims, and not fleeing before having printed in the soil of the surroundings, the traces of the wild animal with a kind of wooden stick; ... In reality the aniototo does not use this disguise which would particularly impede his movements and especially his escape... . The victim, isolated and without suspicion, is surprised from behind and killed with a stab in his full body; After having slashed the throat, the aniototo flees, leaving the corpse*

---

<sup>1</sup> In several publications Couttenier (2005, 2010a, 2010b) discusses the history of the museum from a historical anthropological perspective.

*behind without further mutilation.*"<sup>2</sup>

As Brandt's description suggests, the display at the RMCA became the foundational image lying behind the iconography of leopard men appearing in different kinds of western sources ever since. The iconography started to take on a life of its own, disconnected from its historical context, in fiction and also in other popular cultural phenomena like toys, video games, etc. Except for a few rare pieces in other European ethnographic museums, the large collection of costumes, claws and sticks at the RMCA is unique in the world. Reproductions of leopard men costumes in the RMCA have been used in the past to illustrate literature of other phenomena branded as leopard men from other African colonies. In recent decades leopard men representations have become the subject of critique for presenting a stereotypical image of Congolese culture.

### ***Problems with the leopard man: postcolonial critiques and lack of knowledge***

Academics and members of the Congolese diaspora criticised the sculpture of Wissaert for presenting a stereotypical and racist representation in which violent aspects of African societies from the past are over-stressed. In 2003 the RMCA hosted the exhibition '*Cheri Samba moto na Tervuren*' showing work by the Congolese painter Cheri Samba. One painting especially made for this exhibition represented a tug of war between Congolese trying to removing the sculpture group from the museum and the museum personnel. The Director of the museum is supervising the struggle in the background (Illustration 2). The painting symbolises an act of iconoclasm on a colonial icon. The museum subsequently bought the painting which was displayed next to the sculpture. This can be read as an attempt on the museum's part to come to terms with the critique. Postcolonial critiques of the museum, and of the colonial past in general, have been a sign of changing mentalities in past decades, and the RMCA has responded to these in a diversity of ways, with mixed success. By 2003 the label documenting the sculpture group was also amended to stress the meaning of the leopard men society as an anti-colonial movement. In recent years the sculpture was relocated and comic books containing leopard men representations were displayed next to it. Currently the museum is preparing a large-scale renovation, and the role of the leopard man group in the new permanent display is being negotiated.

In colonial sources, diverse regional varieties of leopard men existing in several African colonies were lumped together under the common denominator of leopard men or one of its synonyms (human leopard, man leopard, etc.). Any particularities within these regional variations were sometimes blended together in these accounts: official documents, press reports and fiction alike. They were often

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<sup>2</sup> F. ex. RMCA AIMO Brandt (1925). Repeated by Libois (1936).



**Illustration 2: Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale. Réorganisation by Chéri Samba, 2002.**

**Translations of the captions (top to bottom):**

**From Lingala :** « *This sculpture is still ours, it has made us who we are today.* »

**From French :** « *It is indeed sad but...* »

**From Dutch :** « *and actually the museum needs to be completely reorganised.* »

**Oil on canvas, 104 x 134 cm.**

**RMCA Tervuren A.3865**

**Photo by J.-M. Vandyck, RMCA Tervuren ©**



associated with the iconography deriving from the Tervuren sculpture. Since the first press reports of leopard men in the Congo appeared in journalistic sources, leopard men have also played a prominent role in European and American popular literature and imaginings of Africa (Illustration 3, Illustration 5). In a way similar to current reporting of violence in the east of Congo, leopard men representations insinuate that there is a historical and cultural predisposition for war and violence here.

Recent critiques of leopard men representations occurred specifically in relation to popular and colonial/exotic literature such as comic books and adventure stories (for example Halen, 1988, 1993; Mbiye, 1993). One of the most influential examples of leopard man fiction has been Edgar Rice Burroughs' adventure story titled *Tarzan and the Leopard Man* (Illustration 3). A Hollywood film was made of the story and today toys based on this story are still offered for sale on ebay, for example. Nowadays the best known example of leopard men representation in a comic is in Hergé's *Tintin au Congo*, later adapted and renamed *Tintin en Afrique* (Illustration 4). In such stories the leopard man usually represents the exotic and evil opponent of the hero, as an exotic prop. The Tintin comic in itself has been the subject of criticism with reference to its representations of Africa. The Congolese law student Bienvenu Mbutu Mondondo launched legal proceedings against the publisher in 2007 to block the distribution of this comic, but his charges were eventually dismissed.<sup>3</sup> Such attempts to draw attention to the regeneration of stereotypical representations of Africa are not always taken seriously in public opinion and are sometimes ridiculed in public discussions. In the meantime leopard men continue to appear in comic books, horror novels, video games and other areas of popular culture. The display in the museum also continues to generate enchanted reactions on blogs or tourist fora on the internet by people commenting on their visit to the museum.<sup>4</sup>

There is no doubt that the ethnographic objects have played an important role in making the stories about leopard men appear both more spectacular and more 'authentic'. Indeed what could be better proof of the existence of leopard men than the ethnographic objects? But a detailed consideration of them leads to the question as to how a man can kill swiftly and unseen while wearing such a costume. A few sceptical colonial observers like Brandt had already noticed this in the 1920s.<sup>5</sup> The hoods of the costumes would very likely impair the sight of the attackers. Likewise,

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<sup>3</sup> See f. ex. an article in *The Telegraph* (13/2/2012). "Tintin does not break racism law, Belgian court rules." The court decided Tintin was not a racist comic.

<sup>4</sup> See f. ex. the website Belgian curiosities referring to the leopard man's appearance in the Tintin comic. See also the famous public TV journalist Rudi Vranx in an interview with one of the big Flemish newspapers *De Standaard* titled "The leopard man is in our heads" highlighting his own and others' fascination with the image.

<sup>5</sup> F. ex. RMCA AIMO Brandt (1925), Bouccin (1936: 21-22).

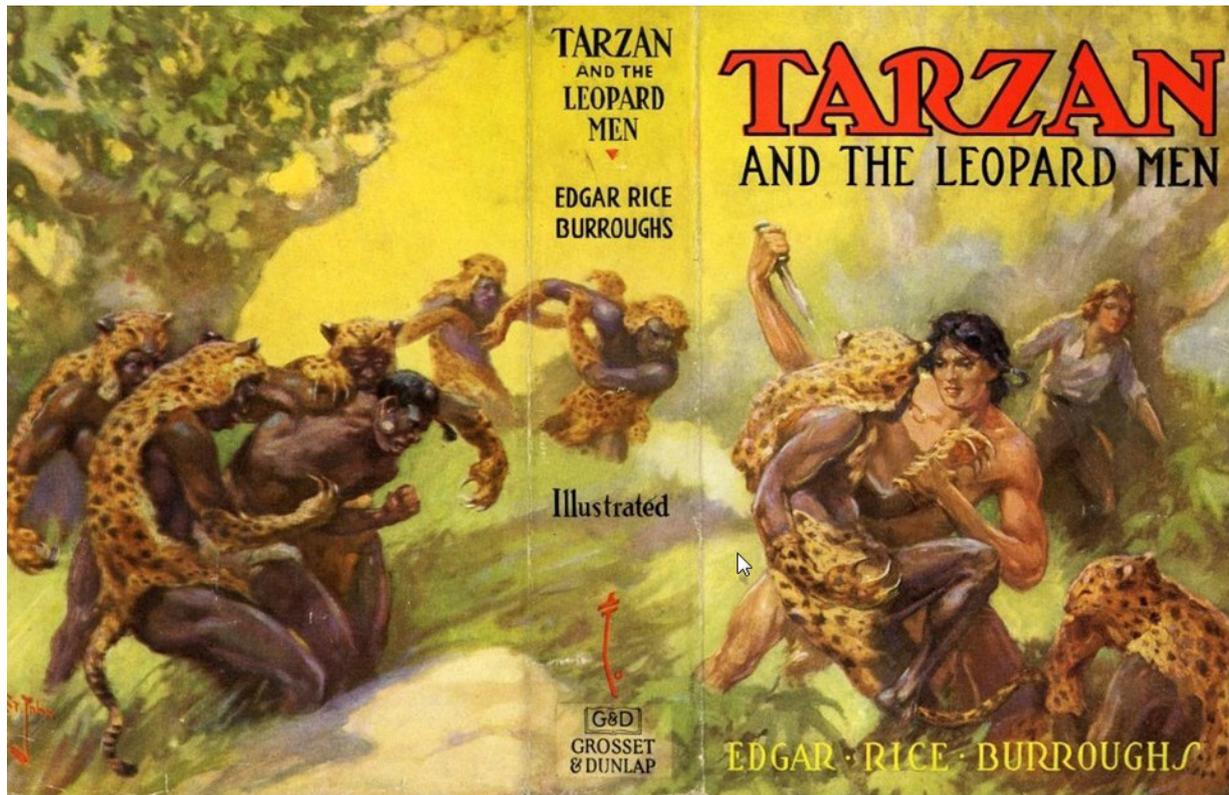
not all the claws seem entirely suitable for fast killings, or even for inflicting deadly wounds at all. Among museum colleagues a number of misgivings about the evidential basis of the display and its interpretation were also voiced. The most sceptical insinuated that leopard men may have never really existed and that the costumes may be false (colonial souvenirs for example), while others asserted it was probably impossible to recover information on this history anyway. The question of the origin of the costumes will be explored at length in Chapter 4. What I want to highlight here is that such rumours may partly be a side-effect of postcolonial criticisms: instances of violence on the part of the colonised are over-generalised as examples of negative colonial representations. An example of this is the denial of the occurrence of cannibalism.<sup>6</sup> Such phenomena have sometimes become a blind spot in postcolonial studies. In light of this, I became particularly interested in why indeed the display of leopard men had become the subject of postcolonial critique but not of serious study. Why were the objects and display never really investigated more thoroughly to find out what was true or false about them? It appeared to me that the ethnographic objects may have contributed to lulling people into “believing” the display, or at least complying with it. The authenticity of the costumes was never really seriously questioned. Denying the existence of leopard men, cannibalism or other kinds of violence, or failing to research them does not de-exoticise them, on the contrary. The continued mystery enhances the strength of the myth. In order to de-exoticise such representations it is crucial, on the one hand, to recover the complexity of the human and particular histories behind the dehumanised and generalised representation of anonymous leopard men killings; and, on the other hand, to try and find out why and how caricatures of such phenomena have been put forward in colonial representations, by revealing the underlying processes contributing to a distancing from the social reality.

### ***Overall approach and research questions***

The museological display is the keyhole through which I look to unravel how a canonical form of colonial knowledge – a “mythology” of leopard men – has diverged from a complex social reality in the colony. I have broken down my study into three principal research questions. The first one is, what was the social reality behind the leopard men display; or in other words which facts were actually happening, and how did this relate to social relations between different groups of

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<sup>6</sup> See the numerous reviews in academic journals of *The Man-Eating Myth* by Arens (1979) in a.o. *American Anthropologist*, *Ethnohistory*, etc. Arens rejects anthropological and historical evidence of cannibalism in several cultures. Besides critical reviews the book also received positive critiques, for challenging over-generalising understandings of colonised or non-European people as cannibals. The historian Daniel Vangroenweghe (2013) has assembled evidence of cannibalism and human sacrifice in historical records in Congo and other parts of the world, challenging in particular Arens’ book.



**Illustration 3: Book cover of *Tarzan and the Leopard Men* by Edgar Rice Burroughs (1935).**





Illustration 4: Excerpt with the leopard man from *Tintin au Congo* by Hergé (1946).





**Illustration 5 (a and b): Leopard man at the American Museum for Natural History.**

**Situated in the hall of “African peoples” under the theme “Science and Faith”. The plaster figure is hardly noticeable to the visitor.**

**Courtesy of Els De Palmenaer (Keeper of Africa collections, MAS)**



people in the colony? Secondly, how did a colonial myth come into being? And thirdly, what was the role of objects and museum display therein?

The overall approach taken in this research project, in light of which the different research questions can be seen, is informed mainly by poststructuralist perspectives on social reality in history and anthropology. I have relied on Giddens' (1984) theory of "structuration" in order to analyse the generation of understanding of leopard men. Historical sources on leopard men are considered to be "structured" by individual agents in their practices of interpretation, negotiation and expression which they develop in line with ideological principles which are natural to and unquestioned by them. Characteristic of this "structuration" is the fact that colonial agents, through their idiosyncratic opinions and diverging practices in social reality, nevertheless concur in a consensual, bottom-line understanding of leopard men. Social pressure ensures that these agents, despite their potentially opposing perspectives, act and express themselves to meet a certain socially agreeable understanding. Through this process ideologies are regenerated in practice, by questioning, arguing, re-negotiating, discarding and re-confirming elements of leopard men lore. This way of shaping the world and being shaped by the world is dialectic, particularly entrenched in discourse, in the form of official documents and language; but is also entrenched in the way people deal with objects and the material world (Saïd, 1989; Bourdieu, 1977; Miller, 2005; Pels, 1997). Document production has occurred predominantly on the side of the colonisers, but the testimony of the colonised has at times made its way into these documents. Discourse analysis has revealed the practices and ideologies underlying textual production, but this process is also situated in the way people have related to the ethnographic objects, have framed them in a museological display and relate to them during their museum visit. The concept of structuration is equally applicable to these situations and can be understood in line with Bourdieu's theory of practice when it concerns relations to objects or culturally constructed spaces in the material world. I want to devote special attention to the latter in this study as it is one of the aspects of the history on which it sheds new light.

The overall approach taken here is thus predominantly situated in the way the sources are confronted: as entangled in the structuration process. Most of the textual sources on leopard men which were produced between the 1920s and the 1950s do linger between myth and fact, blending hearsay and rumour into a colonial consensus. What underpins this study is that such a process of structuration underlies all expressions of human experience. These are all by definition enabled and constrained by a cultural logic and at once rooted in a real environment. A large part of this work consisted in the reconstruction of the history of leopard men – that which has been shed and forgotten in the process of structuration on the part of the colonisers – as a subaltern history, in order to get a better idea of what kind of social reality leopard men narratives have been derived from. I have limited my scope

to two adjacent regional varieties of leopard men from the east of Congo, known as *anioto* and *vihokohoko*, from which the costumes at the RMCA and the display derive.

Finding answers to the first research question regarding the social reality of leopard men entailed two things: firstly, a better understanding of the wider historical and cultural context of the region in which leopard men killings occurred; secondly, trying to establish a micro-history of clusters of leopard men killings in order to find out who they were and why they killed, and consider them in their wider context. The second question is: How did a colonial myth come into being? To reveal the process of structuration and stereotyping in the accounts also entailed verifying in which ways the colonial representation differed from a historical reality; in other words what was true or false about the colonial accounts, which aspects have been emphasised, falsely assumed, or over-generalised, and which aspects have been discarded and forgotten. And what does the latter reveal to us about the cultural logic and ideological formations behind these stories? Finally, the third question: what was the role of objects and museum display in the process of canonisation of leopard men knowledge? To answer this last question, I have considered the objects as intermediaries in creating colonial truths. I have looked at how the objects have been put forward as proof and how ideological understandings are entangled with their formal qualities. Particularly how objects and visual display have affected people in the context of an authoritative institution embodying ideological knowledge is considered as a crucial part of this process. Within the overall poststructuralist approach, a number of theoretical frameworks and methodologies are combined in line with the three research threads followed. I will outline these in separate sections below.

### **1. How colonial myths are made**

The first two research questions parallel two dominant directions of postcolonial studies: firstly, postcolonial literary studies, reading texts as examples of colonial culture bearing in them the ideological formations of colonialism, silencing colonial subjects and imposing stereotypical understanding of them; and secondly, subaltern studies, trying to retrieve the history of the colonised, whose voice was largely absent in colonial documents. These two facets of study are obviously two sides of a coin, and in this work I treat them in a parallel way, as entangled in the same process of structuration. For pragmatic reasons I start here by addressing the second research question, on myth-making, as the way in which I have approached this process theoretically also deals with the way I have assessed leopard men sources for reconstructing the history.

Writing history entails the practice of mythologisation, as part of the invention of tradition, a practice which seeks to legitimise actual power

constellations and social identities by giving them a foothold in a cultural past (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). This particularly applies to colonial discourse revealing colonial events in terms of a unilinear, mythical victory of western civilisation over the uncivilised.<sup>7</sup> In the context of the Belgian Congo the leopard men became a symbol of the uncivilised nature of Congolese traditions as an example of what Ranger (2010: 421) called “*false models of colonial codified African traditions*”. In this section I want to explain how I have envisaged the colonial accounts of leopard men in terms of mythologisation, revealing a colonial logic and social order, and a directive to act against them.

Saïd (2003) originally pointed out that formations of colonial logic equally invaded scholarly accounts, popular and fictional texts and arts. This is particularly the case for leopard men representations and their residue in public memory and in popular culture. The case-study of the leopard men testifies to the processes of regeneration and reinvention of ideological formations in the context of colonial culture and beyond. It is an example of how authoritative knowledge is created in multi-faceted, complex cultural ways as an aspect of ‘colonial governmentality’ (Foucault, 1991; Pels, 1997). Postcolonial critiques of the leopard men display and other remnants of colonial culture are a sign that ideological formations related to colonial power that once seemed natural and unquestionable to the majority of the colonial public have eroded. Colonial histories reveal themselves as mythologies: the arbitrary structure of social hierarchies and the cultural premise on which they are built are becoming painfully clear. For leopard men representations this means that for people nowadays the derogatory, racist character has become obvious. People have become estranged from it and actively distance themselves from it. However, the roots of such ideological formations are so deeply entrenched in western culture that sometimes their manifestation in different cultural expressions remain to a large extent unnoticed and seem harmless to many, which demonstrates that they still live on in intricate and disparate ways. This is especially the case for leopard men representations in the museum display and in popular culture.

The existence of leopard men was most definitely a historical fact. But, as the phenomenon was not very well known or understood, this opened up multiple possibilities for speculation or mystification on the part of the colonisers, with the most spectacular hearsay and rumour being mixed in. In order to deal with this complex nature of the sources as part of this process, i.e. trying to come to grips with the myths and facts in them, I have looked at scholarly work studying textual accounts on colonial violence. The role of rumour in such accounts is regarded by several scholars not as a function of its veracity, but as characteristic of the negotiation of meanings to make sense of the colonial situation. The agency of

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<sup>7</sup> See Ranger (1983; 2010) for the invention of tradition in colonial Africa. See Vansina (1983) and Friedman (1992) on African history and the process of mythologisation.

rumour is situated in its rhetoric, convincing others to think and act (Stoler, 1992; Pandey, 2002: 165; White, 2000).

The first perspective which I found useful to assess the diverse range of textual accounts on leopard men as sources, was Pandey's meta-perspective on the process of text-production relating to the partition of India at the end of British colonial rule in 1947. Pandey distinguishes between different levels of accounts across which narratives of violence become increasingly abstracted and politicised in colonial sources. Pandey (2002: 167, 177-179, 185-186) makes the distinction between primary reports from the colonial society, secondary politicised reports and memoirs aspiring to the status of axiomatic history such as articles in colonial press, and the third stage of history proper "*with the full paraphernalia of referencing, footnoting, objective distance and scientific language.*" These levels are more or less distinguishable in the textual accounts about leopard men as well, with the secondary level accounts being most prolific. As Pandey states, when secondary reports become multiplied, in colonial press for example, they take on the character of true and authoritative accounts, with canonisation of particular acts of violence as a notable feature. According to Pandey, what is characteristic of testimony, seeping into all three levels, is the fact that it "*both participates in rumor and seeks to overturn it*". This means that, despite the canonisation taking place, each time the authors will reintroduce rumour as a rhetoric strategy for adding detail and particularities, such as names and numbers, detailed descriptions of massacres, in order to reinforce their point and make their argument more convincing. This means that in all three levels of reporting, the selective use of rumours can never be completely distinguished from demonstrable fact. Rumour is further used to bring a consistent structure to the story, for example in order to demonstrate the benign character of colonialism, leading to the emergence of heroic narratives. Pandey characterises rumour as the basis of incendiary and rhetorical knowledge, which is experienced by many as "certain" knowledge. It becomes part of the violence, as it creates an atmosphere and instigates action through politicised rhetoric.

The sources which I consulted in relation to leopard men were of different natures, ranging between very specific, densely detailed reports emerging from the colonial administration and more sweeping, canonising publications in missionary and colonial journals, revealing a certain structure, transmitting stereotyped, streamlined knowledge about leopard men. The latter secondary level accounts clearly overruled the primary accounts. The raw, un-customised primary accounts were rarely meant for public consultation, as secondary press accounts are. Rumours of diverse regional phenomena identified as leopard men in several European

colonies in Africa already influenced each other at an early stage.<sup>8</sup> These diverse cultural phenomena were lumped together under a common denominator highlighting superficial similarities at the expense of their differences. By the time the first accounts of leopard men in the Congo appeared, an awareness already existed of leopard men elsewhere, particularly from Sierra Leone where their activities had been reported since the 1870s. With regard to leopard men in eastern Congo, reports were rare prior to 1920. They received more specific attention in missionary and journal publications in the 1920s and especially around 1930, when a number of court cases occurred and gangs of leopard men were convicted and executed. Also in this same period – primary – administrative reports were produced more often as part of the colonial administration investigating and trying to extinguish leopard men. Tertiary accounts, which Pandey identified as history proper, did not appear in a textual form that much in this particular case study but were mainly situated in the domain of the museum as the scientific institution with the objects as material proof. This point will be addressed in section 3 of this introduction.

The process of document production leading to texts of different natures is of course but a fragment of a much more complex process of social interactions in a given context. While Pandey compared different levels of text production, Stoler has focussed on the intricate complexity of primary accounts of colonial agents as witnesses on the colonial scene. Through the analysis of letters of colonial agents regarding the murder of a planter family on Sumatra under Dutch colonial rule, Stoler (1992: 151) looks “*to see beyond an omniscient colonial apparatus to one peopled by agents whose imaginings propelled their actions, a perspective in which fact with fantasy together constituted the realizing of violence and what were deemed appropriate measures to counter it.*” What is crucial to Stoler’s work is that it gives insight into how the process of mythologisation starts in a very tentative and uncertain way in the colonial context itself, as reflected in primary documents. The expression of experiences is shaped by a climate of rumours provoking fear and armed responses, in which the colonial agents are trying to establish themselves. They resort to rumour in combination with other rhetoric strategies in order to provide their version of the events in competition with others. In doing so, alternative accounts are silenced or manipulated and rhetoric strategies are used to give rumour

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<sup>8</sup> For a map of the dispersal of “leopard men” phenomena see Lindskog (1954: 7). Lindskog also provides many bibliographical references. “Leopard men” were reported in Sierra Leone (Sherbro district, among the Mende particularly) (Beatty, 1915; Gray, 1916), in Liberia among several population groups (Westermann, 1921; Welmers, 1949; Junge, 1950; website Liberia Past and Present by Van der Kraaij, F.P.M.; in Cameroon (Miller, 2009), in several regions of Nigeria (Pratten, 2007), in Gabon (Steimen, 1936; Rich, 2001), in Ivory Coast, in Mozambique, in several regions of the Congo (also at the lower and middle Congo river and in the south) (Lindskog, 1954). See Butt-Thompson (1931) on “criminal native secret societies” on the African west coast.

the appearance of evidence. Examples of these are mentioning an informant's status and authority and quoting him in order to be more convincing, or blaming others for things that went wrong in order to protect oneself. The most successful accounts depend for example on an agent's mastery of rhetoric, the way he engages with rumours, and his status. The success of particular rumours determines which versions resonate in official correspondence, travel great distances and result in action. The accounts must also have what Stoler calls "plausible plots" according to colonial logic.

Stoler (1992) argues against the accounts simply reflecting a meta-narrative of a dualistic world; by which she means that they do not simply mirror the juxtaposition of the coloniser and the colonised, but reveal much more complex social interactions. As I explained, primary documents are much based on rumour and inconclusive interrogations of local informants leading to speculation on the part of the colonial administration. As we will see for example, leopard men killings occurred in secret and people would not talk to the authorities out of loyalty or for fear of reprisal, so the data obtained was often limited. Colonial officials filled the gaps in their knowledge with culturally reasonable plots, thereby making their stories both persuasive and relevant to a class-, gender- and race-specific audience. Stoler stresses that conflicting accounts would rather paradoxically refer to a loosely conceived colonial logic, which was mastered differently by the officials. What is important here is that Stoler highlights the initial dynamics of structuration as situated within social life, shaping colonial understanding of a certain situation or phenomenon in a tentative way, but also as rich sources of the atmosphere and relations in the colonial society where the violence took place. I will address the latter point in the following section in relation to the reconstruction of the history of leopard men.

If Stoler was right to consider the structuration of primary accounts as uncertain, negotiated by filling gaps in knowledge with culturally plausible plots, we can argue with Pandey that it takes on a clearer, more certain and authoritative form in secondary and tertiary level accounts. Stoler indicates that the accounts studied demonstrate how limited the impact of the colonial authorities may have been as they sought to put their policies into practice, and how vulnerable and non-hegemonic colonial authority actually was. The fact that, in the process of canonisation, some stories rather than others obtained the stamp of validated knowledge, as scientific history, is in itself a process of claiming control and exerting power. Providing an illusion of certainty regarding something which in reality is uncertain and highly ambiguous is a means to claim the high-ground of 'truth' and thereby make a claim to the exercise of power. In light of this, I consider the mythologisation of leopard men to be a colonial invention, claiming the status of scientific truth, and putting a false, derogatory colonial model of African tradition to the fore.

A third study which has been very helpful to explore more deeply the

understanding of leopard men sources in terms of mythologisation has been White's work (2000: 50) on African stories in which colonisers are regarded as vampires. White (2000: 66-67) looks at these stories as expressions of how colonised people actually experienced, tried to come to terms with, and made sense of colonialism and its violent aspects. She looks at vampires as an epistemological category with which Africans described their world both as beliefs and metaphors. Leopard men can be regarded in a similar way as an epistemological category through which the coloniser expressed experiences of the colonised. In a comparative study of leopard men in different parts of Africa, the Swedish sociologist Birger Lindskog (1954) criticised the very term "leopard men", which he considered a metaphor for Europeans in order to come to terms with a phenomenon they cannot understand. In a parallel way to White's analysis of vampire stories, colonial narratives of leopard men tell us more about how colonisers experienced and made sense of the colonised than about the historical reality of leopard men. The characterisation of leopard men as an epistemological category will be helpful to understand better why and how this image of an African tradition has been selected historically and put to the fore as an icon of the alterity of Congolese. Based on pre-existing cultural models of alterity, Europeans recognised the leopard man as a powerful icon, proving that Africans differ fundamentally from Europeans, essentialising in its visual form fears and fantasies of the colonised. This is a cornerstone in the mythologisation process and ties in with the success of the leopard men as a key image in fictional literature.

While fictional sources fall out of the source levels described by Pandey, they are part of popular or artistic expressions of the modern era equally invaded by colonial ideologies, as pointed out by Saïd (2003). White's characterisation of the vampire stories, not only as testimonies of individual experiences but also as stories, is significant for the analysis of leopard men narratives. White points out that the way individual experience is expressed, the way it is structured so to speak, is important for people to believe the story and is a significant criterion for stories to spread. White's study thus suggests that there is common ground between the epically successful structuring of fictional narratives in order for them to be evaluated in a favourable way, and the successful narration of individual experiences in order to be granted authority as a particular version of the facts. This is corroborated by Pandey and Stoler's perspectives in the sense that testimonies of events had to reveal plausible plots, and that rumours are used rhetorically to make one's version more appealing. Where the two meet is in the suspense they provoke and the way this is built up as a means of appealing to people. Leopard men fiction is thus interesting for this thesis as comparative material for verification of the structuration and mythologisation underpinning leopard men stories in historical reports.

## 2. Reconstructing the history and ethnography of leopard men

In recent decades a number of studies appeared treating in depth the regional phenomena of leopard men, such as David Pratten's *The Man-Leopard Murders* (2007) and Ivor Miller's *Voice of the Leopard. African Secret Societies and Cuba* (2009).<sup>9</sup> What these studies demonstrate is that leopard men phenomena, lumped together under the common denominator in western thought, each have a very rich and unique cultural and political history. The leopard should be understood as a widely occurring African symbol for political and ritual authority underpinning a vast diversity of cultural institutions, and not simply political ones. Comparative study is not soundly based if it plays on what is no more than a superficial visual commonality of the leopard symbolism and the occurrence of killings in these disparate examples. In order to move away from the western epistemological category of leopard men, which provides a false colonial model of African tradition, every regional variety merits study in its own right, in relation to its own cultural, political and historical context. To reconstruct the history and ethnography of leopard men for the region studied was the most important precondition from which to build the other aspects of this study: the analysis of colonial modes of representation and the role played by objects and museum display. In order to be able to retrieve processes of structuration in the colonial representation, one needs to know which kind of social reality it has been abstracted from. In this section I explain how I have approached this part of the research.

The fact that in the eastern Congo leopard men definitely appeared as a counter-hegemonic movement is suggested in several primary sources. I have taken this as the point of departure for the reconstruction of the history. The book *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest* edited by Donald Crummey (1986) raised awareness for the study of varying cultural processes of anti-colonial rebellion and other forms of empowerment in colonial contexts in Africa and has inspired the approach to this research. The concept of social banditry was introduced by the historian Eric Hobsbawm (1981) in the study of European social history. It enabled historians to make distinctions within a larger category of bandits lumped together as such by legal authorities. Social bandits are criminals according to the state or leading classes and, from the information in court records, a historian could not distinguish them from ordinary crooks. Sometimes these are peasant heroes remembered in romanticised stories, like Robin Hood, and Hobsbawm wanted to give them back their place in history.

In Crummey's volume, the social banditry concept was adapted to study similar movements against the established colonial or state order in African history. Despite some critical observations of banditry as an essentially Eurocentric concept,

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<sup>9</sup> See also Rich (2001), Ellis (2000).

it has proven useful to acknowledge and study early local anti-colonial movements in Africa. These early movements generally occurred during the first decades of colonisation, between the 1890s and the 1920s, and are different in character from later anti-colonial independence movements and post-independence rebellions. Such politicised mass movements in the development of national politics were better organised and often led by political or intellectual elites. They were institutionalised forces with military branches and international links. These forces were taken seriously by the western world and were frequently reported on by the international media. Early anti-colonial movements however, started as tentative efforts to oppose colonial control, but the fight was mostly underground, not aimed directly at the colonial government, mainly for fear of repression. The merit of Crummey's book is that it was one of the first works to focus on forms of empowerment which were less clearly identified as political movements in the context of national politics, or as instances of peasant rebellion in the Marxist tradition. Such movements were less straightforwardly voiced in the historical archives of the colonial regime. Even if these movements had an effect on the established order, they were considered as subversive sects rather than social or political movements, and down-played as arbitrary, criminal, irrational and barbaric.

One article in Crummey's volume is of direct interest to this study as it treats an anti-colonial phenomenon similar to that of leopard men. Allen F. Roberts (1986) discusses the lion men of the Tabwa (western shore of Tanganyika lake) as a parallel example of social banditry. The lion men cases are very similar to those of the leopard men and Roberts compares them in his article. Like the *anioto*, lion men opposed the colonial and missionary authorities but, as accomplices of local chiefs, they also used murder and terror in the fight for authority and power among rival leaders. Roberts makes it clear that Tabwa lion men were purveyors of violence and in some ways they were heroic criminals. Their attacks could happen for very different reasons, some less heroic than others. Roberts (1986: 68) writes the following about the criminalisation of lion men in historical records and this applies equally to the *anioto*:

*“Reporting in missionary diaries, travelogues or other nineteenth-century sources is neither consistent nor disinterested. [Considering lion-men attacks as a product of] ‘Disorder’ is often only a matter of perspective. Furthermore, as both Lindskog and Joset note, cases of leopard or lion-men attacks had particular explanations, including revenge, vendetta, ritual or ‘gangsterism’. Close scrutiny of the Tabwa data, such as it is, suggests that all these are possible explanations. However, these do not obviate a general correlation between incidents and their historical contexts (lion-men attacks as a product of disorder); rather, particular case studies allow an understanding of the process or dynamics of the incidents. One can suggest,*

*then, that there is an explanation of the instrumentality of lion-man murder, a kind of functionalist 'bottom line' to all the various incidents."*

As Roberts suggests, leopard men murders have been treated in a stereotypical way as a product of disorder in colonial accounts. The dehumanisation and demonisation of the leopard men have, to a large extent, precluded their recognition as an anti-colonial movement. The basic approach adopted in this study, going against a stereotyped understanding of leopard men, was indeed to look for specific data for trying to outline the functionalist bottom line to the various conflicts.

To start with I want to account for the way I have used the colonial sources for this purpose. As discussed above, primary administrative reports drawn up by colonial agents in the field, provided the most particular and richest data for discovering a "functionalist bottom line" to the incidents. Like Stoler, one of the premises from which this research departed is the understanding of the colonial situation as a fragmented social reality, often characterised by crisis and violence, in which different social groups are trying to maintain themselves. Local agency had to be recovered from the historical documents, which have been predominantly produced from the side of the coloniser, in order to reconstruct personal, micro-histories which are at the basis of leopard men activities. The next step was to interpret them in a larger cultural and historical context, as an aspect of local political culture in the crisis of foreign occupations.

In order to explain how have I assessed the "rumoured" primary documents of the administration, I will give a few examples of the nature of such sources. Territorial administrator Bouccin, whom I will refer to many times in the course of this work, is one of the few colonial administrators who really undertook thorough investigations, engaged in ethnographic study of the Bali population over a long time. Another such person is Paul-Ernest Joset, a contemporary of Bouccin, who was working in another region (Beni). It is a fact that Joset and Bouccin were actively involved as Territorial Administrators in the colonial struggle against leopard men, and also as police investigators. This role obviously placed them in a prejudiced position as observers. I needed to take into account that the information they provided may be biased or even false. Bouccin, Joset and others have stressed the difficulties in their quest, given the secrecy surrounding the attacks. It is clear from their reports that the Territorial Administrators were sometimes guessing and improvising, leading their investigations in different directions. Yet their reports and occasional publications are rare sources for the history and ethnography of the regions studied.

Bouccin provides a number of dense bureaucratic documents, revealing a genuine quest for knowledge combining ethnography with legal investigations. At times Bouccin gives insight into the dialectics between different social groups involved in the history of leopard men, providing detailed descriptions of the

atmosphere and revealing the experience of local populations. The secrecy surrounding the society and the ritual approach, sometimes imitating the attacks by a leopard, played very much on the imagination of colonisers and missionaries and created a particular atmosphere which is reflected in Bouccin's writings. Bouccin also built up a longer term relationship with local populations sometimes leading to detailed "insider" information. He mentioned how the locals experienced the *anioto* killings as a form of terror, living in constant fear. He took seriously the rumours he picked up from the locals, whereas his colleagues did not. He investigated them further and sought evidence to support them. Bouccin has been an invaluable source for providing both ethnographic details and "thick descriptions" of conflict situations (Geertz, 1973).

Joset's (1955) publication *Les Sociétés Secrètes des Hommes-Léopards en Afrique noire*, contains detailed data on colonial administrative measures and legal investigations against leopard men of the Congo and, as already mentioned, also included data on leopard men from other colonies. It has often been referred to by authors on African history and anthropology, but it has never really been reviewed in depth. It has been criticised indirectly by Miller (1998: 194-6) as an outdated and biased colonial source on Africa.<sup>10</sup> As a document assembled by a Territorial Administrator in the administrative and military struggle against leopard men in the region of Beni, it does reflect colonial bias (e.g. his prejudice against Bapakombe as opposed to Nande, which will be discussed at length). Nevertheless, to discard Joset's book as a source would be to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Rather than providing ethnographic data on the cultural institutions and family relationships underlying leopard men activities, as Bouccin did, Joset provides the most complete and detailed overview of leopard men conflicts in the east of Congo. It is a unique document quoting consistently and abundantly from legal and police documents, such as statements by witnesses and accused, and autopsy reports which give detailed descriptions of the attacks, the wounds and the sorts of weapons used. A part of the archival documents he refers to have also been consulted in the course of this research, but so far I have not been able to retrieve all of them. My impression is that Joset quotes his sources quite faithfully and does not generally engage in discussing what is communicated in them. As a historical document, his publication is a rich source, but it is not an eloquent document, as it is burdened with the bureaucratic requirement for un-contextualised details, remaining in the sphere of insider information when it dives into the specific cases.

How have I come to terms with the information provided in these sources?

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<sup>10</sup> Miller (1998: 194-6) actually criticises Deleuze and Guattari (1987) for relying on outdated and biased colonial sources on Africa such as Joset's book in their philosophical exploration of instances of people becoming animal as a way of shedding an identity. See also Bogue (2007: 155-162) analysing Miller's critique of Joset as a source.

First of all, my objective has been to distinguish very specific and individual-related information such as the names of people involved, clans, lineages and villages. I have used these elements to construct a framework identifying a number of the dominant conflict clusters, which I outline in Chapter 3. Also dates were invaluable and key events, such as trials, have been useful in establishing a framework around which to build the micro-history of the conflicts. As a background for understanding better the conflicts, I have also made a reconstruction of the wider history of the region, based on diverse documents, most importantly travel reports and accounts of missionaries and administrators. I have identified the major events during that history, outlined relationships between the principal power brokers and retrieved elements testifying to the living conditions of the population. I have then interpreted the micro-histories or conflict clusters within this reconstructed historical context in order to get an idea of Roberts' "functionalist bottom line" of the conflicts. The problem remains however, that the sources contain a lot of speculation on the part of the colonial administrators in the description of conflicts and the *modus operandi* of the killings, due to the secrecy surrounding these events. This also ties in with the limited access to legal files, which would provide better insight into the conflicts based on the statements of the accused and the victims.

For the reconstruction of conflict clusters I relied mostly on administrative documents kept at the RMCA, at the Africa Archives of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the colonial archives) in Brussels and at the Aequatoria Archives (University of Gent). During the time of my research, I did not gain access to legal and administrative files which are subject to laws of privacy and public security, but which I will try to consult in the future. Therefore this study is unavoidably a work in progress in some aspects. In the meantime, I believe the information I have assembled from primary documents is specific enough to write a better and more comprehensive history of leopard men activities than has so far been attempted, releasing them somehow from the generalising shadows of colonial mythology. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to do fieldwork in the region studied, in accordance with the safety guidelines of UEA. Instead I carried out interviews with people originally from the region in Kinshasa and Belgium revealed fragmentary recollections, given the distance of the era. On the whole the interviews were mostly informative in terms of how people emotionally related to this history in terms of a regional identity.

While a reconstruction of the history of the conflicts has enabled me to understand better which leopard men attacks occurred and why, it does not necessarily provide an insight into the culturally specific role and local experience of *vihokohoko* and *anioto*. A fundamental problem is that primary ethnographic data on how people explained and experienced becoming and acting as *anioto* and *vihokohoko* are simply absent.

A fundamental example of how gaps in colonial knowledge (of the ethnography) are filled with stereotypical ideas is the issue of the belief in transformation into leopards. For the region studied, primary data never reveals that *anioto* and *vihokohoko* believed they were able to transform into leopards as part of the process of the killings. Some sources focus on the fact that leopard men used drugs to achieve an altered state of mind to prepare for the killing, but it is never specified what this altered state of mind was like. Colonial agents rather assumed this kind of belief to be a stereotypical characteristic of leopard men in general, insinuating that religious or other kinds of delusion were at the basis of leopard men killing. Whether or not this belief occurred in the context of *vihokohoko* and *anioto* is not the main question here. What I want to point out is that voids in knowledge were filled with such stereotypes in order to sharpen the argument in favour of legal and administrative measures for example. Colonial observers were simply not able to empathise with such a belief. Fabian's discussion about *simba bulaya* (or *batumbula*) and leopard men with the painter Tshibumba Kanda Matulu, captures this inability on the part of the researcher (Fabian, 1996: 301-305). *Simba bulaya*, or lions from Europe, are in fact the colonial vampires White wrote about. The painter explains that the Congolese notion of transformation into an animal, whether leopard or lion, is acquired by working charms, and that this is misunderstood by Europeans. Europeans believe the leopard men were people who dressed up, pretending to be leopards, based on the existence of ethnographic objects. As Fabian states the discussion caused a fundamental and unbridgeable clash of beliefs between the western researcher and the Congolese informant.<sup>11</sup> I explain here how I have tried to come to terms with the lack of sources and the colonial bias in them, in order to achieve an anthropologically informed understanding of leopard men.

Instead of focusing on the voids, the data which are missing, I have widened my scope and considered leopard men as embedded in a larger cultural history for interpreting the role it must have played among the local population. For this I have relied on three scholarly threads. The principal thread for a deeper understanding of leopard men activities has been informed by anthropological understandings of a more widespread leopard symbolism as an aspect of sacro-political power in

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<sup>11</sup> Fabian (1996: 304-305) wrote: "*Tshibumba stuck to his "werewolf" theory, politely acknowledging that there may have been secret societies operating in the dark. I did not abandon the received ethnographic (i.e., sociological) interpretation that was backed up by "hard evidence," such as items of material culture I had seen in museums, although I, too conceded that changing into wild animals may be a feat accomplished by magic. Notice that the two polite concessions were similar in that both were little more than verbal strategies serving to keep the conversation going. But they were dissimilar in that Tshibumba dismissed my interpretation as irrelevant (without having to take a stand on the existence of lion societies), whereas I simply didn't believe that "were-lions" existed. My problem was to keep "negotiating" with someone who did.*"

Central-Africa. The latter is partly retrieved from anthropological studies of socio-political institutions and material culture in which leopard symbolism plays a role in the region of study and beyond.<sup>12</sup> It is further informed by studies of other forms of empowerment prior to independence and of postcolonial political culture in the context of national politics. Throughout the Congo the leopard was an important symbol of chiefly powers and witchcraft. The traditional notion of chieftaincy was ambiguous: the chief was not only expected to take care of his community but he was also the possessor of occult powers which he could use to harm his enemies or those of his community. In national politics Mobutu Sese Seko used the symbolic reference to the leopard as a claim to traditional power (De Boeck, 1996a). And nowadays in popular paintings the leopard still often figures as a political personality, or represents the Congolese national identity as opposed to that of other nations.

The leopard has not only been a symbol of royal and chiefly powers, but has become a significant emblem of rebellion. As such it has had particular meaning in Congolese contexts throughout history. The leopard symbolism has figured for example in the Maria Nkoi, or Mary of the Leopards, movement among the Ekonda people of the middle Congo region. It was an example of peasant rebellion in the form of a cult in which the propagator of the cult ritually controlled leopards (Jewsiewiecki, 1980).<sup>13</sup> In the novel *Ngando* (1948) by the Congolese novelist Lomami Tshibamba, leopard men are quite literally a metaphor for the opposition against colonialism, with the protagonist and his community turning into leopards and killing their white opponents.

The leopard imagery of the *anioto* and *vihokohoko* must have had a psychological effect on the local people. The strength of the association must have lain at least partially in its mystical aspect in which the symbolism of the leopard itself must certainly have played a role. In fact one could say that for the local community leopard men murders were the occult and political powers of the chief at play, in a secret way. In this study I have taken this as a premise for exploring the leopard men as a particular faculty of a complex and deeply rooted tradition of political culture to which leopard symbolism is central.

The second thread on which my interpretation of leopard men is based is that of the cultural history of the wider region. Data on the pre-colonial history of the Bali and the Beni populations and the development of their main institutions, including leopard men, are considered in a wider perspective. Insights into the background

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<sup>12</sup> Not many studies focus specifically on leopard symbolism in relation to sacred and political power in the context of Central Africa, but many sources do discuss it indirectly as part of a larger argument. See f. ex. the following studies of art and kingship in the Congo: Thornton, 1992; Cornet, 1982; de Heusch, 2002; MacGaffey, 2000; Roberts and Nooter, 1996; Schildkrout and Keim, 1990; Vansina, 1990a; Vansina, 1978.

<sup>13</sup> See also AA AIMO 1637 (9196).

cultural history and development of cultural institutions is particularly derived from Vansina's (1990a) reconstruction of the development of socio-political institutions in Ituri and north Maniema (eastern uplands), and McMaster's *Pattern of Interactions* (1988) on the diversification of languages along migrations of populations. Also anthropological and historical knowledge of the better researched neighbouring kingdoms (Mangbetu, Azande, Nande) with which the studied populations interacted is important to this thread (Schildkrout and Keim, 1990; Packard, 1976, 1981). Also Evans-Pritchard's (1937) study of *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande* has been meaningful in developing a perspective on anti-colonial sentiments in cults and witchcraft beliefs in terms of resistance in the wider region.

Thirdly, I have also considered the strand of political science, particularly of conflict research. I have not used conflict studies sources in the scope of this study to compare leopard men activities with more recent forms of rebellion. The societal changes that have occurred in between their different time-frames are too big and complex to incorporate a comparison in the scope of this study. In this study, it was mostly interesting to look at conflict research of recent warfare and rebellion in the east of Congo because such studies often look at the roots of conflicts in the pre-colonial and colonial situations of the population, treating ethnic tensions and the related competition for land and resources also partly as a product of colonial occupation (Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers, 2004a and b; Beneduce et al, 2006). Such studies highlight economical and political bases of conflict, and do not generally engage deeply with the culturally specific traditions of rebellion and warfare. This may partly be explained by the fact that the latter kind of approach may easily be identified as exoticising, treating cultural traditions as predestined to engender warfare and violence. However, interestingly, a few Congolese researchers did look at leopard men in terms of a "tradition of rebellion" in the east of Congo. Especially the Congolese political scientist Mwaka Bwenge (2003; 2010) looked at points of continuity and also differences in successive rebellions in this region, from early anti-colonial rebellions such as the leopard men, to rebellions in more recent history such as the post-independence *simba* rebellion in the 1960s, in his study of the *maimai* in North Kivu.<sup>14</sup>

### **3. The role of objects and museum display in leopard men representation**

The final purpose of this study is to draw out the role of the objects and the museum display in the processes of canonisation of leopard men representations. The inception of the leopard men display at the museum actually occurred at least

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<sup>14</sup> A similar perspective occurs in a dissertation by Paul-Roger Mokede (1975), a politician originary from the region. Both works address the rootedness of contemporary rebellion in tradition or new cults mentioning for example the importance of *dawa*, sacred medicine or charms.

a decade prior to the appearance of the colonial accounts in the early 1920s. The canonisation of leopard men knowledge is perhaps even more significantly secured by the way people relate to the display, not only mentally but also in the practice of the museum visit through bodily and sensory engagements with objects in the particular setting of the museum. In other words, the museum provides a stage for colonial mythologies, with the ethnographic objects as proof, embodying scientific knowledge at the summit of the hierarchy of credibility. It is puzzling why the critical study of the ethnographic objects did not happen while critiques of leopard men representations have been readily formulated. The representational conundrum in which the leopard men display is caught, causing people to criticise the display but not the ethnographic objects, is in itself a consequence of the complex, ideologically determined ways in which people relate to objects.

In recent decades scholars have highlighted the role of colonial collections as power instruments in the creation of knowledge constitutive of colonial ideologies. Collections were considered as biased, reflecting evolutionist (racist) views on non-western, particularly colonised, cultures and populations (for example, Pels, 1997; Thomas, 1991; Couttenier, 2005). An unfortunate consequence of this may be a certain lack of interest in the study and documentation of objects in ethnographic collections, similar to the way in which colonial ethnographies have been frowned upon as sources. As I explained, especially those subjects and collections highlighting violence on the part of the colonised have become taboo subjects and I believe this also applies to the leopard men. As a consequence of postcolonial critiques of museum collections and under the influence of theories of the ‘social life of things’ (Appadurai, 1986) attention necessarily shifted towards the study of the social networks in which objects were attributed value and meaning in intra- and intercultural “exchanges” as constitutive of (colonial) power relations. However, in the reconstruction of the biographies of objects in scholarly work and in museum contexts, priority shifted, perhaps too one-sidedly, to the intentionality of the people and institutions appropriating and re-contextualising the objects, at the expense of the particular instrumentality of the objects themselves.

Paradoxically, the insight that objects are potential power instruments in the hands of people, may have contributed to them becoming a blind spot in research as they were regarded as biased sources. This paradox is connected to western traditions in thinking about objects: while people are used to thinking of things as inert and mute, they do exert a certain influence on us, but people fail to acknowledge this. This is, I suspect, one of the main reasons why the leopard man display, among others in the museum, may have become the subject of postcolonial critique, but not of serious study. In the end, the ethnographic objects are still proof of the leopard men’s existence and of the colonial knowledge they objectify. To debunk this way of thinking, I have tried to confront the objects in this study as sources of knowledge in the widest sense, building on theoretical premises bringing to the fore the

agency of objects. Capturing the complexity of the social reality necessarily entails moving away from the textual and inter-textual, considering social interactions and generation of knowledge in terms of people's bodily and sensory relationships with the material world. In these relationships too, people's experiences are enabled and constrained by a particular cultural logic. A more active model of the object biography will be adopted here, taking into account the way objects influence people, particularly in relation to the museum as an authoritative institution where colonial mythologisation of history occurs in relation to objects.

Considering more closely the relationship between people and objects, the object's "agency" is situated in the fact that it can move people to think and act in particular ways (Gell, 1998; Hoskins, 2006: 75-77). This entails the methodological consideration of objects as person-like, rooted in the fact that people interact with them in emotional and physical ways, sometimes reminiscent of relationships with people. It also means that I do not consider meaning as something which "hovers over" the object, standing loose from the object as a material entity (Henare et al., 2007: 18-21; Gell, 1998: 18-20). The concept of "objectification" is a means of overcoming this duality. Objectification entails that objects do not simply mirror pre-existing social distinctions, ideologies and values. They rather are the medium through which generation of (colonial) knowledge occurs in a dialectical process between people and objects. Objectification occurs in the visitor's interaction with the objects, who recognises and sees values, ideas and social distinctions reconfirmed in the material form of the objects, or challenges and transforms them through this process. The concept of "objectification" is an aspect of Bourdieu's theory of practice, of people's bodily and sensory engagement with the material world, and ties in with processes of structuration in human experiences of social reality (Miller, 2005: 7-10). This process of objectification is particularly meaningful when considering theoretically processes of mythologisation of history in the context of the scientific study of objects and in the context of visitor experience, both core activities in the museum environment.

As Thomas (1991: 175-6) wrote in his book *Entangled Objects*, objects are 'the stuff of myths'. Our fantasies find confirmation in objects, or in other words objects are 'objectified fantasy'. Their materiality seems to make the stories about them appear more true. Thomas indeed refers here to the dialectical process of "objectification". The engagement of people with the objects entails speculating about their meaning and use, and making fantasies about it. The question as to how we can imagine the instrumentality of objects in this process more precisely, is perhaps best addressed by means of Gell's concept of enchantment, elucidating the agency of art in the generation and maintenance of particular experiences and understandings among people. The process of enchantment is based on a person's desire to decipher the object cognitively. "Captivation" occurs when the

beholder is struck by the cognitive indecipherability of the object he is engaging with. This creates a feeling of wonder and fascination. Gell (1998: 68-72, 97-101) stresses that this process is not only applicable to art but that it also characterises people's engagements with products of technological innovation, outcomes of scientific research, and sacred objects for example. What is particularly interesting about the concept of enchantment in this case, are the bodily and sensory aspects of people trying to decipher the objects. It enables us to consider the process of mythologisation in relation to objects, as distinct from but overlapping mythologisation in texts. As I will argue, the objects and display can actually help people to imagine in a bodily way the use of the objects, for example (Gell, 1998: 14-16; Taussig, 1993: 100).

Considering the objects as sources in the widest sense possible, implies considering how their material qualities objectify ideologies and also particularly how their biographies have marked their "bodies", their material form: have they actually been worn for killing; what traces of their history do they bear on them; are the claws potentially murder weapons, and; what do the written sources reveal about their use? To reconsider objects, not as dead matter, but as bodies bearing traces of life has been particularly meaningful in distinguishing myth from fact in the context of this study. Natural scientists helped to reveal data about the 'individual' history and use of the objects. I commissioned an analysis of the traces on the costumes, claws and sticks. The methodology of the trace analysis will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The museum is a place where relationships between people and objects are cultivated, entailing processes of enchantment situated in the institutionalised scholarly and visitor engagement with objects. If the museum is a government institution where colonial authoritative knowledge is created which is constitutive of power, then what is the nature of this knowledge and how does it relate to objects? The colonial museum has played an important intermediary and structuring role in the ways in which objects from the colony have been categorised in a 'regime of value' of colonialism. This cultural categorising of objects, linking them up with knowledge and emotions is constituted in customary rules and the willingness to exchange them within a particular cultural setting or 'sphere of exchange' (Kopytoff, 1986: 64-68). This is related to the 'hierarchy of credibility' of testimony discussed above, especially in the case of ethnographic objects studied here which provide material proof of a phenomenon in the colony. The value and credibility of ethnographic objects as proof is situated in their appreciation as authentic objects, providing an undeniable link with the reality of the colony.

The reverence of 'authenticity' in science, philosophy and arts in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century culture has been defined by several authors as the result of an existential crisis caused by the secularisation of society in Enlightenment (Gell, 1998: 97;

Jenkins, 2000). The secular existential rooting of one's culture, not in a religion, but in an evolutionist perspective of natural history is a typical phenomenon for 19<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment. It is an example of how a new tradition is invented in times of fundamental change. The invention of "authentic" pasts from which modern societies have evolved and estranged is an ideal example of the mythologisation of history incorporating both a nostalgic yearning for a past that is forever lost and the celebration of progress as two sides of a coin. National museums were among the most important places where newly invented historical foundations were created, displayed and consumed. In this context objects became metaphors for their makers, not only as technical, but also as intellectual and moral touchstones to their advancement, embodying authentic pasts (Foucault, 1991; Pels, 1997: 166; Fabian, 1983; De Boeck, 1996b: 139-140, 144; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991).

Two core activities related to objects with regard to the yearning for authenticity in the context of museums (and beyond) are collecting objects and creating knowledge about them. Yearning for authenticity has expressed itself collectively and individually in the collection of historical objects, heirlooms or antiques, exclusive exotic objects, art works which have become tokens of taste and social distinction. Collecting objects allowed people to appropriate authenticity as an extension of the self, "*incorporating that magical proof of existence*" as Handler (1986: 2-4) put it. These objects have become de-commoditised and "singularised" in private collections or museum institutions as a consequence of yearning. The capability to "singularise" objects or classes of objects in this way is an important means for asserting power symbolically and ties in with knowledge as a source of social distinction and power (Kopytoff, 1986: 73-77; 80-81). This recalls Appadurai's (1986: 44-48) broadened perception of authenticity in relation to knowledge. As in complex capitalist societies, ever more people could gain access to exclusive goods, the criteria for authenticity has shifted into the domain of expert knowledge. This entailed for example, the recognition of originality as opposed to forgery and having 'an eye' for aesthetic quality. Such expert knowledge contributed to culturally acknowledged mythologies about the authenticity of objects. As the political economy of taste entered the discussion of authenticity both the access to and the taste for authenticity came to be tokens of social distinction. This process has been institutionalised in museums as well, leading to a critique of museums as elite institutions since the 1970s. A theoretical bond between the processes of singularisation of objects on the one hand and enchantment on the other consists in the idea that the value of an object can not only be considered as a result of the object resisting our desire to possess it, in line with Appadurai (1986: 3), but can also be extended to the object resisting our desire to understand it (a prerequisite to their enchanting faculty).

I will further consider the dialectical relationship between visitors and objects during the museum visit in light of Bourdieu's theory of practice, as the performance of a public ritual of citizenship (Duncan, 1995). The process of enchantment will be regarded as an essential aspect of museum rituals, incorporating the invention of new scientific beliefs and related ritual complexes in the philosophy of Enlightenment.<sup>15</sup> Sharon MacDonald's (2005) concluding chapter in the volume *Science, Magic and Religion: The Ritual Processes of Museum Magic* (edited by Bouquet and Porto, 2005) explores the analogies between museums and religious sites for example. The 19<sup>th</sup> century public museum, where the unified and confident expression of national identity occurs, is compared to the established church. The core activities of these institutions are the creation of disciplinary expertise, a canonical knowledge or truth entwined with the magic of enchantment. In both kinds of place enchantment is "actively constituted by both producers and consumers through the repertoire of objects, images and places they have at their disposal." (Bouquet and Porto, 2006: 21). In line with Bourdieu's theory, participating in the public ritual entails coded behaviour adapted to the culturally constructed environment of the museum aimed at luring the visitor into a consensual understanding of the display, recognising the colonial social order presented in it as scientific truth. The museum setting and the display is regarded here as an "objectified social world" reproducing a social order making it appear inevitable and timeless, or a "doxa" (Bourdieu, 1977: 164; Saunders, 2005: 76-77; Miller, 2005: 7-10).

However, as Bouquet and Porto (2005: 22) assert, museum "magic" is not magical to everyone all of the time, nor completely predictable. People can engage in the public ritual or refrain from it. Considering the question as to how visitors have experienced the leopard man display during colonial times, is impossible to answer as it is hard to find data. Even though it is not the same kind of experience, I have paid attention to contemporary visitor experiences of the leopard men display, through informal conversations, to verify how people feel about this display revealing a diversity of visitor experiences. Indeed it has been a sign of the times that postcolonial critiques were expressed regarding this display and that doubts arose with regard to its truthfulness. But all things considered, many regular visitors are still enchanted by it and the museum personnel responsible for the permanent display still have regard for the attraction the display offers to the public.

In order to promote a more complex understanding of visitor experiences, Bouquet and Porto (2005: 18, 21-22) refer to Turner's model of the liminoid. This theoretical model can account for the coming into being of consensual understanding of the display in the public ritual, and also for its rejection by the visitor. Turner's

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<sup>15</sup> F. ex. Taussig (1993), Gell (1998), Latour (1993) and MacDonald (2005) revealed that the disenchanting, bureaucratic and mechanically repetitive practices of science and technology bear in them a significant resemblance to ritual practices.

concept of the liminoid, derived from liminality in rites of passage, captures a state of mind acquired by participants in leisure activities, such as going to the theatre or watching a football game. A feeling of “communitas” may spontaneously develop among participants in the flow of participation in the activity. Turner’s understanding of the liminoid highlights individual experience rather than collective regeneration of social structure (Jules-Rosette, 1994; Turner, 1974). Visitor reception is regarded to be diverse and not only confirming, but also contesting the museum and the ideological principles on which it stands. Postcolonial critiques of leopard men can be regarded as an example of the latter, though outside the colonial time-frame. In the flow of the activity people can identify completely with the story-line or game, and “suspension of disbelief” occurs as Turner characterises it (Bouquet and Porto, 2005: 18-22; Duncan, 1991; Turner, 1979). In the course of this work, I will particularly use this concept of suspension of disbelief in relation to Gell’s understanding of enchantment for highlighting sensory and bodily experiences in the public ritual of the museum visit. It illustrates how a visitor or spectator engages with a display, game or performance to such an extent that he can imagine himself participating in it, or a moment of suspension of disbelief. This will be helpful in exploring the specific instrumentality of enchantment in the public ritual of the museum visit, and how this relates to, but distinguishes itself from, the mythologisation in textual accounts.

#### **4. Outline of the thesis**

The first three chapters relate to the first research question, granting importance to the reconstruction of the conflicts in their social and cultural context. They focus on who the leopard men were and what role they assumed in society. Chapter 1 explores the rootedness of leopard men conflicts in the cultural history of the region. It explores the existing hypotheses on the origin of leopard men, its institutional affiliations in the cultural history of the region, and its way of spreading among population groups as an aspect of cultural borrowing. Chapter 2 provides an outline of the historical context of the region and highlights the main developments in relation to leopard men history, such as the way the administration dealt with leopard men. This chapter particularly sheds light on the living conditions of populations under foreign occupation by the Zanzibari slave traders, and the Belgian colonisation which provided a breeding ground for conflicts. Chapter 3 focuses on a number of clustered conflicts describing the particularities of, and most importantly, the reasons for conflicts. In the reconstruction of these conflicts special attention is paid to the relationships between the colonial administration and local chiefs.

Chapter 4 analyses in depth the theme of representation. It addresses the last two research questions on how a mythology of leopard men came into being and what the role of objects and museum display was in this process. The colonial representation is regarded as a process in which the textual and material

are entangled. Firstly I will demonstrate how the inception of the display in the museum was a crucial step towards the canonisation of leopard men violence as a key narrative of the colonial discourse. I will then demonstrate the effect of the objects and the iconography deriving from the archetype, i.e. Wissaert's sculpture, in the structuring of textual accounts. In this chapter the veracity of the colonial representation is also assessed, based on the analysis of traces on the museum objects in conjunction with particular data of attacks which has been retrieved from historical sources. Finally, the human-object relationship is especially regarded as constitutive of the process of mythologisation in which the cognitive deciphering of objects also involves that people see their fantasies "objectified" in them. This process is further considered as institutionalised by the museum where visitors ideally engage in a ritual of citizenship in which consensual understanding of the colonial ideological formations are regenerated. An epilogue follows exploring potential new roles for the leopard man display following the RMCA renovation project.

## Chapter 1. *Anioto* and *vihokohoko*: the roots of leopard men in pre-colonial history

In this chapter I will introduce two adjacent regional varieties of leopard men killings in the Ituri forest zone, *anioto* and *vihokohoko*. Data on these varieties suggest they are related culturally and historically. The origin and development of these leopard men associations will be considered in the wider scope of the cultural history of this region, as part of the development of cultural institutions in the pre-colonial era and stretching into the colonial period. In the following chapters the leopard men conflicts are discussed further in view of the interactions between different social groups under foreign occupation by both the Zanzibari slave trade and Belgian colonialism. Leopard men killings in the north-east of Congo occurred between approximately 1880 and 1941. The Bali and the related Ndaka populations in the forest of the Ituri basin were particularly known for their leopard men activities. Their regional variety is generally known as *anioto*, but the name *botobamu* also occurred.<sup>16</sup> It spread presumably from the Ndaka subgroup Mbo to the region of Beni where leopard men murders were practiced by Bapakombe populations living at the south-eastern limit of the Ituri forest, and by their Nande neighbours. In the Beni region the local variety of leopard men was known as *vihokohoko*.

In order to build up the argument, I have subdivided this chapter into four parts. In the first section, I will introduce the principal populations involved in this study in the wider scope of the cultural history of the region, during which cultural and political institutions developed. The three later sections correspond to three phases in the cultural history of the region during which leopard men activity emerged and was spread. First, I assess the existing hypotheses linking the origin of leopard men to a particular phase in the Bali migration history when the Bali and their neighbours migrated from the Nepoko river to a place called Mbari, in the surroundings of Bomili, before they spread southward into the Ituri forest. The hypotheses are assessed in light of the ethno-history of the Bali and their relatives along with other data derived from, for example, material culture study. Secondly, I discuss the dispersal of *anioto* among different Bali groups after they settled in the Ituri forest, via family relations and institutional alliances. I explore the data on the transmission of *anioto* in light of ethno-historical and ethnographic information on the institutions with which *anioto* was linked: *ambodima*, a dance cult, and *mambela*, the boys' initiation. The third section concerns the spread of leopard men activities via the Ndaka and Mbo to the south-eastern neighbours, the Bapakombe and Nande, in the direction of Beni where the phenomenon of leopard men was known under the regional term *vihokohoko* and linked to the boys' initiation *lusumba*.

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<sup>16</sup> See report by de Leest in RMCA AIMO Brandt, de Leest (1933); Joset (1955: 13).

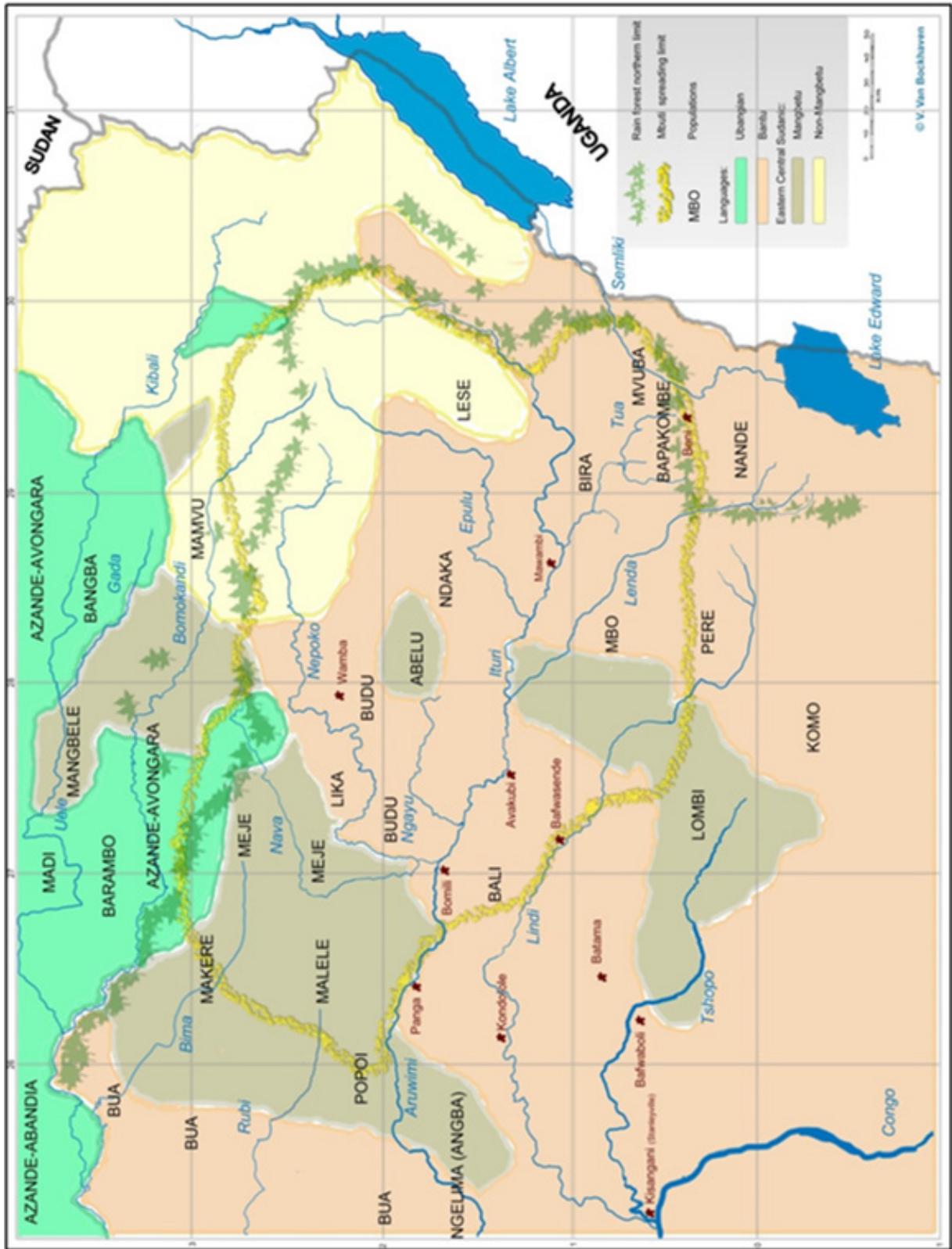
## **1.1. Populations practicing *anioto* and *vihokohoko* and their cultural history**

The region focused on is the Ituri rainforest zone inhabited by the Bali, Ndaka and Budu, and the southeastern fringe of the forest, in the surroundings of Beni. This region is situated between two large-scale cultural complexes which have profoundly influenced the history of this part of east-central Africa (Map 1). The first is the cultural complex identified by Vansina (1990a, 1990b) and McMaster (1988) as the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko area from which the Azande and Mangbetu kingdoms came forth, and also from which large parts of the Ituri forest were populated. The pre-colonial history of this region bears the seeds of the cultural contexts and institutions from which leopard men activities emerged. The second cultural complex encompasses the Semliki valley and the adjacent foothills of the western Mitumba and eastern Ruwenzori enveloping the valley to which different Nande populations migrated from the eastern Great Lakes area. While I will touch upon the cultural developments specific to these two cultural complexes, it is actually the populations that were caught in the vast forest region in between them which are at the heart of this study: the Bali, Ndaka, Budu and Mbo on the one hand and the Bapakombe on the other.

### **1.1.1. Populations from the northern complex: Bali, Ndaka and Budu**

The northern complex, located around the middle of the Bomokandi and Nepoko rivers, has received significant attention in scholarly literature as it was the heartland from which the Mangbetu and Azande kingdoms developed. Since the end of the 19th century an idealised image of the Mangbetu penetrated western accounts, which was of continuing influence in colonial times. In colonial ethnographies the Mangbetu were admired for their elaborate court culture and sophisticated arts and body decorations. They were compared predominantly to the rival Azande kingdoms, but also to their 'less civilised' southern neighbours in the Ituri forest whom they influenced culturally (Schildkrout and Keim, 1990: 29-45). Through scientific research, the larger-scale political units, high population numbers and cultural diversity characterising the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko, identified this region as one of the major hubs for migration and institutional innovations, determining the pre-colonial history of the whole north-east of Congo. From this region, most of the populations discussed in this study emerged.

According to Vansina (1990a: 167-177; 1990b: 69-87) populations from three major African language groups arrived in the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko region between 500BC and 0: Bantu, Central Sudanic and Ubangi speakers. These were farming groups practicing slash-and-burn cultivation, which the Ubangi- and Bantu-speakers combined with hunting and trapping respectively. Between 0 and



Map 1: Populations of the northern Bomokandi-Nepoko area, the Ituri forest and the southern complex of Nande chiefdom.



500 AD interactions between the different language groups led to intensive cultural borrowing among these different groups who were adapting to diverse ecological niches at the northern edge of the rain forest, combining hunting and farming. In the meantime the introduction of iron technology and banana cultivation had caused population growth. Well before 1000 AD a new tradition had been formed in the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko area, forging together the traditions of these diverse populations. One of the key factors in this process is the group of Buan Bantu, from which the Bali and some of their neighbours derived .

Vansina's perspective on the cultural history of the region is based on a wide range of linguistic and ethnographic studies.<sup>17</sup> Moeller (1936a) provides a colonial ethnographic perspective on Bantu migrations in this region, which has its limitations because it is inspired mostly by the practice of colonial territorial administration.<sup>18</sup> Bouccin (1935, 1936a-d) and McMaster (1988) were the two most important authors to reconstruct the shared migration history of the core Bantu population group from which the Bali emerged, named Buan Bantu after the core population Bua from which they split. In the absence of systematic archaeology, McMaster's (1988) reconstruction of the settlement of north-eastern Congo is predominantly based on comparative linguistics. There are major differences between McMaster's and Bouccin's reconstructions of Buan Bantu dispersal. Bouccin's comparative study of oral traditions of several populations reveal parallel experiences of history by different Buan Bantu groups, whereas McMaster stresses the splitting of language groups, based on glottochronology, which is a very tentative and unreliable way of dating. While McMaster's work is based on a very intricate methodology, considering a wide range of data, her way of dating events during migration is often very divergent from Bouccin's reconstruction based on oral tradition.<sup>19</sup> Bouccin's

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<sup>17</sup>Other studies Vansina uses are for example de Calonne-Beaufaict (1909; 1921), McMaster (1988), Bouccin (1935; 1936a), Moeller (1936a), Biebuyck's (1973; 1974) and de Mahieu's (1980; 1985) studies of the Nyanga and Komo respectively.

<sup>18</sup>See Turner (2007: 64) who compares Moeller's (1936a) work on the Bantu migrations in this region with similar overviews of Verhulpen on Luba and Vanderkerken on Mongo making reconstructions of the migration history of people inhabiting very large regions. These are informed by questionnaires filled out by Territorial Administrators and missionaries on a large scale for creating circumscriptions based on ethnic affiliation. The work of Van der Kerken on the Mongo for example has been criticised by the missionary and linguist Hulstaert (1972: 33-35, 37) for being based on preconceived opinions related to colonial politics. Van der Kerken assumes relationships between groups on the basis of genealogies. Hulstaert objects that in certain cases the information gathered was not reliable and that Van der Kerken ignores linguistic and cultural facts which contradict the assumed common ascendance proclaimed in oral traditions.

<sup>19</sup>For critical evaluations of glottochronology in the reconstruction of history, see for example Bergsland and Vogt (1962) and Nurse (1997) and Ehret (2000) specifically for Africa.

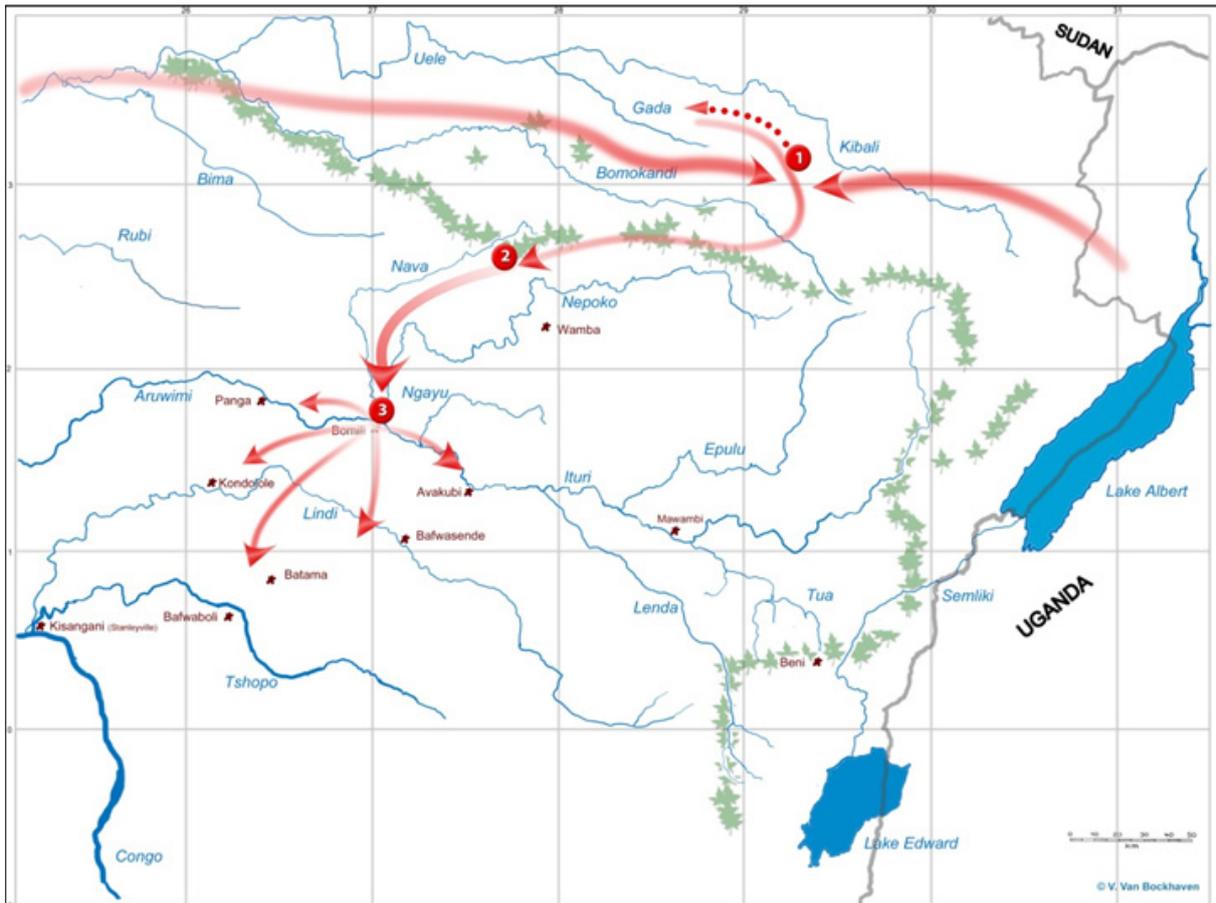
reconstruction suggests that several Buan groups migrated together longer, or at least remained together more closely than the reconstruction of McMaster would lead us to believe. As explained in the introduction, even though Bouccin's work is also a product of colonial administration, as opposed to other reports from his peers, it is very much focussed on discovering the network and spread of *anioto*. He uses events re-collected by several of the population groups studied as key indicators of common migration and dispersal<sup>20</sup>. In this study I have relied predominantly on Vansina's reconstruction of the migrations from the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko area, considering it in conjunction with Bouccin's reconstruction of the Bali migration, rather than McMaster's.

The Buan Bantu group moved into the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko from west to east, generally following the edge of the rain forest, their movement intersecting with other larger Central Sudanic and Ubangian migration waves. After 1000 AD the region became a pole of attraction and there was a steady influx of immigrants, mainly from the east, causing the Buan speakers living in the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko to drift away. Among these were the Budu, a group of Bantu coming from the east, who appeared at the Upper-Nepoko around 1600, and were followed by the Mangbetu. Due to the arrival of new immigrants, Buan branches split off, migrated further and diversified (Bouccin, 1935: 587; Moeller, 1936a: 262-264).

According to Bouccin (1936b: 185-9), the Budu and some of the Buan Bantu, namely the Mangbele, Lika and Bali, recalled separation from the Buan Bantu core group, before they were residing together with the Budu between the Gada and Kibali rivers (Map 2). Subsequently Ubangi-speaking Bangba and Azande invaded the region chasing Buan and Budu groups. The Bali, Lika, Mangbele and Budu withdrew from the Upper-Nepoko to the middle Nepoko river due to these invasions. Based on de Calonne-Beaufaict's (1909) dating of the Azande invasion, Bouccin placed these events in the beginning of the 18th century. According to Vansina (1990a: 174-175) the withdrawal of the Budu from the Upper- to the middle Nepoko occurred earlier, during the 17th century. In their new settlement at the middle Nepoko (in the area of Bafwabaka and Bakoda) the Bali and Budu further lived in relative peace with their Mangbetu-speaking neighbours the Meje and Malele. It seems their ties with the other Buan, Lika and Mangbele, had loosened at that point (Bouccin, 1936b). In this area of settlement, interactions between the Budu, Bali and

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<sup>20</sup> According to Bouccin (1935: 689-690) the hypothesis that Bali, Lika, Mangbele formed a group which migrated together is supported by the fact that, besides their Bua origin, they mention the same subsequent events in their oral tradition: first their meeting with the Budu, and then their hostile encounter with the Bangba and Azande. The Budu recalled these same events in their traditions. Bouccin asserts that the recollections among these populations of the Bangba and Azande are so colourful in the oral traditions that this provides a key event in the reconstruction of the migration history.



**Map 2: Scheme of migrations of Buan Bantu/Bali and Budu based on Bouccin (1936: 186-190).**

1) Buan Bantu (Bua, Bali, Lika, Mangbele) originally came from the west. They separated from the Bua, and met the Budu, coming from the east, at the Kibali river. They presumably resided between the Gada and Kibali rivers together, until they were chased by the Bangba and Azande .

2) Several Buan Bantu groups sought refuge at the Nepoko river together with the Budu. They resided in this mountainous region, rich of iron ore, with Mangbetu-speaking neighbours. At first they live in peace with the latter, and are influenced by them, until they get into a conflict, probably due to Mangbetu expansion.

3) The Bali settle at the Mbari mountains, with the Ndaka and Mbo, who had been separated from the Budu. From there they dispersed into the Ituri forest.



Meje gave rise to institutional innovations, which will strongly determine the later socio-political organisation of the Bali (Vansina, 1990a: 167-177; 1990b: 69-87).

According to Vansina (1990b: 76) prior to their arrival in the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko area the Buan Bantu and the Budu had been characterised by three levels of social organisation: firstly, the extended household which Vansina calls the “House”, including dependent lineages and other attached dependents, secondly the village, and thirdly the district. They had a distinct ideology of leadership at the village level, connected to an ideology of fortune brought about by witchcraft on the part of the leader, to ancestral hero cults, and to belief in nature spirits. In this chapter, we will come across different kinds of such leaders, whose moral authority is based on ancestry. Furthermore, the Buan Bantu already possessed complex collective initiation rites with circumcision for the boys of a village or district, which developed further in scale as a consequence of political competition, such as the *mambela* initiation among the Bali.

Vansina (1990a: 174-175) asserts that the socio-political pressure from neighbours in the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko area forced populations to adapt to the competitive environment or disappear, causing a sequence of innovations in socio-political organisations in the whole region from 1600 to 1800. In the 17th century, the Budu first became political innovators in their new area of settlement at the middle Nepoko, where their most important neighbours were the Meje and Bali. The Budu “Houses” were rather weak, but they had maintained their Bantu village and district level institutions throughout their migrations. The cohesion among their districts had been reinforced by the *emba* institution. This was based on the principle of legitimate patrilineal succession, which led to the formation of strong segmentary patrilineages. The title of *emba* was supported by a set of sacred charms, emblems and rituals, which were kept by a titled functionary. By the 1700s the Bali and Budu had adopted the title of the war leader *gama* from the east. The term *gama* was ultimately derived from *mukama*, the title of kings from the northern Great Lakes area. The *gama* was the temporary title of a war leader who was appointed to lead the warriors in a particular conflict. The title seems to have gone out of use during the colonial era.<sup>21</sup> Among the Budu, the connection of the *emba* institution with the title of the war chief *gama* enabled a better organisation of warfare. The Budu were able to mobilise larger numbers of warriors, who used poisoned arrows.

To keep up with the Budu neighbours, the Bali developed the *mambela* initiation complex, with influences from southern and eastern Bantu neighbours. In competition with the Budu, the Bali enhanced social cohesion by exceeding the

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<sup>21</sup> Among the Bali the war chief *gama* was elected by a council of notables among the most valuable men, or the title passed from father to son (Vansina, 1990b: 81; Moeller, 1936a: 544). Probably this title lost importance in the colonial era due to the colonial “pacification”. It is rarely mentioned in colonial ethnographic reports.

district level in the organisation of the *mambela* initiation. Vansina (1990a: 186-191) identifies the *mambela* style of initiation with a larger complex of what he calls “brotherhoods”, which characterise the socio-political organisation especially of Buan Bantu populations in northern Maniema and stretching northward into the Ituri forest. The brotherhoods, developing out of the initiatory societies, consisted of the members, the initiates and the initiators or leaders of the initiation. The brotherhoods are different from any kind of central government, as occurred in the emergent chiefdoms of the neighbouring Mangbetu for example. It rather created wider social networks of collaboration at the level of the district where communities did not exceed the level of the House.

Towards the end of the 18th century, southern Mangbetu-speakers such as the Meje had developed chiefdoms which were superior in military strength to the social organisation of the Budu based on the ‘House’. The Budu and Bali came under pressure from these developing chiefdoms. The growing population density in the area gave rise to conflicts (Vansina, 1990a:175). According to Bouccin (1936b: 185-9), the Bali fled from the middle Nepoko due to a sudden war with the Mangbetu-speaking groups. They sought refuge at Mbari, at the confluence of the Nepoko and the Aruwimi, where they re-grouped after their sudden dispersal (Map 2).<sup>22</sup> This is an important place in their cultural history. From Mbari, the Bali migrated in different directions into the Ituri forest.<sup>23</sup> In this migration the Ndaka and Mbo probably separated from the Budu, to whom they felt most closely related. Bali, on the other hand, believed that Ndaka and Mbo (whom they believe to be Ndaka as well) are Bali who adopted the Budu language along with the *emba* institution.

From Mbari, different Bali clans diverted into the rainforest, where Mangbetu-speaking Popoi, Lombi and Abelu, settled in enclaves among them. The Ndaka and the Mbo, who split off from the core group of the Budu during migrations into the Ituri forest, are their most important non-Buan Bantu neighbours, who also practised leopard men killing. Buan Bantu neighbours to the north are the Lika, Ngelima and Mangbele, who have been influenced by Mangbetu-speakers, and to the south-east the Komo and Bira. The latter represent the southeastern limit of the Buan Bantu dispersal into the Ituri forest, reaching the surroundings of Beni and the northern limits of the Nande and related groups (McMaster, 1988). Another important population group inhabiting the Ituri forest are the Mbuti Pygmies, who were living there prior to the migration of Buan Bantu and other groups into the Ituri

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<sup>22</sup>The same line of migrations is also outlined very generally by Father Kawaters (1931: 454-5). A significant difference however is that he mentions the name Zamoia for the place called Mbari by Bouccin.

<sup>23</sup>Moeller (1936a: 264) gives a more detailed overview which is probably determined by his views on the territorial administration. He adds as a comment that these divisions will be reassessed as a function of the creation of a unified territory.

forest. These hunter-gatherer societies lived predominantly with the eastern Bali and the Ndaka and Mbo, stretching until Beni.<sup>24</sup>

### **1.1.2. Populations of the southern complex: Nande, Bapakombe and their neighbours**

Nande have historical and cultural affiliations with the Interlacustrine kingdoms of eastern Africa. They originated from the kingdom of Bunyoro in present-day Uganda (see Map 4). Their eastern Bantu leadership traditions rely on different principles to those of western Bantu populations such as the Buan Bantu. Among Nande agriculturalists, leadership is based on ritual authority centred around the fertility of the land, in which rainmaking and averting famines and plagues play an important role. Of several ritual titles *mwami* was generally important in a larger-scale, more centralised coordination of rituals for the fertility of the land. In order to obtain authority leaders must gain the support of several influential population groups and their leaders who possess ritual specialties. This happens through marriage for example. Obtaining leadership is thus also a matter of obtaining support and negotiation with different groups in control of a particular ritual title or authority.<sup>25</sup>

Nande political units consisted of splintered Nande clan groups which depended on each other and of which one group had been able to expand its authority over others. In their stratified organisation, they generally imposed themselves as

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<sup>24</sup>The Mbuti lived mostly to the north-east of the line Panga, Bafwasende, Beni and were subdivided into different groups, speaking different languages. During the first decades of colonisation ethnographic studies in the region studied were predominantly a German-centered undertaking, with a dominant interest in physical anthropology focussing on the Mbuti. This was initiated by Czekanowski but led to prolific studies by the missionary ethnologist Paul Schebesta in the late 1920s. Schebesta (1934) focussed almost entirely on the Mbuti and, to a lesser extent, on the Ndaka and Bira with whom they inhabited the Ituri forest. Colin Turnbull (1965) conducted fieldwork in the Ituri forest on Mbuti Pygmy populations from the 1950s onwards. While Turnbull focussed primarily on Mbuti, and only treated their Bantu neighbours as a function of a Mbuti ethnography, he enabled the posthumous publication of his ex-partner Joseph Towles's (1993) work on the Mbo. Administrative reports from the colonial administration largely ignored the Mbuti populations, considering them subject to the Bantu and Sudanic populations in the area which were more in the centre of their focus. In three surveys of populations in the Ituri region, Van Geluwe (1956, 1957, 1960) made a compilation of sources on the latter. In more recent times, DNA research has been carried out among Mbuti which has been used for the reconstruction of human evolution (Zhivotovsky, Rosenberg and Feldman, 2003).

<sup>25</sup>See Packard (1976; 1981) for the Bashu chiefdom and Bergmans (1974; 1970) for the Bashu and Baswaga chiefdoms. Packard particularly studied the political competition in the Bashu chiefdom in which priests with ritual power over the land were very important.

an aristocracy over communities already residing in the region, and established client relations with them. Several political units of Nande obtained hegemonic positions in the region of the Semliki valley and were able to develop this further by establishing alliances with Zanzibari slave traders and throughout the colonial era. Two such hegemonic Nande political units playing a role in the history of Beni are: the kingdom of the Bashu, one of the major Nande clans; the leadership of the post of Beni itself which was in the hands of a Nande family from a larger kingdom of the Baswaga clan to the south. To its north-west this complex of Nande units is bordered by an amalgamation of forest populations such as the Bira, Komo, Pere and Bapakombe. As indicated earlier the Bira and Komo represent the southeastern limit of Buan Bantu expansion. Leopard men killings predominantly occurred amongst the Bapakombe, but several Nande actors were also involved. Two centres of activity were Malio, a northern region of the Bashu kingdom, and Madiwe, the forest region to the north-west of Beni inhabited by Bapakombe clans (see Map 11).

Whereas the larger Nande realms have been fairly extensively studied, ethnographic data and information on Bapakombe is rare. Under the Zanzibari slave trade and the colonial administration some Nande chiefs had succeeded in maintaining or extending their influence. As a consequence, in colonial times the ethnonym of Nande was for example also attributed by the administration to some of those populations inhabiting the edge of the forest, which did not originally identify with Nande. This fact also played a role in the leopard men hostilities.<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to note that colonial administrators predominantly identified the Bapakombe as Nande who had mixed with the forest populations, whereas non-colonial researchers saw them as distinct forest populations who had undergone some Nande influence. The German ethnographers Schebesta (1934: 129) and Czekanowski (1924: 328, 331) see them for example as a subgroup of the Bira of the forest as opposed to the Bira of the plains living further north-east. According to Packard (1976: 85) they were part of the “Basumba” Bantu forest populations, consisting of Bapakombe, Pere, Bira and Mbuti, living in the region prior to the arrival of the Nande and pushed to the west by them. Their language kipakombe is recognised as a specific dialect most related to kibira and kipere, the languages of the Bira and Pere. To ascribe a Nande origin to them was probably instrumental for colonial administrators to integrate Bapakombe in administrative units with Nande populations. In line with his peers the colonial administrator Joset calls them the

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<sup>26</sup>This was also stated by political scientist Arsène Mwaka Bwenge in interviews in February 2012 and February 2013. Mwaka Bwenge (2010: 313-318) analyses the history of *vihokohoko* at Beni in his doctoral thesis on the history of rebellions in North-Kivu, based on interviews in the 1990s with local informants and research in colonial archives at Beni.

Nande of the forest as opposed to the Nande of the plains.<sup>27</sup> He believes the name Bapakombe is not the name of a “tribe” but the result of friendly and matrimonial connections between the vanguards of Nande migrations and the Mbuti Pygmies. This actually implied that Bapakombe could not be recognised as a separate administrative unit. Joset further asserts that these clans coming from the Nande vanguards were already settling down, organising themselves in small family villages in the forest surrounding the post of Beni, when the larger Nande migration wave entered the region. In the beginning they took wives among the first occupants of the land, the Mbuti Pygmies. Secondary alliances were established with the Pere (neighbours of the Bira and Komo). Joset believes they lost their original language kinande, due to mixing with the Mbuti and Pere. Contrary to what the colonial administration pointed out, Bapakombe indeed seems to be a forest population, culturally more reminiscent of their Bira and Komo neighbours. Nande elements in their culture may be due to cohabitation and intermarriage with Nande which is accounted for in their oral traditions.<sup>28</sup>

### **1.1.3. The occurrence of leopard men among Bali, Ndaka, Bapakombe and Nande**

Before I start with the reconstruction of the history in the following two chapters, it is important to assess the institutional embeddedness of leopard men in the cultural history of which they are a part. The history of leopard men has to be read in the first place against the background of the history of migration and competition for control

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<sup>27</sup>Joset (1955: 28-31) summarises the information assembled on Bapakombe by colonial administrators. Joset claims that until 1933-1934 Bapakombe had remained largely unknown to the colonial administration and were first mentioned by the District Commissioner Absil in a territorial report (RMCA AIMO Absil (1934: 1-2)). See also RMCA AIMO (Joset, 1939: 123-124). The existing linguistic data and the genealogical traditions noted by Joset in the latter unpublished survey of the history of the Beni region are rare historical testimonies of this people (see Appendix 1). Absil (in his report of 1934) and Joset (1955: 28-30) subscribe to Hackars’ hypothesis that Bapakombe came from the spearhead of Nande migrants who moved into the forest to the west of Beni to remain independent from other Nande groups trying to subjugate them. They arrived there prior to, or after the Mbuti Pygmies according to these authors. Absil and Joset mention several clans, each one playing an important role in the leopard men wars: Batangi Bapakombe, Baswaga Bapakombe, Babira Bapakombe and Bashu Bapakombe. A common element in their traditions of origin as noted by Joset is the alliance or intermarriage with the Pygmy population of the region they settled in. According to Hackars the different Bapakombe clans do not make up a “real” population group considering the traditions of origin of each family: their villages are made up of individuals with no link, no tradition.

<sup>28</sup>Also in their clan names (cf. previous note) the Bapakombe’s relation with Nande clans is suggested, except for the Babira Bapakombe whose name suggests a connection to the Bira.

over territory and resources in which new social and political institutions developed.

Like the Mangbetu and Azande, the Nande who migrated from the Interlacustrine region equally absorbed, and culturally influenced, many of the populations they encountered in their new area of settlement. They succeeded in establishing rather large political units, but these were unstable and potentially threatened both by outsiders and by internal conflicts. As I explained, the populations caught between the northern and southern complex of either Mangbetu or Nande kingdoms, had a very different kind of political organisation, namely “brotherhoods” based on collective boys’ initiation. Presumably, the brotherhoods mostly created social cohesion and collaboration among the Buan Bantu clan clusters, who were dispersed in migration (Vansina, 1990a: 186-191). It appears from the sources that leopard men activities were strongly linked to the brotherhoods. Leopard men attacks could be interpreted, to a certain extent, to be one of the ways to respond to the threat of subjugation or exploitation by more efficiently organised rivals, such as those with a more centralised political organisation and hence a larger potential for mobilising an army. But leopard men attacks also served to counter threats from within. In the second half of the 19th century, the whole region, both the northern complex at the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko, and the southern complex at the Semliki, was invaded by Swahili-speaking slave and ivory traders, and by the end of the century they were followed by European colonisers. These foreign occupations disturbed processes of interaction between local population groups providing further causes of action for leopard men.

As explained in the introduction, one of the premises I start with from for the reconstruction of the history is the fact that local chiefly authorities relied on leopard men killings predominantly to maintain themselves under foreign occupation, and try to safeguard their claims over land, resources and people. The leopard symbolism is significant in this. While there are few specific ethnographic data on how the relation between chiefs, leopard men and leopards should have been envisaged in the 1930s, there are abundant examples of the cultural importance of power symbolism and related sacred potency with respect to the leopard in the region studied, which help to justify the way I have approached leopard men here. Vansina (1990a: 104-105) stated that among the rainforest populations the leopard was without exception the major emblem of political power at all times. The spoils of the leopard played an important role as tributes indicating hierarchies among chiefs. This is related to its predominance in chiefly dress as a visual expression of authority. Leopard symbolism was a feature of different kinds of chiefly titles as regalia and portraits of chiefs confirm (Illustration 6; Illustration 7). Among Bali and Budu in general, leopard hide hats decorated with feathers, as well as plaited Mangbetu-style hats, were worn as a token of distinction by chiefs. Leopard and okapi hides were worn at the belt. Leopard teeth were worn around the neck. In particular the leopard also referred to the supernatural powers of the chief who, like the leopard, could



**Illustration 6: Bali *chef médaillé* with his children wearing the insignia of leopard hide and teeth.**

**Author and date unknown.  
RMCA AP.0.2.1508**



**Illustration 7: Chief's hat *n'goy* made of leopard hide.**

**Lokele. Kivu, Upper Congo, DR Congo.  
Collected by A. Hutereau, 1912-1913.  
Leopard hide with a bunch of red feathers as decoration.  
RMCA collection**





**Illustration 8: The leader of the initiation and his assistant among the Ndaka.**

**Photo by P. Schebesta, 1929-1930.**

**Bildarchiv Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 59968B**



potentially strike viciously in hidden ways to punish those neglecting his authority. The spots of the leopard refer to the ability of chiefs to communicate with the spirit world, but more generally in the body decoration of ritual specialists and cult objects, represent the in-betweenness of the worlds of spirits and humans, the living and the dead (Illustration 8). This is also relevant to the populations discussed in this research. More specifically, common beliefs in Central African cultures relate to the ability of powerful men to transform into leopards, call upon the power of the leopard or control leopards to attack people. It is perhaps also in this sense that we need to consider the leopard men more generally as being men under the control of authoritative chiefs. In their initiation they may have obtained a similar sort of power to that associated with the leopard, which they could call upon during their killings sprees. In this chapter, I will explore leopard men as instruments in the hands of chiefs, in light of their institutional embeddedness in the cultural history of the region.

## **1.2. Roots of leopard men in pre-colonial cultural history**

While leopard men murders probably existed before, their occurrence in the Ituri region was certainly triggered by the political climate under the foreign occupations by Zanzibari slave and ivory raiders and Belgian colonizers.<sup>29</sup> So far it has remained largely unclear as to where the phenomenon had its roots. In the next section I will assess the existing hypotheses in light of the available ethno-historical data, in combination with material evidence.

### **1.2.1. Hypotheses on the origin of leopard men among the Bali**

Several hypotheses regarding the origin of leopard men killings are listed and evaluated by Bouccin (1936d: 252-253). Some of them may accord with the ethno-

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<sup>29</sup>So far there is no particular proof that leopard men existed in the Ituri region before the 1880s. In this region, oral traditions have referred to origins immediately prior to the slave trading era. This is suggested by Absil (RMCA AIMO Absil (1934)) and Joset (1955). For the Bali it is earliest mentioned in the period when Bali suffered from confrontations with Mangbetu (RMCA AIMO De Haen (1922)).

historical data on migrations.<sup>30</sup>

One hypothesis formulated by the Territorial Administrator De Haen, in his report of 1922, says that it dates from the war against Mangbetu-speaking populations Meje, Malele and Makere earlier in the migrations. Bouccin is sceptical about this because at the time of his research, no Bali remembered this way of fighting the Mangbetu.<sup>31</sup>

The second hypothesis Bouccin took from the missionary Kawaters (1931: 461-2). Based on oral traditions, the latter wrote that Bafwasea, a principal Bali clan which controlled the iron ore mines at Mbari, used *anioto* to maintain their hegemony and safeguard their access to the mines.<sup>32</sup> According to Kawaters, who resided among Bali for several years, many people told him that they left Mbari because of *anioto* or leopard attacks. The Bafwasea would still be the most renowned black-smiths in the larger region and they would still make up an important *anioto* centre in the early 1930s. They remained close to the Mbari mountain near Bomili, the point from where Bali dispersed to settle in the Ituri forest. Bouccin adds that all investigations led him to the Bafwasea as well, even though the Baenga, a Ndaka clan, equally controlled mines of iron ore and, according to public rumours, they were the main providers of *anioto* claws.<sup>33</sup> But the latter does not preclude the former, which brings us to the following narrative.

The last hypothesis mentioned by Bouccin is what he calls a “legend”. It does indeed seem to be a legend or a myth on the origin of *anioto*. The story was

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<sup>30</sup>Bouccin lists four hypotheses in total. One of them is sheer speculation linking the origin of leopard men to soldiers coming from the west coast together with the first Europeans. A variation on this is the hypothesis of the spreading of *anioto* by soldiers originally from Sierra Leone who served in the Force Publique of the Belgian Congo administering one of the Belgian posts in the beginning of the occupation. As Bouccin indicates this hypothesis is weak as some of the leopard men alliances predate the arrival of Zanzibari raiders who were the first foreign occupants in the region. It is obvious that it is inspired by earlier European sources reporting on the occurrence of leopard men in Sierra Leone since the 1870s. According to Lindskog (1954: 6) sources on leopard men of Sierra Leone were the eldest, appearing in the 1870s. Later sources on leopard men from eastern Congo were often influenced by these early sources from Sierra Leone for example.

<sup>31</sup>RMCA AIMO De Haen (1922). Bouccin (1936d: 252-253) found out in his research that Bali rarely kept a good recollection of this clash with Mangbetu speakers prior to their dispersal from Mbari. Bouccin finds it hard to believe that De Haen came across people who did keep a recollection of these events.

<sup>32</sup>Kawaters spices up the hypothesis by seeing the motif of the attacks in the Bafwasea’s presumed uncontrollable urge for human flesh. Leopard men attacks were an opportunity to gain human flesh. War among populations was eradicated and the access to the flesh of war victims was minimised as a consequence of Wangwana and European conquest.

<sup>33</sup>This was again confirmed by an informant in an interview in February 2012.

told to Bouccin by an elderly man at Bafwaboma, near Bomili. The events related would have occurred when the people of Bafwaboma were still with the Bafwasea at Mbari, that is, prior to their migration into the Ituri forest. The man telling the story claimed to be a relative of a principal *anioto* among the Bafwasea, namely Ibula, the father of Atuo, who was condemned at Wamba for *anioto* crimes. Ibula was said to be the main descendant of the first *anioto* of the Bafwasea in the story, which goes as follows. At Mbari an encounter took place between the Bafwasea of chief Awende and the Ndaka of chief Mondiko.

Mondiko requested from Awende that a young man be initiated in *mambela*, but instead Awende offered him a young girl. While staying at a dwelling at night she was threatened with rape by a man disguised as a leopard. The latter was killed. Her Ndaka fiancé then married her and promised her family that from now on leopard men would be at their disposal. This legend contains three significant elements. Firstly, it actually suggests that the Bali (clan Bafwasea) rather took *anioto* from the Ndaka, instead of the other way around, suggesting also a principal alliance between them at Mbari. As explained above, Bouccin's informants indeed also identified the Ndaka as another centre of dispersal of *anioto*. Secondly, the exchange of initiates and wives were common ways of establishing *anioto* alliances among the Bali. This will be discussed further later. Thirdly, an interesting point of comparison with the old man's story, is the fact that several Buan Bantu neighbours of the Bali, i.e., Bua and Mangbele were said to disguise themselves as leopards to visit their mistresses.

These hypotheses suggest that the origin of *anioto* lies in the communal history of the Bali and the Ndaka prior to their dispersal into the Ituri forest, at Mbari, or even earlier when they were living with Mangbetu-speakers at the Nepoko. Also a link with the *mambela* initiation is suggested, which is confirmed by later data. I will assess these hypotheses further in light of the Bali cultural history and the origin of institutions such as *mambela* during this history.

### **1.2.2. The birth of leopard men in the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko region.**

Bali informants of Bouccin pointed in several ways to the dispersal of the *anioto* phenomenon from the iron-rich mountains at Mbari. Bouccin is sceptical about the hypothesis that *anioto* were used earlier in history in wars against the Mangbetu-speaking Meje, Malele and Makere. However, the occurrence of hunting costumes, similar to those of the *anioto* of the Bali, among several of the populations with whom they migrated, the reported tradition of Mangbele and Bua men dressing up like leopards to visit their mistresses (Bouccin, 1936d: 253), and the legend mentioned by Bouccin which basically relates a similar phenomenon, suggest that the leopard men phenomenon at least had partial roots in the shared cultural history with other Buan Bantu prior to them being pushed to the south first by Azande- and then by Mangbetu-speakers.

In the RMCA, monkey hunting costumes, originally from populations from the north-east of the Congo, such as Bua, Binja, Bango and Azande-Abandia, were wrongly attributed to *anioto* (Illustration 9 ; Illustration 10 ; Illustration 11 ; Illustration 12). Hunting costumes dating from the 1970s, identical to the ones of leopard men and originally from the same region, from Ngelima, Bua, Lika, Mbole and Budja populations, are also in the collections of the Instituts des Musées Nationaux du Congo (IMNC) at Kinshasa.<sup>34</sup> It seems that this type of bark-cloth costume indeed found its origin in the more distant cultural history of the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko area. They seem to have occurred predominantly in the Equator region, between the Congo and Ubangi rivers, but also among Azande and Mbole. The use of these costumes will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, but what is meaningful to this chapter is that all these costumes were reportedly worn for monkey hunting (without claws or sticks). One of the costumes originally had a bow and arrows to go with it.<sup>35</sup> This is corroborated by a photograph taken by Armand Hutereau (Illustration 13). McMaster (1988: 84) indeed stated, that the original Buan Bantu group hunted monkeys and wild boars using bows and arrows as weapons. According to McMaster (1988: 115-121), Bali obtained the technology of working iron separately from their Buan Bantu relatives after they separated from them. The Bali vocabulary related to this subject points at a different origin. Given the prominence of references to the Mbari mountains as a centre of iron production with access to iron ore, the production of claws must have occurred at the latest in the shared history of Ndaka and Bali at Mbari. However, in one rare case the use of a leopard hide, claw, and stick to leave the leopard paw print is mentioned for the *sura* or *nkuru* (*kuru*) variety of leopard men in the Equator province to the north (Joset, 1955: 91-93; Lindskog, 1954: 4, 20).<sup>36</sup>

Considering the migration history of the Buan Bantu, it seems that the population groups from which the costumes at the RMCA and the IMNC originate may either have a common origin with, or have been in touch with, the Bali in the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko area. This shared history may account for the occurrence of this type of costume, not only among Buan Bantu relatives, but also among Ubangi-speaking groups, for in this region, several of the Buan Bantu groups among which such costumes were collected, were in touch with Ubangi-speaking groups such as the Azande (see Map 2). Considered on the whole, the data on the migration and on the origin of the costumes may point to prototypical aspects of leopard men existing among populations sharing a common migration history, more specifically Buan Bantu speakers, but also neighbouring Ubangi- speakers such as the Azande-

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<sup>34</sup>These costumes were nearly all reported to be worn for hunting, generally for monkeys. This was also reported for one of the costumes in the RMCA collection. This will be explored in Chapter 4.

<sup>35</sup>RMCA, DE 203 (Coclet-Henrotin). Note by the collector, Coclet, Basoko, 20/4/1912.

<sup>36</sup>More particularly in the Zongo and Bumba districts.



**Illustration 9: Costume worn for monkey hunting (hood).**



**Illustration 11: Costume worn for monkey hunting (hood).**



**Illustration 10: Costume worn for monkey hunting (tunic).**



**Illustration 12: Costume worn for monkey hunting (tunic).**

**Bua**  
**Collected by A. Hutereau,**  
**1911-1913.**  
**RMCA collection EO.0.0.5301-**  
**1 – 2**

**Azande-Abandia**  
**Collected by A. Hutereau,**  
**1911-1913.**  
**EO.0.0.6410-1 -2**





**Illustration 13: Archer of the chief Bayo dressed for monkey hunting, Benge.**

**Photo by A. Hutereau, 1911-13  
AP.0.0.11078**



Abandia. Unfortunately, so far data on the *nkuru* variety of leopard men of the Equator are not sufficient to establish a historical link with *anioto* or *vihokohoko*. It may well be that *anioto* attacks found their origin earlier in history, prior to their settlement at Mbari, at the middle Nepoko, as part of the institutional innovations which were necessary for populations to keep up with their increasingly competitive environment. In the later history leopard men attacks were also repeatedly employed to safeguard or usurp lands from rival population groups. This would give more weight to the hypothesis that Bali were using *anioto* attacks in the wars with Mangbetu-speaking groups such as Meje, as the Bali fled the Nepoko due to a sudden argument with the Mangbetu-speaking Meje. Bouccin's objection that Bali should have remembered this way of fighting the Mangbetu is a weak one. As said, it would be logical if this had occurred, as this is exactly what leopard men were used for in later decades.

### 1.3. Leopard men among the Bali and Ndaka in the Ituri forest

Bouccin is the only source who listed the known ways of dispersal of *anioto* among the Bali in the Ituri forest.<sup>37</sup> He especially studied family relationships as he believed this would bring insight into the ways of spreading and the relationships between *anioto* owning groups. He concluded that *anioto* was passed along several kinds of alliances, mostly family relationships but also others.

Considering the family relationships, *anioto* was often handed down from father to son, and from the maternal uncle to the nephew and was hence a result of marital alliances. Bouccin noticed that there were nearly always family relationships through wives, between Bali owners of *anioto*. Wife exchange among Bali groups (kibali: *libali*) was a principal way of the spread of *anioto*. A person wanting to obtain *anioto* looked to marry a girl from a family which possessed *anioto*. He received an iron claw symbolising this affiliation. The claw was transported in a pot with oil carried by a male relative of the buyer. The owner's sons would inherit it.<sup>38</sup>

The boys' initiation network *mambela* was of major importance for the spread of *anioto*. *Anioto* services circulated along the *mambela* lines. As I will explain, the same applies to the *ambodima* and other dance cults which bear elements of *mambela* in them, and promote cooperation among adherents. One of the possibilities to establish alliances via *mambela* was the exchange of initiates (*moganza*) called *samba* in kibali. If one wanted to obtain *anioto*, an alliance through *mambela* was sought. This only occurred among Bali groups. If Budu, who did not practice

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<sup>37</sup>See RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1935). In his administrative report of 1935 on the subject of *anioto*, Bouccin explored the spreading, but his argument varies a bit from the one in his publication.

<sup>38</sup>Bouccin (1936d) obtained this information from chief Mbako, whose involvement in leopard men killings is discussed in Chapter 3.

*mambela*, wanted to obtain *anioto* they took a boy to be initiated among the Bali. Another way of establishing an alliance was the communal destruction of the sacred objects of *mambela* (kibali: *mokolo*). Notables of two parties would meet and each would destroy a *maduali* or a *nasasa*, the secret instruments of *mambela*, and bury them to conclude the alliance.

Several kinds of alliance might be required at the same time. Sometimes, as an additional token of discretion, the person making the request also had to sacrifice a victim from his own family. This particularly occurred in the case of transmission from Bali to strangers (i.e. non-Bali populations). Here I consider further the connection between *anioto* and a few dominant institutions related to its spread among the Bali: *mambela* and the related title of the *ishumu*, and dance cults such as *ambodima*.

### 1.3.1. *Mambela* and the socio-political organisation of the Bali

*Mambela* basically concerns the initiation of boys into manhood. Several descriptions have been made by colonial administrators and missionaries of the *mambela* initiation.<sup>39</sup> While the ceremonies can differ regionally, and have changed over time, there are a number of characteristics which return everywhere such as the flagellations (Illustration 14) with whips, the scarifications on the breast said to be made by a bird spirit represented by musical instruments. The scarifications seem to be an alternative to circumcision, a phenomenon otherwise widespread among initiatory societies in the region (Illustration 15). The climax at the end of the initiation cycle is the appearance of an animal spirit named *maduali*, represented by a tree trunk enveloped in leaves and only to be seen by the fully initiated. This animal is also represented by the sound of the bullroarer. For a more extensive overview of the phases, see Appendix 1.

In relation to brotherhoods in the northern Maniema-Ituri-region, Vansina (1990a: 177-1788, 186-191) writes that the type of initiation for boys, associated with the concept of an initiation bird known as *mambela* among the Bali, was also commonly known under the name of *lilwá* among neighbouring population groups to the west, as far as Basoko. The complex of bird initiation styles may even have

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<sup>39</sup>The earliest records are from the territorial administrators Millis (1904) from Bomili and Bernard (1922), and administrative reports in RMCA AIMO Brandt (1917) and Bourghelle (1933). Other sources are published or unpublished reports from missionaries (see report by de Leest in RMCA AIMO Brandt, de Leest (1933)); Christen (1936)). Moeller (1936a: 545-557; 552-553) summarises information gathered in administrative reports from Bouccin mainly. The latter again provides the most detailed information on this topic in a report (RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933)) and in several articles in 1936.



**Illustration 14: Flagellations in the context of the *mambela* among the Bali.**

**Photo by Father Wulfers, 1926  
RMCA AP.0.2.3291**



**Illustration 15: Young Bali man with the scarifications of *mambela*.**

**Photo from Office Coloniale, date unknown.  
RMCA EP.0.0.9354**



spread from the mountain rims in the east to the lower Lindi.<sup>40</sup> This phenomenon of a bird initiation complex is one example of the scale of cultural borrowing that took place among populations in this region. Linguistic proof, provided by Vansina (1990a: 189, 358), of cultural borrowing among populations, especially in relation with brotherhoods, is the widespread occurrence of terms such as *kúmú* (chief) and *gandjá* (boys' initiation). Reflexes of *-gandjá* are found from the Ubangi river and as far as northern Maniema. Also the word *moganza* is used for the candidates in the *mambela* initiation among the Bali. *Mambela* bears traces of plural influences from eastern and southern Bantu cultural institutions in particular, via the Ndaka and the Komo. This will be discussed further in relation to the *lusumba* circumcision in the region of Beni.

This cultural borrowing, and the institutional innovations it caused, also characterised the political competition in the middle Bomokandi-Nepoko area. With regard to the origins of *mambela*, most Bali referred to their south-eastern neighbours, the Ndaka. Sometimes the *mambela* initiation was even said to derive from the Komo further away via the Mbo and Ndaka.<sup>41</sup> In line with Vansina's reconstruction (1990a: 169-175), this process should have started prior to the Bali's migration into the Ituri forest when they were living with the Budu and Meje at the Nepoko. There, *mambela* developed into a larger-scale collective form of boys' initiation, excluding circumcision. While originally *mambela* used to be organised at village level playing an important role in the village government, the successive organisation of ceremonies in lines of villages went together with an expansion of cooperation exceeding the district level.<sup>42</sup> According to Bouccin (1935: 695) by 1900 the *mambela* lines (*ape*) did not yet incorporate all the Bali villages, but by the 1930s *mambela* occurred among nearly all the Bali, except for the north-east in the region of Panga. He (1936c: 225) identified seven lines of villages clustered through a chain of *mambela* initiations.<sup>43</sup> Each line corresponded to a particular variety of *mambela*. Probably in light of the hostility of the colonial administration vis-à-vis the *mambela*, which is discussed in the following chapter, it was shed again by the Bali

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<sup>40</sup>AAE, PO 11: 222. The *lilwa* was described at length in a report by the Territorial Administrator V. Rouvroy of 24 July 1928. AAE, PO 11: 222.

<sup>41</sup>See RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933), Bouccin (1935: 706). According to Bouccin the Mbo adopted an initiation with circumcision or possibly *mambela* from the Bira or Pere. According to Bouccin (1936c: 223-224) the Lombi adopted *mambela* via the Mbo and Ndaka from the direction of the Komo. Ndaka were in touch with Komo to the east of the territory of Avakubi.

<sup>42</sup>See also Vansina (1990: 81) and Moeller (1936a: 542-557).

<sup>43</sup>See also RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 1-2). In this earlier manuscript from 1933 the lines distinguished by Bouccin were somewhat different. Bouccin and also Moeller (1936a: 256) wrote that sometimes lines split up in two or more lines, but also that lines were united e.g. in relation with *ambodima*.

and their neighbours too, who adopted circumcision.<sup>44</sup> There was a hierarchy among Bali villages based on their position along the *mambela* line, but basically they were independent of each other. This organisation in lines did not correspond to the stratified organisation of clan chiefs, which is identified by Vansina as the “political” organisation.

Both Vansina (1990a: 187) and Bouccin (1936b: 192) assert that a pre-existing hierarchy of family chiefs named *metundji* was over-arched by the organisation of *mambela* lines. Originally, social life was regulated by the council of *metundji* under the presidency of the *metundji nkuru* at the village level. The position of each clan was well determined within the hierarchy.<sup>45</sup> The *metundji nkuru* also appointed the temporary war chief *gama* mentioned above (Moeller, 1936a: 543-544). Moeller (1936a: 549-550) specifically states that the original *mambela* initiate of each group ideally was the younger brother of the *metundji nkuru*. It was presumed by Bouccin that the *metundji nkuru* represented the “political” power, and control over land, whereas the *tata ka mambela* and *ishumu* –functionaries of *mambela*- represented a “religious” power which usurped the previously existing authority of family chiefs.<sup>46</sup> During the initiation period the leadership of the village is taken over by the *tata ka mambela*, who is basically the leader of the initiation. He takes command over hunting, and claims the game for the initiation ceremonies. In the meantime any agricultural work is suspended. Originally, the *tata ka mambela* did not seem to have had any specific public role outside of the *mambela* rites.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>See McMaster (1988: 115). Moeller (1936a: 550) noted that it used to exist among the Lombi, the Mangbetu-speaking neighbours of Bali, as he witnessed *mambela* scarifications and *ishumus*, but that *mambela* was abandoned there in 1918-1919. The same development occurred among the Mbo. Towles (1993) does not make mention of *mambela* among the Mbo in the 1970s, while it may have existed there earlier in history.

<sup>45</sup>Bouccin (1936b: 192) describes the family organisation. Moeller (1936a: 543-544) distinguishes between the responsibilities of the chiefs.

· small family *agbadili*; the chief is named *aba* or *tata*;

· extended family *lisali* or *logo*; the chiefs are named *metundji*;

· village consisting of different *lisali* or *logo*, *unzi*; the chief is named *metundji nkuru* (first born);

· clan (*kuzi*, *unzi bundoo*) consisting of a cluster of villages, *kuzi* or *unzi bundoo*; the chief is named *nkuru mbuko*;

· united clans of a particular population segment *deeli*; the chief is named *nkuru ompota*.

<sup>46</sup>The designation of “political” and “religious” is politicised here and should be understood in terms of the evaluation of local titles of authority in terms of indirect rule. The same applies to Bouccin’s interpretation of these titles. This will be explained further in Chapter 2.

<sup>47</sup>Accordingly he did not possess specific regalia besides the feathers worn during the *mambela* initiation and possibly the iron crown (cf. RMCA collection EO.0.0.25606) mentioned in older documents, which was eventually abandoned (Czekanowski, 1924: 321; Schebesta, 1934: 39).

Bouccin thought, however, that his authority had risen beyond *mambela*, exceeding the period of initiation.

According to Vansina (1990a: 186-7) the dispersed clan clusters to which the *metundji* family chiefs related are a typical phenomenon among populations in northern Maniema, and by extension Ituri. Among the populations of Buan Bantu descent in particular, clans were named after totemic animals or objects. The membership followed the patrilineal line and was characterised by the acceptance of the totemic clan name and totemic food taboos. Segments of a single clan, often living widely apart, recognised each other as clan members based on their common totemic allegiance. Due to high mobility and diffusion, the common clanship did not give rise to a community larger than a “House”. According to Vansina this may have caused initiatory complexes such as *mambela* to thrive and expand in northern Maniema and Ituri. From the point of view of the colonial administration, Bouccin favoured the older clan-based social organisation as the original and legitimate organisation and actually wanted to see it restored.<sup>48</sup> He saw *mambela* as a usurping power, impeding the recovery of the original clan-based organisation, which had been further destroyed by administrative reorganisations imposed by the colonial authorities.<sup>49</sup> This also had to be understood as a prejudice of Bouccin against *mambela* functionaries, because of their connection to *anioto*, as a function of their appointment in the practice of indirect rule. This is discussed in the following chapter.

Among colonial administrators the link between *mambela* and *anioto* was much discussed. It was meaningful for the practice of colonial administration and legal process to understand who was to be held accountable for *anioto* murders. While I will elaborate on this in the following chapter, what I want to point out here is the complementarity between *mambela* and *anioto* in the political history of the region. *Anioto* was not an integral part of the *mambela* as a boys’ initiation, according to Bouccin (1936c: 226), and this indeed seems likely historically. The initiation of *anioto* was seemingly grafted onto the *mambela* initiation. Bouccin explained that the *mambela* initiation helped discover young men who were by character suitable for the role of *anioto*. *Anioto* were recruited from the most courageous and compliant initiates. The leaders of *mambela* made use of their authority to impose silence on

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<sup>48</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1934).

<sup>49</sup>Bouccin (1936: 192b) believed that the clusters of dispersed clan groups bearing the same totem were a remnant of shattered clans occurring among the Bali, Ndaka and Mbo. He supposedly found these same groups intact among the Bua. Bouccin thinks that after a period of relative peace due to a sudden dispersal a supposedly pre-existing clan organisation was disrupted. See also RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 3-5).

the initiates but they also had a grip on and inspired fear among non-initiates.<sup>50</sup> An exploration of the functions of the *tata ka mambela*, the leader of the initiation and the *ishumu*, helps to shed a clearer light on this complementarity between *anioto* and *mambela*.

### 1.3.2. The ancestral authority at the heart of *mambela*: the *ishumu*

In colonial sources confusion arose regarding the division of roles and the relationship between the titles of *ishumu* and *tata ka mambela* in relation to *mambela*. The discussion really was about who was to be held responsible for *mambela* and therefore *anioto* activities. This confusion could partly be accounted for by the fact that the titles related to *mambela* could differ by village.<sup>51</sup> *Tata ka mambela* quite literally means the leader of the initiation, but as data on *ishumu* are scarce, the role of the *ishumu* remains unclear. At least in name, the title of *ishumu* did not seem to be widespread among neighbouring populations, except among the Komo.<sup>52</sup> In order to explore the origin and role of *ishumu* in this discussion, it was helpful to consider colonial perceptions of the title of *emba* among the Mbo and Budu, the neighbours of the Bali. It was mentioned earlier that *emba* was an important Budu title in the cultural innovations at the Nepoko during the 18th century. What probably caused

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<sup>50</sup>In 1934 Bouccin explains this at length in an administrative note on “Anioto et *Mambela*”, RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1934).

<sup>51</sup>See RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 8-9). The latter writes that among western Bali the word *asoa* (also *asuaga*, RMCA AIMO Bourghelle (1933)) is used as a generic word for functionaries of *mambela*. The Bali to the east of Bomili do not use the word *asoa* but rather call these people *kumu (wa) mambela*, *kumu* being a generic name for chief. Bouccin writes that it is difficult to establish with any exactness the hierarchy among the *asoa* or *kumu* of *mambela*. Each one has his specific attributions, presiding over this or that ceremony in one group and not in another. Therefore no general classification of functions can be made. According to Moeller (1936a: 555) the assistants of the *tata ka mambela* who are in charge of making the scarifications are called *asoa* at Kondolole, *atumaki* at Avakubi and *sibili* among Mbo. Bouccin further writes that in the region of Avakubi the *asoa* performing the scarifications is named *atumaki*, whereas he is named *osolini* among Beken. Millis (1904) mentions the name *monganga* for the latter function at Bomili. According to Bernard (1922) the *atumaki* is the leader of the initiation, providing a moral education to the candidates, while the *ishumu*, the one wearing the iron galons, is the one in charge of the sacred tattoos. The *atumaki* does not work for over a year during the cycle of initiation and lets his hair and nails grow. The region is not specified for the latter information.

<sup>52</sup>See RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933). *Isume* or *egwandey* titles of the Komo are mentioned by Bouccin in his note on *mambela* in 1933 as titles reminiscent of *ishumu*, as are others. Among Warega (Lega?) of Stanleyville (Kisangani) and the Balengola this kind of nobleman is titled *mongamba*.

confusion among the colonial administrators, both in the colonial discussions of *emba* and *ishumu*, was that different cultural institutions had merged in the context of institutional innovations, and that it was therefore difficult to distinguish between them. Here I want to explore the hypothesis that, similar to the *emba* and its relation to the *gama* among the Budu, the *ishumu* presented an ancestral authority in a duality of power with the *mambela*.

For the Budu, Moeller (1936a: 482-483) identifies *emba* as an original clan-based mystical power. *Emba* is linked to the ancestor cult, representing an incontestable moral authority. The *emba* title belongs to the eldest representative of the eldest branch of the population group and originally represented a principal sacro-political authority. One *emba* existed per clan or extended family, but the presiding *emba* could confer part of his power to one or more influential assistants, who then became a kind of minor *emba*. Moeller writes that the right to obtain *emba* did not guarantee investiture as *emba*. The title is conferred by the council of notables and elders. The force of the *emba* is characterised by certain attributes such as the right of the *emba* or his assistant (*kumu na emba*) to claim and to wear certain animal hides and the teeth of leopards and crocodiles

Moeller (1936a: 482-3) mentions that there was confusion among administrators regarding the exact meaning of the *emba*, which is reminiscent of the administrative confusion over the meaning of *ishumu* among the Bali. The confusion arose particularly between the roles of *emba* and *gama*, possibly inspired by regional differences. As warrior chiefs (*gama*) were adopted from the eastern Bantu (cf. *mukama*), the *emba* title was forced to the background, or at least led to a duality of power, with the *emba* and *gama* representing respectively a religious and political authority. As mentioned earlier, Vansina (1990a: 175) describes the title of the *gama* war leader as a temporary one which is conferred at times of war upon a suitable warrior by the *emba*, who represented the ancestral authority. According to some administrators cited by Moeller, the mystical force *emba* would have been represented in some instances by the *gama* chief, who came to preside over the *emba* cult. According to Towles (1993: 17-21) for example, among the Mbo, the *imba* (*emba*) was the representative of the eldest clan lineage in the village. He settled disputes. His broom *isandei* was the symbol of his function. He also used to be the war chief (i.e. *gama*) of the village.

The *ishumu* is alternately regarded by colonial administrators as the *tata ka mambela*'s assistant, or belonging to a class of nobles emerging from the *mambela*

initiation, but remaining independent of it.<sup>53</sup> Only Schebesta (1934: 70) provided more elaborate information on the title among the Ndaka. The *ishumu* was definitely an important person in the village possessing ancestral and legal authority, taking up the role of a judge. His responsibilities, his fly whisk –*kifakio*– and stool point to his special status (Illustration 16). Several authors mention the *ishumu's mambela* scarifications on his shoulders and arms.<sup>54</sup> These supplementary scarifications did not necessarily imply that *ishumu* had a special function within *mambela* initiation, even though in some instances this was the case, but rather indicated the consecration of his special status by *mambela*. These supplementary tattoos were made when the *ishumu* inherited his title. He was thus submitted twice to the proofs of *mambela*. His was a chiefly title distinguished from others by his body decorations and his special functions.<sup>55</sup> At any rate, according to several sources, the *ishumu* in more than one case did represent a clan-based ritual authority within a hierarchy collaborating closely with the *mambela* organisation. In order to avoid confusion for now, we probably need to distinguish between the dual authority of *ishumu* deriving from ancestry, and his role within *mambela*, which may differ regionally.

If *ishumu* is comparable to *emba*, as an institution representing a moral authority based on ancestry, it might perhaps even have been derived from it. First of all it is not unthinkable that the *emba* institution which, in combination with the *gama* title, played a crucial role among the Budu around 1800, was of influence among the Bali, even if it never appeared to have been adopted in name. As was the case with the *gama* and the *emba* institutions among the Budu, *ishumu* among the Bali potentially merged with other power institutions in the context of institutional innovations. While the *ishumu's* authority was perhaps not rooted in *mambela*, it may have been reinforced by it. The two institutions appear mutually supportive, as do the *gama* and the *emba* among the Budu. Respect for and obedience to elders was also a

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<sup>53</sup>Several sources say that the *ishumu* is only the assistant of the *tata ka mambela*, representing the neophytes of his clan group. However, at Kondolole, *ishumu* claim to be a class of noblemen, who are consecrated by *mambela* but who are not dependent on it. The principal *ishumu* in the hierarchy there is called “*amicie*” (Bouccin, 1936c: 225; Moeller, 1936a: 255). This noble status of *ishumu* is also corroborated by other authors, though poorly explained. In RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 9) calls the *ishumu* the true nobleman of the village. In RMCA AIMO Winckelmans (1933: 2) equally calls him the true traditional chief. Winckelmans mentions the title is hereditary and usually transmitted from father to son. Also see Kawaters (1931: 162).

<sup>54</sup>See RMCA AIMO Winckelmans (1933) and Bernard (1922).

<sup>55</sup>Besides his special scarifications also regalia are mentioned. See RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 9). Bouccin describes the body decorations of the *ishumu* as a hide hat surmounted with eagle feathers, and further adorned with parrot feathers if his ancestor was a warrior. Depending on the region he also wore a belt of okapi hide. A headdress fitting this description is published by Schildkrout and Keim (1993: 72). It is of Budu origin, collected at Medje in 1910.



**Illustration 16: The *ishumu* Abena of the Ndaka carrying the fly whisk.**

**Photo by P. Schebesta, 1929-1930.**

**Bildarchiv Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 59958B**



crucial aspect of *mambela* which was in fact a rite of passage preparing boys for the life as a man and ultimately as an elder. The *ishumu*'s ancestral authority was thus also instrumental in the *mambela* initiation. The *ishumu* supported by the *mambela* may have held the moral power over the population, performing justice in terms of their own cultural traditions. *Anioto* was a tool for maintaining this kind of justice, with the leopard symbolising the legitimacy of power and its rootedness in ancestral traditions.

Considering the duality of power as a working hypothesis, the question remains as to how the title of *ishumu* relates to the position of the *metundji* clan chiefs of the Bali and where it came from. Did it perhaps develop out of the need to reinforce the ancestral authority of the *metundji* hierarchy creating an openness to the influence of *emba* or such like? Bouccin indeed stated that several of his colleagues mistook the *metundji nkuru* for the *ishumu*.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps for further exploration of the origins of *ishumu* we should also look into the direction of the Komo where a similar title, *isume*, occurred.

### 1.3.3. Dance cults and leopard men murders among the Bali

As far as known, Bouccin (1936d: 254-6) is also the only administrator who collected information on *ambodima* and other dance cults which are at the root of the transmission of *anioto*.<sup>57</sup> With a few exceptions, it seemed to have spread only among the Bali. *Ambodima* is a dance incorporating the display of secret instruments of *mambela* outside the context of the initiation. In most villages the *tata ka mambela*, is the leader of the initiation.

Bouccin (1936d: 255-6) obtained particular information regarding *ambodima* from the few chiefs who were known propagators of the dance.<sup>58</sup> *Nekele* and *agabua*, a noble young girl and boy, were selected for the *ambodima* ceremony. Everybody could attend the public dance, including women and children, but only the fully initiated *mambela* members could attend the second part, consisting of a nocturnal meal and dance. At night the *ishumu* told women and children to return to their houses. Afterwards the *mambela* objects appeared. According to chief Mbako, improvised chanting occurred during which the names of future victims would be cited. The *tata ka mambela* designated the men to go on a killing expedition by tying lianas around their neck (Bouccin, 1936d). Bouccin (1935: 18-21; 1936d: 257) tried to investigate the spread of *ambodima* based on its passage from one Bali lineage cluster to another, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 3, and

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<sup>56</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1934: 1-3).

<sup>57</sup>See also in RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1935: 18-21).

<sup>58</sup>The role of chiefs Kabakaba and Mbako in the spreading of *ambodima* is discussed in Chapter 3.

which I summarise briefly here. According to Bouccin (1936d: 254) the transmission of *ambodima* occurred in two main phases in history. *Ambodima* originated in the region of Bomili. In this region, besides *anioto* crimes, *ambodima* also provoked the Bali revolt of 1907. One of the first villages where it appeared was Bafwalipa. During the following 7 or 8 years the practice of *ambodima* spread at a slow pace appearing in the regions of Bomili, Panga and Avakubi. A second phase occurred in 1916 and 1917 when a wave of *ambodima*-related introductions of *anioto* spread in a short time from the chiefdom of Bebengu of Bomili to all their southern neighbours (Map 3). From there *ambodima* crossed the Lindi river and reached the river Tshopo spreading in a short time to Bafwasende and Batama, Bafwaboli and Kondolole. Only in this second phase were the murders actually communicated to the Europeans.<sup>59</sup>

Usually *ambodima* was commanded by the *tata ka mambela* from another *tata ka mambela* of a group possessing the *ambodima* dance, but the dispersal did not occur along the *mambela* lines. Apparently *ambodima* created new ties among villages belonging to different lines of *mambela*. As a consequence of *ambodima* for example, a number of different *mambela* lines merged in 1933, causing big disturbances in the life of the Bali.<sup>60</sup> The villages who had adopted *ambodima* were allies and cooperated with each other, in a similar way to the villages of *mambela* lines. However, in at least one case among western Bali, the introduction of *ambodima* was refused because the group who enforced it did not share the same *mambela*.<sup>61</sup> As we will see in Chapter 3, the collaboration among chiefs especially relied on the fact that *anioto* committing the murders were commanded from villages far away from the locations of the crime, which prevented people from recognising and accusing them. Bouccin's investigations show that similar dances, sometimes under another name, dispersed around 1930.<sup>62</sup>

Considering *ambodima* in its historical context, it seems to be of a different nature from the institutions mentioned above, as its origin appears to be related to the

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<sup>59</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 1-2). In this document the itineraries reconstructed differ from those in his publication.

<sup>60</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 2). The rite Bakundumu is on the verge of disappearing because of *ambodima* being accepted in 1917. This caused a transformation of the rite, becoming nearer to those of Bekeni. The rites from Bekeni, Bomili, Bebege Baita seem to have been united by *ambodima* in 1917.

<sup>61</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 2, 11). The Bafwabu introduced their *mambela* rite with force to the Bafwagadi who refused it from them because they did not share the same *mambela*. They went to ask for it among the Bafwatende of Mugulu pembeni (Bouccin, 1936).

<sup>62</sup>A dance named *ontuni* or *magpasa* had been introduced among Bali of Bengamisa. As we will explain in Chapter 3, Bouccin (1936c) suspected it was spread by the same chiefs as *ambodima*.





colonial occupation. *Ambodima* is called a *dawa* by Bouccin.<sup>63</sup> *Dawa* is a generic term in Kiswahili meaning “medicine”. These are often substances or amulets which are, for example, applied to warriors in order to protect them against attacks. During colonial and postcolonial times, *dawa* especially protected against the bullets of enemies. Such medicines have been mentioned by Evans-Pritchard (1937: 305-6) in his book on witchcraft and magic among the Azande based on fieldwork in the 1930s.<sup>64</sup> *Dawa* also occurred particularly in the form of dances.<sup>65</sup> The *dawa* dance known as *basa* or *mbassa* was mentioned in relation to the rebellions among the Bali in the region of Bomili in 1907, which Bouccin connects to the transmission of the *ambodima* dance (Delathuy, 1994: 271).<sup>66</sup> This will be explored in the following chapter. The dispersal of these dances is but one example of the inception and quick spread of new cults which are typical reactions against the colonial occupation. Evans-Pritchard describes such cults among the Azande in the 1920s. Some of the characteristics listed are shared by *ambodima*.

According to Evans-Pritchard (1937: 511-6) these new “extra-kin” associations, such as *nebeli* among Azande and Mangbetu, are mostly of foreign origin or newly invented. In other words, they are not a traditional part of the social organisation. It is certain that cults like *nebeli* also affected Ituri forest populations. In fact colonial administrators more than once linked *nebeli* to the occurrence of *anioto*, particularly in the surroundings of Bomili, but the connection was never really proven.<sup>67</sup> Evans-Pritchard highlighted that cults like *nebeli* were indicative of wide and deep social change as a result of the late 19th century slave trade and subsequent European rule and connected to the break-down of tradition. They were generally considered as harmful by colonial administrations and missionaries, characterising them as subterranean and subversive. Despite the clear anti-colonial character, *nebeli* was mostly aimed at protection against threats from outside and overcoming social disruption, rather than instigating rebellion. They relied strongly on mutual support between the members. Such cults could spread quickly from one village to another. Interestingly, the rebellion of 1907 among the Bali, which is linked by Bouccin to the *basa* or *ambodima*, is also ascribed to *nebeli* by Czekanowski (1924: 164-67). Similar rebellious and quickly spreading cults arose regularly all over the Congo and were often connected to economic crises and resistance to the

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<sup>63</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 1).

<sup>64</sup>*Dawa* turning the bullets of enemies into water were used by *simba* rebels in the east of Congo in the 1960s and continuously in the context of contemporary rebellions in the East of Congo by maimai (Villafaña, 2012: 142).

<sup>65</sup>See for example Roberts (2012: 81).

<sup>66</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 1).

<sup>67</sup>See for example Federspiel (1909) and the several administrative reports e.g., AAE, PO 19: 246, report by Territorial Administrator Schockaert from 27 July 1933.

raising of taxes. An interesting comparative aspect from the *nebeli* is the performance of public dances to register community problems (Schildkrout and Keim, 1990: 190-3). It is uncertain whether this was a characteristic of *ambodima*, but it would not be surprising if expressions of desperation regarding the rubber tax had occurred in the context of *ambodima*. In the next chapter we will discuss the rebellion of 1907 in more detail.

While *ambodima* was a new and quickly spreading cult, some elements derived from the existing institution of *mambela*. *Ambodima* incorporated elements of *mambela*, for example the display of *mambela* secret objects. For *mambela* the organisation in chains was the basis for collaboration between villages. The same applied to *ambodima*. However, as I explained, the transmission of *ambodima* occurred independently, in a pattern separate from the lines of *mambela*.

#### **1.4. Dispersal of leopard men in the Beni region**

For the Bali region it is clear that the transmission of *anioto* was intrinsically linked to the authority of the *mambela* initiation. For the region of Beni, the available data reveals clearly that there too the dispersal of *vihokohoko* was immediately connected to the *lusumba* initiation which, except for the occurrence of circumcision, bore significant resemblance to *mambela*. According to oral traditions at Beni, leopard men were adopted from the neighbouring Ndaka and Mbo, who took it from the Bali.<sup>68</sup> The cultural borrowing that took place among populations sharing initiation and other institutions in the wider region seems to underlie the dispersal of leopard men too.

##### **1.4.1. Lusumba and the transmission of *vihokohoko***

In the Beni region in particular the attribution of an origin of leopard men to the period of the slave trade is based on oral tradition (Joset, 1955: 32, 37, 46).<sup>69</sup> The centre of dispersal of *vihokohoko* is in the isolated region of Madiwe among Bapakombe. This region of primary forest, to the north-west of Beni, is the beginning of the big Ituri forest extending northwestward to the Congo river. The Bapakombe were neighbours of the Bira and Komo, who were in turn neighbours of the Mbo, and the institution of leopard men most probably spread via Ndaka and Mbo to

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<sup>68</sup>RMCA AIMO Absil (1934: 1-2). Bouccin (1936d).

<sup>69</sup>RMCA AIMO Absil (1934: 2). See also Chapter 3, for example: the conflict between Tsege and Mukohomili, ancestor of Karibumba; the conflict between Mukupi, Bahera and Mwami Tsombira of the Wanisanza of Lisasa; the origin of leopard men among the Batangi Bapakombe under Alonzo's control at the Tua river.

Bapakombe and Nande in the Beni region.<sup>70</sup> Mwaka Bwenge (2010: 314-315) also discusses the relationship between *lusumba* and *vihokohoko*, which spread from the Bapakombe in the Madiwe forest to other chiefs in the region. While nothing has been revealed about the initiation of *anioto*, Joset (1955: 32-34) provides a singular description of the *vihokohoko* initiation.

According to Joset (1955: 32-34), the initiation of sons of Bapakombe families as *vihokohoko* took place after the circumcision ritual, *lusumba*. The circumcision was organised approximately every ten years. In light of the investigations of a series of crimes occurring in 1933-1934, Joset found out that an important *lusumba* ceremony had been organised two years earlier in order to select *vihokohoko*. The authority behind this was a historical person named “Mwami of Madiwe” who was not further identified. The date of the circumcision ceremonies was announced by the *mopinda*, or the chief of the circumcisors, as he passed from village to village. He announced to the village notables that it was time to assemble the young men and children old enough to participate in the *lusumba*. The circumcisor or *kipete*, constructed a special hut called *mohulu* at some distance from the village. It is described as a structure consisting of one room with several entrances. Here too the appearance of a bird spirit, named *njilakendekende*, was of central importance to the initiation. According to tradition this bird visited each *lusumba*; if not the ceremony was a failure. The sound of the bird was also represented by an instrument. The circumcised (*batende*) did not see it, but heard its call and the flapping of its wings. When the ceremony finished, the circumcised returned to the village, where a grand celebration took place. After having resided with their parents for a while, the young men designated to become *vihokohoko*, announced to their friends and acquaintances they were leaving for a long trip. In reality they resided in the forest, on an island of the river “Susote”, where they were initiated. During between one and three months they underwent harsh training. They were often beaten and had to do exercises carrying large tree trunks (the weight of which corresponded to the weight of a man), learning how to run and jump on the top of a roof with this burden. In the meantime the old *vihokohoko* threw spears at them. When a candidate got hurt and died, it proved he would not have made a suitable leopard man. The neophytes also learnt how to use special knives and to imitate the calls of animals. When they finished their training, they had to commit a murder as a test. The old *vihokohoko* indicated the person they had to kill. Often it was the mother, the wife or a close family member of the newly initiated leopard men. It is certain that the *vihokohoko* were under the influence of a stimulating drug

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<sup>70</sup>RMCA AIMO Absil (1934: 1). Mbako reported that since 1921 he had been sending gangs of *anioto* to assist Mbo and Ndaka. Ndaka are closely related to the Babandjo of Mbako. Mbako claims that, when he sent Mbo and Ndaka his *anioto* in 1921, Mbo then passed it to the people of the chief named Mabiti from Beni but *vihokohoko* had already existed in the Beni region long before (Bouccin, 1936c).

to commit these crimes.<sup>71</sup> The initiators valued the candidates who executed this grim task imposed on them without hesitation. This test was also a means to control them. Because of the horror of their crime, they would never denounce the secret society, out of fear of putting themselves at risk. Mwaka Bwenge (2010: 315) also mentions that the bravest candidates of *lusumba*, were further initiated as *vihokohoko* by undergoing all kinds of tests: performing high jumps, self-defence, getting used to the use of stimulant drugs. Several accused admitted that before their expeditions they consumed *iranga* with human flesh taken from their previous victims. Effectively, corpses were mutilated and some parts were taken away such as eyes, the brain or the heart. During these tests they became one with the ancestral spirits conferring upon them a supernatural power. They originally were presumed to do good deeds, such as helping people to cross dangerous rivers, and to protect the community from outside threats. During foreign occupation they were used predominantly as a means of terror, to safeguard or take back control of lands and populations, predominantly against Nande usurpers, who first collaborated with the Zanzibari slavers, but whose hegemony increased further under the colonial administration. The latter also started using *vihokohoko* to maintain and extend their control.

#### 1.4.2. Cultural ties among *mambela*, *lusumba* and beyond

The *lusumba* can be regarded as one of the examples of “brotherhoods” occurring in northern Maniema as defined by Vansina, displaying elements of cultural borrowing spread over the wider region. Most prominently, the occurrence of a bird spirit related to the circumcision or scarification points at a reminiscence of *lusumba* with the *mambela-lilwa* styles of brotherhoods. The brotherhoods of northern Maniema reveal a major influence coming from healing associations and titled functions from eastern Bantu originally from the Great Lakes region. The title of *moame* pointed to such an influence from populations coming forth from the Eastern Great Lake populations.<sup>72</sup> Vansina (1990a: 189) specifies that in colonial times the leaders of the brotherhoods, often called *moame*, were the true authorities in the societies

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<sup>71</sup>The recipe was revealed to Joset by a renowned initiator of Madiwe named Kiambala during an interrogation: *woka*, *iranga* and human flesh. *Woka* is a root of a rare plant in the forest. Kiambali, chief of *vihokohoko* of Madiwe, was the successor to one of the eldest known *vihokohoko*, the initiator Batinde. When the latter left for prison in 1929 he handed over the *dawa* (medicine) together with a woman and child. The process of preparation was to peel it, leave it to dry in the sun for three days, pound it to reduce it to powder and keep it in a banana leaf pocket. Small snorts from this give physical force. *Iranga* was a big plant leaf also growing in the forest; it is prepared like cooked vegetables, similar to spinach. It enabled endurance and courage comparable to the effects of cocaine.

<sup>72</sup>The term *Mwámi* is a reflex of \**yáma*, an ancient root in the languages of the Great Lakes (Vansina, 1990a: 356).

of northern Maniema. The leader of the *lusumba* of the Bapakombe is also called *mwami*, for example. While the term *lusumba* of the Bapakombe may point to an influence from the *esomba* healing associations, the *mambela* certainly entails influences from another type of healing association named *mumbira*. Using data provided by Biebuyck (1973) on the Nyanga and de Mahieu (1985) on the Komo, Vansina (1990a: 186) identifies an important innovative impulse coming from the Nyanga population originating from the Great Lakes area, onto their neighbours the Komo, and stretching into the lower Lindi region and to the Bali. Among the Nyanga the *mumbira* brotherhood had a healing function. The term *mumbira* is related to *mambela* of the Bali and also appears as a technical term in the circumcision rituals of the Komo. As suggested, the title of *ishumu* may also have its origins here. This corresponds further with earlier mentioned oral traditions of the Bali in relation to the origin of *mambela*. As Biebuyck (1973) points out in an article on the *mumbira* association of the Nyanga, further reminiscences are observable when comparing some *mumbira* objects displaying characteristics of the hornbill with the rare Perehorn from the Museum aan de Stroom (MAS) at Antwerp (Illustration 17) and the Nande-Batangi-horn from the RMCA. Similar musical instruments representing the initiation bird spirit are described by Bouccin and Joset in the context of the Bali and Bapakombe initiations respectively, confirming a pattern of borrowing between Komo, Nande, Bapakombe, Pere and Bali.

In summary, relying on the oral traditions and material culture of different populations, it seems there were pathways of cultural borrowing running between the Bali, Ndaka, Mbo, Bira, Komo, Bapakombe and northern Nande. While for the initiation brotherhoods, this flux seemed to have run predominantly from south to north, it seems leopard men spread in the opposite direction to the Bapakombe and further to the northern Nande. In further research these dynamics of cultural borrowing should be considered more closely and in a larger regional scheme. Further south-east, for example, in the *bwami* initiation of the Bembe, a population culturally related to the Nyanga, Nande and Lega, initiation into the ultimate grade of the *bwami bwa engwe*, leads to a distinct position in society. Biebuyck also hinted at historical connections between the *bwami* initiation of the Lega and Bembe and the *mwami* title from the Great Lakes. In the supreme grade *bwami bwa engwe* of the Bembe the candidate becomes one with the leopard and to accomplish this a medicine containing leopard substances is introduced under the skin. Sometimes the cuts made for this purpose are accompanied by cuts from iron claws held together by a hippopotamus tooth (*kalu a engwe*). From this moment he can transform into a leopard or send one against his aggressor. The principal regalia of the candidate is the *e'ombo*, a headdress made of the hide of a leopard's head (Gossiaux, 2013: 206-210). (Illustration 18).<sup>73</sup> Even though this seems a very different kind of institution

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<sup>73</sup>See also Moeller (1936a: 412-21) and Biebuyck (1972: 75-76).

than *anioto* and *vihokohoko*, it would be worthwhile investigating further the cultural borrowing among initiatory and leadership institutions in a wider regional scope.

## 1.5. Conclusion

The dispersal of leopard men associations cannot be considered to be divorced from a larger cultural and historical context. The north-east of Congo, as Vansina argued, contains a complex of cultural institutions, predominantly based on boys' initiation which he called brotherhoods. Intensive cultural borrowing has taken place among them. The fact that diverse language groups encountered each other here, makes the ethno-history at once complex and interesting, as it provides abundant ethnographic and linguistic data for comparative approaches which help to reconstruct directions and time-lines of migrations and of cultural borrowing. It seems that adopting institutions from other populations was common in this region and much inspired by confrontations with rival groups and adaptation to new circumstances. The emergence and dispersal of leopard men may well have been part of these complex processes. As an association probably rooted in Buan Bantu cultural tradition, links and collaboration were established with other cultural institutions of other origins, such as *mambela* and also *ambodima*. In itself the leopard men initiation was also adopted by other populations such as Bapakombe and passed on to northern Nande. It seems that mutual cultural borrowing has taken place among the initiatory complexes along the population chain of Bali-Ndaka-Mbo-Bira-Komo-Bapakombe-Nande. It may well be that the initiatory complexes were also the framework at the heart of which the leopard men initiation passed from one population to another. Both among the Bali as among the Bapakombe, for chiefs who wanted to obtain leopard men it was a regular practice to send their men to be initiated in the *mambela* or *lusumba* of those chiefs who did possess them. In summary, we can conclude that the inception of leopard men should be considered in light of institutional innovation, as an example of cultural borrowing and of the entangled-ness of various cultural institutions in the context of political competition. In view of future research, the sociolinguistic analysis of terminology related to institutions occurring in the wider region, in combination with the study of the related ethnographic data and material culture, would have great potential for getting a better insight into the dynamics of cultural borrowing and the ethno-history of the region.



**Illustration 17: Horn of the Pere or Nande.**

**Wood and pigment, H. 79.5 cm**

**MAS | Museum aan de Stroom – Ethnographic collection, AE.1956.0024**

**© MAS - photo : Hugo Maertens**



**Illustration 18: Leopard hide hat *é'umbu* of the Bembe.**

**Donated by Daniel Biebuyck, 1955.**

**Leopard hide, string.**

**Royal Museum for Central Africa, EO.1955.3.162-1**

**© RMCA - photo: Jean-Marie Vandyck**



## **Chapter 2. Leopard Men conflicts under Foreign Occupations: the Zanzibari slave trade and the Belgian colonisation**

The goal of this chapter is to give an overview of the historical context in which leopard men hostilities occurred, sketching the living conditions of the populations under the Zanzibari slave trade and the Belgian colonisation. Generally, in colonial sources, local societies and their cultures are regarded as disconnected from their historical setting. Activities such as leopard men killings were not acknowledged as attempts at emancipation in the context of foreign occupations, but rather as example of the uncivilised state of the local populations. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the animosities at the basis of the killings were triggered in several ways by the political and social atmosphere created under successive foreign occupations. To the local population the slave raiding era and the Belgian colonisation were obviously a war-like crisis situation in which they had lost their rights of self-determination. In this Chapter I argue that leopard men killing was one of several political strategies adopted to obtain or confirm control over populations, land and revenues. Through instigating a reign of terror local leaders intimidated their rivals or those cooperating with the colonial regime, forcing them to keep quiet about the murders.

During the first decades of the colonial era, leopard men killings were hardly mentioned. Travellers and military personnel never stayed in one place very long, and did not take a very profound interest in the local populations. In these earliest sources attacks by leopards are regularly mentioned among Bali populations. The colonial agents had long remained sceptical, ignoring or disregarding as religious delusions or as real leopard attacks, any rumours about leopard men. This changed over time. From the 1920s more administrative documents appear treating leopard men attacks as real and documenting the way the administration dealt with them. Based on such documents I will give an overview of the colonial context and the administrative history and devote particular attention to the way administrators and legal personnel dealt with leopard men under the Belgian administration. This reconstruction is essential to this work, as it helps to understand leopard men killings better as part of the dialectic processes between different social groups trying to maintain their position in the colonial society. In the next chapter we will then be in a position to treat the conflicts in more detail.

### **2.1. The slave trade and the foundation of the Congo Free State (1870s-1908)**

Oral traditions among the Bali and in the Beni region refer to the earliest leopard men attacks prior to, or during, the slave raids. Leopard men attacks were rarely mentioned by military personnel of the Congo Free State who were breaking the power of slave traders to bring the Congo under colonial control. The Congo Free

State comprised the large Congo river basin region in Central Africa which was procured by the Belgian king Leopold II with the consent of the international community. During this era leopards attacking people are sometimes mentioned, which may really have been leopard men attacks, as I will argue.

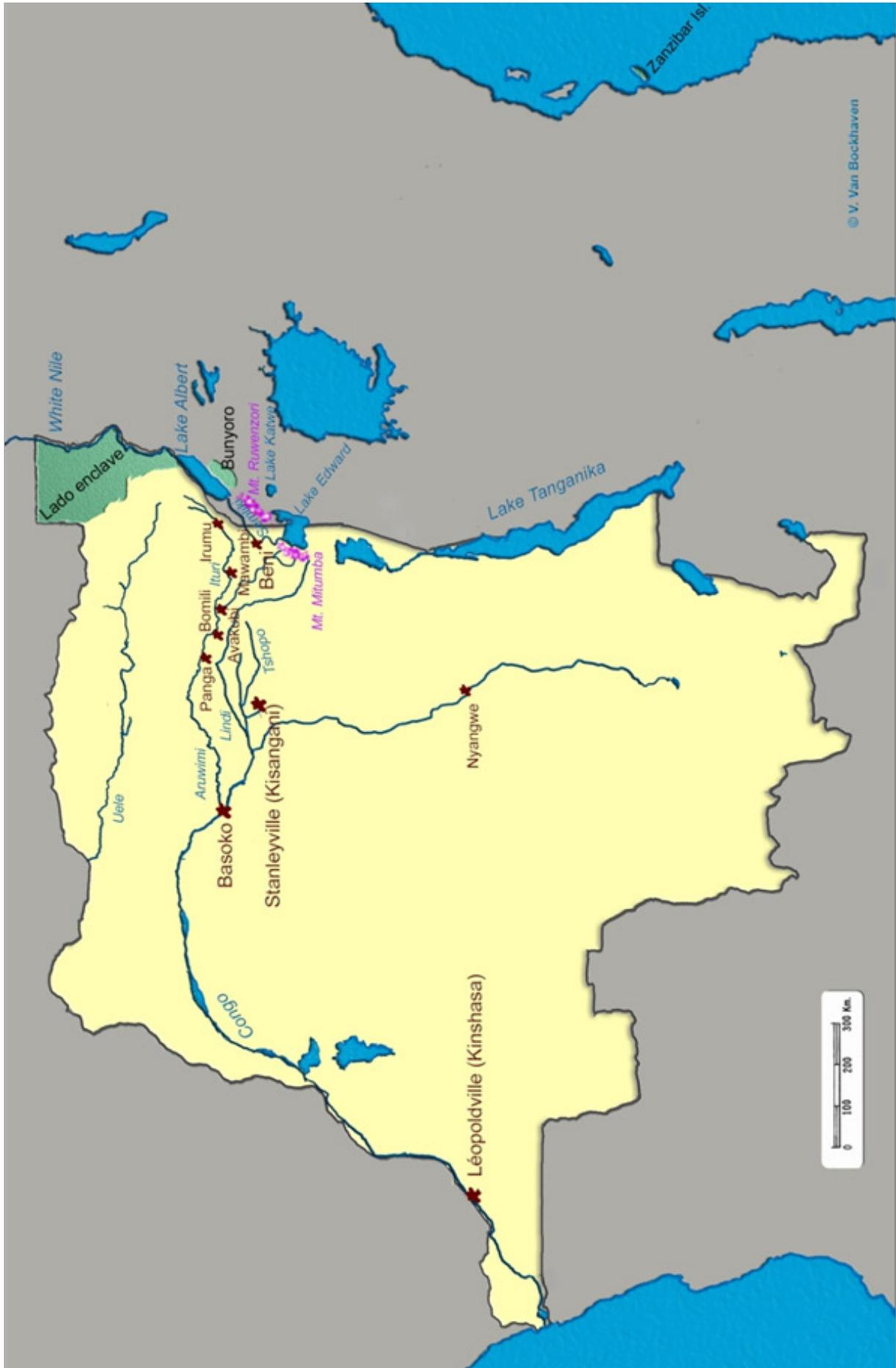
### **2.1.1. The slave trade**

In the last decades of the 19th century the north-eastern forest of the Congo Basin came under the control of slave and ivory trading chiefs (Map 4). There were two spheres of influence, a northern one under the control of Sudanese traders, and a southern one which was under the control of chiefs operating from Zanzibar. The region studied was embedded in the southern Zanzibari sphere in which the slave and ivory trader Tippo Tip played a significant role. Tippo Tip was the main Zanzibari trading chief ruling over the east of Congo in the 1880s. Wangwana was a generic name for all the populations who were enslaved or subjected by the traders from Zanzibar, were culturally influenced by them and spoke Swahili, and who were raiding and extorting the resources of the country to their own advantage. Only the top layer of chiefs was actually rooted in Zanzibar, while the mass was conquered and enslaved people from the African mainland.<sup>74</sup> Caravans consisted mainly of slaves carrying ivory to the east Coast of Africa from where they were shipped to Zanzibar and sold on the market.

Henry Morton Stanley witnessed the quick expansion of the Zanzibari into the mainland. Stanley met Tippo Tip at Nyangwe (Maniema) and was escorted by him on his first journey across central Africa from east to west along the Congo river between 1874 and 1877. Nyangwe, west of Tanganyika Lake, was the main hub for Zanzibari expansion into the north-east of Congo in the following 15 years. Tippo Tip had continued his expansion following the Congo upstream and eastward following the Aruwimi/Ituri. During Stanley's second journey from 1879 to 1884, which he undertook in the service of the International Africa Association at the command of King Leopold II, Stanley established posts along the Congo river making local chiefs sign treaties to confer their lands in preparation for the colonial occupation. Under the cover of this front organisation, of which Leopold was the chairman and which officially had philanthropic purposes, Leopold II was able to prepare his claim on the Congo as a colony, resulting in the foundation of the Congo

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<sup>74</sup>Congo officials used the name "arabisés". Other names were Bakusu and Manyema, which were in fact specific groups amongst them whose name was by extension used to indicate the people who had been enslaved and assimilated by the Wangwana in general. The name Manyema was first only used for the people of the region of Nyangwe, but it was extended to all related populations to the west of the Tanganyika lake. In the end it was also used to indicate Bakusu and to the porters who could be hired at Ujiji (Tanzania), who differ from them culturally and linguistically (Czekanowski, 1924: 240).



Map 4: Map of the Congo (around 1900).



Free State. During his second voyage, from west to east this time, Stanley recorded that Wangwana had extended their control northward, to the region between the Upper Congo at Kisangani and the Albert and Edward lakes.<sup>75</sup> From the beginning the relationship between the representatives of Leopold II's Congo Free State and the Wangwana was ambiguous. To take control over the region, the founders of the Congo Free State were competing with, but also had to rely on, the Wangwana. For strategic reasons Tippu Tip was employed by the new state as Governor of the Stanley Falls Zone in 1888, containing the region around Kisangani, but it was only a matter of time before the two rival parties started fighting. When the Wangwana tried to push further north towards the Bomokandi and Uele rivers, they were quite suddenly stopped by the troops of the Congo State and a war started (Stanley, 1890, Vol. I: 63-72; Stanley, 1890, Vol. II: ; Lejeune-Choquet, 1906; Czekanowski, 1924).

While most of the sources of the time are travel diaries of expeditions providing scattered, if any, information on local populations, there are a few sources which give a good level of insight into their living conditions under the Wangwana hegemony. Jan Czekanowski, an anthropologist travelling with the German von Mecklenburg expedition in 1907 and 1908, published an ethnographic volume on the expedition in 1924. It is an invaluable source on the culture and history of the Ituri and adjacent regions at the beginning of the 20th century. Czekanowski (1924) equally synthesises and builds further on information collected by earlier expeditions, his main sources being Stanley's travel diary (1890) and the latter's companion, Stuhlmann's account of the Emin Pasha relief expedition (1894). Interestingly, Czekanowski focuses strongly on the changes the region had undergone between the 1890s and 1924, especially under the influence of the Zanzibari trade and the Belgian presence. He devotes attention to the relationships between the locals and these successive conquerors at the dawn of Belgian colonialism. His ethnographic descriptions are, in other words, interlaced with the particular history of the region at that time and details about the effects on the lives of locals. This historical contextualisation gives us insight into the relationships among population groups.

The region studied overlaps two particular spheres of the Zanzibari traders. The Lenda river was the border between the spheres of influence of the Wangwana of Avakubi and the Wangwana of Mawambi. Avakubi became the most important among Wangwana settlements founded under the leadership of Abed-bin-Salim, and his son, Said-bin-Abed at the Ituri, Lenda and Lindi rivers. This happened in the 1880s while Stanley was travelling in the region. From Avakubi, expeditions were undertaken towards the Uele where confrontations with Azande and Mangbetu occurred (Stanley, 1890, Vol. I and II; Czekanowski, 1924: 241-5; Stuhlmann,

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<sup>75</sup>This expedition to liberate Emin Pascha from the Sudanese Mahdists was led by Henry Morton Stanley. The Mahdist were muslim rebels fighting the British colonisers of the Egyptian-Ottomon empire.

1894: 576). The second most important settlement was to be Mawambi, founded around 1886 by Ismaili, a slave of the Zanzibari trader Kilonga-Longa. Coming from Kivu, Kilonga-Longa had infiltrated the Semliki valley in the 1880s and raided the Mitumba mountains and the northern slopes of the Ruwenzori mountains. The valley was especially of interest to the traders because it provided them with an easy passage. Furthermore it was rich in cattle and ivory and gave easy access to the salt resources of Lake Katwe, north-east of Lake Edward. Besides Kilonga-Longa, the Semliki valley also attracted other foreigners from the other side of the Great Lakes, such as Karakwenzi from Rwanda and Kabarega from Bunyoro, Uganda. They all preyed upon the region by taking food and holding captives for ransom in the Bashu kingdom (Packard, 1976: 218-29).<sup>76</sup> In this kingdom, furthermore, a local power struggle took place around that time which put even more strain on the region.<sup>77</sup> From the Semliki valley the Wangwana moved northward to the Ituri river and settled at Mawambi. From Mawambi more settlements were founded by Kilonga-Longa's men to the east and north, of which the settlement of Beni was the significant strategic one.<sup>78</sup> This station was occupied by, and named after, the Nande chief Mbene (Stanley, 1890, Vol. I & II; Czekanowski, 1924: 241-5; Stuhlmann, 1894: 576).

The Wangwana suppressed, enslaved and extorted ivory from the locals. Their strategy consisted of repeated sudden and small-scale raids. Wangwana took women from the subjected populations which gave way to a mixed population of black Muslims. Also young boys were enslaved and trained at Wangwana settlements. They were taught Swahili and Islam and were circumcised. Subjected people were supplied with weapons and coerced into slave raiding against neighbouring populations. Local people fled from their villages and hid in the forest. In order to keep the peace with the Wangwana and avoid being raided, local chiefs had to pay high taxes in ivory (Stanley, 1890: Vol. I & II; Czekanowski, 1924: 247-50; Schebesta, 1934: 58). Czekanowski (1924: Tafel 101) reports that in 1907-8 the Bali population still counted few women as a consequence of such Wangwana raids.<sup>79</sup> At

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<sup>76</sup>See also RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 28-9).

<sup>77</sup>The struggle for hegemony occurred between Kasumbakali and Vyogho. See footnote 186.

<sup>78</sup>The Wangwana had chased the Bunyoro chief Kabarega. The latter tried to extend his influence to the east, from Katwe. In 1892, during the struggle against Kabarega, the British, under the command of Cpt. Lugard, occupied Katwe (salt lake). Kilonga-longa, the Wangwana leader of Mawambi, reached a settlement with the British to take the Semliki river as the border between their territories but this was refuted later based on the Belgian claim on the east bank of the Semliki (Packard, 1976: 226).

<sup>79</sup>In 1883 Stanley (1890: Vol. I ) saw the traces of the raiding at the mouth of the Aruwimi and the right bank. The Wangwana returned with booty of slaves and ivory. Stanley had witnessed the devastations of Bali villages by the men of Kilonga-longa between the Lenda and Ituri rivers.

that moment they had already been under Belgian control for about 10 years. In the 1930s the memory of this era was still very vivid and Wangwana were not considered as friendly by the locals.

### **2.1.2. The foundation of the Congo Free State and the military conquest of the slave traders**

In the initial period of occupation of the Congo Free State, the region was under martial law and Europeans were scarcely present. Most of them were colonial agents, in the service of the Force Publique, the colonial army, actively subjugating local populations. This period is characterised by military conquest and insurrections. Military conquest was initially meant to eradicate the Wangwana slave trade, but from the beginning it was also used against local chiefs, forcing them to pay taxes in ivory and rubber.

From 1892 until 1894 the so-called Arabo-Swahili wars took place. Several military operations were carried out by the Congo Free State against the Wangwana to break their hegemony. In the years 1896 and 1897 both military and mutineers of the big expedition of Baron Dhanis to conquer the Lado-enclave, to break the Islamic rebellion of the Mahdi's, put considerable strain on the Ituri region.<sup>80</sup> This particularly affected the regions of Avakubi, Mawambi and Beni. In this conquest, sections of the army consisting of inland arabised soldiers started a mutiny on several occasions. Several letters and diary notes written by military personnel give us an idea of the effect on the local population of one branch of Dhanis' expedition. The column led by the military commander Bodart, travelled through the Ituri forest in 1896 from Stanleyville via Avakubi, Mawambi, and Irumu towards the Uele in 1896 (Salmon, 1977). Bodart's column consisted of local, mostly "arabisé" soldiers who were not trained and whose food supplies were not taken care of. They had to rely very much on local Wangwana auxiliaries for porters and food supplies. While the food supply was very poor causing the soldiers to plunder, the porters were locals who were enslaved by the Wangwana chiefs. They were very poorly treated and starved along the caravan trails (Lejeune-Choquet, 1906; Salmon, 1977).

The vanguard of Dhanis's army, consisting largely of arabised Tetela soldiers from the interior of the Congo, started a mutiny and withdrew southward, plundering as they went. Dhanis retreated and subsequently lost control over Irumu and Mawambi. Withdrawn to Avakubi they gained the support of the military commander Henry. A confrontation with the mutineers then took place in the Aruwimi region. At that time many local Wangwana chiefs were officially on the side of the Congo

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<sup>80</sup>This enclave, which was strategically important to the Congo Free State, as it gave access to the White Nile, was leased by the British to Leopold II as part of a treaty until the latter's death in 1910. At that point it became part of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (Leopold, 2005; 2009).

Free State but the mutineers were also seeking alliances from amongst them. Henry reconquered Mawambi and the mutineers retreated southward ravaging the Semliki valley. Henry and his men constantly feared a general revolt in which their Wangwana auxiliaries would change sides to support the mutineers. Henry tried his best to retain their loyalty. Wangwana auxiliaries, among whom were Mbene and Kisenge, seemed to remain loyal to Henry's side but Henry and his compatriots never trusted them entirely. The crucial military blow to the mutineers was the victory over the Wangwana chief Kibonge, who had been supporting the mutineers with weapon supplies. Henry intercepted a weapon consignment from the Irish trader Stokes destined for Kibonge at Mawambi (Kilonga-Longa's post).<sup>81</sup> Henry defeated Kibonge in 1895 at the Lindi. While the threat of a general revolt was broken, bands of mutineers fled to the south and continued to wage a guerilla war until 1900 (Salmon, 1977: 65-67; Villers, 1961: 153-164, 203-254).

The Wangwana were subjugated and their trading activities with the east coast were broken, but they would continue to play a significant role in the Belgian colonisation of the region in the following two decades. The first European stations were founded at the Wangwana trading posts, whose network became the basis for the building up of colonial territorial organisation. Ironically enough the colonial army depended heavily on Wangwana allies to suppress the local populations. This caused difficult situations, as in the case of the Tetela mutiny (Salmon, 1977; Czekanowski, 1924: 245-7).<sup>82</sup>

### **2.1.3. Military repression of rubber strikes under the Congo Free State**

During the wars against Wangwana up until the Belgian take-over in 1908 the Congo Free State forced the populations to pay taxes, mostly in rubber and ivory, and to provide food and portorage for the personnel of the colony. In this atmosphere of military conquest and economic exploitation, living conditions were very grim. This era is characterised by insurrections against the rubber taxes and other forms of forced labour. The insurrections were violently subjugated by armed gangs of Wangwana middlemen on whom the colonial regime depended. Prior to 1908, under the Congo Free State, the region was barely accessible to travellers. Even though

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<sup>81</sup> Stokes was an Irish ivory trader who worked closely with the Wangwana and provided them with firearms in exchange for ivory. Stokes had close relationships with Kibonge, who was a man of Said-bin-Abed of Avakubi. Stokes was held responsible for providing the enemies of the Congo Free State with weapons and, under the command of Major Lothaire, was arrested by Henry and executed by hanging. This whole affair caused a diplomatic scandal between Great Britain and Belgium (Czekanowski: 1924: 247). See also RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 11). See Casement, Vangroenweghe and Vellut (1985).

<sup>82</sup> See also RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 11-12).

leopard men attacks are rarely mentioned, it is very probable that in this phase of history local populations attacked their wrongdoers in this way.

### *Among the Bali*

Several authors document rubber tax strikes as a consequence of the exploitation of the people. In 1897 Gabriel Grison, of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, founded a first mission post near Kisangani. From there they continued founding mission posts along the Aruwimi towards the east. The establishment of missions was seen as one of the ways to prevent British and German involvement in the north-eastern Congo and to resist Protestant missionaries coming from Uganda. This has to be understood in light of critiques of the abuses of the Congo Free State regime related to the harvesting of rubber, especially by British Protestant missionaries in the Congo Reform Association. Between Grison and the administrative authorities of the Stanley Falls Zone a rather profound animosity soon developed. The German missionaries of Grison's order, Massman, who was in charge of the mission post of Avakubi between 1904 and 1909, and his colleague Wulfers, criticised the abuses of the colonial administration in the rubber exploitation, and especially the privileged positions of the Wangwana auxiliaries. As the surroundings of Avakubi were crowded with Wangwana, both the Fathers Wulfers and Massman had to travel large distances to reach the local populations in their attempts at evangelisation. They established temporary residences further inland at Panga, Bomili, etc. The administrators particularly opposed their frequent travels, as these enabled the Fathers to see the consequences of the rubber exploitation and witness the terror of the rubber soldiers. As a result of their critical interventions, the state administrators undertook legal attacks against the Fathers portraying them as enemies of the state in order to scare them off. Wulfers drowned in the Ngayu river on one of his trips in 1908 and in 1909 Massman was commanded by his superiors to leave Congo never to return. Possibly his bitterness at not ultimately being able to return to his beloved mission contributed to his later publications in the *Kongo-Korrespondenz*, a journal of the Kongo Liga, an association founded in Germany in 1910 as a late branch of the Congo Reform Association. Massman published anonymous eye-witness accounts in several articles in 1910-1911. His contributions detail the conditions during the rubber tax strike of 1907 among the Bali and its repression by the state (Delathuy, 1994: 258-268).<sup>83</sup>

When Massman (1920: 160) travelled in the region of Bomili in 1907-8 the general rumour spread that the people of the rubber posts Panga and Bomili had started a rebellion, which spread to Avakubi. Czekanowski (1924: 325-6) equally mentioned this rebellion in 1907, and an earlier one in 1903-4, among Bali and

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<sup>83</sup>Massman's publications under the title "Die Verhältnisse im Kongo vor drei Jahren. Ein Steuerstreik der Eingeborenen" date from the end of 1910 to 6 January 1911 in the numbers 5, 6, 7 of *Kongo-Korrespondenz*.

their neighbours. The Bali were displeased with the ever increasing rubber quotas demanded from them. The consequence was that they had to spend ever more time camping in the forests in poor conditions, in their enemies' territories to reach suitable trees to harvest rubber.<sup>84</sup> This situation prevented them from planting their gardens, which eventually led to starvation. Massman (1920: 271-6) wrote that the resistance of the populations was linked to a cult which found its origin between Panga and Bomili evolving around a *dawa* (medicine) named *mbassa* transforming the bullets of the Europeans into water. The ritual specialists of the cult moved around secretly to offer their *dawa* to the chiefs, who stopped collecting rubber. In this way the *mbassa* cult reached Avakubi.<sup>85</sup> As I discussed in the previous chapter, the appearance of the *ambodima* dance occurred in this context, and was connected to *mbassa* by Bouccin.

Authors such as Massman provide detailed examples of the harsh punishments inflicted on the populations for their unwillingness to collect rubber. Villages were occupied by the army, massacres were taking place, men were imprisoned and carried off to serve in the Force Publique.<sup>86</sup> The violence inflicted on the populations was in several ways a continuation of the slave trade regime of the Wangwana. These retained a privileged position as they were generally considered, as Czekanowski (1924: 247) expressed it "*the only organised and disciplined element in the country*" by the Europeans present, and the Congo Free State had to rely on them to keep control over the populations. The military commander Leclercq gives us an idea on how Wangwana intervened in a rebellion of the Aruwimi populations against the Congo Free State from May 1894 to 1896 (Salmon, 1970: 68). He describes the methods of "pacification" used to overcome populations seeking refuge in the forest as they refused or were unable to supply the colonial agents with guides, porters and food. Punitive expeditions were not carried out by the troops of the Force Publique, but instead gangs of Wangwana were

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<sup>84</sup>This also applied to the neighbouring populations. The Momvu told Czekanowski (1924: 402-3, 467) that every two months they had to stay in the forest to cut rubber. People fled from their villages in order to escape this slave labour. The Mvuba between Andudu and Fariala. Once every three months they had to reside in the forest for longer periods of time to cut rubber. They were supervised by a colonial administrator.

<sup>85</sup>RMCA HIST Papiers Planche (1908: 40). Raoul Planche equally hints at the role of "féticheurs" in the rebellions.

<sup>86</sup>Several examples are given by Massman. Travelling from the Nepoko river to Avakubi, Massman (1920) encountered a village which refused to carry loads of rubber and provide food to the administration and soldiers. The post-head of Nepoko settled in one village with fifty soldiers carrying out a police operation. Fifty prisoners were taken and carried off to Stanleyville in chains to become soldiers of the Force Publique. Massman also encountered other villages in the region of Bomili and Panga where soldiers were stationed. The soldiers had to raid the surrounding villages for food.

sent to capture or kill the rebels and burn down their villages. The Wangwana chief Mokologando and his gang were known for punishing the villages of the Aruwimi that were in rebellion. These gangs lived in large Wangwana villages and were under the command of Zanzibari chiefs operating under the authority of the Europeans. Mokologando had previously been an enemy of the Europeans, but Henry had gained Mokologando's support to work on the side of the Congo Free State.<sup>87</sup> These kinds of gangs not only devastated the rebel villages, but also ransacked peaceful villages on their way. According to Leclercq, they killed the men and enslaved women and children in their raids. The latter were kept as prisoners and arabised, never to return to their villages and they were "made into enemies of the state". At Avakubi there were four such gangs continuously raiding for large quantities of ivory which they brought to the chief of the post in return for European goods. These gangs not only operated in the "arabic zone", but also raided other districts where no state posts were yet established (Salmon, 1970: 40-41,70; Villers, 1961: 149). Massman also mentions such activities of Wangwana gangs.<sup>88</sup>

Wangwana enjoyed a great deal of privileges, much to the dismay of the missionaries. While the locals were performing forced labour tasks, the Wangwana were free from the harshest duties, such as rubber cutting. They were responsible for the maintenance of the station and the collection of harvested rubber, and were in charge of the transport services and provisions along caravan trails. Massman describes how they ruled as in effect overlords enslaving locals, in rubber collection, portage and all other kinds of labours, and abducting their women and children (Massman, 1920: 69-75). The government had instructed them to found numerous new settlements along the roads and populate them with Wangwana to provide caravans with food supplies. This practice accounts for the fact that travellers over long distances only encountered these Wangwana villages along the roads, as the locals lived withdrawn in the forest hiding from the rubber officer.<sup>89</sup>

Many arguments between the administration and the missionaries Massman and Grison were about the Wangwana's subjugation of local people. From a religious point of view, the Wangwana were obviously an obstacle to their missionary work. Massman writes for example about abuses during a count of the Wangwana population in 1904. All persons listed by Wangwana leaders as being in their

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<sup>87</sup>Mokologando and Saïd are named as the killers of Emin Pasha (Delathuy: 1985: 10).

<sup>88</sup>In 1907 a military operation was sent by the chief of the post of Avakubi against a number of villages to the southwest. At least 78 people were killed, including women and children. Massman particularly mentions that the Wangwana Mabaki and his gang killed women and children on purpose with a bayonet. Also 19 women and children were taken prisoner to Avakubi. Massman visited them in prison and heard that some of the women had been raped by their guards.

<sup>89</sup>In 1907 Czekanowski (1924: 248; 319) only saw Wangwana villages along the road Avakubi-Mawambi-Irumu road and on the road from Avakubi-Bomili, as the Bali were hiding in the forest.

possession were recognised as such by the colonial administration. Relative to the number of slaves they owned, they were obliged to deliver rice and bananas to the military and rubber posts. Women especially were kept hidden in isolated villages in order to minimise the amount of work. People trying to escape slavery of Wangwana by running away to the missions were forced to return by the administration. Missionaries could not advance their cause against the necessity of forced labour to maintain the functioning of the colony. The governor, Demeulemeester, an enemy of Grison, openly defended the Wangwana and considered them a necessary civilised element, providing crucial services and food to the state (Massman, 1920: 69-75; Delathuy, 1994: 235, 239, 241, 261-5).

According to Massman, Wangwana continued to lure girls into slavery, stealing them from their families or the mission. One of the underlying reasons for this was the occurrence of syphilis, which spread among Wangwana in particular rendering them infertile. According to Massman syphilis raged as a consequence of harems and the fact that slaves were not allowed to establish their own families. The latter probably was an allusion to the existence of prostitution. In line with this are the critiques of colonial personnel living a degenerate lifestyle by keeping *ménagères* (housekeepers; this word was used in a euphemistic way) who were often chosen from among girls having received an education at the mission.<sup>90</sup> However, it seems that missionaries also abducted people from their villages forcing them to stay at the missions (Delathuy, 1994: 291, 296).

Other fulminations by Leclercq, Grison and Massman were against the abuse of the colonial officers. During the initial phase of military conquest, posts of the state agents were often very isolated, which increased the chances for abuse and cover-ups, not only by Wangwana, but also by state agents themselves. Leclercq and the other sources reveal a distinction between “normal” behaviour, even in the context of military conquest or occupation, and what was considered as abusive or immoral behaviour in this context. Leclercq himself, for example, used a lot of violence against rebelling villages during the “pacification” as was common practice at that time (Salmon, 1970), but clearly is disgusted by a certain Lemoine, the head of the Avakubi post, who let his agents starve, abused women and claimed them for his harem as “he wants to play the big arab chief”. It is a typical example of megalomania and abuse of power by colonial agents, sometimes linked to paranoia in the case of Lemoine, and inspired by alcohol abuse (Salmon, 1970: 42-3). Lemoine, without any valid reason, commanded a firing squad to execute 30 soldiers who were accused of conspiring against him. It is such abuses which Joseph Conrad

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<sup>90</sup>Massman (1920: 166-167) complains that the young men of the mission could not find brides as a consequence of the harems of the Wangwana. When Wulfers drowned in 1908 there was a legal case against his mission for the abuse of a woman who had fled the mission to return to her village. This is mentioned by Raoul Planche in his papers at the RMCA HIST.

fictionalised in *Heart of Darkness*.<sup>91</sup> Grison and Massman opposed alcohol misuse and the freemasonry of people in high places, especially at the Public Prosecutors' Department of Stanleyville, who were boycotting their attempts to raise issues of abuse (Delathuy, 1994: 291, 296).<sup>92</sup>

### ***In the Beni region***

In the Beni region the situation was potentially different as the leaders of the post of Beni were Wangwanised Nande. A similar role to that of Wangwana gangs at Avakubi was played by the Nande-Wangwana of chief Mbene and his right hand, Kirongotsi. When the Belgians established the first posts in the Semliki region in 1896 and 1897, they supplied Mbene and Kirongotsi, formerly Wangwana of Kilonga-Longa, with firearms to suppress resistant Wangwana in the Semliki valley and also to fight Karakwenzi, the Rwandan rebel chief who had built up a realm in the region. In 1897, Mbene and Kirongotsi also helped Henry in the attack on the Tetela mutineers at the Lindi river (Packard, 1976: 226; Salmon, 1977: 62-68).<sup>93</sup> These activities are a background to leopard men killings in the following generations.

Similar large rebellions took place in the Beni region in 1906 and 1907. Populations of Beni generally opposed submission to the colonial government. Grison writes that the road from Mawambi to Beni was deserted (Delathuy, 1994: 254). Several rebellious chiefs had withdrawn to the mountains. The region was placed under armed supervision by the military Bogaerts to bring Karibumba and other revolting chiefs under control. Eventually a number of chiefs submitted to Bogaerts. The chiefs Karibumba and Mukupi were the last ones to submit. All the mentioned rebelling chiefs were later involved in relation to leopard men conflicts.<sup>94</sup>

In the sphere of influence of Beni, the Wangwana-Nande chief Mbene, and his son Kisenge, had thus assumed an accommodating role to the officers of the Congo Free State. Nande populations under their authority moved into north-western

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<sup>91</sup>Lemoine is described by Leclercq as "Rom nr 2" (Salmon, 1970: 28, 32). See Hochschild (1998). Hochschild suggests that Rom is source of inspiration for the character of Colonel Kurz.

<sup>92</sup>This animosity should be seen in light of the Belgian politics of the day in which the socialist anti-clerical opposition challenged the Catholic government. At several places in the Congo, administrators and particularly legal functionaries, performed anti-clerical actions. In the Stanleyville region and in other regions this concerned conflicts between Catholics and Freemasons. A particular example concerned four state functionaries making a drunken parody on the holy mass occurred in Stanleyville in 1911 causing a big stir (Delathuy, 1994: 301-337). In general the work of missionaries was criticised (especially the foundation of chapel-farms) for forming states within the colonial state (Van Cauwelaert, 1971: 176-8).

<sup>93</sup>See also RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 116).

<sup>94</sup>See also RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 116).

forest lands to settle along the roads abandoned by rebels. On the road from Beni to Mawambi, Czekanowski (1924: 330-331) had already encountered such villages populated with Nande from Beni in order to supply travellers and to take care of the roads. As these chiefs were living withdrawn in the forest, far away from their burnt settlements, new settlements by the name of Kumba-Kumba (Lukumba-Kumba) and Iddo were founded by the Nande along the roads instead. Formerly, Lukumba-Kumba had been a Bira or Bapakombe settlement, for example.

As mentioned earlier, in this initial period information on leopard men attacks is rare. It is first mentioned by Millis in an article published in 1904, linking it to the *mambela* initiation. Further it was mentioned by other military personnel working in the region such as Raoul Planche and Federspiel (1909).<sup>95</sup> The first detailed information was noted by Federspiel. It concerned the murder of a translator named Pascal, accompanying the deputy Public Prosecutor Viscount Jacques De Lichtervelde in the Ndaka region prior to 1907. Czekanowski (1924: 326) adds, probably referring to *mambela*, that the rebellions were associated by the colonial agents with secret societies of which the initiates were called “anyoto”. In other sources only leopard attacks are mentioned which could be leopard men attacks. Leclercq, for example, mentions one of his soldiers being killed in his hut by a leopard at Panga. Leclercq observed there were many leopards in this area, particularly among Bali, and that the locals only went to their plantations armed with a lance and shield (Salmon: 1970: 28, 30). This frequent occurrence of attacks may rather point at leopard men activities.

## **2.2. Leopard men conflicts under the Belgian colonial administration: an overview of the administrative and legal developments (1908-1935)**

After the Belgian government took control over the colony in 1908, it was several decades before an administrative regime started to fall into shape. The land was divided into districts which were subdivided into territories, consisting of chiefdoms and “secteurs” which held together smaller amalgamations of population groups, consisting of clans and villages, which could not be identified as part of a chiefdom. From the beginning the chiefdom was taken as the basic territorial unit, supervised by territorial agents. Only in 1914 did provinces come into being.

In the Belgian Congo indirect rule was practiced from the beginning, which meant that the colonial rulers recognised pre-existing territorial groups and appointed their legitimate chiefs as intermediaries, on the condition they cooperated (see Table 1). The *chef médaillé* was the chief appointed by the government, who wore a medal as a token of his function. In this policy the *chef coutumier*, or traditional chief,

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<sup>95</sup>RMCA HIST, Papiers Planche (1908: 45-46).

was ideally the one to receive this role. Despite their ethnographic questionnaires, colonial administrators did not often develop a good understanding of the social organisation of the populations. This caused them to interfere profoundly in the social organisation, causing more disturbances.

Furthermore, the role of *chef médaillé* was often taken up by ambitious young men or forced upon other straw men acting on behalf of the real chiefs. In practice indirect rule was difficult to implement as previously existing social organisation had suffered much from the Arab slave and ivory trade, related internal warfare and colonial conquest. It gave way to further fragmentation. So in practice Belgian rule turned out to be rather a form of direct rule as the administration named and deposed chiefs at will or whenever they did not comply. The tasks of the chiefs was to combat ‘savage’ customs, maintain law and order and punish crime (as defined in Belgium), to maintain villages, roads and bridges, count subjects, raise taxes, to inform about threat or unrest, supply labour, recruit soldiers, and, from 1917, also to compel subjects to raise and sell crops. Under the Minister of Colonies, Louis Franck, indirect rule became an official policy from 1920. A lot of effort was invested in the restoration of formerly disintegrated political units, such as the Bashu chiefdom. The implementation was not a success and by 1933 the policy was abandoned. Furthermore, there were regular revisions of the administrative units, causing turmoil (Vansina, 2010: 178-180, 183; Turner, 2007: 28, 56; Lemarchand, 1964: 40).

As the territorial administration and the installation of a bureaucracy developed, mostly during the 1920s and 30s, the control over local people, their tasks and their revenues intensified. What it boiled down to was that even though living conditions generally improved, people continued to be coerced into labour services

COLONIAL HIERARCHY		
EUROPEANS	Governor-General	Colony
	Provincial Governors	Province (since 1914)
	District Commissioner - Deputy District Commissioner	District
	Territorial administrators (different grades) - Territorial Agents (different grades)	Territory
AFRICANS	- Local clerks and policemen	
	Chefs médaillés - <i>Sous-chefs</i>	Chiefdom/ Secteur
	Capita (village chiefs)	Village

**Table 1: Scheme of the colonial hierarchy in the Belgian Congo**

and payment of taxes. In the meantime in the north-east, which was one of the most interesting regions of Congo for investors, businesses arose in need of labourers.<sup>96</sup> As labour tasks, the typical activities of road and railroad construction, cultivation of cash crops such as cotton, the harvesting of rubber and palm oil, transport services by portage or by boat, and mining activities were all occurring in this specific region. Military patrols and occupations, but also incarceration, banishment, regrouping of populations and replacing of villages were measures to coerce the population into meeting these expectations and as repercussions to resistance.<sup>97</sup> Local populations further opposed the colonial occupation. The openly armed rebellions which occurred during the first decades of colonial occupation had become rare because of the intensification of administrative control which enabled colonial agents to nip rebellion in the bud. Resistance to the colonial regime became more passive and the secret actions of leopard men which subverted colonial control were part of it. As the territorial administration developed the colonial battle against leopard men also changed over time.

Firstly, I will illustrate how the evolving practice of territorial administration and indirect rule fuelled hostilities among local power aspirants. Secondly, prior to discussing in more detail the culmination of the colonial battle against leopard men in the early 1930s, I will provide an overview of the changing attitudes to leopard men hostilities on the part of the colonial administration in the 1920s and 1930s.

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<sup>96</sup>For an overview of colonial company investments see Buelens (2007).

<sup>97</sup>See also RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 84-9) on the economic exploitation of the Beni territory under colonial administration. Some examples in the immediate action radius of leopard men in the 1920s and 30s are: ivory caravans of Interfina on the road Bomili-Panga; palm oil exploitation and carriages in the chiefdoms Bangbatala and Babamba among the Bali (RMCA AIMO Brandt (1923)); cotton plantations, road constructions between Bafwasende, Babeyru B, and Bomili; mining activities of Forminière (RMCA AIMO Libois (1933a)). Schebesta (1934: 73-74) describes how chiefs from the small Ndaka forest villages were all heading for Kaychui's residence, where the administrator was expecting them. Mayala, one of the chiefs depending on Kaychui, went there not knowing what the gathering was about. He was imprisoned the next morning and brought to Avakubi. The colonial agent accused Mayala and some other village chiefs of passive resistance, because they had refused to supply food and transport food for the construction of a new car road connecting Wamba and Avakubi. They were kept prisoners until their villages had done their duty. Mayala preferred relegation to submission and stayed in Avakubi for weeks. Among the neighbours of Ndaka, Schebesta (1934: 68) heard about a message from the head of the government post to command all the villages to start sowing cotton plants and to pick up the seeds at the post. People were protesting. They were warned that in case of refusal, they could be imprisoned.

### 2.2.1. Rivalries fuelled by territorial administration

While for the Bali populations intense territorial reorganisations were predominantly taking place between 1910 and 1920, for the Beni region the foundation of an administrative network occurred in the 1920s. The history of the administrative and legal battle against leopard men in this region therefore came later. Between 1920 and the early 1930s, the administrative and legal response to leopard men gangs in the Bali region was clearly characterised by more directed actions than before. In the Beni region serious legal investigations only started in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In archives and literature there are more traces of the colonial struggle against leopard men for the Bali region. The practice of territorial administration under the Belgian occupation in many cases gave rise to, or intensified, hostilities between chiefs and population groups. As we will see in the next chapter, leopard men hostilities were often triggered by administrative practices.

As colonial ethnography gained ground as an instrument to divide the country into more logical administrative units shaped after ethnic affiliations, the visions of colonial administration and the policy of indirect rule also evolved; particularly the view on who would ideally take the role of invested chief changed. For the Bali region this is illustrated, for example, by several administrative reports on political organisation by the administrators Hackars and Strubbe.<sup>98</sup> In a document of 1919 the District Commissioner Hackars makes an evaluation of a political reorganisation of the Avakubi territory of 1916. According to Hackars it was the natural desire of the populations themselves to join their relatives but previous installations of invested chiefs in the Avakubi region prevented this. The aim of colonial administration in this view was to restore the “original” constitution of the populations which were predominantly separated and dislocated during the slave trade. However, Hackars remarks that chiefs and populations who had gained power and independence from other groups under preceding administrative arrangements did not easily part with their privileges and manipulated colonial administrators by inventing stories about their migrations and affiliations with other populations in order to hold onto their positions. Based on ethnographic surveys, the guideline for appointing invested chiefs was the presumed general succession rule existing prior to the Wangana arrival: the rightful chief is the eldest son of the eldest branch of a clan.

Hackars’ opinion reflected the view that with time the “original” population’s historical and ethnic affiliation would become an important criterion for creating administrative divisions and appointing chiefs.<sup>99</sup> The Belgian territorial administration was therefore based on the interpretations of colonial agents of local

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<sup>98</sup>RMCA AIMO Hackars (1919) and Strubbe (1920).

<sup>99</sup>Strubbe, with reference to Hackars report, particularly points at the importance of the study of hierarchy and social organisation of populations in function of territorial administration.

power and intergroup relations. This caused particular problems. In the Congo genealogies and migration histories are important instruments for legitimising and claiming power. In this sense the colonial administration also brought opportunities for local power aspirants. Similar processes occurred elsewhere in the Congo.<sup>100</sup> When adding to this the subsequent administrative reorganisations -putting populations and their chiefs in alternating hierarchical constellations, and continuous appointments and dismissal of invested chiefs- we can get an idea of the turmoil this caused. Wangwana chiefs were equally hit. Their hierarchies were also ignored by the colonial administration and their power was waning since, with time, the *chef coutumier* was preferred as invested chief. Wangwana lost their privileged position as colonial control became stronger and their intermediary position was of reduced importance. Their religion and their past as slave traders started turning against them.

A complementary difficulty was that in numerous cases the local chiefs were initially happy to let a straw man take their place to become middlemen for the colonial government. With time these straw men acquired real control over resources, land and people which created tensions with the senior chiefs and populations who did not consider them as the legitimate power holders.<sup>101</sup> This too became a trigger for leopard men murders. In the previous chapter, I have brought to the fore the complementarity between *mambela* and *anioto*. The *mambela* initiation among the Bali was a very important means for imprinting in young boys their subservience to the ritual authority of their elders.<sup>102</sup> The leopard men murders were a strategy in the hands of these chiefs to maintain or reclaim their authority. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, leopard men crimes were equally used to impose silence upon potential rival chiefs during colonial investigations preparing for the constitution of chiefdoms and appointment of invested chiefs in the colonial administration.<sup>103</sup>

### *Wangwana chiefs versus chefs coutumiers*

The German missionary-ethnographer Schebesta (1934: 64-6, 69-71), who did fieldwork among the Mbuti Pygmies in this region in the 1930s, described the tensions between three chiefs. His testimony illustrates that the sympathy for

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<sup>100</sup>As indicated in a previous footnote the missionary Hulstaert (1972: 33-35, 37) criticised the work of the administrator Van der Kerken for having preconceived opinions related to his mission in colonial politics, namely the territorial reorganisation. Van der Kerken assumes relationships between groups on the basis of genealogies. Hulstaert objects that in certain cases the information gathered was not reliable and that Van der Kerken ignores linguistic and cultural facts which contradict the assumed common ascendance proclaimed in oral traditions. See also f.ex. for the Kongo as described by MacGaffey (2000: 63).

<sup>101</sup>See for example RMCA AIMO Winckelmans (1933: 3), Schebesta (1934: 38).

<sup>102</sup>See for example RMCA AIMO De Haen (1922: 2) and Libois (1933b: 1).

<sup>103</sup>See for example RMCA AIMO Absil (1934: 4).

local *chefs coutumiers* as opposed to Wangwana leaders was growing. Schebesta sympathised with the *ishumu* Abena of the Baenga, at the middle Ngayu river on the road Avakubi-Penge, claiming his authority based on ancestry. Abena loathed Kayumba and Kaychui, two Wangwana chiefs of southern Ndaka villages whom he regarded as usurpers. He avoided all foreign influences in his dress and wore bark-cloth loincloth, a shoulder belt of hide, and a few hides of wild cats hanging from his waist belt (Illustration 16).<sup>104</sup> Abena claimed descent from Moenga who founded the Baenga clan about 80 to 100 years before. Schebesta seemed ignorant of the fact that Abena was locally known as a leopard man chief.<sup>105</sup>

While Wangwana blamed the Belgians for their demise, Schebesta writes that they were unjustly privileged by the latter who still preferred Wangwana to be their headmen. Wangwana still considered themselves as superior to the locals and refused harsh labour, such as carrying loads, for example. The population count in their settlements had decreased significantly over two decades due to syphilis-related infertility. Their slaves had been set free and returned to their villages of birth and they were left impoverished. Despite their miserable situation, they still enjoyed a great deal of prestige and locals still converted to Islam for that reason. For outsiders it became difficult to distinguish between the original Wangwana and recent converts.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, the locals did not consider Wangwana as friendly due to their still recent memories of the slave trade.

Kayumba and Kaychui were important chiefs among the Ndaka appointed *chef de secteur* by the colonial administration. Kaychui and Kayumba became powerful thanks to the slave and ivory traders. Kayumba was the leader of the Mbo (or Mbo-Ndaka) and had his residence at the mouth of the Lenda in the Ituri. As a boy he was enslaved and raised among Wangwana. He gained his riches through the ivory trade and was known as a violent chief. Kaychui's residence was at the river bank opposite Avakubi. At the time Avakubi was conquered by the Wangwana, Kaychui's land belonged to a chief named Sombo. Kaychui's father collaborated with the Wangwana, pretending to be the chief instead of Sombo. Kaychui was later appointed chief by the Belgians, instead of the legitimate chief, Sombo. He was feared and loathed by many. Kaychui and Kayumba were enemies and they tried to

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<sup>104</sup>Interestingly Abena reminded Schebesta (1934: 69) of Munsa, the legendary Mangbetu king. Idealised representations of the Mangbetu in early travel reports and colonial administration was discussed in *African Reflections*, catalogue edited by Schildkrout and Keim (1990: 29-30, 256-7). In this case a customary chief is idealised as opposed to the Wangwana chief.

<sup>105</sup>RMCA AIMO Tihon and Winckelmans (1935)

<sup>106</sup>According to Schebesta (1934: 58) the recent converts were Muslim only in name. They only had to follow a few Koran lessons and were not obliged to denounce their original religion. One of the main differences with the "true" Wangwana was that they remained in their villages of birth and were only superficially influenced by Wangwana.

discredit each other by invoking their ambiguous pasts.

Schebesta's testimony contains much interesting information. It is likely that local populations loathed Wangwana for the atrocities they had inflicted on them in the past. Probably the fact that Wangwana associates still occupied important positions and were better perceived by the colonial administration must have caused friction. We can only guess whether this was one of the underlying reasons for leopard men attacks by chief Mbako, an important leopard men chief and an associate of Abena, against Kayumba in 1914. On the other hand, the generations of people of disparate origins associated with Wangwana, had an ambiguous position in the society. Wangwana had enslaved many children who were raised in Wangwana environments, or children who were born from enslaved women. By the 1930s, these former slaves had been able to return to their families. Many of these mixed populations also remembered their local roots which they could claim in the function of power positions and especially so when they were supported by their original family group. Probably, depending on the point of view of the colonial administrator in charge, both these associations could be played off against each other. Abena did this too: he clearly distanced himself from Wangwana by claiming a ritual authority which is visually expressed in his entirely indigenous regalia. Furthermore, colonial administrators had disagreements about who were the legitimate *chefs coutumiers* and which title corresponded best to this role. This opened up possibilities for power aspirants to negotiate their position. Different intersecting reasons were at play in the leopard men hostilities and the situation was more complex than assumed by the colonial administration due to this complex history of foreign occupation.

In the regions of Beni and Madiwe, the memories of Wangwana occupation under Mbene and his son Kisenge were another important trigger of leopard men hostilities. However, here too these old feuds did not continue to exist in their own right but were potentially enlivened through the policy of colonial administration. Particularly in the Beni region the hostilities against these chiefs, their accomplices and against Nande groups in general were fuelled by the territorial administration. As we will see, this led to a kind of war situation between certain Bapakombe chiefs and Kisenge and his allies.

In several cases the claim of Bapakombe as first occupants of the land indeed played a role in leopard men hostilities towards Nande. This was possibly triggered further by a certain preference for Nande as auxiliaries in the colonial administration and the fact that Bapakombe were not perceived as a "real" population group when encapsulated in administrative units controlled by Nande. Nande, who were seen as more loyal, were pushed by the colonial administration to move further northward into the forest, settling along the roads, occupying lands deserted by rebelling forest populations or settling in villages among forest populations. Packard and others

have referred to this process as being at times peaceful and at times violent.<sup>107</sup> In several instances leopard men killings from Bapakombe against Nande were indeed a consequence of Nande occupying Bapakombe lands and not acknowledging the rights of its first occupants. However, we have to be careful with the black-and-white view of Joset (1955: 25-26) that in the Beni region leopard men killings in the 1930s were predominantly a conspiracy of Bapakombe against Nande. Bergmans also disagreed with this interpretation of Joset. On different occasions Joset valued Nande as better organised and loyal to the colonial administrators, whereas Bapakombe were perceived as rebels and leopard men. But it is not correct that *vihokohoko* murders were only used by Bapakombe chiefs. Some Nande chiefs adopted leopard men killing from Bapakombe. Furthermore, several leopard men chiefs were also mentioned as having been involved in Wangwana raiding. In the next chapter, I will explore this further in light of the specific conflicts.

### ***Problems in identifying the legitimate 'chef coutumier'***

In the previous chapter, I reflected on the meaning of the title of *ishumu* in relation to *mambela*. In the colonial sources it is hard to distinguish between regional variations in the content of titles and misinterpretations by colonial administrators. The delicate nature of the practice of colonial administration is particularly illustrated by Bouccin's discussion with other colonial administrators concerning the titles of *tata ka mambela* and *ishumu* as opposed to *metundji*, which I have touched upon in the previous chapter. This discussion arose especially in relation to investigations of murders commanded by a certain chief Bangombe in 1933, which will be discussed further in this and the following chapters.

According to Winckelmans, based on an interrogation of chief Mbako who was involved in the killings, *ishumu* were the true leaders of the *mambela*. They gathered in a council presided over by a major *ishumu*.<sup>108</sup> Libois contests this. He thinks that Mbako had tricked Winckelmans by saying that *ishumu* decided

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<sup>107</sup>According to Packard (1976: 85) forest dwellers such as Bapakombe and Pere lived in the Mitumba Mountains prior to the Nande. Nande chased them to the west but they did resist e.g. early 20th century Mwami Lukandi of Maseki reported complaints of raids of forest populations on a Belgian reconnaissance party. Later Nande expansions into the forested regions of Bira, Pere and Bapakombe led to conflicts, but was sometimes a peaceful process. Packard cites Schebesta who described Nande expansion to the north of Beni in the 1930s where he encountered peaceful villages where Nande were settled as minorities in Bira villages, recognising their authority.

<sup>108</sup>RMCA AIMO Winckelmans (1933: 2-3). Winckelmans investigated the murders in the Budu territory against the Bayamane clan in 1930. He had questioned Mbako regarding the relationship between *anioto* and *mambela*. Mbako told him that the real chiefs of the Bali were the *ishumu* and that he had addressed Bakeboi *ishumu* to request from the big *ishumu* Dungbe, who presided over a council of small *ishumu*, to assist him in his vengeance.

about the crimes and that Winckelmans thus confused the *ishumu* with the *tata ka mambela*.<sup>109</sup> Libois subsequently wrote that the *ishumu* as a family chief is a political chief, whereas the *tata ka mambela* is a religious chief, and that the *ishumu* has no role in *mambela* or *anioto* murders. However, as discussed earlier the authoritative involvement of *ishumu* in *mambela* rites is very convincingly mentioned by several authors for other regions.<sup>110</sup> Libois wrote that the *ishumu* is the eldest in age of a group of families which together form a village. Big and small *ishumu* do not exist according to him, while other sources also refer to hierarchies of *ishumu* or big *ishumu*.

Bouccin also disagreed with Winckelmans on the exact role of *ishumu*, but his interpretation does not accord with Libois'.<sup>111</sup> The role of the family chief which Libois attributes to the *ishumu* is rather identified by Bouccin as the role of the *metundji nkuru*. Bouccin mentions that many colonial administrators confused the *ishumu* with the *metundji nkuru*. He claims the legitimate political power based on ancestry is represented by the *metundji*. As we discussed, Bouccin believed the political power of the *metundji* was usurped in the past by the *tata ka mambela*. The latter supposedly represented a religious authority originally, and only gained political control over the society during the special regime of the *mambela* initiation. The *ishumu* he considered but a servant of the *tata ka mambela*. According to Bouccin, rivalry existed between the *metundji* and the *tata ka mambela* but in practice the *metundji* never openly confronted the latter. As an example Bouccin indicated that some *metundji* chiefs had a dozen *tata ka mambela* among their administrators and that it is highly probable that they also made use of this connection for commanding *anioto* killings.

In Bouccin's report on *anioto* and *mambela* one can read between the lines that his preference for invested chiefs goes to the *metundji* who are considered the genuine traditional chiefs of the local populations.<sup>112</sup> Bouccin denied a legitimate political role to *mambela* and its leaders, by saying it usurped the previous and

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<sup>109</sup>RMCA AIMO Libois (1933a: 2-3). According to Libois Bakeboi was not *ishumu* but *tata ka mambela* of the Babandjo; Dughe was not *ishumu* but *tata ka mambela* of the Bafwadiriri (Bafwadjiri, Bafwadili) families. Libois also had difficulties understanding how Mbako, whom he considered an usurper imposed on the Babandjo by the Zanzibari, could have imposed his will on the *tata ka mambela* Dughe (Dugbe, Dughele) for organising a *mambela* initiation.

<sup>110</sup>See Bernard (1922), Moeller (1936a) and RMCA AIMO Brandt (1923) and Winckelmans (1933). e.g. by his contribution in performing the scarifications on initiates and by the fact that he is mentioned by more than one source to have abundant scarifications of *mambela* on his shoulders and back. Generally *ishumu* would undergo the incision twice and were tattooed on the arms and shoulders and sometimes on the back.

<sup>111</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1934: 1-3).

<sup>112</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1934: 3)

righteous political power of *metundji* as opposed to the religious power of the *mambela* leaders and *ishumu*. The latter chiefs were logically discarded for the role of political, invested chief given the subversive aspirations ascribed to them.

It seems that the joint roles of the *ishumu* and the *tata ka mambela* originally were about maintaining justice in a traditional way rejecting the indigenous courts established by the colonial government and supervised by the *chefs médaillés*. In practice mostly the *chefs médaillés* and the *metundji* complied with the power of *ishumu* and *tata ka mambela*.<sup>113</sup> While initially in the colonial administration Wangwana chiefs were chosen as middlemen, with time increasingly the *chefs coutumiers* were favoured. In theory in administrative practices, this right usually belonged to the first born of the eldest clan. It is also in this light that Bouccin's preference for the *metundji* has to be understood. Schebesta on the other hand designated the *ishumu* as the legitimate *chef coutumier*. These examples demonstrate the slippery nature of the policy of indirect rule in practice.

### **2.2.2. Overview of actions against leopard men**

Between 1920 and 1930 the battle against leopard men culminated in a more directed administrative and legal follow up. The decades before were characterised by a rather uncoordinated approach for which the scepticism regarding the existence of leopard men was often to blame. In the Beni region, this shift only occurred by the end of the 1920s, due to a later development of the territorial administration. Until then, the large distances between the locations of the crime and the administrative headquarters from which legal actions had to be coordinated, were a problem. With time, investigations were undertaken with increasing vigour and the role of colonial ethnography became ever more important. In the following section I will provide an overview of the administrative and legal actions undertaken in the two regions discussed in this study.

#### ***Among the Bali***

The oldest concrete trace of a legal investigation is a photo taken during the expedition by Lang and Chapin at Avakubi in 1907 (see Illustration 19). In the region of the Bali the wave of *ambodima*-related killings, in the years 1916 and 1917, in the regions of Batama, Bafwaboli and Kondolole first caught attention. From 1916 onwards more serious attempts were made to investigate the crimes. In most cases, the lack of proof merely led to administrative measures, such as banning suspects

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<sup>113</sup>See for example Kawaters (1931: 462-3). In an interview in February 2012, an informant also pointed out that this was indeed the role of *ishumu* and *tata ka mambela* among the Bali under colonial occupation.

from their home villages and restoring peace in the region.

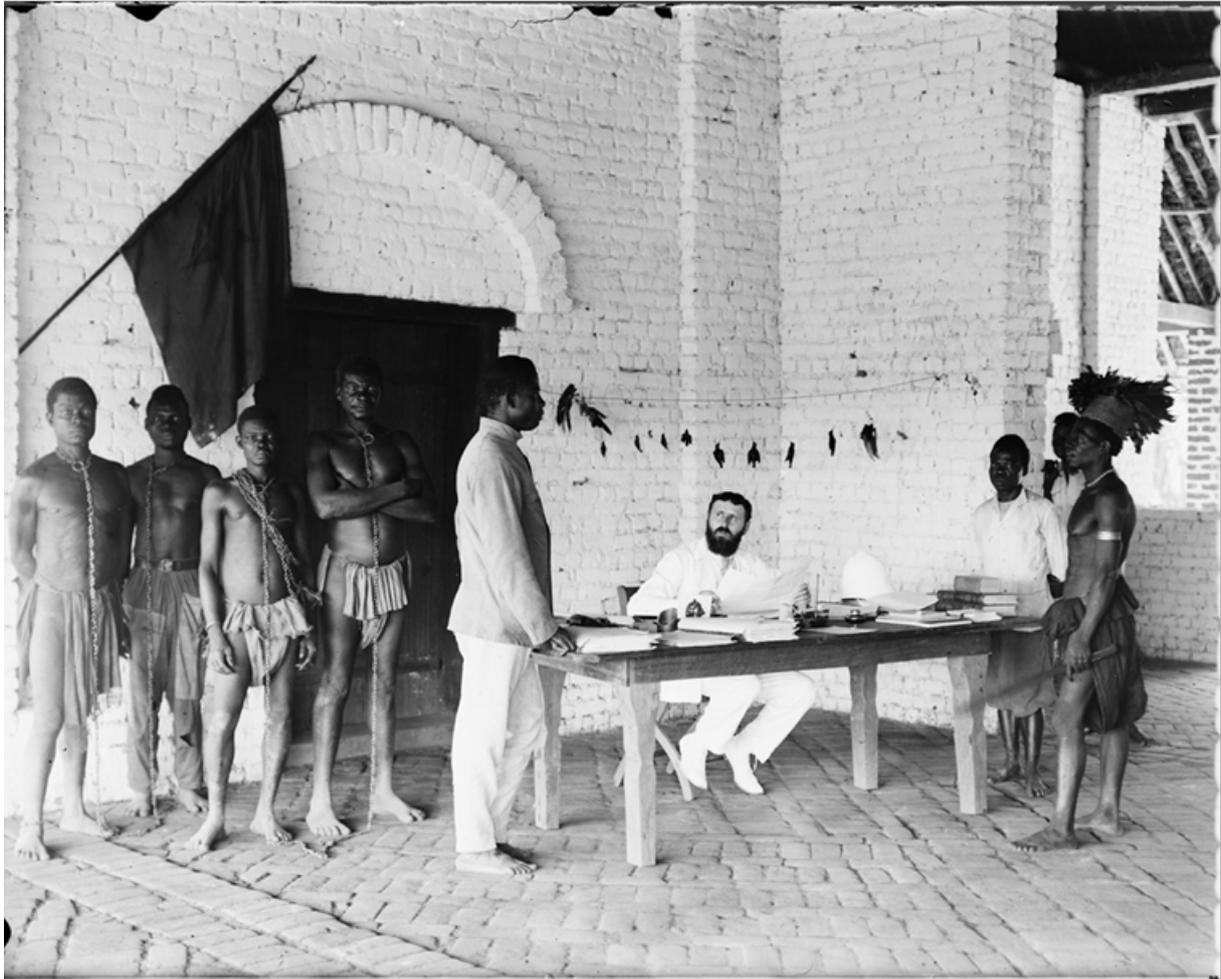
One of the earliest investigations by Libois (1936: 6066-8) dates back to December 1916 when a child of about 10 years, in the company of his cook, was killed in the village of the Babandjo between Avakubi and Medje. Libois was convinced the child was murdered by the *anioto* of Mbako. He had previously reprimanded Mbako for not having assured the food supply of his porters and Mbako reacted by killing a member of his caravan. Libois undertook an investigation to demonstrate Mbako's involvement and identify the killers but remained unsuccessful. Despite the numerous murders which inspired fear, the authorities paid no particular attention to them. Libois mentions the scepticism of the high dignitaries of the colony and even of the Territorial Administrators dealing with them directly. They would rather believe the criminal chiefs who put the blame on actual leopards. Apparently at that time attacks were aimed directly at people in the immediate presence of the European travellers, such as the child in Libois' (1936: 6066) company, and earlier Leclercq's soldiers and the translator of Viscount De Lichtervelde.

From 1916 awareness of leopard men attacks steadily grew within the colonial administration, due to the wave of killings related to the *ambodima* dance, which was discussed in the previous chapter. The first large case was that of the chief Abopia in 1920, which led to ten death penalties being carried out at Bomili. The investigations were based on the insights of the Territorial Administrator Rémy of Panga. Thanks to his knowledge of the local language, kibali, he picked up crucial information about some murders by Atembuko, the leader of the *anioto* gang of chief Abopia. The death penalties were conducted near the homeland of the convicted leopard men at Bomili. This was particularly meant to scare the population from committing more murders. But the exemplary conviction did not have the expected results and the killing continued abundantly. Investigations following on murder inquiries did not often lead to results. Military or police patrols did not generally prevent murderers from continuing their activities (Joset, 1955: 70-1, 228; Marrevée: 1928: 170, 206-8, 239-41).

In the early 1920s specific changes in law occurred in hindsight of the latter case to help the colonial administration in eradicating subversive movements such as *anioto* (and *mambela*). In the case of 1920 the crucial link between *anioto* and *mambela* had been acknowledged. During the 1920s several cases led to further convictions. The increasingly coordinated approaches led to successful investigations of a large series of killings in the early 1930s bringing an important blow to leopard men. This will be discussed further in the next section.

### ***At Beni***

In the Beni region the battle against leopard men developed later than among the Bali. Joset (1955: 17- 21) gives an overview of the administrative approaches undertaken in the history of *vihokohoko* in the Beni region. Leopard men murders



**Illustration 19: *Anioto* before the judge Altdorfer.**

**At the right, the chief of the village stands, with his interpreter.**

**Avakubi, Congo Belge.**

**Photo by Lang and Chapin, 1909.**

**American Museum for Natural History 112197**



in this region might probably be identified in administrative reports from 1912. Territorial administrators mentioned strange killings by wild animals, but which could also be attributed to criminal acts. Higher authorities did not take this seriously for a long time, even though certain indications might have encouraged them to investigate further. In 1921 for example the Territorial Administrator, Wauthier, mentioned the occurrence of leopards to be the only serious problem in the administration of the region of Beni. He writes that nearly every day people are killed by leopards and adds that the locals have this supernatural belief that the killings are committed by gangs of murderers who kill and drag their victims into the forest. The murders never led to serious investigations, until the following case occurred in 1926.

In that year the District Commissioner, Hackars, witnessed a fire at a village among the Hema of the notable Yambayamba. The Hema are a Nilotic pastoralist group which migrated from Bunyoro (Uganda) into the Semliki valley where they subjected other populations. A large part of them migrated back to Uganda in the 1920s due to the evacuation of the Semliki valley because of sleeping sickness. This explains why Hema are not mentioned much in later leopard killings. According to indigenous sources this fire was lit by leopard men. When later 21 people were killed among this population, the Territorial Administrator Ransbotyn was charged with a legal investigation. Ransbotyn believed these were ritual crimes to mourn the death of the recently deceased chief Biongo. This idea that leopard men made sacrificial victims to provide a “human mattress” for the deceased was also mentioned in other contexts for the Nande.<sup>114</sup> Six suspects were sent to the Public Prosecutors’ Department of Irumu. Eventually the case was transferred to the higher Public Prosecutors’ Department at Buta, several hundreds of kilometers away. Only a year later did an examining magistrate come to investigate the murders on the spot. By then the witnesses withdrew their testimonies and the suspects were released. The royal prosecutor did not consider the charge of ritual murder proved and ascribed it to wild animals.

In June 1927 Aluta, a Bapakombe notable, came to the legal police investigator at Beni to announce the murder of his son. Around the same time several other murders were reported. Over the next two months, 20 individuals were killed. The murders were investigated but the killers were never identified. However, it had now become an undeniable fact that *vihokohoko* were operating in the Beni territory. During the investigations at the crime scenes people were killed in the immediate surroundings of the tent of the legal police officer. The people arrested died in prison and investigations were abandoned without reaching a conclusion. But in this case,

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<sup>114</sup>See f. ex. Mokede (1971) and Mwaka Bwenge (2001). As this does not seem a common expression in French it was probably copied by these authors from the original source in the administrative archives.

for the first time, it was considered a possibility that it concerned political crimes.

Towards the end of the decade, the case of 1920 was much discussed in the function of multiple waves of killings. These caused heated discussions about the approach of catching the killers and the chiefs behind them, not only from an administrative and military perspective but also particularly from a legal point of view. By the end of the 1920s the importance of ethnography had also steadily grown as a tool in the colonial administration. Related to the “hécatombes”, or massacres, at Wamba between 1928 and 1933, a proliferation of administrative documents appeared discussing the ways to deal with leopard men and bearing witness to the use of colonial ethnography as an instrument in this battle. Around this time, also in the region of Beni, a larger-scale series of murders took place, which for the first time truly caught the attention of the administration.<sup>115</sup>

### **2.3. The culmination of the colonial conquest: the “hécatombes” from 1928 to 1934**

Given the divergent histories of the colonial administration, the approaches differed among the Bali and at Beni. Several larger series of murders occurring between 1928 and 1934 in the region of Wamba among Budu and Bali, intensified the battle against leopard men and led to more resolute efforts on the part of the colonial administration to extinguish the phenomenon.

#### **2.3.1. The cases of Bangombe and Mbako: towards a “concerted” approach**

The attempts to prove the involvement of chief Bangombe in the *anioto* killings against the chiefdom of Wangata in the Budu region in 1928 set the tone for the investigations in a successive series of killings among Budu in 1933. The latter resulted in one of the biggest leopard men trials in history, and to the conviction of one of the principal chiefs Mbako (Joset, 1955: 55-6, 65-70). Both cases are discussed further in the following chapter. Here I focus on the approach of the colonial administration.

In the first case against Bangombe, Vindevoghel, the Royal Prosecutor, started searching the archives of the Public Prosecutors’ Department of Stanleyville to find links with previous cases in order to collect information about suspects. He compared this with the information retrieved from interrogations of suspects and witnesses by

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<sup>115</sup>It would be interesting to investigate if the 1930s wave of killings were in any way related to the economic crisis related to the Wall Street Stock Exchange crash. This surely did affect many regions in the Congo. Administrative archives may reveal if there are more specific links between economic measures and the displeasure of the populations.

his deputy De Waersegger. Prior to Vindevoghel, different people had made mention of and researched this case, pointing out very different suspects and motives.<sup>116</sup> In a document of 1930, the Royal Prosecutor Vindevoghel explained his approach to the investigations against Bangombe.<sup>117</sup> His archival research, in combination with interrogations of suspects and witnesses by De Waersegger, led them to identify a number of suspects. Arrests and custody were made on the basis of two legal provisions, namely « prevention of assassination » and on article 64 of the penal code “association formée dans le but d’attenter aux personnes”; specifying the crime already consisted in the organisation of the gang. It is an article aimed at dealing with terrorist groups threatening public security which was an important issue in the Belgian Congo, as in most colonies. The law had been adapted at several instances in the 1920s for accommodating arrests in such difficult investigations. Based on his findings Vindevoghel suggested deportation of two suspects (Nabanea and Aganzi) because they were both relatives of *anioto*. The discovery at Nabanea’s house of a particular kind of fruit, used for imitating traces of leopards, was considered another form of serious evidence. Mbako was also a suspect, but could not be accused of anything specific. A certain Oदिनी, from the village of Mbako, was formally accused of having a knife in his possession. Bangombe was deported for political reasons and his accomplice Angassoa was deported for his unjustified displacement to Bomili and for providing a false alibi. The case was then closed without leading to any convictions. Vindevoghel further requested supervision of the group of Mabiama in the chiefdom of Agabi at Bomili – who supposedly delivered *anioto* to Bangombe - in case more killings might occur. After a while the murders indeed started again and an investigation followed. To guarantee a quick follow-up a permanent state agent in residence was appointed, backed up by a police detachment. Vindevoghel however, concludes that the latter attacks were rather done by leopards. Nevertheless, from then on every injured person had to be sent to Wamba for an examination of the wounds. Despite all these efforts, trouble continued among the Budu.

The next case against Mbako overlapped with the previous one, as Mbako had also been a suspect there. Several reports were written in 1933 regarding these murders, for example by the Territorial Administrator of the Budu at Wamba, Winckelmans.<sup>118</sup> His report from April sought to discover the exact nature of the relationship between *mambela* and *anioto*. In the whole process of the investigations, the District Commissioner Libois played a key role.

In 1933, Libois was charged with a military patrol in the villages of Mbako and his accomplices. He wrote a report on his mission, documenting the approach.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>AAE, PO19: 245, 246. Reports by Schockaert (1933) and Noirot (1934).

<sup>117</sup>RMCA AIMO Vindevoghel (1930).

<sup>118</sup>RMCA AIMO Winckelmans (1933).

<sup>119</sup>RMCA AIMO Libois (1933a: 4).

A couple of days prior to his report, a meeting had taken place between the Royal Prosecutor Schoumaecker, Libois himself and the Territorial Administrators Tihon, Bourghelle and Bouccin. They worked together and shared information in order to resolve the situation. At their meeting the decision was taken to evacuate the Ngayu region and relocate the villages of the Babandjo and of the Bafwadili who were possibly involved in the murders as suggested by Royal Prosecutor Schoumaecker (see Chapter 3, I.3). Babandjo had to return to their (supposed) clan of origin near Bafwasende and the Bafwadili would have to occupy lands abandoned by “licenciés”, discharged soldiers or labourers, at Bomili, their supposed region of origin. The benefits of relocation would be that the Babandjo and Bafwadili would be closer to the European posts Bomili and Bafwasende, which was better for supervision and for sanitary reasons. Furthermore, relocating the villages, as Royal Prosecutor Schoumaecker noted, would not have repercussions for the food supply of the mining centres. Other measures listed in Libois’ report were to facilitate the discovery of objects related to *anioto* as an incursion, and to continue to pursue the discovery of the criminals by means of colonial ethnographies by Bouccin, focusing on close family links.

Furthermore, Libois also commented on the immediate military patrols he had been charged with among the Babandjo and the Bafwadili, by Royal Prosecutor Schoumaecker. He did not see any solutions in a military patrol or occupation as requested by the latter. Instead, Libois suggested that rendering the *mambela* initiation public would be more effective in doing away with the *anioto* killings. By that time most Territorial Administrators and the legal hierarchy involved also realised that the link between *mambela* and *anioto* was a crucial one. Libois was convinced that *mambela* would eventually disappear when the secret aspects of the ceremony were made public. In case of reappearance, the deportation of the *tata ka mambela* was suggested. Subsequently the *mambela* and its leaders were specifically targeted. In his report of the next month Libois wrote for example, that on 5 August 1933 a public performance of *mambela* took place at Bomili.<sup>120</sup> Libois was convinced that this action was the final blow to *anioto* but it seems his cry of victory came a bit too soon. A police statement was made for the record to note the decisions taken at a meeting with the invested chiefs. The archive contains several such police statements containing a signed declaration by several *tata ka mambela* stating they would refrain from organising the *mambela* initiation. Also a list of *tata ka mambela* was drawn up to facilitate actions against them in case of trouble, such as banishment. In 1935 the gang of Mbako was executed at Bafwasende (see Chapter 3, I.3).

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<sup>120</sup>RMCA AIMO Libois (1933b: 1).

### 2.3.2. Ethnography as a weapon: understanding *mambela* and *anioto* in the case against Mbako

In the earliest colonial sources the link between *anioto* and *mambela* was mentioned.<sup>121</sup> Ethnographic research was used to analyse and understand *mambela* and *anioto* in order to extinguish leopard men killing. Several Territorial Administrators and police investigators sought to uncover the exact link between *mambela* and *anioto*. Especially Territorial Administrator Bouccin engaged in researching the ways of transmission of *anioto* via *mambela* and also *ambodima* alliances, as we discussed in the last chapter. In the footsteps of Vindevoghel, he established some links between perpetrators in contemporary and old cases and also verified family links between them. It remained hard for him to get to the bottom of the crimes and underlying motives and institutions because the crimes were also kept secret by the victims, and were seldom brought to the attention of the colonial administrators. Bouccin, and others like him, had the feeling that despite their efforts they could never really discover the truth, and that crucial information remained hidden from them. In their need for proof or key witnesses to get the killers and the commanding chiefs convicted, this was particularly problematical. It was in the light of such difficulties that laws had previously been adapted and that the colonial hostility against “secret” societies has to be understood. I will elaborate on how secrecy was perceived in this section.

Libois was convinced that the proper way to eradicate the murders was to render the *mambela* initiation public.<sup>122</sup> He succeeded in convincing his colleagues. The ethnographic investigations of his Territorial Administrator and legal police investigator Bouccin, who seemingly was his protégé, was aimed at showing the responsibility of the *mambela* association for the murders.<sup>123</sup> As I discussed, for the administrators it seemed important to distinguish between the “religious” and the “political” authority in the case of *mambela*. It is interesting to follow the polarisation in the argumentation of Bouccin, increasingly sharpening up his point of view in subsequent reports. At a certain point he considers the religious authority as being in the hands of the *tata ka mambela*, who is hence, in his view, also the major person responsible for *anioto* murders- and the political roles as being in the hands

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<sup>121</sup>For example by Millis (1904) and in RMCA AIMO Defeld (1917).

<sup>122</sup>RMCA AIMO Libois (1933a: 4).

<sup>123</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1934), Libois (1933a) and Libois (1933b).

of the political chiefs *metundji*. Formerly however he had seen this differently.<sup>124</sup> As explained earlier Bouccin saw the *tata ka mambela* as an usurper which obviously opened up the way for abolition or, less intrusively, desecration of it. By “religious” is meant that the *tata ka mambela* had no real basis of executive leadership in society, originally only enjoying this privilege during the initiation cycle. In a generalising way, those controlling and safeguarding religious secrets, or ritual specialists distributing *dawa* for example, were often perceived by authorities as untrustworthy parvenus luring people into invalid heathen beliefs. We can see here how Bouccin’s insights and arguments are adjusted and sharpened in the function of a politically and legally charged discussion. The point of view of Libois and Bouccin can be summarised as follows: if one makes *mambela* public, the power of its leaders (*tata ka mambela* and *ishumu*) is broken, and the grip over their initiates, who were forced under threat to keep the secrets of *mambela* (and by extension *anioto*) will disappear. Breaking the secret of *mambela* would break the silence of the people, *anioto* – *mambela* initiates- and their victims.

### 2.3.3. Secrecy and rebellion

Bouccin and Libois’s point of view needs to be understood in terms of the larger discussion which was connected to fundamentally different perspectives on colonial administration and its legal system. Several colonial administrators named *mambela* a secret association and by doing so stressed the hidden aspect of it, which was clearly perceived as threatening. This is an often recurring characteristic of the Belgian colonial perceptions of cults and initiatory societies. In an article of Edouard De Jonghe (1936: 57, 62) on secret societies, the author explains how divination, sorcery and magic are very important in the generation of rebellion. Edouard De Jonghe was one of the pioneers of the establishment of territorial administration based on colonial ethnography. He counts *mambela* and other initiatory societies among secret societies as they often have magic and secret aspects at their core which are shared by the whole (male) population. According to De Jonghe initiatory societies are an important foundation of secret societies (read: rebellious organisations), even though not the only source. One of his examples is *anioto* which is not an initiatory society in itself but exists in symbiosis with *mambela*. De Jonghe also counts *nebeli* among subversive secret societies. Religious practices and magic are considered as the source of conspiracies and both quickly spreading new cults

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<sup>124</sup>He wrote first that *anioto* was an instrument either in the hands of the political chiefs or in the hands of *mambela* chiefs. Both Libois and Bouccin in the reports on the Wangata murders, opposed the report of Territorial Administrator Winckelmans who was responsible for the Budu territory where the murders had taken place. See the discussion on the titles of *tata ka mambela* and *ishumu* earlier in this text.

such as *nebeli* as initiatory societies with longer traditions are regarded as suspect. As mentioned above, Evans-Pritchard also writes, regarding the cults of mani and *nebeli*, that they are reactions against wide social change and that they are rather founded on mutual assistance to overcome difficulties of life, than on instigating rebellion.

*Mambela* and other brotherhoods in the wider region were more generally perceived by colonial agents as elements of rebellion because of their ritual secrecy. While a rebellious character was certainly not inherent to these brotherhoods, colonial agents and missionaries were suspicious of the secrecy. For example, this is also the case for the *bwami* initiatory society of the Lega in the Kivu region. While it did not in fact obtain a rebellious character, missionaries and colonial administrators were suspicious of it because of the esoteric knowledge communicated to the initiates during the initiation. This could not be controlled.<sup>125</sup> On the other hand initiatory societies such as *mambela* and *bwami* represented a ritual authority which was maintained through keeping some of their core ritual activities and knowledge secret. This is precisely a source of power. Naturally this opened up the door to activities of rebellion such as *anioto* attacks. The *tata ka mambela* was probably the position with the most authority among Bali and their neighbours.

In the view of Libois and Bouccin, indeed, *anioto* had to be combated by attacking its roots, the religious belief which was identified with the *mambela* initiation. Bouccin understood very well how the strength of the *mambela*-*anioto*-connection was exactly situated in the ritual authority of *mambela* leaders and in the vow of secrecy that the initiates were obliged to keep.<sup>126</sup> While basically it remained a common initiatory cycle for boys into age grades, through their ritual authority the leaders of *mambela* had a strong grip over the initiated men. *Mambela* initiation helped discover young men who were by character suitable for the role of *anioto*. The leaders of *mambela* made use of their influence to impose silence on the population. Libois and Bouccin were targeting the secrecy of *mambela* by exposing the secret instruments and ceremonies to non-initiates.

However, other views opposing attacks against the population's religion also pleaded in favour of a more gentle approach of acculturation, not to advocate brute force or far-reaching measures such as undermining the population's religion. This was in line with a relative respect for the population's culture, and the position characterised those colonial officers who genuinely took an interest in the local cultures. To some extent this was also connected to a political compartmentalisation in the colonial institutions which had been interfering in colonial administration from its beginnings, especially opposing conservative Catholics to other, more

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<sup>125</sup>The *bwami* initiation gave way to socio-political positions based on secret knowledge and was perceived by colonials as an anarchist organisation undermining colonial authority and banned (Biebuyck, 1973: 63-5).

<sup>126</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1935: 221)

liberal views.<sup>127</sup> I have already mentioned Moeller in relation to the study of Bantu migrations in the previous chapter. As a former Governor of the Oriental Province, he took a special interest in the ethnography of this province. From the early 1920s Moeller was taking an interest in *mambela* and *anioto*. Opposing Libois, and others, Moeller (1936b) stressed that *mambela* was not a secret association, but an initiatory association with secret aspects to it. This has to be seen in light of the compartmentalisation in the public discussion. As a key figure in the history of territorial administration, Moeller was one of Edouard De Jonghe's most important challengers. Where Moeller displayed a more liberal view, De Jonghe was on the conservative Catholic side.

#### **2.3.4. Attacking *mambela* or not? Accountability in the legal discussion.**

The legal discussion regarding accountability of the killers was connected to the widely held view that cultural phenomena, with secret knowledge or activities at their core, were a potential threat. In the discussion above it becomes apparent that the religious aspect of *mambela* is stressed by Libois and Bouccin.

The leopard man phenomenon is often explained as the belief of certain people that people can change into an animal, in this case a leopard. This belief is often connected to a totemistic belief, in which people believe they descend from the animal, or to mental derangement or 'wildness'. In the case of the religious attribution, the belief itself is taken as an example of the uncivilised state of the population. It is generally seen as analogous to cases of zooanthropy in European culture, the most well-known being werewolves.<sup>128</sup>

The general colonial perception of leopard man killings being rooted in mental derangement or in "primitive" religious conviction (which is in a way considered invalid), lies at the heart of a fundamental discussion related to the legal prosecution. The discussion is really whether leopard man can be held accountable for their deeds and only arose in the context of the Bomili death penalties of 1920. The judges had reasoned that they were, whereas apparently some people doubted this based on a perception of the religious belief or mental state at the basis of it. The

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<sup>127</sup>An example of this in the region of Stanleyville was the conflict between the zone commander Delhaise and his associate Decorte who, as freemasons, took an interest in the *nebeli* cult and let themselves be initiated in order to conduct ethnographic research. They were suspected of sympathising with the cult which was considered harmful by others. Following on the previously mentioned conflict between Father Grison and a group of freemasons of the Stanleyville administration, Delhaise was accused of helping to propagate the "sect" in the Aruwimi district. This nearly meant the end of his colonial career (Delathuy, 1994: 291, 301-2, 337).

<sup>128</sup>See for example RMCA AIMO De Haen (1922: 2); see also Jadot (1928: 164) and Marrevée (1928: 173).

view that the attackers were victims of their religious beliefs and had to be protected against themselves was quite widely shared, not least by missionaries.<sup>129</sup> This argument is brought up again in the legal discussion in 1928 by Jadot (1928: 164-5):

*“Should we link this belief of a magical order to individual crimes or to collective crimes committed by men or groups of men wearing hoods and masks and armed with claws and other instruments that allow them to disguise their murders as nightly attacks by felines? It does not appear that the Court of Appeal of Boma, which had to judge the case of the Aniotos of the Mobali of the Lindi river on August 24, 1920 has accepted this connection to magical belief. Anthropologists have on the other hand hardly doubted the magico-religious character of sects similar to the one judged in the forementioned arrest. Anthropologists have even seen in these phenomena deviations of the religious instinct similar to those which used to appear in Europe; the werewolves and the lycantropes who were the subject of essays by theologians of the Middle age, of observations of doctors like Paracelsus and Pomponatius, of decisions of parliaments who first led these wolf-men to the pyre, and emprisoned them as socially maladjusted neurotics later in history. We are dealing here with neurotics similar to the demonic creatures of the European Middle Ages rather than criminals, and we would have to lock them up in asylums rather than condemn them to the gallows or to the firing squad. But, I have already pointed out that the thesis of ethnographers has not been accepted by the judges in the case of 1920. Let us note however, that the judgment of 1920 tends to see in the case of Aniotos Lindi a case of political crime directed against our civilising authority, thereby [...] discarding in this case the hypothesis of a collective criminal neurosis, cannot preclude a priori this hypothesis.”*

Jadot thinks leopard men cannot be held accountable because they are victims of their belief. On a presentation by Jadot held at the Conférence du Jeune Barreau in Brussels in January 1934, entitled *Le Juge et Le Sorcier*, a critical response was formulated by a member of the panel, Louis De Lannoy, which is in line with a later argument by Adolphe Moeller, who also attended this conference.

Moeller (1936b: 59) firmly rejected Jadot’s point of view, summarised in the phrase *“the crime of the panther [or leopard] men will disappear when people stop believing in it”*. Warning of the risks of revealing the secrets of *mambela*, he writes

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<sup>129</sup>It is interesting to see how *anioto* killers are often in one way or another portrayed as victims: victims of their religious or mental state of being (by missionaries this is seen as victims of evil forces, the devil) or victims of the hierarchy that keeps them hostage (cf. Chapter 4 on colonial representation).

the following passage, about the military patrol he carried out in 1917 among the Bali on the road between Bafwaboli and Bafwasende (possibly assisted by Libois). In one of the villages removed from the road, while people were in fact forced to move to the road:

*“Then I saw the “gates of Mambela” open to the vastness of the forest, a type of arches formed by the bundles of flogging sticks and among other annoyances I heard about a territorial agent – the one who requested the military operation- who found it intelligent to trespass these gates which was forbidden for non-initiates. I have since learned enough to know my Bali to realise what would have caused pain and left bitterness, as this this violent operation did. When an institution is as crucial to the social framework of a people as the Mambela is, we have to think twice before touching it and risking to break a balance, causing the disruption of a social order, without doubt an imperfect one, but which, as far as I am concerned, is preferable to disorder and confusion.”*

(Moeller, 1936b: 63-4)

Moeller (1936b: 64, 65) believed that in order to repress *anioto* the indigenous cultural premises did not need to be attacked. He therefore criticised a particular decree of 24 September 1923, which was implemented to simplify legal actions, *“to suppress superstitious trials and barbaric practices”*. It had enlarged the possibilities for interpretation of the existing penal code.

*“It represses those trials which subject a person to a real or supposed physical harm, so that the Crown does not have to provide evidence of actual harmfulness of the drugs administered or the ordeal inflicted. It expands on the ordinary notion of participation in order to better hit the sorcerer (diviner should one say here); that is to say that those who in one way or another have deliberately claimed the ordeal, ordonnated it or carried it out in practice are all considered as perpetrators or accomplices.”*

According to Moeller (1935: 66-68) it would be careless to just abolish *mambela*, despite the gruesome character of *anioto* killings, because they were in fact part of local legal procedures and institutions, comparable to the witch trials in the Middle Ages in Europe. To abolish these trials would not do away with the beliefs with which they were aligned. It would be more useful to implement public indigenous courts where wrongs would be redressed without doing harm to anybody. Moeller used indigenous courts in British colonial territories as an example. He rejected a repressive approach to leopard men, and called for “civilisation from

within”, not by force but in combination with education and missionary work. For the time being he subscribed to the regular administrative measure of banishment, and reduction of the liberty of movement of the criminals.

### **2.3.5. The military occupation at Beni**

When in 1933 the wave of *vihokohoko* killings started in the Beni territory, more serious measures were taken here as well. An official list of victims between December 1933 and October 1934 is preserved in the archives of Beni: 38 attacks occurred, of which only 6 failed. The General Royal Prosecutor A. Gaspard wrote to the Royal Prosecutor of Stanleyville in March 1934, that repression of every individual suspected of being a leopard man was needed. Police investigators were sent to investigate the crimes on the spot. Every victim had to be brought to Beni for forensic inspection of the wounds to verify whether it was a leopard attack or a murder.

In June 1934 the Governor of the Province Orientale sent the administrators Joset and Hoffman to investigate the killings more closely. Consequently, a special military occupation was organised under their supervision. In the forest zone to the north and west of Beni the occupation was supervised by Joset and in the savannah region, where the crimes were committed, by Hoffmann. This eventually led to a large number of arrests and banishments. Consequently a new territorial unit “secteur des Wanande de Beni” was created to assemble together, under a “unique” administration, the disparate populations of the region of Beni where the murders were committed and which had no clan relationships with each other.<sup>130</sup>

Joset and Hoffman pursued preliminary legal investigations in those regions considered as centres of leopard men activities and studied all related political tensions. Joset mentioned that it was very difficult for the European investigators to discover the truth. To start with they were completely ignorant about *vihokohoko* activities, as ethnographic data on Nande and Bapakombe had hardly been collected and because of this they lost precious time in their investigations. It took them a lot of perseverance and hard work. Furthermore, locals kept silent about these murders, out of mistrust of Europeans and also out of fear of vengeance, according to Joset. The people generally knew the names of the criminals and particularly their motives, as they were usually warned of what was going to happen. After a first series of arrests of the presumed leopard men, the murders stopped for a number of weeks (24 June to 8 August 1934) and then they started again. But by pushing their investigations further, Hoffman and Joset were able to make new arrests which caused the killing to eventually stop by 28 October 1934.

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<sup>130</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 75, 123).

## 2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated the living conditions under the foreign occupations of both the slave traders and Belgian colonisers, and the hostilities these brought forth among following generations, as grounds for leopard men killings. Initially, the killings seem to have been directed against foreign intruders in general, who were obviously perceived as a threat by the local populations. For the first decades of colonisation, the relationship between leopard men killing as a reaction against foreign occupations, is perhaps best demonstrated by its association to new cults, such as *basa* and *ambodima*, and the fact that these cults were connected to rubber tax strikes. In hindsight of the previous chapter, it can hence be understood as a military strategy, imbued with ritual aspects, to deal with a stronger enemy. As the colonial administration grew tighter and openly armed rebellion became scarce, its secretive attacks of enemies and rivals and the way it succeeded in silencing both accomplices and victims, turned it into a powerful tool to circumvent colonial control. However, as the colonial administration became better organised, and its attempts to get to the bottom of leopard men killings became more efficient, people apparently denounced the murders more easily.

### **Chapter 3. Leopard Men Conflicts in the Bali and Beni regions: a detailed analysis**

In this chapter the micro-history of several cases of leopard men hostilities will be reconstructed based on detailed information retrieved from historical sources. The intention is to get a better insight into how leopard men attacks were used in conflicts, why and with what objectives. I have sought to bring to the fore information on how they are related to local power struggles, as embedded in regional relationships between population groups in the colonial context.

On a first level, I have identified a number of principal conflicts making a reconstruction from the most steadfast bits of information. As explained in the introduction, I have relied on particular data such as the names of people, places and dates from detailed administrative documents. The main sources of information were Joset's (1955) book on leopard-men, containing a compilation of major cases and conflicts, and those administrative reports giving a better insight in one particular case or clusters of cases, revealing statements from witnesses and perpetrators, data about the *modus operandi* etc. For the reconstructions, I have also relied to a large extent on archival maps drawn up by colonial administrators, which have been important for interpreting the data provided in the administrative reports. The known conflicts of which traces are left in archives and publications, only represent the tip of the iceberg. Many leopard men murders passed unnoticed or were never investigated so that no records were kept. To outline a framework of clustered conflicts was very important in getting a grip on the very dense and detailed data in the sources to identify the major chiefs and key population groups involved, and situate them in space and time.

On a second level, I have assessed the data in primary sources to verify the role played by leopard men in the colonial society relying on the elements of "thick description" and ethnographic details as provided in some of the records (Geertz, 1973). As explained in the introduction, sometimes administrative reports provide interesting data in this respect, drawing out the underlying reasons and motives for killing, and providing insight into the way the gangs organised themselves and interacted. Data on the exact processes of initiation of leopard men is largely absent, but details on the *modus operandi*, weapons used and the traces left behind have been recovered from the primary sources to obtain a better idea of how leopard men operated. I will not engage in detailed descriptions of the attacks, but a survey is

provided as a separate chart in Table 7.<sup>131</sup> This data will be analysed in greater detail in the next chapter on colonial representation.

I have deemed the level of detail in this chapter necessary (in the form of names, places and dates predominantly) as this information provides the building blocks of my historical reconstruction. This guarantees a level of accuracy in the reconstruction and provides a point of reference for further research. This, in turn, ties in with the difficulties envisaged in the deciphering of the “insider” information in colonial records, which mostly meant coming to terms with the toponyms and ethnonyms used abundantly in these documents. Names of clan clusters, people and places often appear in these documents, but unfortunately this data did not usually come with maps. Different ways of spelling names, shifts in the colonial administrative units and the occurrence of dispersed clan groups of the same name, all made it a tentative undertaking to situate the conflicts geographically and see the connections between them (see Table 2 and Table 3 for an overview of the clans and subclans treated here of the Bali and Nande respectively). Despite these difficulties, clustering names linked to places and dates was the single most important way to reconstruct the history of the conflicts. In this way, I was able to identify larger conflict clusters, constituted of several smaller conflicts, which I was able to link up with each other, as the same chiefs and populations were involved, and because they were occurring in the same region, at around the same time. The maps provided here should be regarded as schemes resulting from reconstruction rather than definitive geographical maps.

The reconstruction of the history of leopard men is thus a work in progress, which should be open to further scrutiny as, with time, more legal documents will become accessible in the Belgian state archives. Even though the collective memory regarding these events does not seem to be equally vivid in different places and among contemporary generations, this research would benefit greatly from field research in the region, if the political situation improves. This would be important for getting a clearer perspective on the regional history and the relationships between population groups.

### **3.1. *Anioto* among the Bali, Ndaka and Budu**

For the Bali region, I was able to distinguish three clusters of conflicts, which I have presented more or less in chronological order in the following sections, parallel to

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<sup>131</sup>As explained in the introduction, in attendance of further access to legal files, I have relied on Joset’s book which provides an extensive compilation of such data from primary documents (e.g. autopsies, witness statements) cf. Table 7. In addition to Joset’s book, the administrative reports of the 1930 cases among the eastern Bali and their neighbours (2.1.3. in this chapter) mostly provide such detailed data, e.g. Bouccin and Winckelman’s interrogations of Mbako and other suspects.

the previous chapter, in which changing approaches towards leopard men in the colonial administration were discussed. As we have seen, in the beginning leopard men attacks were particularly aimed at foreign occupants, and can be characterised as a way of coping with fundamental change. With time, leopard men murders were probably increasingly seen as an instrument of oppression in the hands of a few elder, authoritarian chiefs. This changing mentality may have contributed to people denouncing the main instigators more easily around 1930, whereas formerly they would not have done so either out of fear or loyalty.

### **3.1.1. Transmission of *anioto* related to dance cults**

The largest network of *anioto* dispersal was connected to dance cults such as *ambodima*. In Chapter 1, I discussed the transmission of *ambodima* among the Bali in two waves. Bouccin traced back the earliest origin of *ambodima* to 1907, when its emergence was connected to the tax strikes spreading from Bomili to Panga and Avakubi (Map 3). Due to an intensified wave of killings in 1917, traces started to appear in the administrative reports but serious investigations regarding these early killings only started in the 1930s with Bouccin. When Bouccin (1935, 1936 a-d) was researching the series of killings at Wamba around 1930, which is discussed under 3.1.3. below, he consulted older administrative reports in combination with interrogations of locals, both witnesses (among whom were surviving victims) and suspects.<sup>132</sup> The role of dance cults in the dispersal of *anioto* was one of the leads he followed. He drew up reports on two of the chiefs identified as key propagators behind the dispersal of *ambodima* in 1916-1917, and behind later dance cults reminiscent of *ambodima* appearing during the 1920s. What follows here is largely a summary of these reports.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933).

<sup>133</sup>AA AIMO 13611. Report on chief Nembunzi of the Bebengu by Bouccin written at Kondolole, 29/10/34. Report on chief Kabakaba of the Bekeni written by Bouccin at Kondolole on 29/10/34.

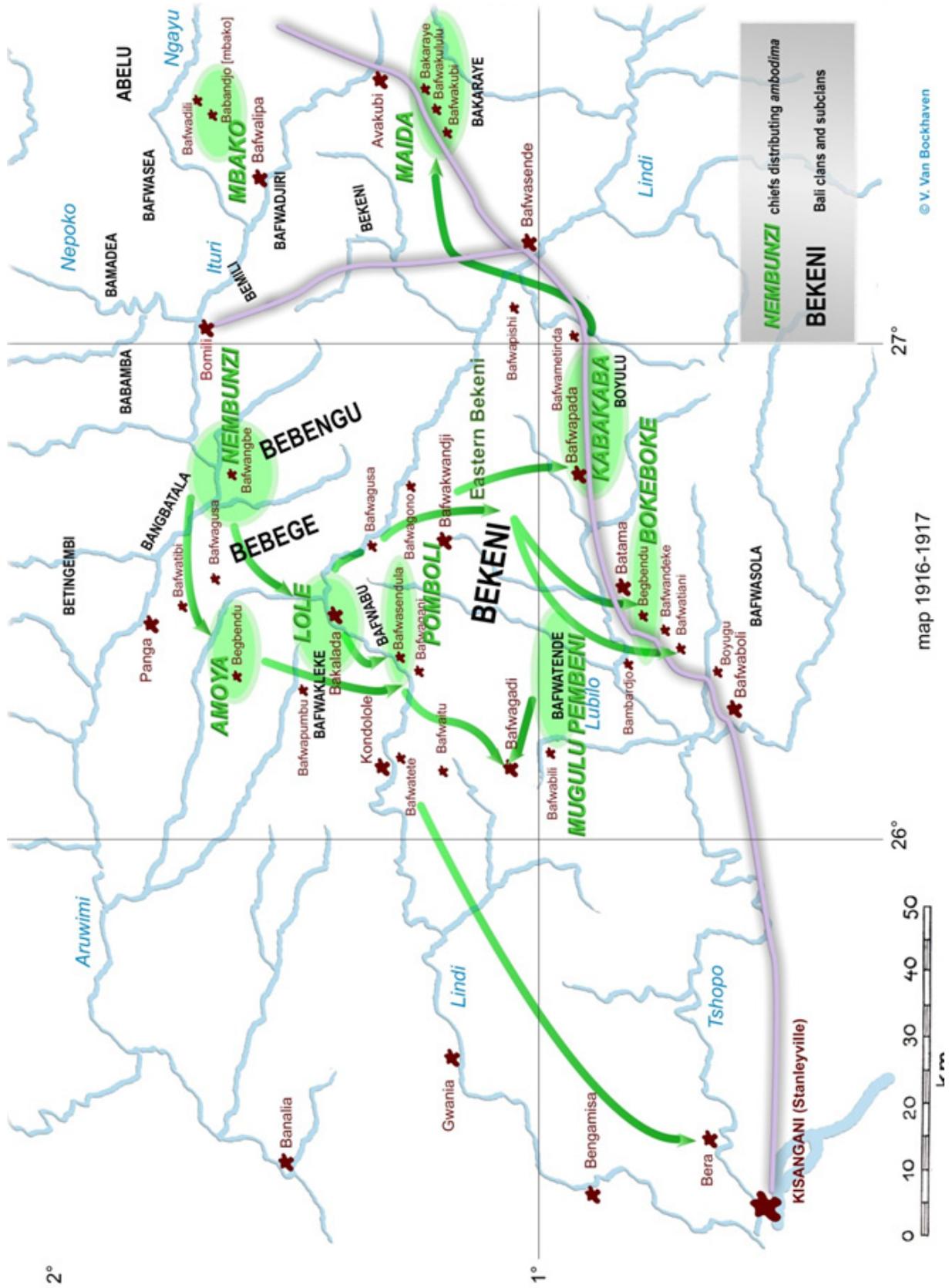
The details of the transmissions are outlined in Map 5.<sup>134</sup> The key person in the dispersal of dance cults in 1916-1917 seems to have been chief Nembunzi from the Bebengu chiefdom [see Map 5, loc. Bafwangbe]. Especially through the chiefs Lole [loc. Bakalada] and probably also Kabakaba of the Bekeni [loc. Bafwapada] *ambodima* was transmitted further west- and southwards. As explained in Chapter 1, *ambodima* entailed some common features with *mambela*, such as collaboration along the lines of dispersal and the display of the *mambela* instruments.

Bouccin (1936c) noted that according to chief Mbako [loc. Babandjo/ Mbako] the last murders due to *ambodima* in his sphere of influence, the region east of Avakubi, were committed in 1922. Up to 1924 *ambodima*-related crimes still occurred among the western Bali. Bouccin remarked that even though *ambodima* may have been suppressed later on, it potentially still existed under another name. In the 1920s a dance known as *akoyo* (presumably a pseudonym of Nembunzi) was introduced in Lole's village. Around the 1930s such dances, predominantly known by the names *ontuni* or *magpasa*, were also transmitted by the same key propagators: Nembunzi, Lole and Kabakaba.<sup>135</sup> Bouccin (1936c: 222) wrote that the dance *ontuni* was further introduced to the chief Maïda of the chiefdom of Bakaraye

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<sup>134</sup>Map 5 is based on itineraries of spreading provided in the following documents: RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 2); RMCA AIMO Defeld (1917: 2); RMCA AIMO Brandt (1917). Nembunzi and his son Etoroka, were mentioned as being involved in old *ambodima*-related cases, as were other family members. According to Bouccin, in the wave of killings of 1916 and 1917, *ambodima* reached Kondolole originally coming from Nembunzi's son Etoroka, via the chief Amoya [loc. Begbendu - chiefdom Bafwakleke] and his subject Vanngobo [loc. Bafwapumbu – chiefdom Bafwakleke]. Amoya in his turn, passed it to a certain Pomboli [loc. Bafwasendula] who introduced it to neighbouring groups [loc. Bafwabu, Bakalada, and Bafwagadi]. Pomboli's name was also mentioned in other reports in relation to murders in the region of Kondolole in 1917. In the same year a number of *anioto* murders took place at Bafwagani, presumably as a reaction to Pomboli's deportation. During the wave of 1916-17, coming from Nembunzi, *ambodima* crossed the Lindi river under Lole's [loc. Bakalada] influence and was transmitted via Bafwagusa [loc. Bafwagusa] to different Bekeni groups towards the Bafwaboli-Batama-Bafwasende road. In the wave of killing of 1916-1917, Andangi had sent a certain Ayesani/Bayasana to request *anioto* via the Bafwagusa. The latter possibly acted as intermediaries to request *anioto* gangs from Panga further north. The *anioto* that came to the region were temporarily based at the village of a certain *sous-chef* of Andangi, Sekonde [loc. unknown; eastern Bekeni], who gave them shelter under the command of Andangi. They extracted vengeance in the name of several chiefs (Andangi, Sekonde, Aliamba [loc. Bafwatiani] and possibly also Bokeboke [loc. Begbendu - chiefdom of Bafwasola]. According to Bouccin the latter chief Bokeboke had been suspected prior to 1917 for the distribution of *anioto* knives. Defeld also stated he was known as a rebellious chief. Probably, in this way it also reached Kabakaba [Loc. Bafwapada].

<sup>135</sup>Agbodu, an old *anioto* chief (an associate of Maida?) questioned by Bouccin, affirmed that he had only known *ambodima* under the name of *magpasa*.



Map 5: The dispersal of dance cults from the Bebegu chiefdom.



[loc. Bakaraye] in 1929, and by the beginning of 1931 it had been transmitted to the western Bali [loc. Bengamisa]. In less than two years it had been spread over several hundreds of kilometers.

While Bouccin established the role of the chiefs Lole and Nembunzi in the transmission of *ambodima* in 1916-1917, he did not really provide insight into the motives of the transmission. However, one of the first reports on these killings by the territorial administrator Defeld provides some more details regarding a series of *ambodima*-related killings along the Batama-Bafwasende road. Defeld mentioned that the *anioto* involved were not originally from this region but were commanded by the chiefs there, via allied chiefs further away. Local initiates then joined the foreign gangs to guide them or cooperate in the attacks. Defeld reported that the *anioto* killers had been commanded by the ‘big chief’ Andangi [loc. unknown; eastern Bekeni] in the name of several chiefs.<sup>136</sup> Later Bouccin pointed out the connections to a wider *ambodima* network, to Lole, for example. The *anioto* gangs operating at Batama came from Panga and had passed the Lindi at Bakalada (Lole’s village), but some gangs reportedly came from Bafwasende, tracking through the forest following the old Bali villages (*tongo*).<sup>137</sup> Such old villages did not lie on the principal roads. As noted, under colonial rule populations were forced to move to such roads and were obliged to maintain them. It was often mentioned in annual and semester reports between 1917 and 1924 that Bali fled back to their old isolated settlements in the forest and were subsequently forced to move back to the roads again. It is not surprising that *anioto* travelled via these old village trails where their diffusion would remain discreet. The motives for the attacks in this region remain unknown.

In the 1930s Bouccin found out that chief Kabakaba of the Bekeni had also been one of the principal propagators of *ambodima* in 1916-17. According to the rumours, Kabakaba was responsible for numerous killings, and he must have been connected to the above mentioned chain of *ambodima*-related killings reported by Defeld in 1917 which occurred in the area of his village, Bafwapada.<sup>138</sup> Bouccin drew up a report on his involvement.<sup>139</sup> In 1921, for example, a murder occurred when Kabakaba was staying at Bafwasende. The subsequent investigation brought to

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<sup>136</sup>Different clan groups deriving from the Bekeni lineage lived between the Aruwimi and the Bafwaboli-Batama-Bafwasende road. Under the colonial administration, this region was subdivided between the eastern Bekeni (the side of Bafwasende) and the western Bekeni (the side of Kondolole). I will use these designations in order to indicate the whereabouts of the populations discussed.

<sup>137</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 2) and Defeld (1917).

<sup>138</sup>It is unclear whether Kabakaba is the same chief as Kapangapanga mentioned by Defeld in his report of 1917, as the latter is also to be situated in the village of Bafwapada on the road between Bafwasende and Batama.

<sup>139</sup>AA AIMO 13611. Report on chief Kabakaba of the Bekeni written by Bouccin at Kondolole on 29/10/34.

light that Kabakaba called *anioto* among the Bebengu (Nembunzi), and when these arrived he left for Bafwasende, giving the order to attack during his absence. They were led by Atebi, his cousin, who had connections with Lole and Nembunzi too, as I will explain. Apparently, on at least two occasions the principal witnesses against Kabakaba died soon after they denounced him, poisoned according to local rumour. Several family members of Kabakaba were involved too. Neither Kabakaba, nor his family members were ever convicted. The Public Prosecutor simply accepted their denial. Despite the allegations, Kabakaba always maintained that *ambodima* was an innocent dance.

In relation to the transmission of *ambodima* among the western Bali and their neighbours, via the chiefs Nembunzi and Lole, as indicated on Map 5, Bouccin also mentions an example testifying to the refusal of *ambodima*. The Bafwabu of Kondolole tried to force *ambodima* upon the Bafwagadi, who refused it because they did not share the same variety of the *mambela* initiation. Instead, they took *ambodima* from the Bafwatende (western Beken) of the chief Mugulu Pembeni, who was a descendant of a very important *mambela* leader.<sup>140</sup> This specific variety of *mambela* originated from the Babamba of the Nepoko river and reached Mugulu Pembeni's people via Bakalada [loc.]. Mugulu Pembeni enjoyed great authority as *ishumu* of this *mambela* variety among the Beken of Kondolole and beyond.<sup>141</sup> A similar refusal of the *ontuni* dance by chief Mugulu Pembeni and his neighbours was mentioned around 1930.

In the 1930s, Bouccin collected the following specific information about Kabakaba's involvement in the dispersal of new dance variations. In November 1932, Kabakaba undertook a trip to the western Beken, to the chiefs Adonio, Kisanga and Mugulu Pembeni, purportedly to sell oil. The chiefs told Bouccin, however, that Kabakaba's real purpose was to introduce a new dance named *magpasa* or *ontuni* which they associated with *ambodima*. According to them, Kabakaba was accompanied by his dancers. They were carrying gongs, which Kabakaba had received when he had visited Nembunzi, supposedly after the death of his cousin Atebi, who had been killed during a mission for Nembunzi and Lole. Reportedly the gongs received were identical to one Lole had received from Nembunzi, along with *anioto* claws (cf. passing of *ontuni* from Nembunzi to Lole below). According to the informants the *tata ka mambela* Magwabundu, also involved in previous *anioto* killings, accompanied Kabakaba carrying the instruments of *mambela*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the dispersal of *ambodima* entailed the display of secret instruments of *mambela*. Kabakaba and his company were denied access to

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<sup>140</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 2). The *mambela* was introduced to the Beken by Zebu, son of Kondima, who went to his parents-in-law among the Babamba at the Nepoko to be initiated. RMCA AIMO (s.a., 1925: 3).

<sup>141</sup>RMCA AIMO (s.a. 1925: 4).

the villages by the chiefs. Bouccin doubted whether the testimonies of these chiefs were true, but he did believe that the chiefs must have had some reason for denying Kabakaba access to their villages. In June and July 1933, Kabakaba had to report to the administration to give explanations about murders occurring in his surroundings, due to revelations from a man named Agondewolo. A family member of the latter was subsequently subjected to corporal punishment by two nephews of Kabakaba, allegedly for not paying his taxes.

Bouccin (1936c: 222) wrote that the *ontuni* dance was further introduced to the chief Maïda of the chiefdom of Bakaraye in 1929. Maïda wanted to avenge the death of his father, whom he believed had been poisoned by his people. He went to the chiefdom of Boyulu of the Bafwasea lineage, south of the Bafwasende-Avakubi road, to command *anioto*. Maïda was related to the Bafwasea through marriage. The first victims were killed by the Bafwasea gang under the direction of Okungu. Maïda's cousin Banonzi guided them. The Bafwasea also initiated members of Maïda's family. Subsequently Maïda's neighbours came to him to request *anioto*. Maïda's gang committed murders in the neighbouring chiefdom at the request of *tata ka mambela* Agbodu [loc. Bafwakubi – chiefdom Baida]. Once Maïda was in prison, his cousin Banonzi took over the organisation of the expeditions. In total 21 crimes occurred in the period of 1929-1932, carried out by three different gangs. In November 1934 four men, including Maïda and Okungu, were handed down the death penalty by hanging (Joset, 1955: 70-5, 225, 228; Bouccin, 1936c: 222; Bouccin, 1936d: 257).

As said in 1931 *ontuni* had spread to the western Bali of Bengamisa too. Numerous killings were reported in that region.<sup>142</sup> For example, Lipakala, the *tata ka mambela* of the lineage of Babandjo at Bengamisa, would have received an *anioto* “knife” from Lole, along with the *ontuni* dance.<sup>143</sup> According to local informants, in 1929 Lole had gone to Nembunzi to make an alliance by means of blood brotherhood (the exchange of blood) between two of their people. In 1931 Lole visited Nembunzi again, they exchanged wives, and Lole returned with a supply of oil. The rumour persisted in the region of Kondolole that some pots of oil contained claws. During

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<sup>142</sup>Moeller (1934) wrote that in the forest region between Kondolole and Bera *anioto* murders had been committed in a chain of villages in an area covering 30 km between 1931 and 1933. See also RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1935). Bouccin tried to verify the links between the Lombi of Bera and the Bali of Kondolole and investigated several cases. A Lombi man named Ingini had gone to the Bali of Kondolole and came back with two women of Ramazani (who had already been banned in another *anioto* case). Questioned by Bouccin, Ingini pretended to have gone to Kondolole to buy goats, but Bouccin found his explanation did not make sense. Some witnesses from Kondolole said Ingini left from there for Bera accompanied by five Bali, all from the village of Bafwaboma. Other cases are mentioned by Joset (1955: 60, 72, 88-9). See also Libois (1936).

<sup>143</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1934).

these interactions, Lole obtained from Nembunzi the dance *ontuni* or *magpasa*, compared by indigenous informants to *ambodima*. Nembunzi had sent for Atebi, Kabakaba's cousin, to accompany Lole in order to initiate the latter's men into the *anioto* way of killing. This may be an example of the special kind of cooperation between chiefs, lending each other leopard men. However, Atebi was killed during an expedition. The testimonies of Atebi's family in hindsight of his death are crucial to Bouccin's investigation. They recognised Atebi's participation in the killing, but referred all responsibility to Nembunzi, saying that Atebi was but his servant. Bouccin found that all testimonies in this case corroborated each other, enabling him to obtain more clarity regarding the responsibilities of the mentioned chiefs in the dance cult network. Following from his investigations, Lole and Nembunzi were both deported.<sup>144</sup>

### 3.1.2. Cases among the northern Bali since 1920

The following cases among the Badi, Bamadea and Babamba also appeared to be related. The investigations in the first case against chief Abopia of the Badi led to the first big court case in 1920, raising awareness of leopard men in the colonial administration and the general public. The second case discussed, concerns the involvement of chief Mabilanga of the Babamba in the previous case of 1920 and two subsequent series of murders among the Badi in 1921-22 and 1924-25. For the geographical location of the populations see Map 6.

#### *The legal case of 1920: Abopia of the Badi and Alebi of the Bamadea*

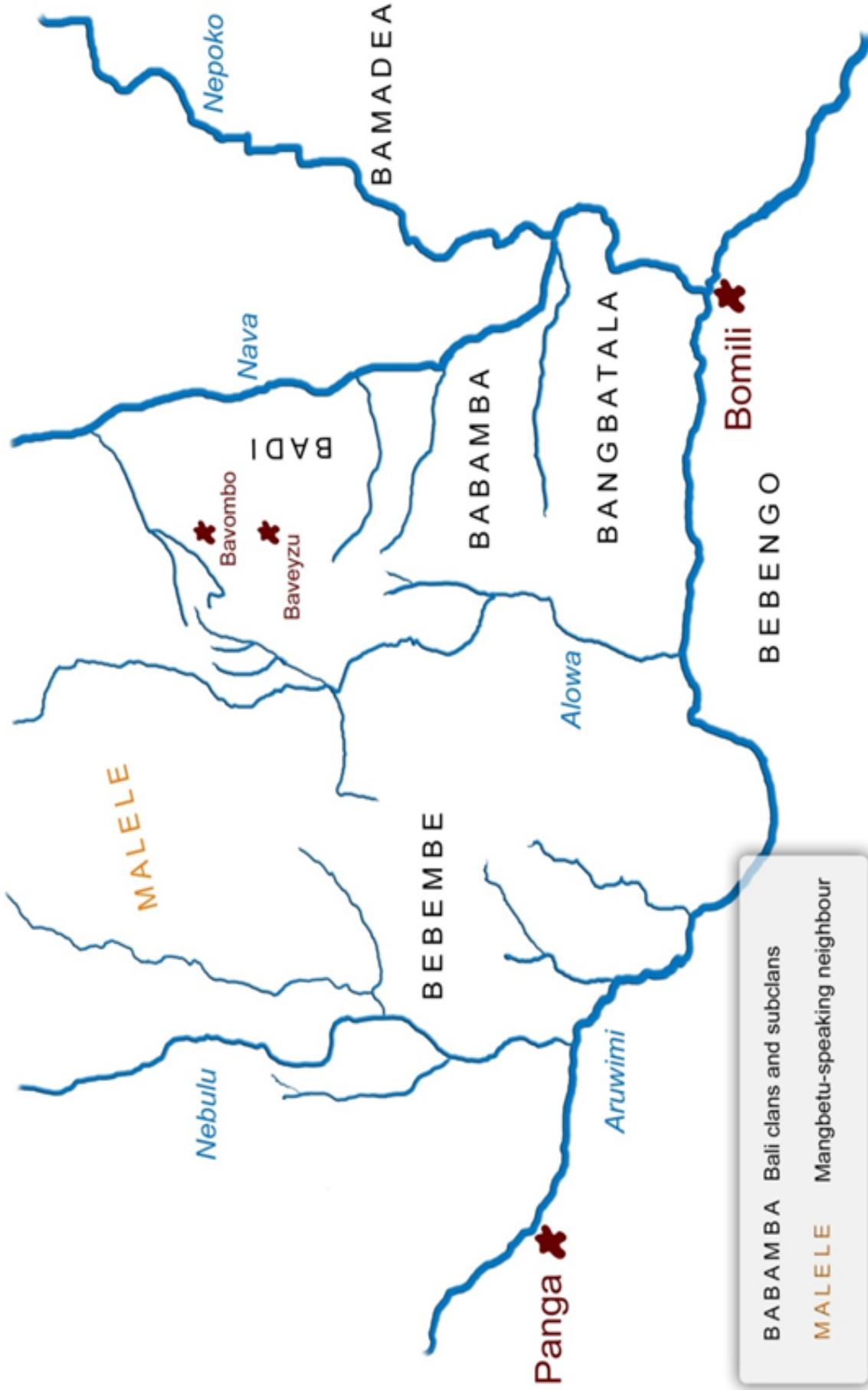
The leopard men attacks commissioned by chief Abopia may have been connected to the *ambodima* network, but so far this has not become apparent from the sources.<sup>145</sup> Abopia of the Badi collaborated with other chiefs, mostly with Alebi of the Bamadea.

As in the cases discussed above, the chiefs involved exchanged *anioto* services. Abopia helped Alebi of the Bamadea by killing among the latter's neighbours but also among the latter's own people, including even his own wife and child. The aim was probably to confirm or extend Alebi's authority by means of leopard men terror. In 1919 for example, Abopia killed mainly among the Bebembe neighbours of the Bamadea, as a service to Alebi. A legal report mentions that the Bebembe had passively undergone this, not revealing anything to the authorities, probably for fear of reprisal. In return, Abopia took one of his prisoners to Alebi to kill him. Abopia did this because the prisoner was a fellow *mambela* initiate

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<sup>144</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 1, 4).

<sup>145</sup>The name of chief Abopia is spelled in different ways: Chepia, Mbopia, Nbopia, Obepia. So is the name of chief Alebi: Alobi, Alabi, Abebi. Joset mentions the chief Aboli, but this also is Alebi.



Map 6: *Anioto* among the northern Bali from 1920.



and killing him would bring harm. Abopia further received parts of leopard men costumes from Alebi. There was also an alliance with chief Mongudu. Two *anioto* involved in the attacks were subjects of the latter (Joset, 1955: 63-5; Marrevée, 1928: 171-173, 207-8, 241, 272-274).

The murders by chief Abopia and his gang were discovered by accident, by the Territorial Administrator Rémy from Panga, who overheard a conversation involving members of the gang. Rémy interrogated the leader of the gang, Atembuko, who admitted his involvement. According to the rumours, they had committed more than 50 crimes in the course of one year. They were convicted of approximately 30 murders and “anthropophagy”. Both chiefs Alebi and Mongudu escaped punishment, as their guilt could not be proven.<sup>146</sup> Abopia and his associates, in total 14 people, were condemned to death by hanging. The execution was first meant to take place at Panga, in which jurisdiction the convicts belonged. However, the superior court ordered that the punishment had to take place at Bomili instead, the heart of the Bali country, in order to set an example. During the investigations some of the accused died in prison. Ten convicts, including Abopia, remained and were hung in 1920. Under the command of Grison, the Vicar of Stanleyville, a missionary was sent to baptise the convicts and take their confessions before the death penalty was administered (Marrevée, 1928: 171, 207-8, 239, 241, 272-7; Joset, 1955: 64). (Illustration 20)

### ***Mabilanga, chief of the Babamba***

In the early 1920s, after Abopia’s death, numerous killings were occurring in the chiefdom of the Badi. In 1934 Bouccin picked up the threads of the older investigations regarding these series of killings and drew up a report on chief Mabilanga, which I summarise here.<sup>147</sup> Local rumour indicated that the neighbouring chief Mabilanga of the Babamba was involved, and had also played a part in the affairs leading to the hanging of Abopia of the Badi.<sup>148</sup> Following this first series of killing in 1920, Mabilanga was also named as the instigator of two subsequent series of murders in 1921-1922 and 1924-1925 among clans dependent on the Badi, more

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<sup>146</sup>RMCA AIMO De Bock (1932). Much later, in 1932, Alebi was appointed invested chief of the chiefdom of Bamadea. He was disenfranchised and Mongudu soon replaced him. In his turn Mongudu was replaced by Yambayamba, the representative of the junior branch of his lineage, because of suspicions regarding his involvement in *anioto* activities. He was disenfranchised and banned from office.

<sup>147</sup>AA AIMO 13611. Report on the chief Mabilanga of the Bekeni by Bouccin, Kondolole, 29/10/34.

<sup>148</sup>Mabilanga’s name is also spelled in different ways in several sources: Mabianga, Abilanga, Abianga. It is unclear whether the Mabiama mentioned in relation to killings among the Budu, may be the same person as Mabilanga.

particularly the Bavombo and Baveyzu.<sup>149</sup>

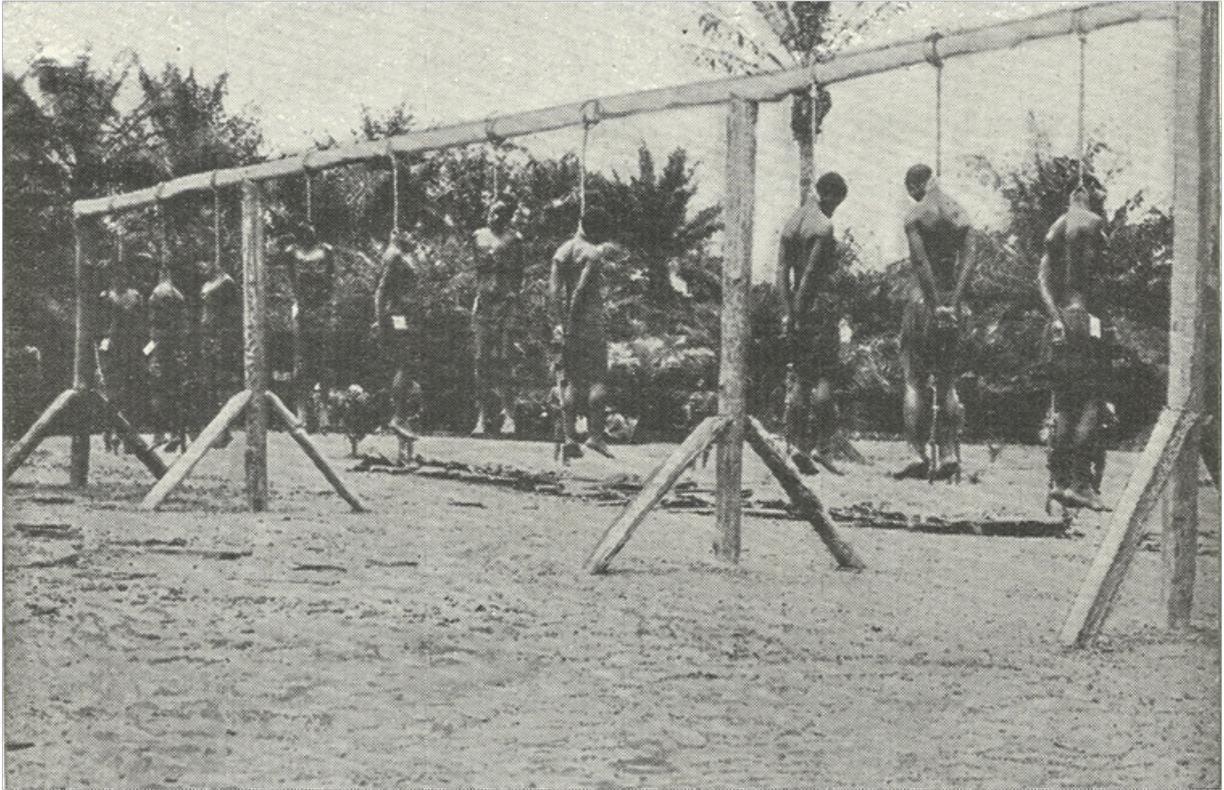
In his report on Mabilanga's involvement in the killings, Bouccin reconsidered the investigations of the three series of murders among the Badi and their neighbours (of 1920, 1921-22 and 1924-25). He pointed out how diverging perspectives of the investigators Laurent and Hallez regarding the role of Mabilanga in the series of killings in 1924-25, and those before, had prevented successful closure of the investigations (Scheme 1). In 1924-25 about 20 murders were reported among Bavombo and Baveyzu, clans attached to the Badi, since the death of Abopia. The District Commissioner Laurent wrote a report, trying to establish the role of Mabilanga in these murders, in relation to his claim of authority over the Badi, and connecting them to the two earlier series of murders in 1920 and 1921-22. A counter-investigation in 1925 by Hallez and Brandt challenged Laurent's conclusions, liberating Mabilanga from suspicion and putting the Badi themselves in the frame as perpetrators. In 1934, in light of new investigations, Bouccin reinstated Laurent's findings.

Laurent's report basically boiled down to the fact that Mabilanga used a divide-and-rule strategy, casting suspicion on the Badi, for attacking some of the clans dependent on them, with whom they were having problems. In this way Mabilanga took the edge off the suspicion against him, and more generally against his people, the Babamba. Mabilanga profited from the reputation of the Badi as *anioto* after the hanging of Abopia and his accomplices in 1921. Even though Laurent's conclusion may appear farfetched, it is indeed a recurring strategy in leopard men killings to attack the enemy of your enemy, thereby casting suspicion on the latter. Mabilanga knew there was friction between the Badi and the Bavombo and hence attacked the latter to put the Badi, who were already known as leopard men, in a bad light. A preconceived suspicion against the Badi, led to bias in the investigation. Furthermore, in the 1920s, Mabilanga was much respected by the European authorities for the achievements in his chiefdom, in terms of the development of plantations and the maintenance of roads. Despite his origins as a former labourer of the railroad, he had worked his way up to become a chief and had developed considerable wealth.<sup>150</sup> Mabilanga profited from his good reputation in the eyes of the administration and skillfully refuted the allegations against him. As Bouccin observed, hardly any investigations were carried out among Mabilanga's people, the Babamba. In each series of killings, Mabilanga was denounced, but each time he succeeded in redirecting the investigations to the Badi. Only in one case

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<sup>149</sup>AA AIMO 13611. In his report on Mabilanga, Bouccin wrote that in Laurent's report from December 1924 it was stated that some people related to Abopia, hung in 1920, were also related to Mabilanga. For example, Avevea, the son of Dumba.

<sup>150</sup>Mabilanga had formerly been recruited as a labourer for the railroad construction site at Kindu from 1902 until 1910.



**Illustration 20: The execution of Abopia and his accomplices, published in Marrevée (1922: 30).**



**BABAMBA ↔ BADI**

**1920:** first series of murders; related to the hanging of Abopia of the Badi

**1921-1922:** second series of murders among Badi dependents Bavombo and Baveyzu

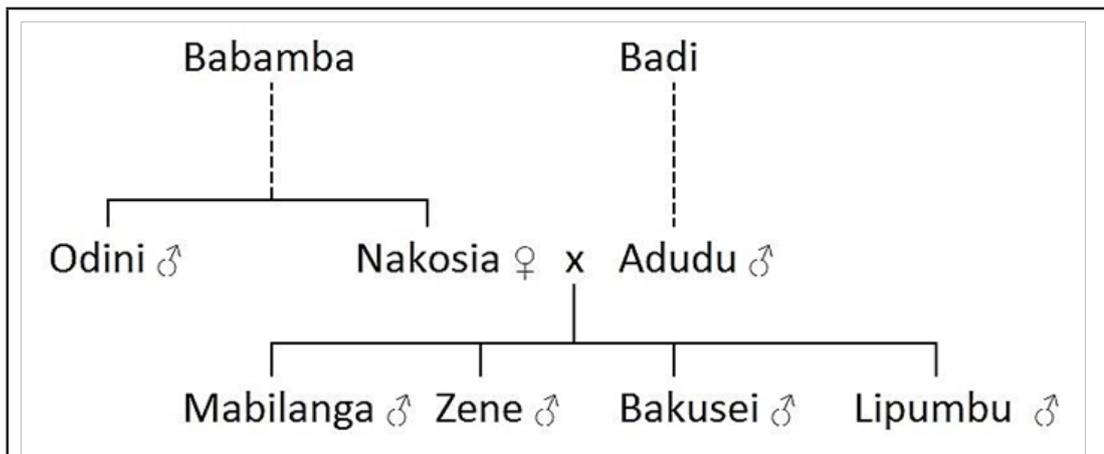
**1924-1925:** second series of murders among the clans Bavombo and Baveyzu

**December 1924:** investigations by District Commissioner Laurent pointing out the role of Mabilanga

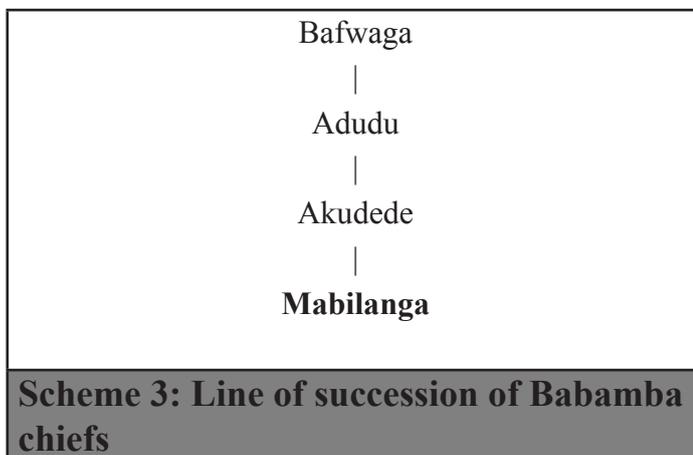
**1925:** counter-investigations by Territorial Administrators Brandt and Hallez in favour of Mabilanga

**1934:** investigations by Territorial Administrator Bouccin (reinstating Laurent's report)

**Scheme 1: Chronology of events in relation to the attacks of Mabilanga of the Babamba against the Badi**



**Scheme 2: Family relations of Mabilanga of the Babamba**



**Scheme 3: Line of succession of Babamba chiefs**

was a Babamba man interrogated. In 1934 Bouccin tried to assemble information by consulting Babamba informants especially, to get a better idea of their perspectives on the killings. According to Bouccin this new information clearly confirmed Laurent's view of chief Mabilanga, indicating his involvement in the previous series of killings.

This leaves us to address the question of why Mabilanga attacked the Badi. The principal reason is that Mabilanga wanted to obtain authority in the chiefdom of the Badi. Possibly this ties in with a vengeance Mabilanga wanted to act out on the Badi, in the name of his father. Mabilanga's father, Adudu, was of Badi origin (Scheme 2). As a consequence of a number of conflicts among the Badi, Adudu moved to live with his wife Nakosia's family, from a clan of the Babamba. Adudu in fact became a straw man of the chief of the Babamba, named Bafwaga, as the latter did not dare to present himself to the Wangwana chiefs of the colonial administration.<sup>151</sup> Even though Adudu was considered a stranger for not having received the *mambela* initiation among the Babamba, he was allied to the family of chief Bafwaga by his father's marriage.<sup>152</sup> Adudu was thus considered chief of the Babamba on the arrival of the Europeans in the region of Bomili (in 1898). On his death, his son Zene refused to succeed him and appointed a village chief instead (Akudedede), who handed over the role of chief to Mabilanga in 1918 (see Scheme 3). Mabilanga's father's conflicts among the Badi were supposedly the origin of his hostility against them. But obviously his personal ambition was also at play. Nakosia's brother Oдини, and two of her later children with Adudu, Mabilanga and Zene, all became involved in the series of *anioto* killings discussed.

The second series of murders in 1921-1922 among the Bavombo reportedly served to settle Mabilanga's authority in the chiefdom of the Badi, which had not had a leader since the hanging of chief Abopia. Mabilanga administered the Badi via one of his village chiefs. In 1922 Mabilanga sent his brother Zene and uncle Oдини to commit murders among Badi dependents, such as the Bavombo and the Baveyzu. As previously stated, he did not attack the Badi directly. Mabilanga and his family were accused by the Badi at the time but the investigations bore no results.<sup>153</sup> Subsequently the Territorial Administrator of Panga summoned Zene and Oдини to come to Panga to account for the suspicions against them, but they refused. As a consequence Zene, Oдини and some others, were deported.

In the third series of killings in 1924-25 about 20 murders were reported, again among the Bavombo and the Baveyzu. Mabilanga was accused once again and arrested in August 1924. A certain Opobo, a Babamba, was accused of murder.

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<sup>151</sup> These chiefs are Ali Bulele and Musa.

<sup>152</sup> His father was married to Bafwaga's great aunt.

<sup>153</sup> RMCA AIMO Brandt (1923). The fact that Mabilanga was suspected was also mentioned by Brandt.





Opobo's reply to the accusations is quoted in a police statement: "*The Badi say it is us [Babamba] who kill people. I (Opobo) don't know, but each time Mabilanga is in my village, he says that people die because he is suffering from the banishment of his brother [Zene]. This he has said in every village and everybody knows it.*" But, Opobo did not admit having committed any murders. Later, in December 1924, Laurent drew up his report on the involvement of Mabilanga, also naming Opobo as a member of Mabilanga's *anioto* gang. As explained, Laurent did not believe that the Badi were committing the murders, as was assumed by the administration. In the meantime, the investigations of the murders had led to a military occupation among the Badi and the annexation of the latter to the chiefdom of Betingembi. But, Mabilanga was not banished nor sentenced to death and returned to his chiefdom in December 1924. Upon his return more murders occurred among the Bavombo. Seven months after Laurent's report, Hallez passed among the Babamba and the Badi. He wrote in his report that Laurent's declarations were exaggerated. According to him the Badi, Baveyzu and Bavombo were not suffering from attacks by Mabilanga and the murders attributed to *anioto* were not so numerous. He asserted that the organisation of *anioto* activity should be looked for in the chiefdom of the Badi. According to Hallez also, Mabilanga had no motive for the killings, as he had never demonstrated aspirations to become chief of the Badi. With this report the investigations ended.

To reinstate Laurent's conclusions, Bouccin was able to count on new data which was more easily revealed many years later. A year prior to Bouccin's investigation, in 1933, the ex-wife of Zene, Ambule, came to testify to the authorities about the involvement of her ex-husband's family in the series of killings in 1922 and 1924. She reported an injury Zene had suffered during an expedition and stated that Mabilanga was the keeper of the "claw" which Zene had used. In 1934, Opobo finally admitted the killing he was accused of in 1924. Furthermore, Mabilanga's brothers, Bakusei and Lipumbu, also admitted their involvement in several murders. Bouccin thus concluded that Laurent was right about Mabilanga's family being behind the series of murders. In total, Bouccin counted at least 35 murders among the Bavombo and Baveyzu.

### **3.1.3. Cases among the eastern Bali and their neighbours around 1930**

The cases among the eastern Bali were already discussed at length in the previous chapter (section 2.3.1 and 2.3.2), as they were fought with more vigour by the colonial administration. The combination of ethnographic research, interrogations of both witnesses and accused, and archival research as a consequence of a tightening of administrative control, eventually led to the conviction of some of the main chiefs, such as Mbako in 1934. For an overview of the three conflicts in this region see Map 7.

### ***Bangombe of the chiefdom of Wangata (conflict 1)***

In 1928 crimes occurred in the chiefdom of Wangata of the Budu population [near loc. Bafwabaka]. As the murders were not reported by the locals, a few of the crimes came to the attention of the European authorities only later. The legal investigations were described at length in a report by Royal Prosecutor Vindevoghel in 1930.<sup>154</sup> Prior to Vindevoghel's investigation, however, suspicions had been raised in several different directions.<sup>155</sup> In Vindevoghel's investigation, it came to the fore that a certain Bangombe had commanded attacks against his own people, who had not recognised him as their chief after the death of chief Wangata in 1924. The chief Manganea had been invested instead. To take revenge Bangombe had commanded a gang of *anioto* from "the big *ishumu*" Mabiama of the chiefdom of Agabi [loc. unknown; roads Bomili-Avakubi-Wamba in the surroundings of Avakubi] to undertake attacks in a group of his villages.<sup>156</sup> Bangombe hoped to discredit the invested chief Manganea in this way. Through the mediation of Mabiama, a gang of *anioto* of the chief Bongo and his *ishumu* Mapandi of the chiefdom of Betingiti were sent [loc. Bafwadili].<sup>157</sup> The *anioto* of Mbako [loc. Babandjo/ Mbako] were also involved (Joset, 1955: 55-6, 65-70). The four different parties involved in this conflict have been located approximatively on the map.

Concerning the first attacks that came to light, suspicion initially arose against the people of chief Mbako. One of these attacks was on Bangombe's wife, Nasuni, and was witnessed by their daughter Matawe. Matawe suspected the *anioto* of Mbako, but Bangombe would later admit in court that he had sacrificed his wife to be the first victim of the *anioto* as a token of discretion. Suspicion more particularly arose against a certain Bafwaka, a subject of chief Mbako, who had a disagreement about a dowry at the chiefdom of Wangata. It seems Bafwaka had threatened to send *anioto* of Mbako. To ward off suspicion against him, Mbako accused the chief Bongo and the *ishumu* Mapandi of the chiefdom of Betingiti in his turn. To identify the killers a confrontation was organised at Avakubi, where Bangombe's daughter Matawe had to face suspected *anioto* of both chiefs, Bongo and Mbako. She picked out different men, among them Aganzi, a subject of Mbako, and Odini and Kisanga, subjects of Bongo. Because of inconsistencies in Matawe's testimony, Vindevoghel took the investigation a step further and went looking for more clues. As explained in the previous chapter, he was the first one to dig into old cases which helped to identify those previously suspected in *anioto* cases. Furthermore, he searched for specific proof such as claws, hidden in the houses of the suspects, or hidden forges

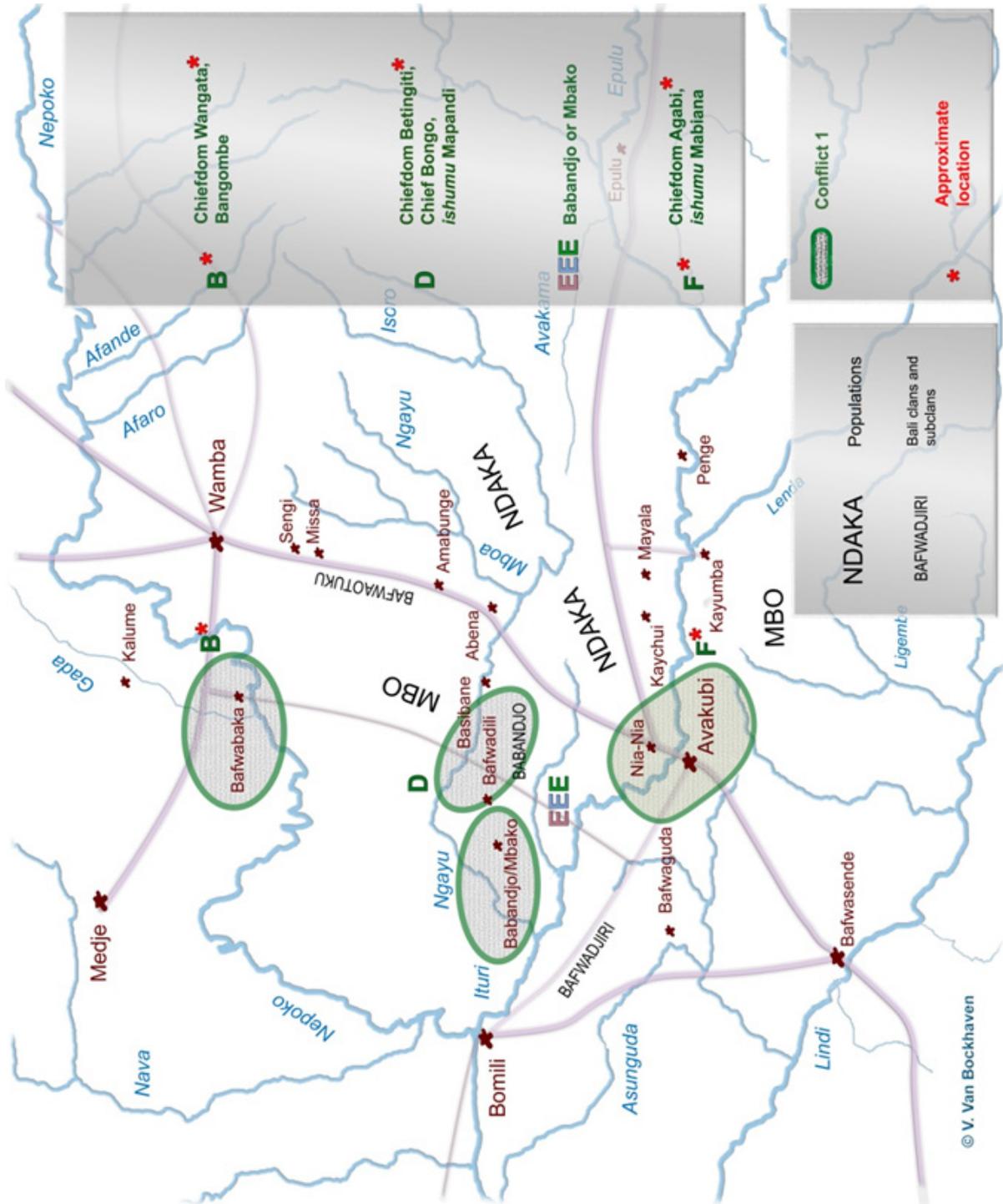
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<sup>154</sup>RMCA AIMO Vindevoghel (1930).

<sup>155</sup>AAE, PO19: 245, 246. Reports by Schockaert (1933) and Noirot (1934).

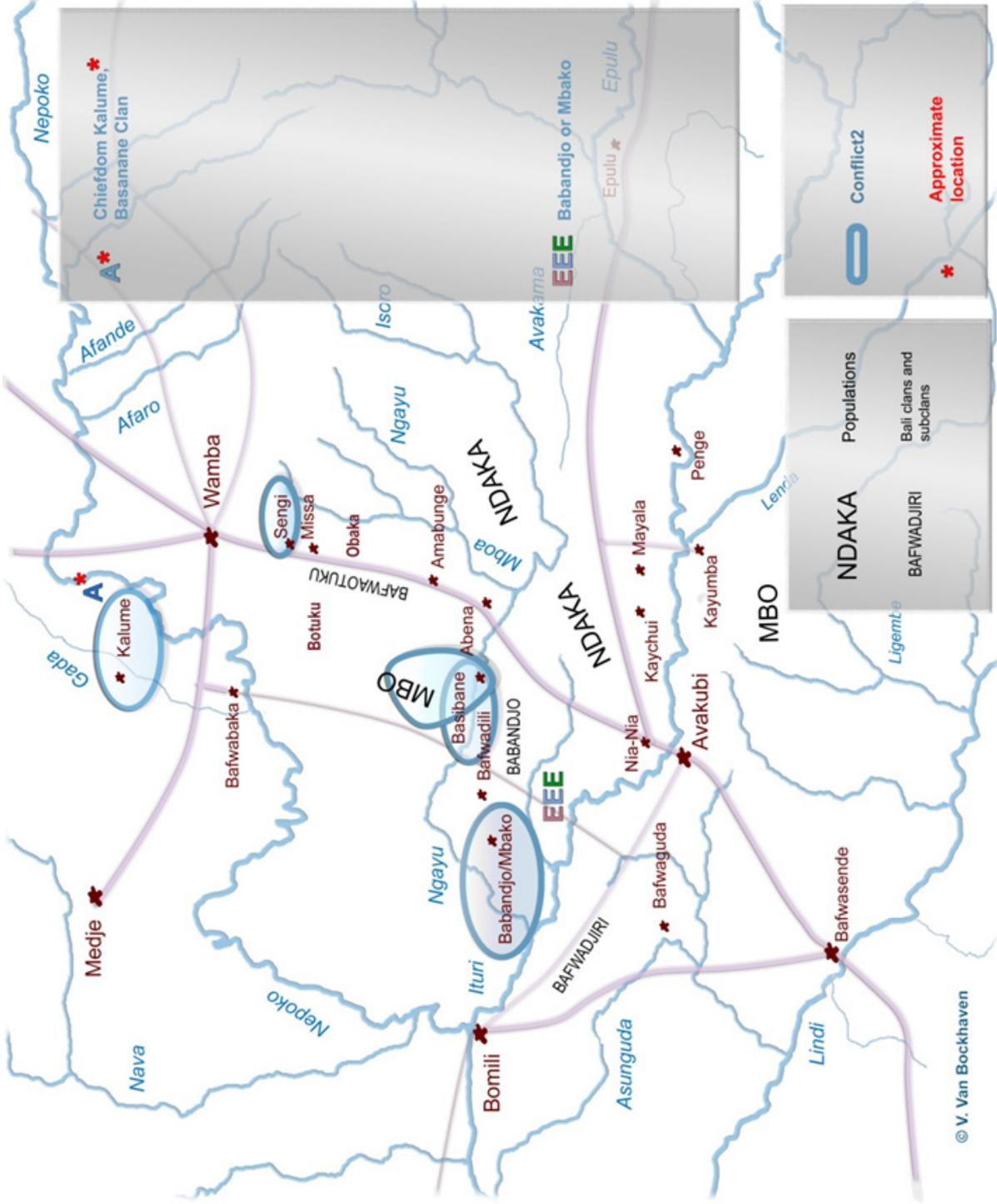
<sup>156</sup>Mabiama is also spelled Abiama or Abiana.

<sup>157</sup>RMCA AIMO Hackars (1919). Bongo was mentioned by Hackars in 1919 in relation to leopard men murders.



Map 8: Conflict 1 among the eastern Bali.





Map 9: Conflict 2 among the eastern Bali.



where the weapons were supposedly made. An additional lead was to track down the ways the *anioto* had travelled, by making enquiries in the villages along the roads between their homes and the places of the crimes. In this way he tried to establish links between the four suspected parties in this case. For example, the suspects of the chiefdom of Bongo of the Betingiti, Odini and Kisanga, were identified as *anioto* by several witnesses. Vindevoghel discovered that Odini and Kisanga had been mixed up in another case regarding the production of *anioto* knives in the past. *Anioto* knives were also found in Odini's house at the construction site of the Wamba-Avakubi road. Vindevoghel discovered that Aganzi, the subject of Mbako, who was indicated by Matawe as one of the murderers, was a close relative of Nabanea, son of Sambea, who had been prosecuted in 1917 for having forged iron claws. These men were all from the village of Mbako [loc. Babandjo/Mbako]. Furthermore it was discovered that Nabanea and Aganzi had travelled in the direction of Wangata around the time of the murders.

Considered on the whole, Vindevoghel and his colleagues had a hard time getting people convicted, and often could not do more than deport them for a while. In the meantime the murdering continued. Only in 1935, the case was brought in court. Finally, Bangombe admitted in court that he had visited the *ishumu* Mabiama of the chiefdom of Agabi himself, with people from his village. In order to establish an alliance, Bangombe's nephew, still a child, was initiated into *mambela* together with children of Mabiama's village. Bangombe also admitted having appointed his wife Nasuni to be the first victim, as a token of loyalty and discretion (Joset, 1955: 200, 222). Bangombe and a number of his accomplices were sentenced to death and publicly hung at Wamba. The intermediary role of the *ishumu* Mabiama was clearly suspected but he could not be convicted for lack of sufficient incriminating evidence (Joset, 1955: 55-6, 65-70, 200-201).<sup>158</sup> Mbako would only get convicted in the following case.

### ***The case of Mbako of the Babandjo (conflict 2)***

Mbako had been mentioned as a suspect in *anioto* crimes as early as 1909, and had been involved in the *ambodima*-network as well. Since at least 1921, he also entertained *anioto* alliances with his eastern neighbours, the Ndaka and the Mbo, independent of the *ambodima*-network. The latter collaboration was the basis for one of the biggest series of murders among the Budu in 1932-1933, ultimately leading to Mbako's demise. The investigation was described at length in a report by the Territorial Administrator Winckelmans in 1933.<sup>159</sup>

In 1929 and 1930 Mbako helped his relatives among the Mbo, more particularly his son-in-law Basibane and the latter's father Sengi. They requested

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<sup>158</sup> Joset (1955: 200) added a copy of the official statement as an annex to his book.

<sup>159</sup> AAE, PO 21 : 250. A Report by Territorial Administrator on *mambela* Winckelmans (10-4-1933).

Mbako to take exemplary revenge on the Budu of the Basanane clan of the chiefdom of Kalume [loc.].<sup>160</sup> The origin of the conflict was a murder which had been committed there by Basibane in 1929. In an investigation in 1930, witnesses of the Basanane clan identified Basibane as the murderer. Basibane was convicted and sent to prison. His father Sengi and his wife Bayakisu asked Mbako to take revenge. According to Winckelmans, Mbako consulted with the *ishumu* of his group (cf. discussion of the titles in the previous chapter).<sup>161</sup> The council agreed to organise a *mambela* initiation. The most suitable initiates were selected to become *anioto*. An older wife of Sengi was designated as the first victim as a token of discretion for the alliance. The attacks against the chiefdom of Kalume took place in 1932-33. Mbako's gang was guided to Kalume by the brothers of Basibane, sons of Sengi. Witnesses in the investigation were Badokwisha together with Amabangi and Madindi, who will also be referred to in the next case.<sup>162</sup> Badokwisha, who ultimately identified Mbako as the chief of the gang, was arrested after one of the surviving victims recognised him. He claimed to have been forced to guide the gang of *anioto* to Kalume. Mbako finally admitted having sent *anioto* to the chiefdom of Kalume, and also admitted his earlier *anioto* expeditions amongst the Budu in 1928-1929 (against the chiefdom of Wangata). (Joset, 1955: 75-79).<sup>163</sup> (Illustration 21; Illustration 22)

The trial took place at Wamba in front of a public audience in 1933. Very detailed information on the crimes was revealed in the testimonies during this trial. In this case the *modus operandi* of the killers was particularly unveiled in the testimonies of witnesses and perpetrators. It was, for example, admitted by Mbako and his women that the flesh obtained in the attacks had been sent to Mbako and that it was cooked by the women in his company and eaten by all. It was also stated that the killers removed the eyes from the victims in order to prepare a medicine in which the knife was dipped to be more efficient, as the *anioto* supposedly killed with their eyes closed. This suggested certain rituals surrounding the killings. In 1935 Mbako

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<sup>160</sup>In some documents the clan name is spelled "Bayamane".

<sup>161</sup>RMCA AIMO Winckelmans (1933: 3-4). According to Winckelmans the *ishumu* Bakeboi intervened on behalf of Mbako in the council of *ishumu* presided by the big *ishumu* Dungbe (Dunghe, Dunghele), but Libois and Bouccin shed doubt on this data.

<sup>162</sup>Badokwisha, a son of the slaves of Wangwana, was accused but in the end proved a useful witness for the investigation. He was originally from the Budu chiefdom Danga, of Bafwakoye descent. On a trip to Bafwabaki in 1932 he met a gang of *anioto* the chief of which was Sengida, a Bali. They spared Badokwisha on condition he guided them. He went with them to the chiefdom of Kalume and assisted them there in several murders until he was arrested. Malamu, a Bafwakoye man, recognised Badokwisha, who attempted to attack him but failed. In 1933 the notable Amabangi of the Ndaka declared that the chief of the gang was Mbako, notable of chief *Akurugbi* of Bafwasende territory. Mbako denied it, but he was recognised by Badokwisha in prison (Joset, 1955: 76, 78-9).

<sup>163</sup>RMCA AIMO Vindevoghel (1930).



**Illustration 21: Portrait of Mbako as *chef médaillé* in the company of his family.**

**Photo by M. Migeon, 1934.  
RMCA AP.0.1.6174**



**Illustration 22: Portrait of Mbako at his conviction.**

**Photo by M. Migeon, 1935  
Ceges-Soma**





**Illustration 23: Mbako and his accomplices at their trial.**

**Second row: third person from the left: Mbako; fourth person from the left: Bayakisu; fifth person from the left: Fatuma, favourite wife of Mbako; the man behind Fatuma: Sengi; first row, first person to the right: Badokwisha.**

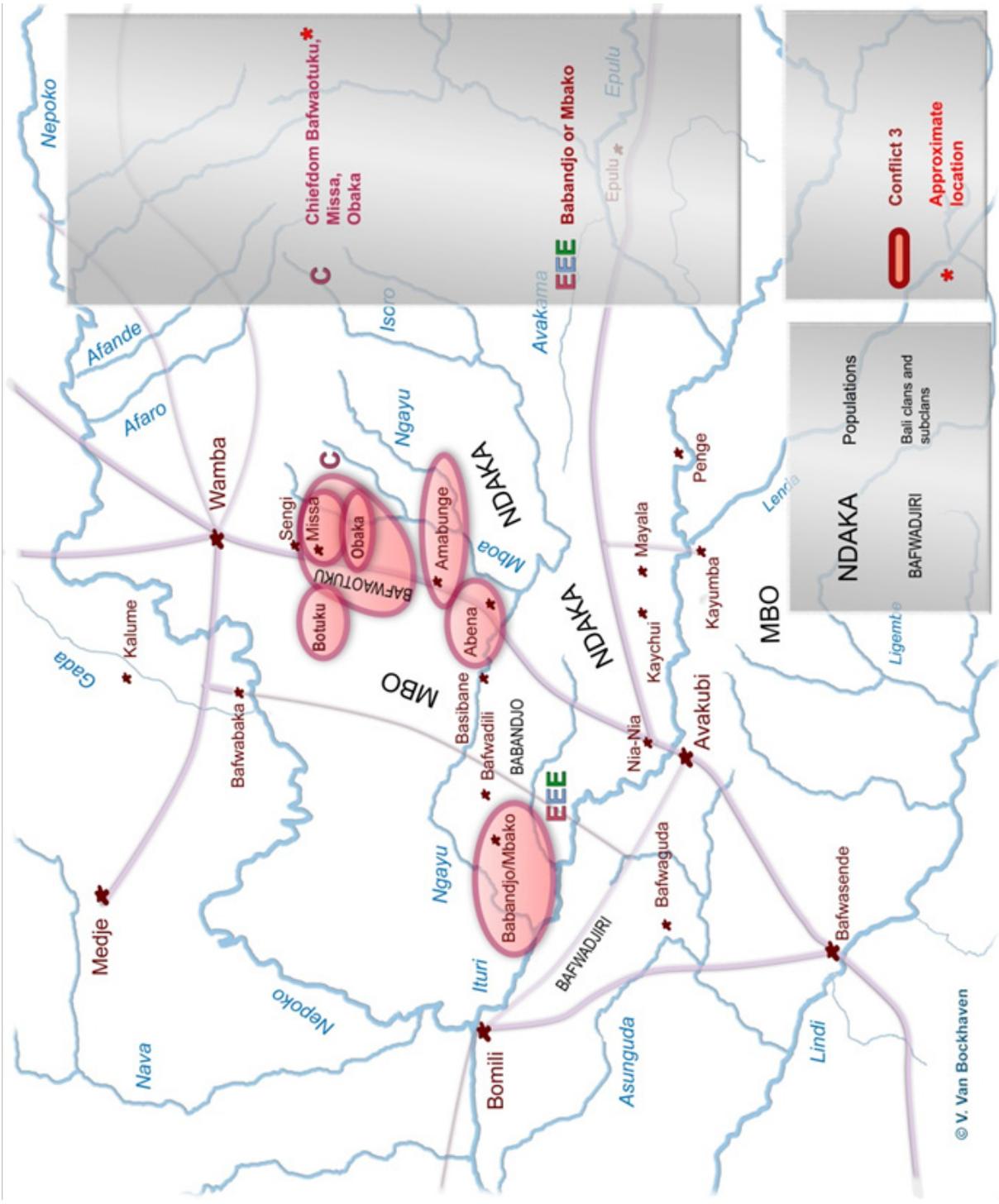
**Photo by M. Migeon, 1935.  
RMCA AP.0.1.6175**



**Illustration 24: Sengi, commander of *anioto* murders, father-in-law of Bayakisu.**

**Photo by M. Migeon, 1935.  
RMCA AP.0.1.6176**





Map 10: Conflict 3 among the eastern Bali.



and his eight accomplices were hung in public at Wamba (Joset, 1955: 59-60; 79-88). (Illustration 23; Illustration 24)

### ***The Budu and Ndaka allies of Mbako (conflict 3)***

Subsequent to the investigations of the large series of murders at Wamba, the following conflict which ties in with the previous conflict came to light, resulting in a series of murders along the road Nia-Nia-Wamba. The data provided here is mostly a summary of two reports by the administrator Winckelmans, also investigating the previous case, in combination with data provided by Joset (1955: 89-91).<sup>164</sup>

In 1934 chief Obaka of the Bafwaotuku wanted to take revenge on his rival Missa for a conflict which had its origins some 20 years earlier. The conflict was over the right to supremacy between two Budu clans, Bafwaotoku and Bafwananzaie, which had started in the *sous-chefferie* of Bafwaotuku [loc.]. At that time the Europeans were in touch with the Ndaka of chief Abena and of chief Amabangi, who were allies of the Babandjo of Mbako. (Illustration 16; Illustration 25)

As a consequence of a territorial reorganisaton in 1930, the Bafwaotuku migrants had to return to their old homelands. Chief Missa was then placed at the head of the chiefdom of Bafwaotuku and Obaka became a village chief in his service. Because the Bafwaotuku were so few, Obaka also had to give away part of their land to another village chief of Missa. Obaka requested *anioto* from the Ndaka to discredit Missa in the eyes of the Europeans for not being in control of his chiefdom. In 1934 Obaka first sent for the gang of Madindi of the village chief Amabangi, but several gangs were operating in this series of murders. In the killings, the former Bafwaotuku migrants were spared but there were many victims among the Bafwananzaie (Joset, 1955: 89-91).

In the investigations a peculiar element of comparison with the previous case at the Wangata chiefdom occurs, where the guide of one of the gangs was recognised by a victim. The Pygmy guide of one of the *anioto* gangs operating in this case, named Bokuabekombo, was also recognised by one of the victims and became a key witness. Bokuabekombo subsequently denounced most of the others involved and presented himself as a victim, being forced to collaborate with the gang, like Badokwisha in the previous case. This makes sense in as far as locals familiar with the area were recruited as guides, and hence risked being recognised by locals, but this may also have been an attempt to lie one's way out of it. The different collaborating groups thus denounced by Bokuabekombo were the Bafwaotuku of Obaka, the Ndaka of Abena, the Ndaka of Amabangi, and also the individual Batoku

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<sup>164</sup>RMCA AIMO Tihon and Winckelmans (1935). AA AIMO 11688. Letter to the District Commissioner from Territorial Agent Winckelmans of the Mabudu. Wamba, 27/6/35.

of a neighbouring Budu chiefdom.<sup>165</sup> All the people designated as accomplices by Bokuabekombo were interrogated at Wamba. Batoku was identified as the principal killer accompanying all the expeditions. Among the people identified by the witness, Winckelmans also recognised Madindi, the *anioto* of the village chief Amabangi, who had both been important witnesses for the investigations against Mbako in the former case. Winckelmans put Madindi under extra pressure during interrogation to obtain more specific information (Joset, 1955: 89-91).

In a subsequent letter reporting on the progress made in the investigation, Winckelmans summarised the testimony of Madindi.<sup>166</sup> Madindi, presenting himself as a victim too, reported that after the hanging of Mbako, the people of Abena accused him and Amabangi of having betrayed Mbako, and they were hence forced to make up for it (Joset, 1955: 89-91).<sup>167</sup> It seems that vengeance for Mbako's conviction was indeed an additional factor in this case. Mbako had long-standing ties with the Ndaka, which accounts for this vengeance.<sup>168</sup> Madindi, an *anioto* himself, claims to have been forced to accompany the Ndaka of Abena to the aforementioned individual Batoku where all the parties involved were gathering. Madindi had to assist in a killing close to this village of Batoku. Another gathering also took place at Obaka's settlement. Madindi stressed that the first witness, Bokuabekombo, was lying when he asserted that the people of Amabangi were guilty. Madindi insisted that those he had brought to Batoku were only people of Abena, putting to the fore the role of the latter. He stressed that the principal killers, Batoku and also Awango, were men of Abena. He claimed, for example, that Batoku was married to a woman belonging to the family of an important blacksmith of Abena, named Bandeso (alias Fundi Kamansi). Batoku had obtained the secrets and knives of *anioto* from his wife's family. Moreover he claimed that Awango had family ties with Mbako too.

The case was heard in court in 1935. Obaka and eight of his accomplices were condemned to death, but Obaka died in prison. Prior to their hanging, his accomplices were urged to convert to Christianity and make their confession, as in the case of the northern Bali chief Abopia. In May 1936 they were publicly hung at Stanleyville (Joset, 1955: 91).

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<sup>165</sup>It concerns a man from the *sous-chefferie* Maha Sud-Ouest just next to the *sous-chefferie* of Bafwaotuku to the west.

<sup>166</sup>AA AIMO 11688. Letter to the district commissioner from Territorial Agent Winckelmans of the Mabudu. Wamba, 27/6/35.

<sup>167</sup>RMCA AIMO Tihon and Winckelmans (1935).

<sup>168</sup>An example of this may be that in 1914 Mbako for example sent *anioto* to attack Abena's rival, the chief Kayumba of the Mbo (cf. Chapter 2) (Schebesta, 1934: 65, 73).



**Illustration 25: The Ndaka chief Abena at his residence.**

**Schebesta, 1929-1930.**

**Bildarchiv Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 59957B**



### 3.1.4. Summary

A key characteristic of the cases discussed so far, is the secrecy surrounding the events, helping to evade colonial control. As explained in the previous chapters, the initiation of *anioto* is generally grafted onto the *mambela* initiation. The moral authority of *mambela* enforced people involved to keep the secrets of the cult and of the killings. For the dance-related transmission of *anioto*, this relationship with *mambela* may have been different and more arbitrary.

The collaboration among neighbouring chiefs and over larger distances was a common characteristic of the different conflict clusters. In several cases, the chief from whom *anioto* were requested would send his gang, or act as an intermediary to request gangs from associated chiefs further away. These gangs would then initiate men of the commanding chief, who would from then onwards possess his own gang. The fact that gangs came from elsewhere and travelled discretely, for example, via walking trails through the forest instead of the principal roads, helped to guarantee the secrecy of the events. In this way the risk that people could have recognised and denounced the killers and that the commanding chiefs could be identified was averted. This was probably one of the strengths of the collaboration along the lines of dispersal. Particularly with the dance-related cults, large networks of collaboration were hence established. There were also other ways of maintaining the secrecy: such as in the context of the dance-related cults, the transmission occurred under the pretext of palm oil trade, with claws presumably hidden in the pots of oil. We have come across several examples of the sacrifice of the wives or children of people requesting *anioto*, as a token of absolute loyalty and discretion.

Also the ways in which the attacks were organised were aimed at silencing the victims and misleading the colonial administration. One of the strategies used in several of the conflicts is to discredit one's rival, for example by attacking the latter's enemies or subjects. Mabilanga successfully manipulated the colonial administration by casting suspicion on his rivals, who were reputed to be leopard men, by attacking clans subject to them. Furthermore, even victims kept silent, for those denouncing the leopard men were punished severely. However, what is interesting about the cluster of conflicts among the eastern Bali is that despite the very strict demands of allegiance, suspects seemed to accuse each other systematically whenever they were under suspicion. It almost seemed a structural characteristic of the conflicts in this region. The relative frequency of these denunciations goes against the secrecy as a fundamental aspect of the allegiances. In these cases too, those chiefs requesting *anioto* sacrificed their wives and children as first victims, as a token of allegiance. Arguably this strategy of mutual accusation worked quite effectively initially (e.g. in the chieftom of Wangata) causing confusion among the administrators, but became obsolete as the colonial administration became more determined and better organised in fighting the crimes. Also, it appears that when these mutual accusations did lead

to convictions, as in the case of Amabangi and Madindi, who were accused of denouncing Mbako and were forced to make up for it.

Regarding the specific motives for the killings, we remain largely ignorant as far as the dance cults are concerned. Among the eastern and northern Bali, however, chiefs were killing among their own and neighbouring people to confirm or extend their authority by means of terror. This ties in with more petty reasons of personal vengeance at times, the deaths of family members, for example. The role of inherited conflicts has become apparent in some cases, especially in relation to chiefly claims of authority, and the rights of eldest clans on succession, which were quite often surpassed under the colonial administration.

### **3.2. *Vihokohoko* in the region of Beni**

As discussed in the previous chapters, the heightened awareness of leopard men conflicts among the Bali in the early 1930s, also brought to the attention of the colonial administration a history of killings in the surroundings of Beni, which had previously been ignored. The leopard men hostilities in the region of Beni were limited to the immediate surroundings of the post of Beni itself. Sources are therefore less numerous and less diverse. However, in comparison with the Bali cases, the sources in this region provide perhaps a more comprehensive perspective on the cases themselves and how they were interrelated. For that reason, even though more limited in time and space, they have a significant part in this chapter.

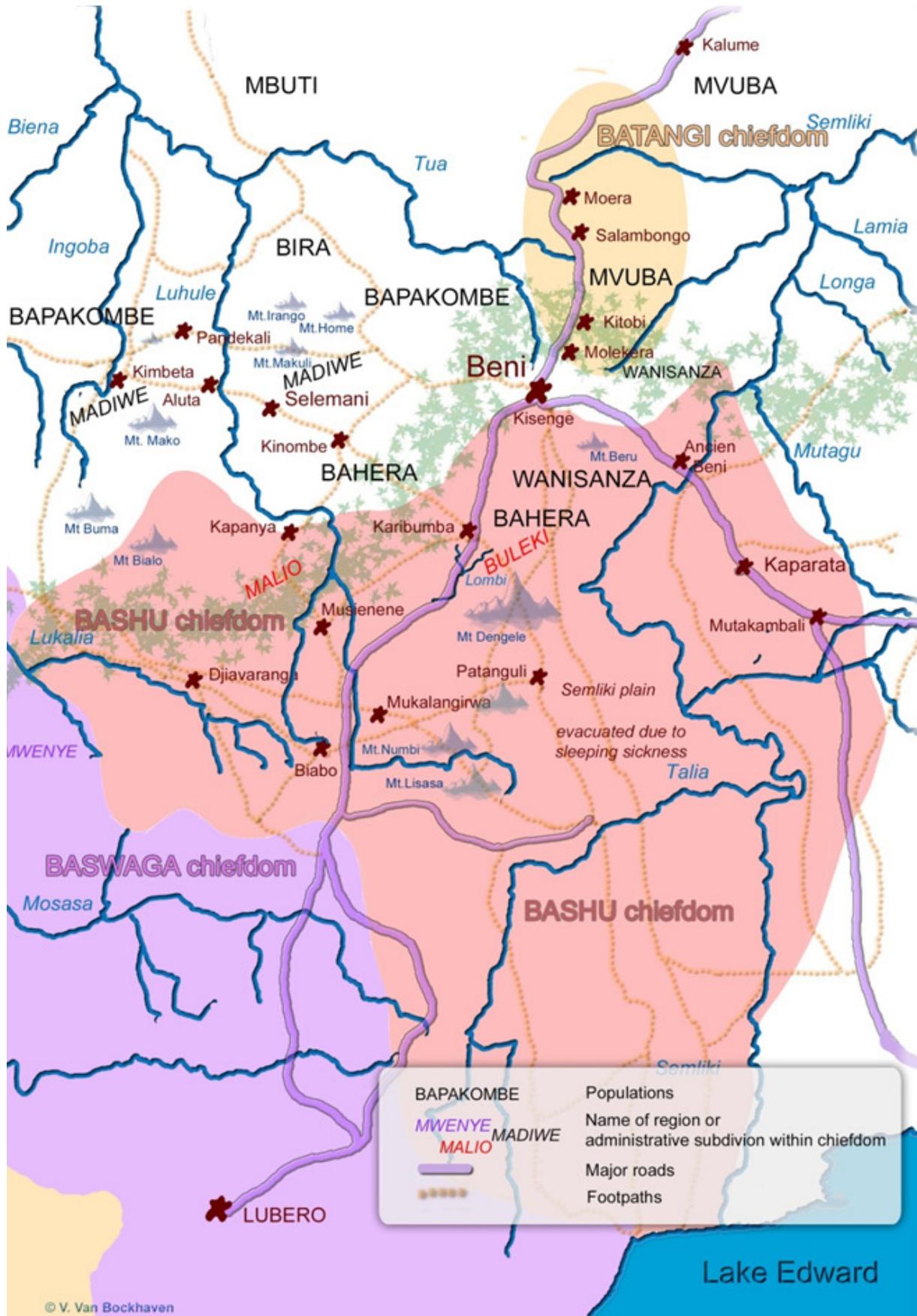
#### **3.2.1. The core of the conflict: tensions among Bapakombe and Nande groups**

The investigation following on the wave of killings of 1933-34 brought to light previous feuds between the chiefs involved. Several reports suggested that the Bapakombe terrorised the Nande to extort land and tribute from them through *vihokohoko* killings.<sup>169</sup> I have noted in the previous chapter that this should be regarded as an over-generalised, distorted perception.

The wave of murders in 1933 and 1934 was the culmination of a series of events causing increased friction and triggering *vihokohoko* conflicts on a larger scale. Nande groups had been migrating into the forest to the north and west for a long time. In the previous Chapter I detailed how, during the revolts in 1907 and later, Nande from Beni were urged to settle along roads in the lands deserted by rebel chiefs. Furthermore in 1924, the Semliki valley was evacuated on a large

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<sup>169</sup>AA AIMO 1639 (9201). Letter from Territorial Administrator Lauwers to District Commissioner of Kibali-Ituri Absil at Irumu. Beni, 17/8/34.



Map 11: The region of Beni around 1930.



scale because of sleeping sickness, forcing people to relocate. Related to this, the post of Beni was also moved westward and some of the population groups, such as Kisenge's, went to settle near the new post potentially posing a new threat to the populations already in that area. Furthermore, the crash of the price of ivory in 1932 led to a general impoverishment and put extra strain on the region, triggering conflicts based on existing tensions.<sup>170</sup>

The series of *vihokohoko* attacks in 1933-34 revealed a general anti-colonial atmosphere among forest populations to the north and west of Beni. The Bapakombe, and other forest people overtly refused to comply with the colonial conditions and collaborate, while specifically in this region several principal Nande chiefs remained notably cooperative. The forest populations continued to live withdrawn from the roads.<sup>171</sup> In the reports on *vihokohoko* in the surroundings of Beni, the "honest masses" of Nande were often reported as being terrorised by "small gangs of bandits", that is by the Bapakombe.<sup>172</sup> This assertion ignored the fact that Nande groups certainly had their share of anti-colonial rebellions requiring, for example several military occupations of the Bashu region from 1922 to 1932 to restore order.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, of the different families identified by colonial administrators as using *vihokohoko* terror, two were Nande families of the chiefs Kisenge and Meanga.<sup>174</sup> The bias in the investigation, focusing predominantly on the Bapakombe crimes, accounts for the lack of data on murders instigated by Nande chiefs. By 1934 Kisenge was charged with being a leopard men chief but so far no information on killings commanded by him has been retrieved from the archives. Despite the grand career of collaboration of his father Mbene, by 1934 he had clearly fallen from grace with the administration.<sup>175</sup>

Basically the conflict of 1933-34 was between several Bapakombe factions under the authority of Mwami predominantly, and several Nande chiefs, among

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<sup>170</sup>AA AIMO 1639 (9201). This is mentioned in several letters: Letter from District Commissioner F. Absil to Territorial Administrator of Wanande-Nord (Lauwers). Irumu, 3/9/34; Letter from District Commissioner F. Absil to the Provincial Commissioner. Irumu, 3/10/34.

<sup>RMCA</sup> AIMO Joset (1939: 16, 18, 22).

<sup>171</sup>AA AIMO 1639 (9201). Letter from District Commissioner Absil to the District Commissioner. Irumu, 3/10/34.

<sup>172</sup>AA AIMO 1639 (9201). Letter from Territorial Administrator Lauwers to District Commissioner of Kibali-Ituri Absil at Irumu. Beni, 17/8/34.

<sup>173</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 20). See also AA AIMO 1639 (9201). Letter from District Commissioner Absil to the District Commissioner. Irumu, 3/10/34. Absil stresses that Nande are no 'cowards' and dare to attack too.

<sup>174</sup>AA AIMO 1639 (9201). Reply by Territorial Administrator Lauwers to District Commissioner Absil. Beni, 17/9/34.

<sup>175</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 127).

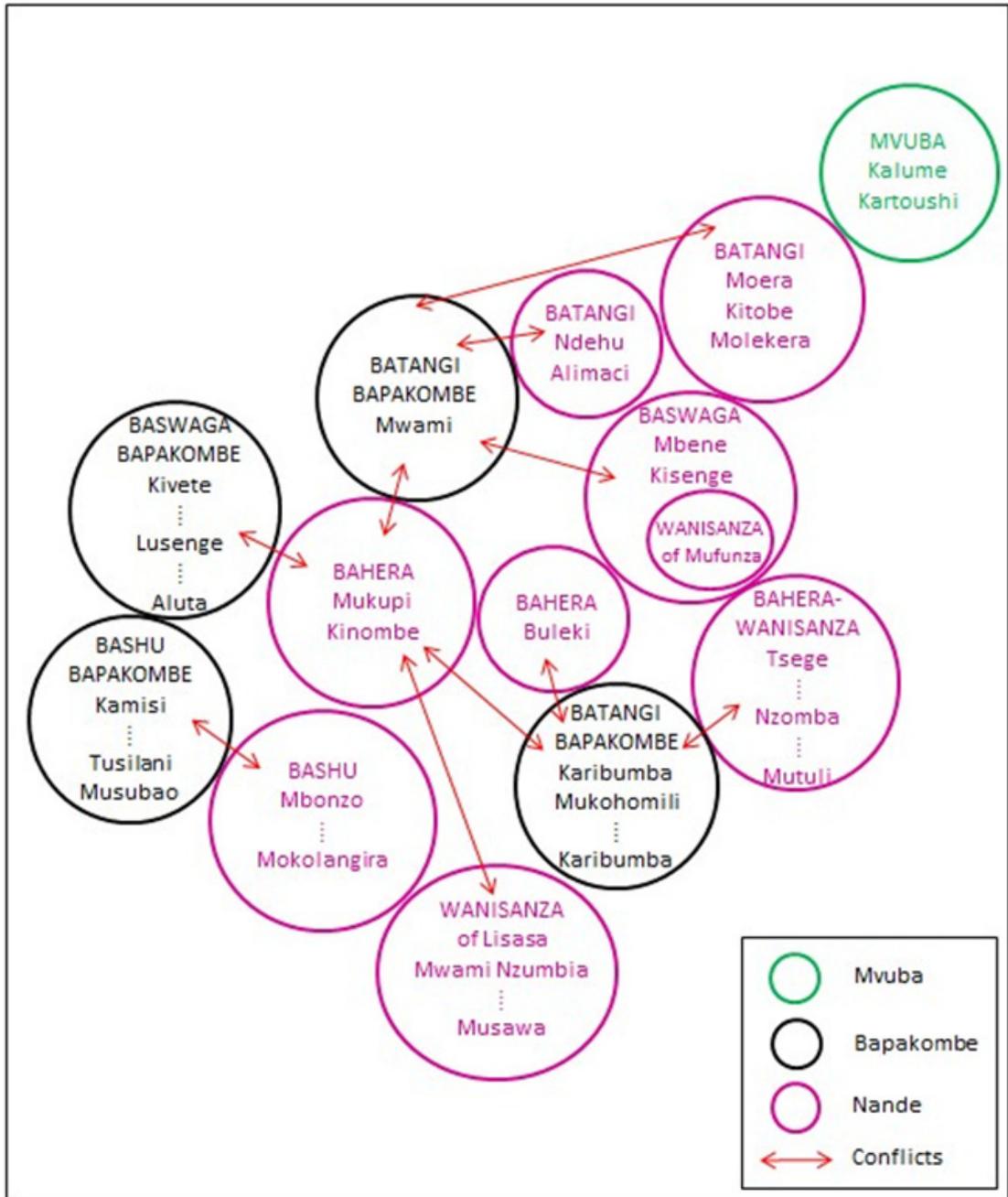
whom Kisenge and his associate Moera played a key role. The historical core of the conflict was a feud between Mwami and Kisenge dating back to the era of the slave trade. This inherited conflict apparently became entangled with a number of other disputes. For an overview of the conflict clusters see Scheme 4. I will outline here the development of the *vihokohoko* conflicts, starting from the Bapakombe's original situation in the forest region.

In their tradition, different Bapakombe clans refer to an ancestral figure, Kivete (see Appendix 2 for the origins of the clans). From Kivete and his sons, four clans descended: Bashu Bapakombe, Baswaga Bapakombe, Batangi Bapakombe and Bira Bapakombe (see Table 3). They settled on the hills of the Madiwe forest and became a hegemonic minority in the region. They sought to attach families from neighbouring regions by giving them wives and land, but they also used *vihokohoko* to usurp land, extract tributes and retain control over them. Two branches of Batangi Bapakombe were especially active in the conflicts of 1933-34: the group of Mwami was located in the Madiwe region [Locs. Mont Home, Tua river], the other group had settled south of Beni under the leadership of Karibumba [Loc. Karibumba]. The Mwami of Madiwe was probably the principal *vihokohoko* chief of the Beni territory in the 1920s and 1930s. The group of *vihokohoko* of Mwami descended from the principal initiator Soli, who had provided many leading families in the region with *vihokohoko*. Mwami's associate Mukuniu was one of his succeeding initiators. Over the years they had initiated many men of requesting chiefs, especially Bapakombe but also Nande, so from that time onwards the chiefs possessed their own leopard men. This process was connected to the *lusumba* initiation. Mwami and Mukuniu were principal instigators of the big *vihokohoko* campaign in 1933-34 in which also Karibumba was involved (Joset, 1955: 31-32).

An important breeding ground for the hostilities between Mwami and Kisenge was that the latter inherited the hostility against his father, Mbene. This derived from his involvement subsequently as an ally of the slave traders and colonisers, in whose name he extorted and enslaved the local populations.<sup>176</sup> According to several traditions Mbene came from a Baswaga group (Nande clan)

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<sup>176</sup>RMCA AIMO Absil (1934: 2).



**Scheme 4: overview of the clustered conflicts at Beni**

which had migrated to Beni from the south (Bergmans, 1970: 47).<sup>177</sup> At Beni they acquired the leadership over the group of Wanisanza (Nande) of Mufunza. In the 1880s Mbene first became chief of the post of Beni under the control of the Wangwana Kilongalanga (Packard, 1976: 222-226; Stuhlmann, 1894: 271-280).<sup>178</sup> According to Joset (1955: 50-1), at the time of the slave trade Mwami had fought against the indigenous population of the Tua region who had taken 130 piston rifles from him. These arms were subsequently taken by the big chief Mbene shortly afterwards. In 1927 Mwami purportedly claimed these weapons back from Kisenge, who returned them, but Mwami still wanted vengeance – for a variety of reasons, as I will explain. It is asserted by Joset that in 1933 Mwami presided over a big gathering of Bapakombe to plan a war against Nande, who were disrespectful of the Bapakombe's position as first occupants of the land. Mwami was especially disturbed by Kisenge's attitude towards him.<sup>179</sup>

If animosities had important roots in the past, they were fuelled by the struggle for control over land and resources which was reinforced by the policies of the territorial administration. In this process, opposition between Nande and forest populations became sharper as the former were often favoured by the colonial administration. Prior to colonisation, however, the Bapakombe families had resorted

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<sup>177</sup>The tradition of Mbene's origin was written down by Bergmans (1970: 47). A young girl of Bulengya, one of the Baswaga chiefdoms, married an ancestor of Mbene. According to the version noted by Absil (1932) it was Mbene himself who married the girl. In a period of famine a group of Bulengya inhabitants migrated to settle at Mbene's. This then would be the historical core group of the Baswaga of Beni. Bergmans noted that the Baswaga origin of Mbene was confirmed by an unsigned report of 1911-1912, adding a citation: One tradition situates Mbene's origin in the group Baswaga of Lubula which came from Bunyoro. Lubula was chased from there following a series of murders. Later, when a named Mutulu had become chief of the group, another Baswaga man named Bubyia came to settle with them at Bunyunyu. When the latter died he left three sons who settled on Mont Matala. One of his three sons Lyongoma, who died shortly afterwards, left a young son Mbene who was raised by a Baswaga named Butumbire. Towards 1895 Mbene installed himself with the Wanisanza of chief Bolemba whose trust he gained. He was soon invested with power and took part in the administration of the region. Mbene subsequently became a crucial ally to the Zanzibari traders first, and then to the Belgian colonizers. Mbene would thus originally have been from Bulengya, but this was strongly contested by some who claim that Mbene's ancestor came from Ineneya in the Ngulo (Bergmans, 1970: 47). See also RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 118-9).

<sup>178</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 28, 67).

<sup>179</sup>Joset (1955: 26) writes that a letter was mentioned written by another chief named Kisenge, of the Pere of Lubero, to the big chief Moera who was arrested and banned for having assisted *vihokohoko*. This letter was seen by the chief Kalume of the Mvuba of Beni. It warned Moera that Bapakombe had decided, in a big reunion of their clan chiefs, to start a general war against Nande. Each chief had to deliver six *vihokohoko*.

to *vihokohoko* tactics with considerable success, in order to safeguard their access to land and resources in a region increasingly occupied by Nande immigrating into the forest from the south. The initial success of the *vihokohoko* may perhaps be illustrated best by the fact that it was adopted by the principal Nande chiefs too, who also used *vihokohoko* against each other.<sup>180</sup> At the end of the 19th century, in some instances, the Bapakombe were able to profit from the disintegration of Nande political units as a consequence of internal struggle and foreign occupation, with local power aspirants seeking support from foreign parties.<sup>181</sup> As I will argue, a few Bapakombe groups seem to have left the forest and installed themselves to the south, on Nande lands, trying to subjugate the populations by means of *vihokohoko*.<sup>182</sup> However, even though Bapakombe did use *vihokohoko* to usurp lands which had not been theirs before, it seems in more than one case that Bapakombe were pressured by Nande immigrating into their forest territory. Under pressure of a colonial administration favouring Nande, they rather resorted to *vihokohoko* to safeguard or

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<sup>180</sup> *Vihokohoko* attacks for example, were undertaken by Bashu against the Wanisanza of Kisenge. In 1924 a number of murders occurred in the chiefdom of Kisenge. The attacks were commanded by Alima, a Bashu man, against the Wanisanza of Kisenge to avenge the death of his nephew Mutuli. These attacks were carried out by Kampania, a Bapakombe notable and leopard men chief of Mwami of Madiwe. Kampania was also involved in attacks against people of Kisenge in 1933-34. Mutuli, of Bashu origin, was the son of Motowa, Alima's younger brother. Alima had once chosen the daughter of Kinieki of the Wanisanza, named Visavengi, as a wife for his brother. Later Alima killed his brother Motowa out of jealousy. At the death of Motowa, the widow Visavengi fled back to her father with her child Mutuli. Alima demanded the return of the dowry from Kinieki who refused. Furthermore Visavengi married the big chief of Wanisanza, Mbene. Mbene reimbursed Alima but Mutuli remains with the Wanisanza of Kisenge (with his wife's father). When he died there, the Bashu held the Wanisanza clan responsible for Mutuli's death. The Bashu of Alima announced that they would devastate the lands of Wanisanza to avenge the death of Mutuli. The son of Alima, the notable Kilumu asked Pilipili to go and look for leopard men at Madiwe. Shortly afterwards people of Kisenge were killed (Joset, 1955: 49).

<sup>181</sup> This is something which happened elsewhere too, for example among the Azande and Mangbetu. In their struggle for hegemony Mangbetu and Azande chiefs sought the support of the Sudanese slave and ivory trades which caused further disintegration of their political powers. This process was arrested by the colonial occupation, but which, in the practice of indirect rule, caused further problems (Schildkrout and Keim, 1990: 30-43, 162; Thuriaux-Hennebert, 1964: 295-298; Denis, 1961).

<sup>182</sup> This seems to be the case for Karibumba (Batangi Bapakombe) who tried to expand his control over Bahera-Wanisanza south of Beni (see below), and for Musubao (Bashu Bapakombe) who profited from internal struggles among the Bashu in Malio. For the latter case see Appendix 3.

reclaim their rights as first occupants of the forest lands.<sup>183</sup>

The question now remains as to which specific conflicts preceded and culminated into the larger-scale killing of 1933-1934? ( See Scheme 4) As argued, the evacuation of the Semliki valley in 1924, and the economic crisis resulting from the crash of the ivory prices, reignited formerly existing conflicts. From the archival data available, at least three conflicts can be discerned, grafted onto the historical core conflict between Mwami and Kisenge, which culminated in the wave of killings of 1933-1934 (see Map 12). The first is that Mwami started sending *vihokohoko* to his former allies, the Bahera of Kinombe who originally came from Malio, but had settled on his land [Loc. Irango, Mont Home]. In the meantime Kinombe had become chief of a new Bahera chiefdom at this location under the colonial administration, which was composed of different Bahera and other groups. In this new context, Kinombe came to be protected by Kisenge. Secondly, the animosity between Mwami and Kinombe was connected to a second struggle between Karibumba and his Bahera (and other) neighbours whom he tried to subject but who fled to be protected by Kinombe. When the different Bahera clans were centralised in one chiefdom under the colonial administration, Karibumba, who had first claimed authority over them, had to compete with Kinombe in this matter. As Kinombe further allied himself to Kisenge, Karibumba took part in the 1933-4 actions by Mwami against Kisenge (Joset, 1955: 24, 26). Thirdly, other chiefs, presumably belonging to a “Nande realm”, also became involved in this conflict. It particularly concerned Moera, who became the invested leader of a Batangi chiefdom to the north-east of Beni, and a few of his associates (Joset, 1955: 22-6). In the 1920s, Moera, a principal chief associated with Kisenge, pleased the colonial government by settling Batangi villages on the new road from Beni to Irumu. Around the 1930s, Moera sought to extend his influence in the direction of the Madiwe forest as well. In the meantime, Mwami and Karibumba each had problems in subjugating other Batangi groups (respectively Batangi of Ndehu, and Batangi of Kalivehe) who sought protection from Kinombe and Kisenge. Kinombe in due course also allied himself to Moera, who appears to have outclassed Kisenge as a chief in the early 1930s. I will discuss these three conflicts in the following sections.

### **3.2.2. The Bahera of Mukupi and Kinombe**

The Bahera of Kinombe, and his father Mukupi, is one of the main groups against which the Bapakombe of Mwami and Karibumba directed their attacks in the wave of killings during 1933-1934. Originally a pastoralist population, Bahera groups were

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<sup>183</sup>AA AIMO 1639 (9201). This is also replied to in the previous letter from District Commissioner F. Absil to the Territorial Agent of Wanande-Nord (Lauwers). Irumu, 3/9/34. This is reported in several of the cases discussed.





### Map 12: legend

**CORE CONFLICT: Mwami (Batangi Bapakombe) ↔ Mbene/Kisenge (Wanisanza, Nande)** In 1924, as a consequence of the evacuation of the Semliki valley, the administrative post of Beni was moved northwestward. Probably this caused Kisenge to relocate, as a settlement by his name was founded near the new post, closer to Mwami's territory.

### MUKUPI/KINOMBE (Bahera, Nande)

1: Under the leadership of Mukupi, the Bahera were living in the northern region of the Bashu chiefdom, Malio. They sent *vihokohoko* to the Wanisanza of Lisasa.

2: Due to hostilities, they moved northward and settled with the Baswaga Bapakombe of Lusenge, descendants of the Bapakombe ancestor Kivete. They also fell out with the latter.

3: Due to *vihokohoko* attacks, probably from Lusenge and Aluta, they moved to live with Mwami at Mont Irango.

4: Around 1924, Kinombe becomes chief of the Bahera chiefdom, in competition with Karibumba.

### KARIBUMBA (Batangi Bapakombe)

1: Karibumba's branch of Batangi Bapakombe probably had a common origin with Mwami's group in the area of Mont Home.

2: In 1907 Czekanowski reports that Karibumba had abandoned his village, living withdrawn in the forest, as he was rebelling against the Belgian colonisers. His village was located between the settlements of Iddo and Lukumba-Kumba, which were situated to the north-west of old Beni on the old caravan trail to Mawambi (not on map).

3: According to the Bahera-Wanisanza and Bahera of Buleki, Karibumba's group settled on their lands and demanded from them exorbitant food tributes. *Vihokohoko* were sent to the disobedient.

4: After 1924, Karibumba's new settlement is found on the new road south of new Beni to Lubero. In this region he is competing with Kinombe for the hegemony over Bahera and Batangi groups previously controlled by him, but who sought protection from Kinombe.

### MOERA (Batangi, Nande)

1: A larger group of Batangi had migrated into the area of Mont Dengele from Lubero. At Mont Dengele, several groups split off from the Batangi core group, migrating in different directions.

2: A branch of this core group migrated northward and settled on the left bank of the Semliki river, north of old Beni.

3: In 1907, Czekanowski reported that Moera founded a Batangi settlement on the road from old Beni to Irumu. This area was abandoned by the Mvuba, who were rebelling against the Belgian colonisers at the time.

4: As a consequence of the evacuation of the Semliki plain (and the Mvuba post Lessi) in 1924 Moera is found populating the new road between new Beni and Irumu with Batangi settlements. He became the invested chief of a new Batangi chiefdom created under the colonial administration in this area. Around the 1930s he tried to extend his control over Beni. Kisenge and Kinombe were eventually placed under his authority.

absorbed by Nande during their migrations and became clients of the latter in several places. The Bahera of Mukupi had been practicing *vihokohoko* for a long time, at least since they were still situated at Malio in the north of the Bashu chiefdom, prior to moving into the Madiwe forest. As mentioned, the Bahera of Mukupi already sent their *vihokohoko* candidates to be initiated by Mwami of the Batangi Bapakombe of Madiwe, when they were at Malio (Joset: 1955: 40-41, 54).<sup>184</sup> Having obtained *vihokohoko* from the Mwami of Madiwe, they fell out with the latter as they moved further into the Madiwe forest. I will treat the Bahera's major conflicts in a chronological order, along with their migration northward from Malio to Madiwe.

### ***At Malio: conflicts with the Wanisanza of Lisasa***

The inherited feud between Mukupi of the Bahera and Mwami Nzumbira (Tsombira) of the Wanisanza of Lisasa, found its origin at Malio in the era prior to the slave raids. During the 19th century, the Wanisanza of Lisasa had become a very important support group for the central leadership of the Bashu chiefdom. Among the Wanisanza, an internal struggle took place. Kalundula wanted to replace his grandfather Nzumbira-Mokubwa as the leader of the group. He demanded that warriors from Mukupi help him, but they were conquered. In 1920 Mukupi's family still took vengeance on the son of Nzumbira-Mokubwa, Musawa for this loss by sending leopard men from Madiwe to Musawa (Joset: 1955: 40-41, 54).

As explained in the previous chapter, at the end of the 19th century several foreign parties preyed upon the region of the Bashu chiefdom, among whom were Wangwana slavers, and the Rwandan rebel chief Karakwenzi. In the internal struggle for power within the chiefdom, alliances were sought with some of these foreign parties for access to firearms. At that time, the Wanisanza of Lisasa, under the leadership of Mwami Tsombira, were important allies to Kasumbakali, aspirant to the central leadership of the Bashu chiefdom. They helped Kasumbakali to obtain

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<sup>184</sup>This group may originally have come from the same core group as the Wanisanza of Beni of Kisenge and his father, Mbene. At least two conflicting traditions exist concerning the origin of the Wanisanza of Lisasa. One is written by Joset in RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 119-120). The latter states that they came from the Wanisanza of Malambo to the east. The ancestor Lulwa (nephew of Bolembo; also named as ancestor of other Wanisanza groups) left Malambo to go hunting and settled in the Mitumbas where many of his people died. They moved to Mont Lisasa, where they encountered a number of Bahera families. Another tradition is mentioned by L. Bergmans (1974: 6-7). The Wanisanza told Bergmans that their migration went in the opposite direction. Coming from Toro they travelled through Isale until the Falls of Ivugha in the Ngulo region, chiefdom of Baswaga. Then they went to the north-east to settle at Mont Lisasa. From there the largest part of the group went to settle on the western slopes of the Ruwenzori mountains. Bergmans thinks this is a more plausible explanation as the elders remembered passing by the location named Ivugha without knowing where it was located, but pointing out it was far away in the south-west.

firearms from Karakwenzi, the Rwandan rebel chief, in exchange for spoils from their raids.<sup>185</sup> These different parties used firearms and terror in their struggle for power, raiding the land for food and holding captives for ransom (Packard, 1976: 168, 175). During these pre-colonial and early colonial struggles for leadership in connection with access to land and resources, several population groups of Malio entertained relationships with *vihokohoko* of Madiwe.<sup>186</sup> Like the Bahera of Mukupi, they used *vihokohoko* in this context as an additional strategy to keep up with the violence and safeguard their own position.<sup>187</sup>

It seems the Bahera of Mukupi could not maintain their position in this situation. Around the time of the Wangwana raids, the Bahera of Mukupi left their land at Malio, moving further into the Madiwe forest to live with the Baswaga Bapakombe on Mont Voliaki. However, the feud with the Wanisanza of Lisasa continued (Joset, 1955: 46).<sup>188</sup>

### ***From Malio to Madiwe: conflicts with the Baswaga Bapakombe***

When Mukupi died, his son Kinombe was still young and the latter's uncle Bonunzi became regent of the Bahera. At Madiwe they became vassals and tributaries of the Baswaga Bapakombe. According to their traditions, the Baswaga Bapakombe had obtained a hegemonic position at Madiwe through *vihokohoko* attacks under their ancestor Kivete, extracting tribute and wives from other population groups in the area. By the time the Europeans arrived, Kinombe had assumed an important role in the politics of Madiwe as a notable of Lusenge, a direct descendant of the ancestor Kivete. Lusenge refused to submit to the Europeans and sent Kinombe, who had undergone Wangwana influence and spoke Swahili, to the Europeans as his straw man. Kinombe gained the trust of Europeans and was invested *chef médaillé*. But,

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<sup>185</sup>In the struggle with Vyogho of Isale, Kasumbakali sought alliance with the rebel chief Karakwenzi and Mwami Tsombira of the Wanisanza of Lisasa. Via the latter he obtained access to firearms from Karakwenzi in exchange for some of the spoils of the raids. The weapons were supposedly bought from the Irish ivory trader Stokes, via Karakwenzi. With the Wanisanza support Kasumbakali intimidated lineage heads and ritual leaders in Isale and adjacent regions to support him against his major rival for political control over Isale: Vyogho. Kasumbakali eventually lost. The Rwandan rebel chief Karakwenzi had fled from Mwami Rwabugiri. He established an organised political system in the upper Semliki after a Rwandan model and competed with the Wangwana and Bunyoro of Kabarega. There is some discrepancy between the sources concerning the popularity of Karakwenzi in the region (Packard, 1976: 229-30, 246-56). See also RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 28-9).

<sup>186</sup>For example Musubao (see Appendix 3).

<sup>187</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 12), Absil (1934). It is suggested by Joset and Absil that Mukupi was also involved in the slave trade as an ally of Kilonga-Longa of Mawambi who had his tomb at Mukupi's residence.

<sup>188</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 124).

even if he was considered a local authority by the Europeans, he remained a vassal in the perception of the Bapakombe of Lusenge, who was the true chief descending from the oldest branch of Kivete. Finally, according to colonial rule, Kinombe had the right to obtain one ivory tusk per elephant as a tribute, but was denied them by the Bapakombe. In return Kinombe refused to pay his tribute in goats to them. Lusenge sent his *vihokohoko* (Joset, 1955: 46-47).<sup>189</sup>

Kinombe had particular problems with Aluta, a notable of Lusenge, who refused to obey him. Aluta had sent several *vihokohoko* to Kinombe, killing his uncle Bonunzi's wife amongst others. Kinombe and his uncle sent *vihokohoko* to Aluta too.<sup>190</sup> However, Kinombe was able to ward off suspicion and another man was arrested for killing the son of Aluta in 1927.<sup>191</sup> Later, in 1934, Kinombe admitted he had sent two expeditions to Aluta in 1927 (Joset, 1955: 48-9).<sup>192</sup> The first attack had been organised by Bonunzi, who wanted to take revenge for the killing of his wife by Aluta's *vihokohoko*. The motive for this killing was an argument between Bonunzi and the Bapakombe notable Kampania, over a piece of land which Bonunzi was forced to abandon. Bonunzi decided to let his children be initiated by the initiator Mukuniu of the Mwami of Madiwe and sent *vihokohoko* to Aluta to extract vengeance for his wife's death. The second expedition of Kinombe against Aluta was again caused by a dispute over a piece of land. Kinombe had bought the land from the Baswaga Bapakombe but Aluta had reclaimed it as a representative of the first occupants. Aluta sent *vihokohoko* to Kinombe. Kinombe, in turn, sent back *vihokohoko* which he acquired from Mwami of Madiwe (the gang of Kimbiro) (Joset, 1955: 48-9).

It is reported that the Bahera of Kinombe moved further into Madiwe, to Irango near Mont Home, into the lands of the Batangi Bapakombe, due to leopard men attacks, probably from Lusenge and Aluta.<sup>193</sup> But soon Kinombe also fell out with his new neighbours, the Batangi Bapakombe of Madiwe, who had provided them with *vihokohoko* previously. This ties in with other conflicts and will be explained further in section 3.2.5.

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<sup>189</sup>RMCA AIMO Absil (1932) and Absil (1934).

<sup>190</sup>Aluta obtained *vihokohoko* from the Bashu Bapakombe chief Musubao. The latter was an example of Bapakombe retreating southward, profiting from internal struggles among Nande for extorting them. He was especially known for his *vihokohoko* attacks on the Bashu chief Mbonzo. See Appendix 3 for more information. See RMCA AIMO Absil (1934). In 1929 a crime occurred at Mambasa, carried out by a certain Sukuma, who had been initiated as *vihokohoko* in the territory of Aluta.

<sup>191</sup>In 1927 Musienene, a Bashu notable of Malio, was falsely arrested for killing the son of Aluta. The latter was associated with Mwami but also with an important Bashu Bapakombe group responsible for many murders at Malio.

<sup>192</sup>RMCA AIMO Absil (1934).

<sup>193</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 125).

### 3.2.3. The Batangi Bapakombe of Karibumba

Karibumba was also from a branch of Batangi Bapakombe and hence of the same descent as the Mwami of Madiwe. Karibumba's clan must have originated from the same core of Batangi Bapakombe at Mont Home near the Tua river and moved southeastward where Czekanowski located him in 1907 near to the future post of Beni.<sup>194</sup> In the previous chapter, Karibumba's role as a leader in revolts against Europeans was noted. When Czekanowski arrived in the region, Karibumba had abandoned his village, and was living withdrawn in the forests. Previously, Karibumba's people dominated this area, which was predominantly inhabited by several Nande groups.

Among these populations were the Bahera of Buleki, who settled at the Lombi river, and the Batangi of Kalivehe who had joined them. These people claimed to have settled in this area first, and were joined there by the Bapakombe who installed themselves on their lands. Bit by bit, through *vihokohoko* attacks, the Bapakombe took control over their lands.<sup>195</sup> The latter tradition accords with that of the Bahera-Wanisanza group in this region. The inherited feud between Karibumba and the offspring of Tsege, the chief of the Bahera-Wanisanza, supposedly had its roots before the slave raids. The predecessors of Karibumba started to terrorise the Bahera-Wanisanza with *vihokohoko* murders to gain control over their lands. Since the Bapakombe of Karibumba arrived there, they had demanded from the Bahera-Wanisanza a highly irregular and excessive tribute in millet. *Vihokohoko* were sent to those who were disobedient.<sup>196</sup> In this case too it seems that Karibumba's clan was the usurper, claiming control over lands which were not previously theirs. Furthermore, this strategy of claiming control seems to be typical of Bapakombe clans (Appendix 2).

Due to the evacuation of the Semliki plain and the relocation of Beni in 1924, Karibumba probably had to move, as a settlement by his name can be found on the new road south of the new post of Beni. Apparently, in this new settlement Karibumba did not cease to claim control over the populations subjected by his predecessors. But, due to Karibumba's violence, several of the population groups he terrorised sought refuge with the Bahera of chief Kinombe. When disparate

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<sup>194</sup>This is in the area between the posts Iddo and Lukumba-Kumba encountered by Czekanowski (1924: 328, 352-353, 360) on his trip from (Old) Beni to Mawambi in 1907. He specifically mentioned Lukumba-Kumba to be a Babira Bapakombe settlement under the leadership of the chief Lukumba-Kumba.

<sup>195</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 118).

<sup>196</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 123-4). At that time, Mukohomili, Karibumba's ancestor had given land to Kivete, the *vihokohoko* ancestor of the Baswaga Bapakombe, to send *vihokohoko* against Tsege, the Bahera-Wanisanza ancestor.

Bahera groups were centralised in one chiefdom under the colonial administration, Karibumba, who had first claimed authority over them, competed with Kinombe in this matter. The creation of the chiefdom probably occurred around 1924 when the administration of the region was more vigorously pursued.<sup>197</sup> From 1924 numerous killings by *vihokohoko* were counted in the chiefdom of the Bahera of Kinombe. The anarchy in the Bahera chiefdom as a consequence of the struggle for leadership is cited by the District Commissioner Absil as one of the reasons behind the wave of killing in 1933-34 (Joset, 1955: 37-39, 54).<sup>198</sup>

Karibumba was probably the principal instigator of the hostilities against the Bahera chiefdom, as those populations first controlled by him fled to Kinombe. This indeed applies to the Bahera of Buleki, the Batangi of Kalivehe, and the Bahera-Wanisanza. For example, in 1925 Karibumba still sent *vihokohoko* to the Bahera-Wanisanza, more particularly to Tsege's descendants, Nzomba and his son Mutuli, to kill Mutuli's children. Mutuli subsequently fled to Kinombe of the Bahera. Through the intervention of the administrator Hackars, the Bahera-Wanisanza leader Mutuli was reinstalled as chief of the "land of his ancestors", but he was subsequently murdered. The Bahera-Wanisanza did not dare to complain anymore. In 1927 Karibumba was temporarily put under surveillance and the crimes stopped.

#### **3.2.4. The Batangi Bapakombe of Mwami against several Batangi groups**

The competition between Mwami and Kisenge on the one hand, and Kinombe and Karibumba on the other, became further entangled with the formation of a larger Batangi chiefdom to the north-east of Beni, by a principal Nande chief Moera, associated with and obtaining control over Kisenge. In the conflict of 1933-34, attacks were also particularly aimed at the associates of Moera.

##### ***Attacks against the Batangi of Moera***

According to their tradition, the Batangi of Moera had originally migrated northwards from Mont Dengele, where they separated from other Batangi groups to settle in the forest on the left bank of the Semliki.<sup>199</sup> The Batangi had already been moving into this region while it was still under the control of the Mvuba chiefs Kalume and Kartoushi. But probably, under pressure from the colonial administration,

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<sup>197</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 65).

<sup>198</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 123), Absil (1932) and Absil (1934: 2). AA AIMO 1639 (9201). Letter from District Commissioner F. Absil to the Territorial Administrator of Wanande-Nord (Lauwers). Irumu, 3/9/34.

<sup>199</sup>RMCA AIMO Absil (1932). Absil expands on the tradition of migration of the Batangi which eventually results in the Batangi chiefdom of Moera.

and Moera, the Batangi were further urged to populate the villages along the new roads.<sup>200</sup>

Moera was mentioned in the previous chapter as one of the Nande chiefs encountered by Czekanowski (1924: 364, 410) on the road between Old Beni and Irumu around 1907. Under Moera, Batangi were populating a new settlement on the roads abandoned by rebel chiefs. This land actually belonged to the Mvuba chiefs Kalume and Kartoushi. These chiefs were involved in the rebellions against the Belgian colonisers in 1907, and again in 1912. They lived withdrawn in the forest refusing to move to the road and Moera had taken control over their lands.<sup>201</sup>

When the road from the new Beni settlement to Irumu was constructed through the forest in 1924, Moera went to settle on that road too and gained further control over the Mvuba in this region. He was in charge of their relocation and regrouping along the new road which was a direct consequence of the evacuations of the Semliki plain in 1924, but also, earlier of the evacuation of the main Mvuba post (Lessi) in this area. These events again ignited a rebellion of the Mvuba chiefs Kalume and Kartoushi. From 1924 to 1928 a military occupation was installed to prevent the Mvuba, whose subsistence depended on the Semliki river, from returning to the plain and to chase off those Mvuba groups who refused to leave the plain.<sup>202</sup> The Mvuba were integrated in a Batangi chiefdom created by the colonial government, of which Moera became the invested chief.<sup>203</sup>

In 1933-34 *vihokohoko* attacks of the Bapakombe were not directly aimed against Moera himself but against his chiefs Kitobi and Molekera, more particularly by the Mwami of Madiwe. Moera is said to have been banished around the time of this wave of killing for being an instigator of *vihokohoko* murders himself. The attacks against Moera's associates were probably inspired by their collaboration with the colonial government, and probably also for their connections with Kinombe and Kisenge, as I will explain in the following section (Czekanowski, 1924: 410; Joset, 1955: 25).<sup>204</sup> Moera seemingly became the most important Nande chief in the region, and Kisenge and Kinombe were placed under his authority. Moera had ambitions to expand his sphere of influence to the Madiwe region which may have reinforced

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<sup>200</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 18-19).

<sup>201</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 50, 60-4, 104).

<sup>202</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 19, 74, 77). This same process was probably also causing animosity between the Hema chiefs Bilongo and Masidongo observed by Hackars in 1926.

<sup>203</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 18-19).

<sup>204</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 18, 123).

animosity against him.<sup>205</sup> The hostilities against Moera were potentially connected to other hostilities between Bapakombe and Batangi groups, such as Karibumba's animosities against the Batangi of Kalivehe, who fled to Kinombe to seek protection. Perhaps there was also a connection to the following conflict.

### *Attacks of Bapakombe against other Batangi groups*

At Madiwe, another Batangi group, the Batangi of Ndehu, had once established an alliance with the Batangi Bapakombe of Mwami to settle on Mont Home and pay them an annual tribute of salt. This group of Batangi represented one of the principal population groups in the region of Beni.<sup>206</sup>

During the 1920s and 1930s the Batangi of Ndehu fell into conflict with the Batangi Bapakombe. It started with a few killings in relation to conflicts over a woman and a payment of goats, which caused many Batangi to flee, but they were called back by Ndehu's heir, Dugbwa. When Ndehu died Mwami presumably refused to succeed him as invested chief under the pretext that he could not speak Swahili. He appointed Saani, one of his Batangi assistants, as a straw man instead. Saani and Mwami got into a fight. In the end the whole of Saani's village was devastated by Kimbiro, the leader of Mwami's leopard men. The indigenous population complained to the administration and the Batangi chief Meanga was appointed to administer the group, installing himself near Ndehu's son, Alimaci. This happened around 1924.<sup>207</sup> Apparently, Meanga split the region into two sectors, taking control over the savannah part himself and leaving the forest part to Mwami. Subsequently crimes occurred at Alimaci's village, under the command of Kimbiro (Joset, 1955: 51-2, 54). Meanga himself was also reported to be a principal *vihokohoko* chief.<sup>208</sup>

The fact that Meanga and another notable received tribute from the local population and refused to give Mwami his part was cited by Mwami as a reason for the attacks in the chiefdom of Kisenge in the wave of killings of 1933-34 (Joset, 1955: 24). This suggests there was an alliance between the Batangi of Ndehu, led by Meanga, and Kisenge.

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<sup>205</sup> AA AIMO 1639 (9201). Letter from District Commissioner F. Absil to Territorial Administrator of Wanande-Nord (Lauwers), Irumu, 3/9/34. Absil warns Joset – who seems willing to involve Moera in the administration of the Malese and Madiwe regions – that Moera has nothing to do with this region, anticipating it will pass to the territory of Wanande-sud. Moera instead has to organise his Batangi villages in the west, after the example he set in his own village and the one of Kitobi, without exaggerating reorganising the populations.

<sup>206</sup> RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 122).

<sup>207</sup> RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 18).

<sup>208</sup> AA AIMO 1639 (9201), Reply by Territorial Administrator Lauwers to District Commissioner Absil. Beni, 17/9/34.

### 3.2.5. Culmination of the different conflicts

The hostility that arose between the Mwami of Madiwe and Moera of the Batangi, was grafted onto Mwami's historical feud with Mbene and Kisenge, and became entangled with Karibumba's and Mwami's disputes with the Bahera of Kinombe. By the early 1930s the Bahera of Kinombe, who had settled at Madiwe and obtained the hegemony of the central Bahera kingdom there, were also attacked by *vihokohoko* from their former ally, the Mwami of Madiwe.

In the previous section, I explained that Moera was also trying to extend his influence in the Madiwe forest. Not only had Kisenge been placed under Moera's authority, but also Kinombe, first invested chief of the Bahera chiefdom, was unseated and integrated into the Batangi chiefdom under the authority of Moera.<sup>209</sup> Apparently during the wave of killings of 1933 the Bapakombe were displeased with Kinombe, who had settled with the chief Moera of the Batangi chiefdom, while they wanted him to move further away. The Bapakombe were angry because Kinombe had given a part of their land (near the Tua river, or Mont Home) to a notable of Moera, Molekera, and the Bapakombe would not tolerate any alienation of their lands. A village chief of Moera, Kitobi, was hence killed by leopard men from Mwami of Madiwe (Joset, 1955: 25-26, 53).

Still, another reason was mentioned in the context of Bapakombe attacks against Molekera. Endebo, a Bapakombe notable of Mwami, had been placed under the orders of Molekera, being removed from his former functions (probably as a village chief or another rank in the colonial hierarchy). In 1933 Endebo was sentenced to corporal punishment by Molekera for not paying his taxes. When this came to the ears of Kisenge, who was as a *sous-chef* of Molekera (under Moera) at that point, he paid Endebo's taxes in silver. Instead of forwarding the payment to the colonial administration, Molekera kept it for himself. When Endebo left prison, he went to see his brother Pilipili who resided with his blood brother Mukuniu of Mwami. Endebo ordered *vihokohoko* to be sent to Molekera in revenge (Joset, 1955: 25-6).

In 1934 Kisenge's *sous-chefferie* at Beni was dissolved and a new sector of Beni was created. Kisenge was banned for his involvement in *vihokohoko* murders and his territory and the clans living there were split up: the Baswaga group of his father was attached to the new sector of Beni, while the Wanisanza of Mufunza, whom they had controlled and lived with for a very long time, were attached to the sector of Ruwenzori to the east (the territory of Malambo). Karibumba was held in custody for instigating *vihokohoko* attacks. The former Bahera chiefdom, incorporating among others the Bahera of Kinombe and the Bahera of Buleki, had also been dissolved. While the former became part of the new sector of Beni,

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<sup>209</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 125).

the Bahera of Buleki were attached to the territory of Malambo in the sector of Ruwenzori.<sup>210</sup>

### 3.2.6. Summary

In comparison with the conflicts among the Bali and their neighbours, which cover a much vaster region, the cases of Beni gave us a deeper insight into the history of one specific regional cluster of conflicts and demonstrates its considerable complexity. Clearly *vihokohoko* originated among a core of Bapakombe families in the Madiwe forest region, and later on it was transmitted predominantly by one particular core group in that region, namely the Batangi Bapakombe of Mwami. *Vihokohoko* were used by these forest populations at first, taking up their rights as first occupants, and trying to expand their influence to populations surrounding them, predominantly for wives and tributes in food. This probably changed as Nande migrants increasingly infiltrated and settled on forest lands. Nande clans, however, applied other principles of power, by which recent immigrants adopted the groups they found on the spot as clients and tried to impose their hegemony over them. This hegemonic positioning of Nande clans among each other, but also vis-à-vis the forest populations encountered in their migrations in the forest region to the north-west of Beni, potentially caused animosity with the latter. This particularly occurred in the context of collaboration between some Nande chiefs and the foreign occupants, such as Mbene and his son Kisenge's collaboration with slave traders and colonisers. It seems that *vihokohoko* may have evolved under these circumstances from an effective strategy to obtain and safeguard power, towards a coping strategy for those being threatened by a hegemony of the Nande, disregarding their rights as first occupants, but this was not originally so and not for all parties. The *vihokohoko* killings acted as a counter-force in this process, with some success it appears, as a few Bapakombe branches (e.g. Karibumba, Musubao) had progressed southward, usurping lands from Nande groups. Another token of its success was the fact that principal Nande chiefs also resorted to *vihokohoko* killings. The 1933-1934 wave of killing can be explained by the fact that Nande hegemonies were in many instances confirmed and promoted under the colonial administration from the 1920s onwards, creating a Nande elite in the region of Beni and at a wider regional level. The fact that Bapakombe suffered from a poor reputation as rebellious populations, living withdrawn in the forest, and were one-sidedly regarded as the leopard men who terrorised the Nande is an example of colonial bias. This also explains why in the archival records hardly any

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<sup>210</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 118-9, 123). In the 1930s the Wanisanza of the sector of Ruwenzori comprised two administrative units; Bolema and Malambo. Malambo contained the following clans : a.o. I clan Bahera of Buleki ; II clan Wanisanza of Mufunza; III clans Wanisanza of Nzumbia/Tsombira ; IV clan Wanisanza of Kaparata.

references are made to Nande chiefs' involvements in killings.

### 3.3. Conclusion

It seems that leopard men killings, both among the Bali and at Beni, could potentially be analysed in view of the invention or adoption of new socio-political institutions in a changing environment, in the competition over land and resources. For now, the ethnographic and historical data point in this direction but further investigation would be required to fully substantiate this hypothesis.

When looking at the specific conflicts, in both the Bali and Beni regions, the role of leopard men killings appears to be twofold: first, to acquire land and authority in new circumstances, for example, subsequent to migrations; and secondly, to safeguard or extend one's control, particularly in contexts of political competition. For the Bali, it seems that the origin of *anioto*, prior to their migration from Mbari into the Ituri forest, may be connected to the spiral of innovations which forced populations to adapt to competitive circumstances in order to survive, as discussed in Chapter 1. In the Beni region too, when Bapakombe settled in the forest, they initially used leopard men killings to gain control over people who settled with them and extorted tribute from them. However, in the Beni region around 1900, leopard men killings became one of several terror tactics commonly used under foreign occupancy, gaining ground among Nande power brokers.

Later, under Belgian colonialism, leopard men conflicts seem to evolve, first and foremost, around land or revenue claims from those chiefs who proclaimed themselves to be the legitimate possessors of such rights on the principle of "primogeniture" as representatives of the eldest clan (among the Bali), or as first occupants of the land (at Beni). However, many chiefs still used it to extend their influence. Whenever these claims were threatened, chiefs also used leopard men terror against their own people to impress their authority on them and punish them for not paying due respect. Secondly, conflicts also often evolve around the responsibility and control exerted over people. The latter aspect is often about loss of people through death in warfare, for example, and neglect of appropriate compensation, unpaid brideprices, run-away wives and control over their children. In many cases the conflicts seemed to be of a collective nature, even though the collective aspect may have tied in with individual ambitions. Grudges of the chief and individual revenge of chiefs, or of commoners supported by their chiefs, also occurred.

In multiple cases the conflicts were transgenerational and old conflicts were reinvigorated by new events. In the old conflicts involvement in slave trading activities and inherited feuds over land and resources were frequently an important trigger. Under Belgian colonial rule, among the Bali, the changing preferences for different kinds of chiefs in the territorial administration caused shifting power

balances and created tensions between different power brokers, reigniting these old conflicts, as explained in Chapter 2. At Beni, these conflicts rather developed around the colonial administration privileging Nande as chiefs.

## **Chapter 4. The Colonial Representation of Leopard Men: discourse and display entangled**

The bigger research question behind this chapter is how a colonial mythology, a canonisation of leopard men violence, has derived from a complex social reality which has been elucidated in the previous chapters. Here, diverse colonial sources on leopard men will be assessed as a means of creating and reproducing cultural understanding of a certain phenomenon in line with a colonial logic. This process applies to individual testimony as well as to official history and has equally invaded the fiction. The structuration of diverse documents will be compared and assessed in terms of history-writing as “mythologisation”. As explained in the introduction, this process of mythologisation entails negotiation of the political legitimacy of a societal order. In the context of western colonial history this results in the power relations with the colony being legitimised and social identities established by revealing colonial events in terms of a unilinear, mythical victory of western civilisation over the uncivilised.

In this chapter people’s relationships with colonial objects and with the museum display are considered to be a part of this process of mythologisation. While these relationships are entangled with the structuration of leopard men understandings in the textual and inter-textual, they are understood to be a quite different and separate process, located in people’s relationships with the material and sensory world. I will demonstrate how this process played a key role in the emergence of leopard men understandings, related to, but also distinct from, interpretations expressed through mediums of narration such as texts, comics, films and documentaries. Firstly, I will assess the role of leopard men objects and display at the RMCA, which actually preceded the emergence of colonial narratives in textual and audiovisual forms. I will assess the cultural biography of the leopard men objects, in terms of the changing perceptions of both scholars and visitors to the museum, in relation to the growing struggle against leopard men in the colony. Secondly, I will verify the canonisation that occurred in leopard men narratives in hindsight of these struggles, in terms of the mythologisation of colonial history. In this process, I focus on the role of pre-existing traditions of othering which helped shape leopard men understanding. In addition, I demonstrate the role of the objects and the iconography derived from the museum display in the structuration of the narratives. Finally, the colonial representation and the museum display will be assessed in terms of its veracity, based on the factual information retrieved from objects and from historical sources. This will reveal the ways in which colonial discourse and visual representation have diverged from a historical reality and have constrained understanding of leopard men.

## 4.1. Leopard men objects and display at the RMCA

In this section, the origins of the museum display will be addressed as connected to the cultural biography of the leopard men objects. Also visitors' relationship with the display and the interconnectedness with the reports from the colony will be assessed.

### 4.1.1. The genealogy of the museum display

The museum display had already been developed at a time when the colonial administration in place in the eastern Congo was barely conscious of the occurrence of leopard men attacks and before the colonial struggle against leopard men began. The development of the display was inspired by the concrete ethnographic objects and several field photographs which had reached the museum at an early stage of colonisation.

Originally the Congo museum was housed in the "Palace of Colonies", an art nouveau pavilion designed for the World Exhibition of 1897, to display the riches of the Belgian colony, its natural resources, stuffed exotic animals and ethnographic objects, which celebrated the colonial economy. This building soon became too small for the growing collections. The current museum building was commissioned by Leopold II and opened in 1910, one year after his death. The architectural design of the museum and its interior decoration, especially in its entrance cupola, characterise it as a secular shrine promoting the colonial project to bring the Congo to a higher level of civilisation (Morris, 2003; Saunders, 2005). The commissioning of a sculpture group representing a leopard man attack derived from the success of four sculpture groups in the niches of the circular entrance hall, which had been commissioned for the new museum from the artist Arsène Matton. The four scenes are allegories representing the ways in which the Belgian state supports the Congo: *Belgium grants Civilisation to the Congo* (Illustration 35), *Belgium grants its support to the Congo* (Illustration 37), *Belgium grants prosperity to the Congo* (Illustration 36), and *Slavery* (Illustration 34). The four main allegoric figures take up higher positions in the window recesses against the curved marble walls. They have smaller, kneeling black individuals represented at their feet. Wendy Morris (2003) and Barbara Saunders (2005) have discussed the messages communicated in these paternalist scenes which introduce the visitor to the museum, setting the tone of the visit at the entrance. A few years after the new museum opened in 1915, the leopard men display formed the next centrally-positioned sculptural scene in the exhibition hall, adjacent to the entrance cupola, until it was moved to another hall in recent years.

The leopard man sculpture was commissioned in 1912, from the artist Paul Wissaert (1885-1951), by the Ministry of Colonies, together with another sculpture

group which was destroyed by a V1-bomb in World War II (Couttenier, 2005: 309). The idea for this leopard men group was inspired by some of the first leopard men objects from the Bali populations and some documentation sent to the museum by the military officer Charles Delhaise. In 1909 Charles Delhaise became the commander of the Oriental Province, formerly called Stanley Falls district, comprising the Bali populations.<sup>211</sup> The objects acquired by Delhaise between 1890 and 1908 according to the records, reached the museum in two deliveries in 1911 (see Table 4 for an overview of objects). The first series of leopard men objects consisted of five different claws, of two different types, (EO.0.0.2573-1 to EO.0.0.2573-5), and two sticks to impress the image of a paw print in the soil (EO.0.0.2574-1 and -2) amongst other objects of the Bali of Aruwimi.<sup>212</sup> They were registered on arrival in the museum at the beginning of January 1911.<sup>213</sup> A second series of objects was sent some months later and registered in June of the same year. These objects consisted of a stick to leave the impression of a leopard paw (EO.0.0.2985), a costume consisting of a hood and a tunic (EO.0.0.3068-1 and -2) which was later used to dress Wissaert's sculpture, and five iron claws (EO.0.0.3069-1 to -3).<sup>214</sup> As opposed to the former dispatch, the latter also contained documentation on the objects, including two photographs, which were cut out of the file and stored in the photo archives (Illustration 26; Illustration 27).

Delhaise wrote in his accompanying notes that “Anioto” are typical of the Bali. He did not know whether they operated in an organised sect or by themselves. What he understood was that they dressed up as leopards armed with iron claws on a bar, fixed with a rope to their wrists. They approached victims at night and cut their carotid artery with the claws. Most often the killings were acts of vengeance. Those denouncing the killings were threatened with being killed in the same way. Delhaise documented the use of the stick leaving traces next to the victim leading to the belief that an actual leopard had been responsible for the attack. He asserted that indigenous people knew very well that it was an *anioto* victim but concurred in saying that it was a leopard attack for fear of revenge. This documentation is one of the first written descriptions of the leopard man dress and *modus operandi* in the east of Congo, and

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<sup>211</sup>Previously, Delhaise had contributed to the repressions of Tetela mutineers of the Force Publique in the expedition led by Dhanis (cf. Chapter 2). Being in command of the Oriental Province, he was charged with an ethnographic mission in light of the World Exhibition in 1910 (Belgian Colonial Biography, Vol.II, 1951, 264-267).

<sup>212</sup>Maes (1911) wrote that previously the museum did not possess any *anioto* objects. The first object was acquired from a certain Mr Daelman not long before. It was a long iron object consisting of a ring at one extremity and at the other five claws, curved, pointed and solid. This object went missing. The next objects are the ones sent by Charles Delhaise.

<sup>213</sup>RMCA, DE 153 (C. Delhaise).

<sup>214</sup>RMCA, DE 177 (C. Delhaise).

was to play a significant role in connection with the interpretation of the objects and the iconography of the accompanying photographs. These photographs and objects made up the foundation of Wissaert's design, with the photographs actually providing the blue print for the sculpture. The posture and physical likeness of the victim with the photographic imagery is striking (see comparison between the previous Illustration 26 and Illustration 27 with the leopard men display on Illustration 28).

The same year the head of the ethnography department, Joseph Maes (1911), published an article in which he described and interpreted the material provided by Delhaise on leopard men, revealing clearly how little was known of the subject at the time. Two earlier published accounts by Federspiel (1909) and Millis (1904) from their military experiences in the field are not mentioned by Maes and were probably not known to him.<sup>215</sup> The same applies to other documentation and photos by the colonial administrator Raoul Planche, dating from 1908-9, which were only handed over to the museum in the 1950s (Illustration 29 to Illustration 32). Maes (1911: 313-315) provides the following description in his article:

*“Although the aniotos operate individually, they always strike in the same way. Wearing their masks, their chests covered by the mantle, the stick with iron rods fixed to their belt, and the terrible claws firmly tied to their wrists, they attack their victims at night. They are only approaching the unfortunate victim when the latter puts himself at rest to recover from the fatigues of the day. Quietly they bend over their victim, driving the sharp blades into the neck in a violent blow to cut his carotid artery. The next day, the natives found the victim, observing the paw prints of the leopard and all accuse the terrible beast. Though, the natives are convinced they are confronted with an Aniota crime, the fear, or rather the certainty, of having to undergo the same fate for treason, prevents them from denouncing the killing. Moreover, to this fear must be attributed, to a large extent, the complete lack of specific information on Aniota. The one initiated into these practices, the Aniota of the Mobali [Bali], has every interest in not revealing anything, as the only acts Aniota is known for, so far, are murder and crime.”*

Maes actually modifies Delhaise's description here by incorporating elements describing what is depicted in the photographs. Maes would also have a determining role in the conception of Wissaert's sculpture.

In 1913 the Director of the Museum Baron d'Hauleville received a letter from

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<sup>215</sup> Millis (1904: 260-262) describes *anioto* as reminiscent of the “Corsican vendetta”. His description of the costume remains limited: only one iron claw and one bamboo walking stick to leave a trace are mentioned, but no costume.





**Illustration 26: *Anioto* ready to attack, mise-en-scène.**

**Photo by Charles Delhaise, 1909  
RMCA AP.0.0.10871**



**Illustration 27: *Anioto* ready to attack, mise-en-scène.**

**Photo by Charles Delhaise, 1909  
RMCA AP.0.1.6554**



**Illustration 28: *Anioto* sculpture by Paul Wissaert, 1915.**

**Plaster, wood, ethnographic objects.  
RMCA AP.0.1.6555**







**Illustration 29: Leopard men objects, mise-en-scène.**

**Photo by Raoul Planche, 1909-9.**

**RMCA EP.0.0.2106**



**Illustration 30: Leopard man, mise-en-scène.**

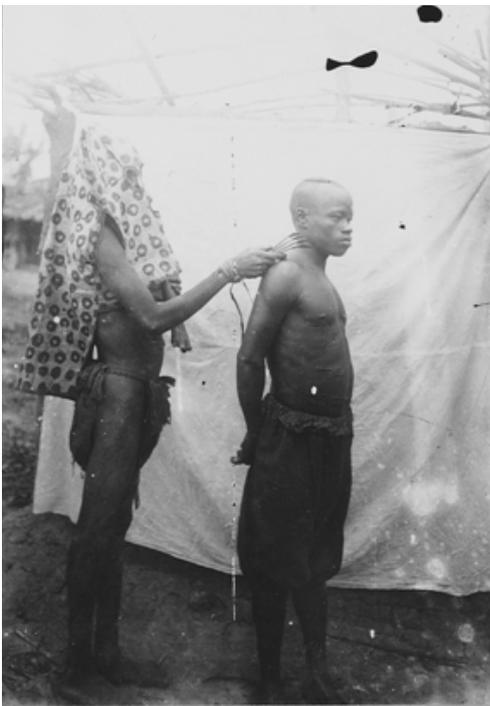
**Photo by Raoul Planche, 1909-9.**

**RMCA EP.0.0.2106**



**Illustration 31: Leopard man, mise-en-scène.**

**Photo by Raoul Planche, 1909-9.  
RMCA EP.0.0.2107**



**Illustration 32: Leopard man attack, mise-en-scène.**

**Photo by Raoul Planche, 1909-9.  
RMCA EP.0.0.2109**



the Minister of Colonies with a request from the sculptor, Wissaert, to use two molds of the busts of the African figures in the entrance cupola, made by the artist Matton, for the production of the *Anioto* group.<sup>216</sup> A number of them were loaned to Wissaert in order to design the leopard men figure, along with some of Delhaise's objects. About the costume, Wissaert writes in his letter of 11 July 1913 to the Director: '*With regard to the dress I have tried all the objects in my atelier and all could be placed perfectly according to the instructions of Mr Maes (acting head of the division of ethnography).*' The figure was eventually dressed with the objects collected by Delhaise which also figured on the latter's field photographs. Finally in 1915 the sculpture group took a central place in the permanent display under the title '*Anioto of Stanley Falls*'. In the 1980s the original bark-cloth pieces were replaced with replicas.<sup>217</sup>

Between 1911 and 1913 numerous other objects were sent to the museum by different colonial administrators. In his article of 1911, Maes (1911: 315) writes that Delhaise's assertion that *anioto* are Bali, contradicts the arrival of another hood and costume completely "analogous" to the objects sent by Delhaise. These objects were collected by Coclet, the chief of post of Basoko, at the mouth of the Aruwimi in the Congo, among the Bango, and were sent to the museum by his colleague Henrotin (see Table 4; EO.0.0.3399-1 and -2). Coclet, who did some research, added a note on the costume. A man had come to give it to him along with a bow and arrows. Together these objects were part of a monkey hunter's costume. Coclet adds that this explanation seems to do away with the idea that the costume was worn by adherents of a secret sect, obviously pointing at leopard men. According to him these were rare objects, only worn in the forest. He had also seen them elsewhere in the region (1906: at Yahila and Mokaria near Basoko). Coclet specifically states that no claws were ever found together with these costumes and that Bango black-smiths were not able to produce such "arms" with their rudimentary utensils and skills. He further asserts that every single person interviewed provided the same answer without hesitation: the costume was worn for monkey hunting. Coclet wondered if this might have been a secret code intended to cover up the true use of the costume. He even remarked that monkeys are afraid of leopards, so the costume would be of no use for hunting monkeys.<sup>218</sup>

Maes concluded from Coclet's note that the use of the costume for monkey hunting seemed to be absolutely wrong, granting credibility to Coclet's remark that the leopard is the animal feared most by monkeys and repeating his exact words in the article. The indigenous population had no reason at all to imitate the

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<sup>216</sup>RMCA HIST, Museum archives, Diverses, Letter of 13 January from the Minister to the Director of the Museum.

<sup>217</sup>Pers. Comm. with Roger Houtmeyers, the person who made the replicas.

<sup>218</sup>RMCA, DE 203 (Coclet-Henrotin). Note by the collector, Coclet, Basoko, 20/4/1912.

leopard when hunting monkeys. Maes also shares Coclet's curiosity as to what the relationship could be between the Bango and Bali, as there does not otherwise seem to be any. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, around the same time, several other costumes for hunting monkeys were collected. Armand Hutereau, military of the Force Publique was charged with an expedition to collect for the RMCA between 1911 and 1913. He collected monkey hunting costumes from populations further north of the Bali in the Uele region, among the Bua, the Binja and as far north as the Azande-Abandia (Illustration 9 and Illustration 10; Illustration 11 and Illustration 12). At the Institut des Musées Nationaux du Congo in Kinshasa, several hunting costumes from populations in the same region were collected during the 1970s (see Table 6). It seems that only those costumes in the collection of the RMCA, which were collected among Bali groups, sometimes in combination with claws, were truly worn in the context of leopard men activities, whereas the costumes collected by Coclet and Hutereau were wrongly ascribed to leopard men in the museum records. The next person to send a complete and real leopard man costume to the museum was General Henry de la Lindi. The costume was registered in 1934 but collection in the field occurred between 1893 and 1922. This costume was also displayed in the museum for a while (Illustration 33). In total about four leopard men costumes were collected among the Bali. Further about 24 claws -1 pair consisting of 8 separate finger rings with knives attached- and 6 sticks were assembled at the RMCA (see Table 4). A number of claws exist in other European and American ethnographic collections, but the leopard men costumes from the Bali are unique.<sup>219</sup> In 1924, in drawing up a typology of masks from the Congo in his booklet *Anioto-Kifwebe*, Maes (1924: 54) writes about leopard men costumes again. He particularly lists the objects he sees as being part of the leopard men costumes: the tunic with a belt, the hood, a pair of claws and the stick to leave the impressions of the leopard paw. However, he does distinguish between the claws and an instrument with four pointed projections as two different types of weapon. Maes (1924: 56) further asserts support for De Jonghe's hypothesis that the instigators of secret societies exploit a belief widely held in Africa, namely, that certain people, especially sorcerers, can temporarily take possession of a leopard and direct its activities. The *anioto* were regarded as an example of this (De Jonghe, 1923: 388). Maes also refers to the report

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<sup>219</sup>The Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm has at least two costumes in its collection from the region and period studied here. Also a more recent costume from the Komo is held by this museum (pers. Comm. Michael Barrett, 2013). Claws from the Bali region are found in the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen (1), at the Museum aan de Stroom in Antwerp (1), at the Ethnology Museums in Berlin (2) and Basel (2). The British Museum has several claws from Sierra Leone in its collection, which are of a different type to the claws discussed here. The Musée du quai Branly in Paris has in its collections anthropomorphic statues wearing bark-cloth spotted leopard men costumes from the Bandjun, Cameroon.



**Illustration 33: Costume displayed in the RMCA consisting of a hood, tunic and belt.**

**Collected by General J. Henry de la Lindi (the claws are from another collection), between 1893-1922.**

**RMCA EO.0.0.35655, EO.0.0.35656, EO.0.0.35657**



by the missionary Marrevée, who had baptised the convicts in the legal case of chief Abopia prior to their hanging, in 1920. In the aftermath of this first big case, some more specific data started seeping into the accounts. This introduces a phase of more intensive colonial reporting on leopard men. However, the canonical iconography put forward in the museum continued to reappear as an unchallenged element of leopard men accounts. The small group of people consisting of Maes, Wissaert and Delhaise, tied up in the museum network in support of the Ministry of Colonies, can be considered as the founders of a canonical leopard man iconography, finding its permanent form in a museum display. By publishing information based on Delhaise's objects and other reports, Maes further formalises his understanding of leopard men as scientific knowledge displayed in the museum institution.

The genealogy of the museum display is an example of how authoritative knowledge is created at the heart of the museum through cognitive deciphering of objects. This is only the beginning of a more complex process, which results in the visitors' interaction with this display in the context of the museum visit. In this particular example, the museum display came first, prior to the formation of a standardised narrative in accounts. With time, this process became increasingly entangled with the rumoured accounts about leopard men, travelling between the social reality of the colony and the Belgian metropole. Based on the available data it would seem that standardisation of colonial accounts of leopard men and the interpretation of objects have steadily grown towards each other, so as to become part of a leopard man mythology. While rooted in the same colonial culture, they started from different premises, quite independently. This supports the idea that people's experiences of colonial phenomena do not passively reflect pre-existing colonial ideologies. Instead, these ideologies are regenerated in diverse processes and acquire different shapes, and the interpretation of objects is but one of them. Through this dialectical process of objectification, which repeatedly occurs in museum visitor's experiences and scholarly relationships to the objects, the objects become "thing-concepts", in which matter and mind are indistinguishable to the beholder (Henare et al., 2007: 18-21). This process of "objectification", will be discussed further under section 4.1.3., in view of its connection with the social reality, which I will address first.

#### **4.1.2. Leopard men objects in the colony as evidence**

The variability of meanings in the process of objectification will be the focus here. The key to understanding this process lies in the fluctuating perceptions of ethnographic objects as material proof of the phenomenon of leopard men killing. In order to explain this, the cultural biography of these objects as proof, between approximately 1900 and 1935, will be outlined. I will pay attention to how they have been redefined and used, in order to get a more object-centered perspective on

leopard men representation.

The oldest leopard men objects in the RMCA collection are either souvenirs or trophies from military personnel, the result of salvage anthropology, or the combination of both. As the head of the department of ethnography, Joseph Maes wrote numerous requests to missionaries, colonial administrators and military personnel alike, to encourage them to collect objects and data for the museum. He even allocated budgets for this purpose. Maes invested considerable effort in assembling objects and cataloguing collections.<sup>220</sup> The objects collected by Delhaise and Coclet and the related documentation were a result of Maes' efforts. Some objects collected prior to 1913 – the year of origin of the display - were only donated or sold to the museum later. They were probably first kept as souvenirs from individual colonial careers, and donated or sold to the museum after the death of their collectors by their family members. As already indicated, Delhaise, Maes and some other contemporaries had no doubt at all regarding the existence of leopard men. However, until 1916 the colonial administration did not take rumours about leopard men seriously.

The basic ideological formation was presented by the sculpture, implying an inferior morality of the wild and bad Africans from which the good Africans, their victims, needed saving. But, it was not yet embroiled in the polemics related to the conquest of leopard men in the social reality. At this stage the leopard men objects objectified this basic moral code in quite a straightforward way. It appears the leopard men objects, even though quite rare at that point, were deemed particularly suitable and selected for originating a prototypical display, in line with preceding ones in the entrance cupola. This was not initiated by an arising popular narrative, but was rather inspired by the formal qualities of the objects and the photographic documentation and depended on the decisions of only a few people.

A decade later, however, leopard men objects had gained value. After 1913 leopard men objects in the museum collection were obtained predominantly via private collectors and later also from art dealers.<sup>221</sup> In 1928 a leopard men claw was reportedly auctioned for an exceptionally high price at the auction of the Henry Pareyn collection. The claw was sold for 4.000 francs, when, by comparison, more highly worked and embellished carved stools were sold for between 7.000 and 11.000 francs.<sup>222</sup> The peaking of prices for ethnographic arts was a consequence of the blossoming of the ethnographic art trade in the 1920s. But it is highly probable that the rising value of a leopard men claw on the art market, also stands

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<sup>220</sup>Couttenier (2005: 260-8) provides a detailed discussion of Maes' work at the museum.

<sup>221</sup>This is for example the case for the objects obtained from Walschot and Arnold. See Table 4.

<sup>222</sup>RMCA, DE 220 (Pareyn). Such prices are listed in the documents of the Pareyn collections. This file also contains a journal article on this 1928 auction. See also Couttenier (2005: 164, 122) and Corbey (1999).

in relation to the rising public awareness of leopard men occurrences in the colony and the enhanced, elusive and mysterious understanding of them, which was spread in popular media. From the 1920s onwards the colonial government made a considerable effort to get to grips with the leopard men, by means of official investigations, ethnographic reports, administrative measures and punishments. From the early 1920s, published reports started appearing in colonial and missionary journals. This reached a climax in the early 1930s when the major legal cases occurred.

As discussed in Chapter 2, certain administrators tried hard to dismantle leopard men groups and get the murderers, and those commissioning them, convicted. The difficulty was indeed the secrecy surrounding the society and the problem of finding reliable witnesses. In Chapter 2, I discussed that in the 1920s the law had been adapted to deal with “secret societies” like *anioto* in a more effective way. A decree of 1923 enlarged the possibilities for considering objects as evidence. Instead of treating the killings simply as murder crimes, which meant one had to find proof and witnesses, the decree enabled them to rely on more indirect proof found in ritual practices and objects (Moeller, 1936b).

Towards the 1930s, objects became an important focal point as evidence in the investigations. Leopard men claws in particular came to be seen as material evidence of an otherwise ungraspable and largely incomprehensible society by the colonial administration. Different sources make clear that having leopard men objects in or around one’s house or forging claws, would be considered to be key elements in raising suspicions of someone’s involvement in leopard men killings. Vindevoghel for example, wrote the following about the investigations from 1928 of murders commissioned at the chiefdom of Bangombe by the Bali chief Bongo, which was discussed in the previous chapters.

*“In the meanwhile, I pushed the investigation a bit further and told the substitute to go there to see whether there aren’t, in the surroundings of the villages, any hidden forges. Aganzi, in fact, was a close relative of a certain Nabanea, son of Sambea, alias Sambia, persecuted in 1917 for having collaborated to a crime by forging the irons imitating the traces of leopards and they lived in the same village as Mbako.*

*In the course of a house search the substitute De Waersegger discovers at Nabanea’s house a fruit with thick ribs(?) cut in two and which, applied on loose soil, leaves behind a leopard trace which is so clear that I surprised non-informed blacks who maintained that a leopard had passed from there.*

*Nabanea interrogated on the subject of the presence of this fruit in the leaves of his roof (the usual hiding place among blacks) declares he doesn’t know how it got there. ... It has to be added, in fact, that Nabanea is*

*an anियो son: his father once declared that he had made the irons found in his house for offering them to Europeans as curiosities. Nabanea declared to me that his father once repaired an anियो knife to please a certain Mandia. This Mandia was persecuted equally in 1917.*

*I am convinced that Nabanea and his relative Aganzi have something to do with the murders and that they are, at least, related to the anियो sect. The discovery at Nabanea's house constitutes, joined to the circumstance that his father, for a particular reason, forged anियो knives, to me seems sufficient as a motive to deport these two individuals."*

...

*"Another indigenous man was detained. It is a certain Odini of the chiefdom Betingite in whose house on the wharf of the route Wamba-Avakubi an anियो knife was seen during a fire. He was designated by different witnesses as having participated in the murders committed in the region, but isn't it because at the moment of the confrontations the witnesses knew of his accusation for keeping a knife that he was designated? ... I leave the territorial authority to judge whether keeping an anियो knife is sufficient for banishing Odini from the region. ...*

...

*[Last page:] "Odini is formally accused for having kept an anियो knife"*

...

*"Vindevoghel proposes the deportation of Nabanea and Aganzi [...] the discovery of the fruit [...] is a serious presumption." <sup>223</sup>*

Further, in the context of the following case against chief Mbako, Libois writes in 1933 *'in order to give the territorials of our chiefs a weapon in their hands, it is necessary to treat the production and possession of anियो knives as an offence. Then we can hope that anियो "allies" will avoid being spoken of.'*<sup>224</sup> In 1936, in hindsight of the legal discussions related to the leopard men cases, Moeller (1936b: 65) criticised the treatment of objects as evidence as a consequence of the decree of 1923 as too liberal. He noted: *"On many occasions known to us, the accessories have been found and seized; it has to be admitted that, for a couple among them or less, it would be difficult to find a legal justification to that seizure."*

In legal investigations, the objects were treated as material evidence providing a missing link between the owner and the single most important context, the murder case. The consideration of the costumes and weapons as proof departs from the same premises as the consideration of objects as evidence of the existence and nature of the colonised in successive scientific paradigms. In the latter case too

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<sup>223</sup>RMCA AIMO Vindevoghel (1930)

<sup>224</sup>RMCA AIMO Libois (1933 b).

they provide the missing link, the proof of existence of these authentic cultures. Revelation of the secrets (for example of *mambela*) has been identified more generally as a core strategy in the battle against leopard men. While in the beginning leopard men were generally regarded as an odd and mysterious phenomenon, highlighting the uncivilised nature of natives, the elusive and ungraspable character of leopard men became more important in the narratives as the colonial and missionary conquest became more frenetic. This may have enhanced the consideration of objects and the display as material trophies quite literally linked to colonial suppression. In the context of the museum or scientific research of objects, the material presence of an object as proof, contradicts the elusive character of leopard men, potentially enhancing people's understanding of it. By outlining this process of the developing understandings of leopard men, I want to point out the interrelation between the process of objectification at the museum, and the changing attitudes to leopard men in the colony as separate aspects of the process of structuration. Let us now elucidate the process of objectification in visitor experiences.

#### **4.1.3. Objectification in the visitor experience of the museum display**

In Bouquet and Porto's volume, exploring museums as ritual sites, Barbara Saunders (2005: 75-89) discusses visitor experience in relation to the allegorical figures in the entrance cupola at the RMCA. The process of visitor experience invoked by Saunders can be interpreted in light of Bourdieu's characterisation of a public ritual "*within a scenario that has frozen early-twentieth century Belgian understandings of the colonial project.*" (Bouquet and Porto, 2005: 11). The museum display is looked upon as an example of an "objectified social world" reproducing a social order which appears as natural, a "doxa" (Bourdieu, 1977: 35, 60, 164; Layton, 2008: 34; Tilley, 2008: 61). Saunders describes the performative ritual of visiting the museum and interacting with the display as instrumental in securing a powerbase of paternalism. Saunders' discussion is based on Wendy Morris' (2003) critical and artistic assessment of the sculptural scenes. Saunders imagines a visitor who engages and identifies fully with the display, but as explained in the introduction visitor's engagements can be diverse.

To summarise Saunders and Morris, the figures in the entrance cupola represent civilisation in a detemporalised form as a mythical victory (Illustration 34 to Illustration 37). Saunders argues in line with Morris that, except for the *Slavery* figure, the upper layer represents Civilisation, while the two African figures at a lower level represent Primitivity; the top layer is art in the form of allegory, the lower layer embodies natural history based on sketches and plaster casts that the artist Matton assembled during his trip to the Congo in 1911 (Morris, 2003). Morris also points at the gendered relationship between some of these figures. For example, in *Belgium grants her support to the Congo* the African man gazes upward, his hand

resting on the thigh of the white female figure (Illustration 37). In the figure of the Slaver, who has an enslaved young girl at his feet, moral outrage and eroticism are invoked by this scene (Illustration 34). The sexual connotations provide gendered moral and ethnic hierarchies, which directly and physically act upon the spectator as a desirer. The four sculpture groups by Matton further interact with four other figures standing on the ground below them. These four figures are plaster casts derived from original bronze figures made by Herbert Ward for the Smithsonian Institute, but were there withdrawn from the display (Arnoldi, 1998) (Illustration 38 to Illustration 41). Despite the artist trying to present an ideal reality, “as Art not Science”, the hyper-realism of these figures nevertheless provides further contrasts with the allegorical figures, and do communicate the scientific ideas and methods of the day (Saunders, 2005: 82-3, 87). Through bringing a formal hierarchy to the display, juxtaposing two temporalities, an ideological structure is imprinted on the visitor: of the coloniser associated with the spiritual realm of art, and of the colonised associated with natural history. Even though the leopard man display is of a different nature, perhaps even more ethnographic than artistic, the moral outrage invoked by the Slaver and the girl group is also present in this scene with the ill-intentioned leopard men attacking a harmless sleeping victim.

The visitor engages with a culturally constructed environment where consensus is created among individual agents of a society. In this setting, the visitor adopts a particular kind of coded behaviour and a way of relating to the objects, depending on his mastery of the rules and norms of the museum, which also contributes to the aura of the objects. The atmosphere of the setting is created through other conventional strategies, such as labelling, the presence of museum guards, etc.... As Saunders (2005: 76) asserts: “*The mode of apprehension requires the senses to be disciplined to accord with a particular kind of world-picture whose paradigmatic form is found in representational images produced by a mechanical apparatus or instrument.*” The museum’s authorial role remains invisible, creating the illusion that it provides an objective, higher form of truth. The whole process of the visitor’s compliant behaviour and experience further ramifies the museum’s authority. This also requires the compliance of all the staff, who are creating and created by the authority they act to confirm. The museum scholars’ role in this is to forge the identity of objects in line with agreed taxonomies or aesthetic canons.

As argued in the introduction, Bouquet and Porto understand the public ritual of the museum visit in analogy to the liminoid experience in the context of the theatre or cinema, as theorised by Victor Turner. Central to the understanding of the public ritual and of people’s relation with an objectified social world is that these concepts entail a bodily and sensory engagement of the participant with a culturally constructed environment. The concept of the liminoid can help to point out the nature of the bodily and sensory engagement of the visitor in the processes of enchantment and objectification. The liminoid experience entails the suspension of disbelief,



**Illustrations 34 to 37: Allegoric figures at the entrance cupola of the RMCA by Arsène Matton, 1910-1922 (left to right, top to bottom):**

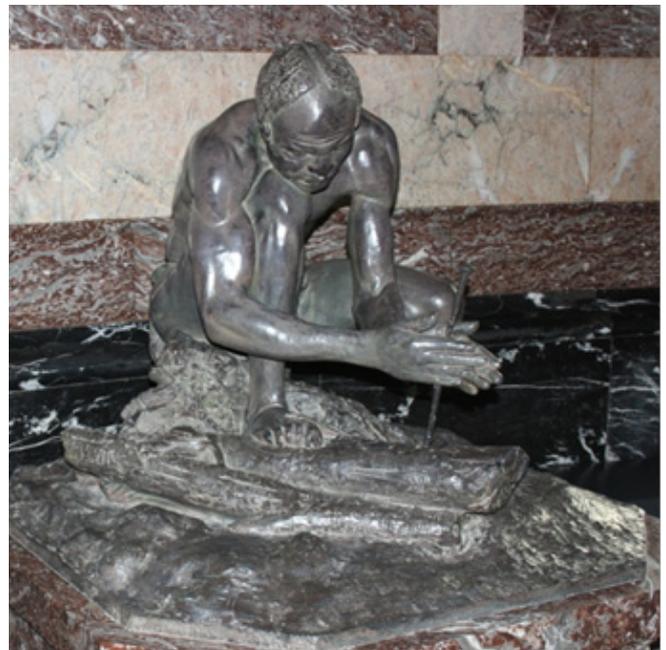
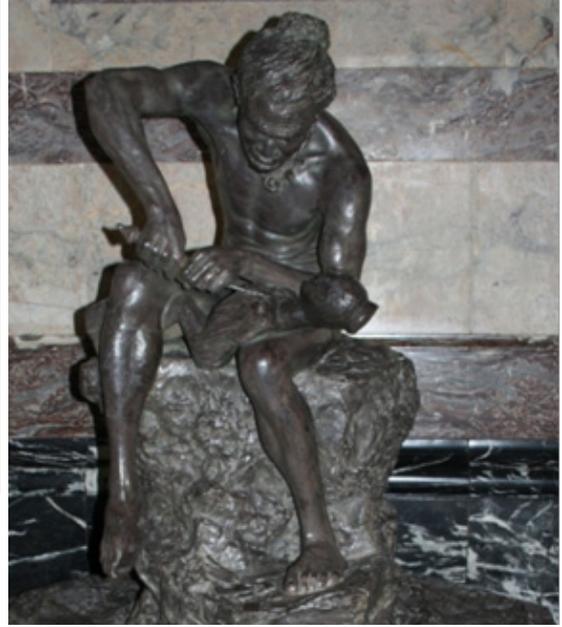
**Illustration 34: *Slavery***

**Illustration 35: *Belgium grants civilisation to the Congo***

**Illustration 36: *Belgium grants prosperity and well-being to the Congo***

**Illustration 37: *Belgium grants her support to the Congo***





**Illustrations 38 to 41: Figures at the entrance cupola of the RMCA by Herbert Ward, 1906-1910 (from left to right, top to bottom):**

**Illustration 38: *The Artist*, 1910**

**Illustration 39: *The Idolmaker*, 1906**

**Illustration 40: *Chief of the Tribe*, 1908**

**Illustration 41: *Making Fire*, 1908**



in which the spectator is able to be absorbed by and identify fully with the film or performance. The liminoid experience at the RMCA can for example be illustrated by the experience of moral outrage, upon confrontation with the Slaver figure, against which the mirror image of civilisation provides a liberation, or catharsis. Even if for just a moment, the visitor can identify with the scene represented and a moment of suspension of disbelief is reached. How can we imagine this for the leopard men display? At the RMCA I once saw a little boy revealing a brief reaction of fear when looking up and seeing the leopard man. This reaction may be inspired by a very short suspension of disbelief characteristic of liminoid experiences. This is where the understanding of the public ritual and the concept of enchantment overlap.

The process of enchantment is based on a person's desire to decipher the object cognitively, but his incapacity to do so creates a feeling of wonder and fascination (Gell, 1998: 68-72, 97-101). Gell has equally stressed the bodily and sensory aspects of this process in terms of mimesis, with the visitor engaging with what he sees in a direct bodily way. I believe that in this case study enchantment is indeed constituted in the tension between the proof of existence presented by the objects, and the visitor's inability to imagine precisely why and how leopard men operated in the way presented. In trying to decipher the display, the objects and bodily postures of the figures actually help people to imagine the "beastly" way of killing in a bodily way. The experience is situated in the grey zone between belief and disbelief, decipherability and indecipherability. This process of enchantment can be considered as instrumental to the public ritual of the museum visit, in which the whole setting and atmosphere moves people to decipher the objects cognitively in line with the ideologies of colonialism. The colonial ideologies are hence objectified in the display. The question now remains how these museum processes relate to textual leopard men sources.

#### **4.2. Structuration in textual and audiovisual documents on leopard men**

With reference to the textual accounts, Lindskog (1954: 181) highlighted in the 1950s that a certain level of stereotyping occurred in leopard men reports. Lindskog's understanding of leopard men as an armed metaphor is reminiscent of White's (2000: 50) understanding of vampires as an epistemological category in African stories about colonisers. Here Lindskog's observations will be developed further, pointing out structural elements in the discourse about leopard men, and assessing their qualities as an epistemological category.

Rather than singling out "factual" data and reconstructing a secular history, White (2000) chooses to read into vampire stories how people actually experienced, tried to come to terms with, and made sense of colonialism. The introduction mentioned that White's characterisation of African vampire stories, not only as expressions of individual experience but also as stories, brings us to

consider culturally specific structurations of narration in terms of their effectiveness. Therefore, in the analysis of structuration in documents on leopard men, both colonial reports and fictional documents on leopard men have been considered. While the visual often plays a role in the textual accounts, in the form of descriptions of scenes and objects, and in illustrations, there are also documents on leopard men in which language and the visual are even more significantly entangled, such as in comics, films and documentaries. The latter documents about leopard men will also be considered here.

In an earlier article, the most obvious parallels between primary and secondary colonial reporting on the one hand and fictional sources such as novels, comics and films on the other were discussed. It was pointed out how they relate to Euro-American traditions of othering (Van Bockhaven, 2009). Here some of the main points of this discussion will be summarised and considered in view of Pierre Halen's (1993) finer-grained analysis of leopard men as figures of alterity in Belgian colonial literature.

#### **4.2.1. Structuring principles of narration: the white male conquest of a lesser adversary**

Colonial accounts were probably derived from local rumours and stories on leopard men, which were recast in terms of a colonial logic. The most fundamental structure that appears from colonial reports and fiction on leopard men, is that they variably bear in them the conquest of good over bad, and in a more specific form of civilised order over chaos. This scheme of narration more generally underpins the historiography of the modern nation, as discussed in the previous section with regard to the figures in the entrance cupola of the RMCA. It is more fundamentally a characteristic of Euro-American traditions of narration still abundantly applied in contemporary forms of narration. Whether it concerns contemporary horror films, adventure stories and comic books, Euro-American narratives often display this set scenario entailing the victory of the hero, who is still often a white male of superior morality and strength, conquering the enemy, or a general evil force.

In colonial discourse the leopard man provided an example of an opponent of inferior morality against which the colonial hero is acting. Halen (1993: 181-182) pointed out that the leopard man has particularly proved to be a strong image of alterity. In fictional works, it survived the facts of the legal cases in the 1920s and 1930s long after these had been forgotten (see Appendix 4 for a list of fictional work and documentaries on leopard men). Leopard men figure prominently in colonial fiction, but also appear in exotic fantasy standing loose from the history of colonisation, which Halen identifies as two subgenres of the exotic adventure story. It has remained a prolific motif appearing in new editions of comics up to the present day. Halen also notes that the graphic representation has remained the same for over

60 years.

### ***The hero***

In the fictional stories, the hero travels to a place which is exotic. The exotic stylistically manifests itself as a “topos”, a symbolic place. Halen (1993: 150-151) defines this topos as “*nature as fantasy*”, which is unpredictable, wild, dangerous, chaotic as opposed to civilisation; in other words a “heart of darkness”. The leopard men are a part of this dystopic place. Through his confrontation with the exotic, the hero is threatened with alienation from his rational self and challenged to maintain his identity. In the colonial story the hero has a purpose of contributing to the colonial project by bringing order to the exotic chaos, while in the purely exotic fantasy the hero has no ambition to change the exotic place or dissolve the alterity, but rather to save himself from alienation.

Halen (1993: 151) asserted that in the subgenre of colonial fiction of leopard men, often the opposition between the good hero and the bad opponent is not always clear cut. This changing position of the colonial hero specifically occurs in the decades following on the controversy of the rubber exploitation of the Congo Free State regime, reflecting changing mentalities about what colonisation ought to be. Halen (1993: 182-183) asserts that Edgar Rice Burroughs’ *Tarzan and the Leopard Man* can be considered in this light, with Tarzan being the anti-authoritarian hero, who is wary of the colonial authorities, and sides with the good African against the leopard men. The warrior Orlando, the good African, finds Tarzan, who is suffering from amnesia, and his monkey N’kima, in the forest and believes Tarzan to be his guardian spirit. Because of a conflict in Orlando’s village community, Orlando and Tarzan are confronted by the leopard men, an evil sect worshipping a speaking leopard and practicing cannibalism.

The intermediary role of the colonial hero in fiction, as the saviour of the good Africans against the bad, accords with the colonial reality. Colonial reports of leopard men refer, as much as fiction, to the pre-colonial dystopic state, which is fought and rectified by the missionary or administrator, who usually is the author of the piece. This ties in with Stoler’s discussion of primary accounts in which the authors are trying to defend their point of view. Rhetoric strategies highlighting the degree of success of one’s approach are important in this respect. In Chapter 2, the different opinions on how to deal with the leopard men in the colonial administration were discussed at length. In an article in *L’Illustration Congolaise* in 1936, the District Commissioner Libois, whose role was discussed in Chapter 2, announced “*to have harmed the society greatly by enforcing a public celebration of the ceremonies of mambela, a secret society restricted to men, to which the anioto was linked.*” In several reports a certain frustration can be noticed, highlighting that fighting the *anioto* was not an obvious task, but more generally the authors’ own accomplishments were accentuated and exaggerated as is the case for Libois.

This was also done in missionary accounts, for example, with several missionary stories confirming that before executions took place, the condemned were initiated into the Christian faith and baptised in prison. Father Joseph Christen (Prêtres du Sacré-Coeur, Stanleyville) (1936: 29-30) writes about the involvement of “the missionary” in the third person. In line with the use of rumour, reinserting detail into the accounts, to write in the third person can be considered as an additional rhetoric strategy to present this kind of event as an objective, self-evident process, reflecting a kind of natural order. It also makes the self-glorification appear more modest:

*“More than once appears in front of us, modest and discrete, the silhouette of the missionary: ... it is most of all the image of the messenger of God who appears at the right moment to bereave Satan of a prey he already considered his, for the remission of sins and reconciliation, to make of the leopard men the most gentle and harmless lambs, of these murderers newborn people. These wolves, suddenly turned into lambs, have received the Missionary with the greatest joy, happy to enjoy the consolations of his sacred service... After having desired and called out for the baptism with all their heart.”*

### ***The act of uncovering***

What seems crucial, both in colonial fiction and in the reports, is the act of discovering and exposing the secrecy of the leopard men in order to dissolve the threat. As in the quote above, sometimes this also entails uncovering the true nature of leopard men as fundamentally good people. This unveiling of the secrecy, or demystification of the leopard man, was noted by Halen (1993: 158- 160) for some of the fictional stories. In Hergé’s *Tintin au Congo*, the hero quite literally unmasks the leopard man uncovering his identity and thereby also his motives. In André Villers’ *La Griffé du Leopard*, this is achieved by making the secret rites of *mambela* public in analogy to the reality in the colony. The story is based on autobiographic elements of the author, who had been a journalist working in the Congo. But perhaps even more than using this anti-exotic, demystifying code, there is a tendency to exploit the elusive and mysterious impression that the leopard men invoke. This is done in fiction and in reporting alike, to entice the readers. This equally occurs through unveiling the secrecy, but instead of offering a rationalised, demystified image of leopard men, the sensational, a kind of hyper-realism is used in order to maximise the effect of the narrative.

An example of this is the sequence in the documentary *L’Equateur au 100 Visages* by André Cauvin (1948). In this sequence a chief is telling a story about leopard men and a reconstructed scene appears (Illustration 42 to Illustration 47). The chief relates how leopard men came together at night to plot a murder. They





**Illustration 42:** Still from *L'Equateur au Cent Visages* by André Cauvin, 1948.  
Ceges-Soma 148238



**Illustration 43:** Still from *L'Equateur au Cent Visages* by André Cauvin, 1948.  
Ceges-Soma 258869



**Illustration 44:** Still from *L'Equateur au Cent Visages* by André Cauvin, 1948.  
Ceges-Soma 258872



**Illustration 45:** Still from *L'Equateur au Cent Visages* by André Cauvin, 1948.  
Ceges-Soma 258875



**Illustration 46:** Still from *L'Equateur au Cent Visages* by André Cauvin, 1948.  
Ceges-Soma 258878



**Illustration 47:** Still from *L'Equateur au Cent Visages* by André Cauvin, 1948.  
Ceges-Soma 258879



were accompanied by a woman. The purpose was firstly to make a sacrificial victim whose body parts would be used by the woman to make a magic potion. The claw was then soaked in it to make it more effective. Subsequently the leopard men would dress up once again and leave to commit a murder as an act of vengeance. The scenes with the eyes and other body parts, which are used in the magic substance, may be derived from ethnographic data provided by chief Mbako with regard to claws (see Table 7), but the film-maker interprets this so as to maximise the sense of a bloody and threatening ritual.

Another example is the so-called documentary by Paul Hoeffler *The Leopard Men of Africa*, which distorts reality in multiple ways. The author misleads the viewer by giving the illusion that the leopard men they encounter really existed, stressing that the film contains real footage. The film is an assemblage of safari and nature images, exotic “ethnographic” scenes, and largely *mise-en-scène* portrayals of particular events to fit the story-line. The voice-over mentions the usual clichés of Africa: cannibalism, wildness, mystery, constant threat, disease and death. In the montage the chronology of the journey does not make sense geographically.<sup>225</sup> The scenes concerning leopard men in particular are all *mise-en-scènes*. The costume worn by the leopard men with leopard hide and head, the claws and the stick with the paw print are a pastiche of the costumes at the RMCA. Other equally flagrant inconsistencies occur, such as the mention of the medicine *borfima* concocted from human remains. The use of such a medicine is specific for a regional leopard men variety from Sierra Leone in West Africa, while the sequence is actually set in East Africa. While these two documentaries cross the border between myth and fact, in fiction ethnographic detail and realistic elements from colonial reports are also used so as to maximise excitement.

The tension between the elusive reputation of leopard men and the hyper-realistic exposure seems purposeful. It parallels the use of rhetoric strategies in the colonial reports where an apparent realism is situated in the citation of so-called factual particularities derived from rumour. Much as in the fiction, the missionaries and colonials, to varying degrees, represent themselves heroically by incorporating this tension in their accounts. The more threatening and ungraspable their enemy is, the more they stand out in their accomplishments. In many cases the men serving in the colony were quite ordinary men back in their homeland and they may have

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<sup>225</sup>The journey begins in Kenya (Mombasa) and continues further into East African countries. At one point the journey is said to continue more northwards to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) to look for leopard men there. Historically and geographically this doesn't make sense at all. Suddenly the leopard men king is found in a region which appears to be Kivu. A few sequences were shot in the Ituri forest region (e.g. people with lip plugs). Also a few sources mention the crew of Hoeffler filming in the surroundings of Avakubi, around 1929 e.g. Schebesta (1934), RMCA AIMO Joset (1939), but this footage does not seem to have been used in the leopard men scenes.

used their involvement in this history to legitimise their presence in the colony, to gain more credibility as civilising heroes. This characteristic of the story-as-quest recounted from the perspective of a white male hero uncovering and/or dissolving a threatening alterity may be identified as one of the strands of a colonial logic. This also brings us to consider the way the threatening alterity is defined.

#### 4.2.2. Leopard men alterity

Lindskog realised that the term “leopard men” and synonyms, such as “human leopard”, are metaphors attempting to categorise and make abstraction of African realities which people in the west fail to comprehend. He opens his last chapter on this subject with the following quote by John Locke: “*Figured and metaphorical expressions do well to illustrate more abstruse and unfamiliar ideas, which the mind is not yet thoroughly accustomed to.*” (Lindskog, 1954: 192). “(N)ature”, Lindskog suggests, “*is structured for the native otherwise than it is for the European, and where magical dimensions are regarded as possibly playing a part, any understanding of time, place and action mean entirely different things to the native than they do to the European.*”

The principal problem specified in this respect is the incapacity of Europeans to get an idea of how exactly natives perceive or experience things such as transformation into leopards. This problem grows bigger with the incapacity to translate native languages, causing even more confusion on how exactly the phenomenon should be understood. Lindskog suggests that in such cases a practice occurs by which a diversity of phenomena are lumped together under a common denominator, exaggerating the similarities among them. But he stresses that the similarities observed in disparate phenomena are less significant than their variations. Lindskog sees the function of the metaphor as making something difficult and challenging discernible to Europeans. To clarify, he refers to a passage in the study of werewolves by Robert Hertz: “*in this way the werewolf becomes, in dark poetic symbolism, the image of the animal-like demonism in the nature of people: Homo homini lupus.*” (Lindskog, 1954: 199). In a similar way leopard men are categorised as evil, cannibals, deranged, monstrous, inhuman and other such characteristics. In this way, Lindskog argues, the understanding of leopard men gradually crystallised, and through the learned tradition, received an ever-increasing credibility. Through the moral associations, giving it a derogatory and propagandist turn, the metaphor becomes “armed”.

The term “leopard men” becomes a comprehensible abstraction, a label in other words, which provides guidelines for interpreting and addressing the phenomenon. This touches upon Luise White’s (2000: 66) characterisation of vampires as an epistemological category enabling and constraining African experiences of colonial events. She suggests that such categories, and the stories in

which they appear, necessarily contain fantastic elements because in such elements debates about the real are situated, and how to deal with it. This equally applies to the category of leopard men.

### *How alterity is defined*

Several scholarly publications have focussed on how deformed humans and animals represent evil, “heathens” or the insane in the arts and literature of medieval European Christianity and folk religion. Otherness has long been defined within this religious framework, representing heathens and non-Europeans as liminal beings that cross the border between humanity and bestiality. For example, the devil is represented with hooves and horns. Witches are associated with control over animals. In the Middle Ages, Jews and Muslims were depicted with dog’s heads and pig’s noses. The latter were also sometimes accused of eating their own species, like certain animals do. The opposition is also gendered, for example, by associating Jewish male circumcision with menstruation. Furthermore, mental illnesses were perceived as possession by the devil or as animal-like behaviour (Gregg, 1997; Mason, 1990; Salisbury, 1994).

These people or beings are considered threatening to the social order normally maintained through mechanisms of self-control and the following up of taboos (e.g. on incest, bestial and extra-marital sexual relations, arbitrary violence, consumption of human flesh). Evil, heathenism and insanity are hence defined in terms of the breach of these taboos, loss of self-control and the following up of animal-like urges. In older European styles of narration, such evil, animal-like beings are often defeated by male heroes or Christian elements such as Holy Water. Even though such stories have lost their explicitly religious meaning and social relevance, the story-line underlying them remained popular until today, for example in thriller stories. The occurrence of animal-like beings as a metaphor for the anti-social is thus very deeply rooted in a cultural tradition of othering equally invading religion, science, culture, arts, fact and fiction.

In both fiction and colonial reports leopard men are an example of the “wildness” of a population. Halen (1993: 151-152) explained that in colonial fiction the leopard men usually appear as a secret sect which threatens to awaken a cultural and religious past, an original chaos, in the form of a wild pre-existing political domination. This theme of secret sects became very popular in colonial adventure genres in general, such as stories about voodoo. In these stories the secret sect justifies rational domination and at the same time threatens it. The colonial forces ultimately triumph against these forms of resistance. In the fictional writings the same anti-social aspects which appear in medieval stories are ascribed to leopard men and their accomplices. They behave like animals, they are promiscuous, they are unpredictable in their actions, they eat human flesh, they smell badly, they get drunk or take drugs and so on. Besides the promiscuity, several of these characteristics are

also variably attested to in the colonial reports.

The costumes and the rumours about traces left at the crime site, referring to the leopard, obviously triggered European imaginings of otherness as an animal-like state of being. This is also connected to colonial stereotypical understandings of African religious experience. Firstly, there is the idea that Africans worship animals, like the leopard. This comes up regularly in fiction, for example, in the Tarzan story where the leopard god is a speaking leopard. Secondly, linked to the former idea, is the western interpretation of totemism assuming that *anioto* members consider themselves to be blood relatives of the animal. Thirdly, in missionary and colonial writings, “aniotism” is regularly compared to a European notion of transformation, as in the case of werewolves where a man, unwillingly, takes the shape of a wolf and kills people. Father Joseph Christen (1936:31) sums up several of these ideas:

*“One encounters sometimes in Africa, where the pathology is more dominant than elsewhere, curious cases of delirium where the patient imagines himself to have metamorphosed into one of the animals feared by the population. Tribes, families, placed under the protection of the animal to which they imagine to be blood-related, live in this belief that runs in a certain way through their veins and arteries.”*

These understandings of African religious experience were taken as examples of the superstition and irrationality of Africans and were also used in the legal and administrative debate on how to eradicate and punish those involved in leopard men attacks (cf. Chapter 2).

The killings were often thought to be the result of delusion or madness, an acting out of uncontrolled animal-like urges, a consequence of a religious trance or a combination of all these. In the quote by the missionary Marrevée cited earlier, murderers are said to have transformed into “lambs” upon their conversion to Christianity, and are depicted as victims of their own state of mind, which nevertheless makes it worthwhile to ‘save’ them. This came up in the legal discussion regarding the accountability of leopard men as discussed in the previous chapter. Along with the colonial hero and the good African, the leopard man potentially acquires a more moderate position. As already indicated above, it is as if underneath the evil there is a true, better person to be discovered: they are victims of their belief, of an ill-meaning ritual specialist (“féticheur”), or of a degenerate white opponent who is looking for profit. This is the case in Hergé’s *Tintin au Congo*. Denial or downplaying of the political nature of leopard men killings is equally situated in the characterisation of leopard men as either evil beings or naïve victims of a primitive state of mind.

### *The role of objects and iconography in the texts*

While representations of others have changed over time and the comparison to animals might have become less obvious, others have continuously been represented as less civilised or human in both behaviour and physical features. This has particularly occurred in science, for example, in physical anthropology and in colonial discourses, underpinning the study of objects.<sup>226</sup> Here the role of objects and iconography as a means of structuring accounts of leopard men is focussed on.

Lindskog particularly noticed that accounts of the east of Congo were structured around the *modus operandi* of the attack and the costumes and weapons used:

*“The descriptions of the phenomenon are so written that expressions for masking, masking material, attack, attack technique, and weapons have the greatest frequency. Therefore the stereotyped version can be illustrated as follows: “These men ... metamorphose/ disguise/ cover themselves/ dressed/ dressed as to resemble/ in the guise of/ clothed in .. in/ with ... leopard/ leopards ... skin/ skins ... spring/ pounce ... suddenly/ unexpectedly ... from behind ... upon/ on ... unsuspecting/ quite unconscious of his fate ... victim/ victims/ solitary individuals ... plunge/ plant/ bury/ drive/ cut/ lacerate/ tear in pieces ... with ... long, claw-like un-cut nails/ iron claws and sharp knives/ sharp claw-knives/ a knife/ two knives/ a three-pronged knife/ two three-pronged forks/ three knife-like prongs/ a four-pronged knife ... into the ... throat/ neck.*

*For the French language material the corresponding schematic story becomes: ... se couvrir/ s'accoutre/ se déguise/ s'affuble/ se travêtit/ sous le couvert et la forme du fauve, soit en se revêtant ..., soit en se tatouant ... en ... panthère/léopard ... une peau de ... panthère/ léopard/ lion ... d'une étoffe travaillé à l'imitation d'une dépouille de grand fauve/ la cqsaque mouchetée à l'imitation du léopard ... à chacun de ses doigts des petits couteaux/ d'une griffe à deux ou cinq branches/ de griffes de fer/ de griffes artificielles tranchantes comme des ongles de léopard ... égorge ... en tranchant la carotide. The most noticeable feature of the French material is that the terms used to describe the different features of the attack have significantly less variation than the English correspondents.*

(Lindskog, 1954:181 ; Lindskog's analysis is based on Federspiel, 1909: 61; De Jonghe, 1923: 379; Maes, 1924, 55; Czekanowski, 1924: 326; Kawaters, 1931: 461; Christen, 1935: 29, 40; Moeller, 1936b: 55; Bouccin, 1936d: 252, 257)

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<sup>226</sup>For a historical overview of physical anthropology in Belgium see Couttenier (2005).

Lindskog's analysis demonstrates that the accounts are structured by the description of an attack, in which the costumes figure and in which the claws are highlighted as weapons. A canonised iconography becomes apparent. The descriptions of costumes and weapons and the iconography of the leopard men images in these sources usually contain the tunic and hood in bark cloth (or actual leopard hide), one or two claws, and the stick to leave the paw print of the leopard. These four types of objects are exactly the ones which are unambiguously identified as leopard men objects in the RMCA collection and which are equally deployed in Wissaert's Leopard Man ensemble. Lindskog's observations were based predominantly on colonial press, in other words, on secondary accounts. But the role of the iconography can also be demonstrated clearly in primary colonial and missionary reports, from authors who dealt more directly with leopard men in colonial society.

Even if colonial authors sometimes questioned the wearing of the costumes and the use of the weapons, they generally added the standard description of the leopard men appearance (costume and weapons) to their account, as if they wanted to be 'complete'. This was pointed out in a quote on the first page of this work (cf. on the use of the costumes and knives). The missionary Marrevée, cited above, who was involved in the baptising and final confession of Abopia and his gang in 1920, provides the following description of an attack:

*"Advancing on tiptoe, the body bending forward, the eyes spying in all directions, the iron claws in one hand, raised in order to slay: doesn't the sight of such a monster make us fearful and heavy-hearted."*

(Marrevée, 1928: 172)

Marrevée (1928: 172-3), in addition to his description of a leopard man costume and attack clearly reflecting the basic iconography of Wissaert's sculptural model, also acknowledges the use of a knife as a murder weapon rather than the claws:

*"To this we can still add a knife, of which the aniotos in their attacks make use more often than of the iron claws, which are rather used to tear up the flesh, ....*

*The aniotos do not always appear in their leopard disguise. Those cases, where they attack without any masquerade and finish off their victims with a knife, are not rare."*

### ***Concluding remarks***

Regardless of the particularities in both colonial reports and fiction, a colonial logic appears. This logic goes hand in hand with a culturally determined rhetoric which helps to make the stories more salient and appealing. By implicitly and naturally shaping their accounts after the logic of an older tradition of othering, in which

opponents display animal-like features and anti-social behaviour, the authors can depict themselves as heroes of civilisation. This epic structuration has an entertaining character, enhanced by the sensational, gruesome qualities of the opponent, in line with a learned tradition of the conquest of good over bad. The werewolf, the ‘madman’ and the possessed are some of the most prominent beings leopard men are compared with in colonial accounts.<sup>227</sup>The epic structure is perhaps most significantly constituted in the act of discovering or uncovering the secrecy, which is equally present in fictional writings as it is in reports, and which leads to a catharsis. The colonial hero dissolves the threat of the original chaos. This epic structure in which a tension is created through the threat of the opponent, remains effective in contemporary entertainment media, in which leopard men have survived as horror creatures. These aspects of structuration have been an important asset to their effectiveness in spreading colonial ideas and to their persistence in time.

Why did leopard men come to the fore as an epistemological category in the mythologisation of colonial history? I believe this is because, in light of Western traditions of others as animal-like and threatening, they presented themselves as an easily identifiable category which caused them to be singled out. The costumes and weapons in particular, and the iconography derived from them, clearly served the colonial discourse, because they objectified the animal-like and evil intent of the leopard man. In colonial accounts they embodied the pre-colonial chaos which the author seeks to dissolve. At the basis of the catharsis is the moral code to which Lindskog referred, of which the archetype is provided in the medieval narratives about others. The leopard man as a western metaphor was “armed” with derogatory moral associations, providing it with a propagandist turn and directing people’s actions against it.

### **4.3. Myths and facts in in the colonial representation of leopard men**

In colonial accounts of leopard men, the description of the attack, analogous to the iconography of the sculpture at the RMCA, became a canonical element. It was noted that a few sceptical colonial observers doubted the use of the costumes and claws for the killing. Furthermore a number of costumes, worn for hunting monkeys, were falsely ascribed to leopard men. And, while the range of objects identified as leopard men objects corresponds quite closely to the iconography in the sources, other objects are also mentioned. In summary, there was a need for detailed research on the costumes and weapons themselves to find out whether they were really worn or not, what they were really used for, and if any other objects may have been involved. This section evaluates further on the authenticity of the colonial representation in light of the cases discussed in the previous chapter. The data related to the set of

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<sup>227</sup>For example by Jadot (1928: 164-5), Marrevée (1928: 173) and Christen (1936: 31).

ethnographic objects, and particularly the material traces on them, are considered in conjunction with known details of the attacks.

#### **4.3.1. Analysis of the traces on the objects**

In the museum's history, and more generally from a western point of view, leopard men objects have always been considered rather passively as material proof of the existence of leopard men, and used as obvious illustration material in their representation. Recent critiques of leopard men representations did not lead to more detailed research. It is notable, however, that not one of the objects in the collection was linked to a particular crime and detailed information about the use of these specific objects was simply absent. The costumes and claws looked unsuitable to be used for secretive and sudden attacks. For instance, the hoods of the costumes would impair the vision of the attackers. This is corroborated by official documents such as autopsies or eye-witness reports containing particular data from the attacks (see Table 7 of the *modus operandi*, weapons used and traces of the cases discussed in Chapter 3). These documents rarely reveal the wearing of costumes or the use of claws.

As discussed at length in the introduction, the concept of material proof is a relative one, as it varies along with the scientific paradigms and the ideological formations it is connected to. It stands in relation to the 'regime of value' in fashion, the cultural categorisation of objects which determines the scientifically agreed ways of investigating these objects and deducing information from them. It seems that the categorisation of leopard men objects as ethnographic objects, providing an undeniable link with their original context, precluded further scrutiny of their materiality and evidence of their use. The fact that this research has been evaded until today is in itself a consequence of the complex, ideologically determined ways in which people relate to objects, which has brought me to consider objects more thoroughly as sources from multiple angles. The lack of available information about the use of the objects and the doubt regarding their practicality, have inspired me to re-consider the objects as material proof in a direct way and to initiate an analysis of traces of usage found on them. In December 2008 an analysis of traces on the costumes was carried out by scientists from the Belgian National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology (NICC). The results were then considered in conjunction with data about the murders as provided in the historical sources, based on witness-statements and autopsies.

The stain-dyed bark-cloth costumes were investigated by researchers from the genetics lab inspecting the costumes with UV-light (Polilight) in order to identify

possible traces of bodily fluids such as blood, saliva and sweat.<sup>228</sup> Depending on the reflection of trace, samples were taken by swabbing with cotton sticks containing a physiological solution. The latter samples were tested for the presence of blood and to collect DNA material from the wearer.<sup>229</sup> Furthermore samples were taken from material residues. The metal claws were inspected with a stereomicroscope by the researchers from the microtraces lab. This lab further investigated the samples of material residues from both the costumes and the claws. The sticks only were investigated by the Department of Agricultural and Forest Economy from the RMCA with a microscope. For an overview of the results of these tests I refer to Table 5. I summarise the principal results here.

The inspection of the bark-cloth costumes with UV-light showed transpiration and saliva traces around the mouth and nostril openings on the inside of the hoods and around sleeve and neck openings. Under UV-light these appeared as fluorescent zones. No blood or other stains were found which could link the costumes with murder in a direct way. But the costumes all appeared to have been worn and some of them bore traces of multiple DNA, meaning they were worn by different people. While most of the claws did not carry any particular traces, one did contain remnants of a couple of maggots which could point to the former presence of a larger chunk of (human?) flesh. One of the claws has clear marks of corrosion and may have been buried for a long time. Some of the claws are clearly too feeble to be used as weapons, while others are quite firm and heavy with sharp knives, capable of inflicting severe injuries (see Table 8 for an assessment of the claws as weapons). The investigation of the sticks identified that four of the five have traces of earth on the impression surface. This may point to the use of these objects to imitate an impression of a leopard paw in the soil but could also be marks of burial. One of the objects (EO.0.0.42666) shows very clear traces of usage on the heel and claws of the impression surface. Several of the sticks have rotted and show deterioration from fungi. One of the sticks also contains a tubercle made by an ant or other soil fauna. The tubercle is filled with earth. These elements point out that these sticks were buried or kept underground. The rotting process stopped eventually and, after that, the objects were mummified in a very dry environment, probably the museum stores.

#### **4.3.2. Interpretation of the object research in conjunction with historical records**

The data revealed in witness statements, as far as is known, makes no mention of

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<sup>228</sup>The spots on the costume are created by applying plant juice first, and after these stains have dried up, iron-containing mud is applied to the costumes so that the stains obtain a dark colour (Pers. Comm. Françoise Therry textiles conservator RMCA).

<sup>229</sup>Tests used: Hemastix to test for haemoglobin.

costumes in the context of specific murder cases (see Table 7 based on Joset (1955)). This corresponds to the results of the trace analysis which has revealed no blood traces at all. Taken into consideration the test results and the poor practicality of the costumes for killing, it seems rather unlikely that the costumes were worn for such activities. On the other hand it seems that leopard men costumes did derive from monkey hunting costumes which existed in the wider north-eastern Congo basin, as discussed in Chapter 1. Hypothetically speaking, killing people may have been considered analogous to hunting animals. In addition, might the assertion mentioned in Chapter 1, that Mangbele men used to dress like leopards in order to visit their lovers, point to an analogy between conquering a woman and killing an animal or a human? In relation to *anioto* activities, might the costumes have played a ritual role in the context of the initiation of boys into *anioto* or in the context of “hunting” magic to prepare for an expedition? Unfortunately there is no ethnographic data to verify this.

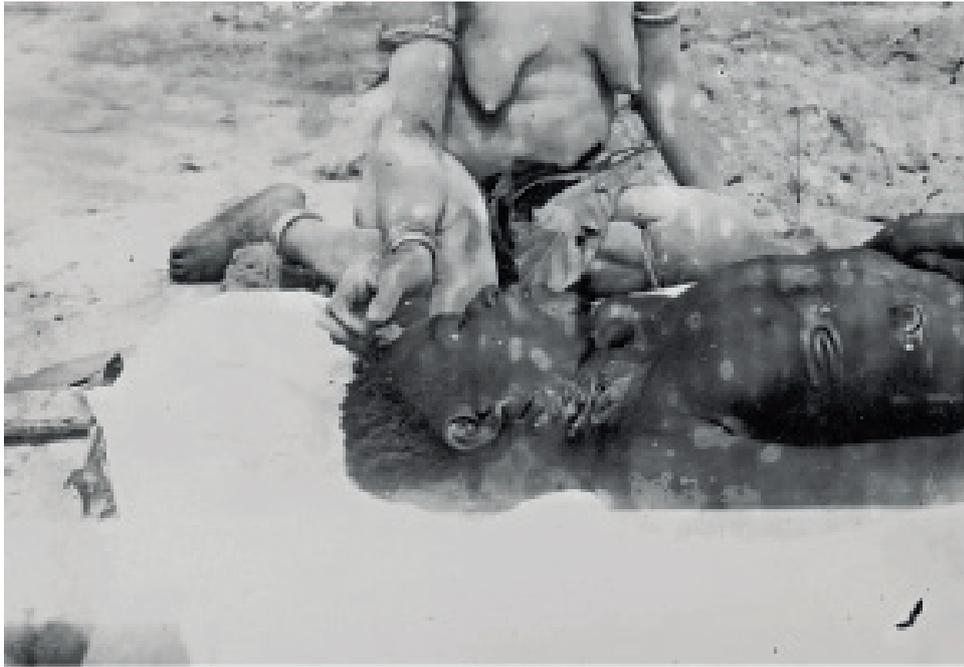
With respect to the use of claws as murder weapons, it seems this rarely occurred. Several authors do, however, mention the use of diverse kinds of weapons in leopard men attacks, among which are knives and claws.<sup>230</sup> On the basis of the witness statements the murders were usually committed with a knife, instead of claws. Based on Mbako’s testimony, Bouccin writes that attacks generally occurred with regular knives (*mbolea* or *sapi*) and after killing the victim, the claws were used to mutilate the body, invoking an attack by a leopard.<sup>231</sup> Elsewhere Bouccin (1936d: 257) wrote that any use of the claws is almost always denied by the *anioto*. Bouccin ascribed this denial to the fear of having to denounce the owner of the claws, who was the commander of the leopard men. In line with the data provided in the witness statements it appears therefore, that claws were occasionally used to disfigure the body after the victim was killed with a knife, tearing chunks of flesh out of the body. This becomes clear in the autopsies described in Appendix 5. This might explain the presence of maggot remnants on one of the claws in the collection.

However, there are a few rare witness accounts in which a “claw” is

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<sup>230</sup>RMCA AIMO Brandt, De Leest, Bouccin, et al (1933). In a report dating from around 1930 the missionary De Leest wrote, based on what informants told him, he mentioned three different weapons: claws to imitate the wounds caused by a leopard, another kind of claw made up of little knives, and a regular “pocket” knife. Also Kawaters (1931) mentioned a claw made up of a ring with nails attached to it worn in combination with a kind of glove. The nails could be up to 15 cm long and were used to give a deadly blow to the neck. Kawaters added that among the knives used, one had the form of the *abaka*, the knife used to apply the incisions during *mambela*, and another kind of knife was decorated with the *mambela* incision motif.

<sup>231</sup>It is interesting to mention in this respect that the word *mbako* is the vernacular name for a machete or a knife with a double blade, which leads us to wonder whether there may be a connection with chief Mbako’s name.



**Illustration 48: Victim of leopard men.**

**Bali**

**Photo by Raoul Planche, 1909-9.**

**RMCA EP.0.0.2110**



**Illustration 49: Victim of leopard men.**

**Bali**

**Photo by Raoul Planche, 1909-9.**

**RMCA EP.0.0.2111**



literally mentioned as a murder weapon (Joset, 1955: 59-60; 79-87). In a few early photographs by Raoul Planche (Illustration 48, Illustration 49) and in official statements, there is a clear reference to a trident or similar weapon with multiple stabbing points. In Table 8 the types of claws present in the museum collection have been listed. When one looks at these, most of them do not seem very suitable for fast killings. If used to kill, they would rather require several violent blows to inflict deadly wounds on a victim. A victim would be tortured to death and it seems unlikely that this could happen unnoticed, while this was intended. In the majority of cases the victim was never completely isolated from the village or from his companions.<sup>232</sup> Overall it seems that claws were rarely used as murder weapons, and that most types were probably only suitable to mutilate the dead body, even though knives were also used for this purpose (e.g. for cutting off limbs). Indeed, in most cases it seems that the murderers were not carrying any claws with them. To summarise we can say with relative certainty that most victims were simply killed with knives, and that claws were rarely used for mutilations and probably even less for killing.

In several texts Bouccin pointed to a symbolic role of *anioto* claws as a ritual token which was distributed along with the skill of *anioto* killing. The smaller and weaker claws in the collection may indeed have been limited to such a solely symbolic role. Claws were for example spread as a symbol of affiliation along with wife-exchanges, from brother-in-law to brother-in-law. A man marrying a girl of an *anioto*-owning family received a claw as a token of the affiliation. We saw that the claw was transported in a pot with oil (Bouccin, 1936d: 253-254). As mentioned in the previous chapter, a similar dispersal of claws in a pot of oil is also mentioned in the context of *ambodima*- and *ontuni*- related alliances. It is unclear whether this particular way of transporting the claws had a ritual meaning, and if the oil may have contained a kind of magical concoction (for example containing eyes of victims as suggested by Mbako) (Joset, 1955: 59-60; 79-87).<sup>233</sup> There is no doubt that it was helpful in keeping secret the transmission of *anioto*, and perhaps also the oil prevented the claw from rusting. Obviously the role of claws as a token of an alliance does not necessarily exclude their use as weapons for killing or mutilating the victim.

The sticks were apparently used with more certainty, as the presence of paw impressions is mentioned in several accounts of the murder scene.<sup>234</sup> But according to the literature, there were alternatives to imitating the impression of a leopard paw, for example a kind of fruit named *okawa* might be used - when cut in two the

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<sup>232</sup>Many of the witnesses quoted in Joset's (1955) work were in the company of the victim, or at least in the neighbourhood, while working in gardens or taking a sanitary break in the bush (see Table 7, in the column attacks). Many of them said they were alarmed by a scream and ran off to help the victim.

<sup>233</sup>RMCA AIMO De Haen (1922).

<sup>234</sup>For example in murders commanded by Mbako (Joset, 1955: 59-60; 79-87).

*okawa* resembles a leopard paw.<sup>235</sup> Or the impression might have been made with a clenched fist (Bouccin, 1936d: 257-258). In the sources a couple of other objects are mentioned which have not been found in museum collections. One of them is a harness which was first mentioned by De Haen in 1922.<sup>236</sup> Bouccin (1936d: 258) also mentioned such a harness made of multiple narrow planks along with thick balls of rubber which were used as soles in order not to leave foot prints at the murder scene. Bouccin added however that he never found confirmation of the existence of the latter objects. Crossed shoulder belts were used as a sort of harness in the context of the initiation to protect the candidates from being injured from the flagellations, but these could not protect them from being stabbed with a knife. Furthermore, several authors have mentioned the use of musical instruments to imitate the cry of the leopard. A ceramic resonance vessel named *ziba* is mentioned by Bouccin (1936d: 257), while Marrevée (1928: 172) called this instrument *shungu*. De Haen mentioned a horn to imitate the cry of the leopard.<sup>237</sup> It is not unthinkable that such instruments existed as multiple blowing instruments were used in the context of *mambela* to imitate animal sounds.

#### 4.4. Conclusion

It has become apparent in the course of this chapter that objects and visual display have played a significant role in the processes of structuration of colonial leopard men history. Having discussed leopard men as a western epistemological category providing a culturally effective symbol of the colonised other, I have sought to point out the role of the ethnographic objects in this process.

The analysis of traces and data regarding the use of costumes and weapons in the killings confirm that particular data about the murders from official reports have been left aside or ignored in favour of a standardised narrative in which the usual elements, i.e., the costumes and the attack, figure prominently in most of the colonial sources. Leopard men representations, while based on certain facts, display clichés and over-generalisations, providing a twisted image of the way leopard men operated. The claws clearly received too much attention as weapons, probably because their form, reminiscent of animal claws, appeals to a cultural logic of ‘others’ as animal-like. In the majority of cases the murder weapon was a knife, and the claws may have been used to kill rarely. It is also remarkable that when looking at the claws of the RMCA and the factual information, claws were not made or used in pairs, as is often suggested in colonial depictions. Objects, which through their form and material unambiguously objectify western understanding of leopard men

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<sup>235</sup>RMCA AIMO Vindevoghel (1930).

<sup>236</sup>RMCA AIMO De Haen (1922).

<sup>237</sup>RMCA AIMO De Haen (1922).

(thus no knives), are highlighted in the stories and in the iconography. In this respect, claws are more spectacular and exotic than ordinary knives. They illustrate more effectively the animal-like 'other' threatening the social order of the colony, which ranges between an irrational being, linked to the belief in transformation, and an evil being using the leopard costume as a disguise to cover up a crime. These simplistic understandings of the belief in transformation and the idea that the costumes and weapons were used to 'imitate' attacks by a leopard were not easily overcome, it seems. They make up the moral code underlying the leopard men as an armed metaphor, identifying it in terms of an inferior morality, rendering it instrumental to the colonial discourse. This may explain the colonial agents' reluctance to be more sceptical regarding the presumed use of the objects.

But if they were not predominantly used for killing, then what was the true meaning of the costumes and the association with the leopard, in relation to the history retrieved in the previous chapters? To leave the impression of leopard attacks through the use of claws and sticks was not intended by the murderers but may have come in handy to mislead colonial administrators. To begin with, initially colonial administrators would not believe that the murders were committed by people. Indeed, for those investigating it was not always easy to distinguish between a leopard attack and a leopard men murder.<sup>238</sup> However, around 1920 autopsies were increasingly requested to verify the cause of death. The royal prosecutor, Vindevoghel, literally suggests that the imitation of leopard attacks in the killings was more a kind of intimidation to the locals as the imitation of leopard traces and wounds were used to evoke fear, not fear of leopards but fear of the terror of chiefs. This is probably more in line with the traditional importance of the leopard as a major symbol of chiefly power in equatorial Africa, especially in the Ituri region. The costumes definitely had a role in the context of leopard men activities, even when their role may have been far more symbolic and psychological than purely physical, as a disguise for imitating leopard attacks. They may rather have been ritual objects associated to the hidden powers of the leaders controlling leopard men. This further highlights the intricate complexity of a local variety of psychological warfare and intimidation, rather than irrational, random, beastly killing, as suggested in colonial sources.

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<sup>238</sup>See for example RMCA AIMO Vindevoghel (1930).



## Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to explore how the colonial “mythology” of Congo leopard men, has reflected, but also distorted, a complex social reality. This has been considered as a dynamic, dialectical and complex process in which the interpretation of facts and the creation of myth were interconnected. In order to reveal this process in the intersection between the colonial society and the Belgian metropole, it was necessary to get a better idea of the social reality of leopard men.

Firstly, I will assess the general approach which has enabled me to treat both the reconstruction of the history of leopard men, based on the available colonial sources, and the mythologisation in these sources as two sides of a coin. I explain how I have considered both texts and objects and museum display as sources. Secondly, I will summarise the approach to the reconstruction of the history of leopard men. Thirdly, I will focus more deeply on the process of mythologisation in leopard men accounts and its leaps into fiction. I will focus more particularly on the intersection between textual expressions and museum display, and where they differ and overlap in the colonial discourse.

### 1. Approaching myths and facts in the sources

This research began with the questioning of the leopard man display at the RMCA. Whilst the anti-colonial nature of leopard men activities has been brought to the fore by scholars of colonial history since the 1980s, the nature of the subject, highlighting violence on the part of the colonised, seems to have contributed to a scholarly reluctance to engage with it. Despite critiques of the display, burdened as it is with the suspicion of colonial bias, to many people the objects still attest to the existence of leopard men. This situation presented a deadlock: the insight that ethnographic objects have been used as power instruments in colonial culture contributed to them becoming a blind spot in research, as they were regarded as biased sources. It has been necessary in my work to step away from this representational conundrum in which the leopard men display was caught. Hacking into the moral code of colonial leopard men representations, embodying an African predestination for violence, thus specifically required analysing the role of objects in the display, whilst assembling data on their use.

What has been distinctive in this case study is the opportunity to compare the creation of scientific knowledge in the context of the museum, to the emergence of narratives about leopard men. The focus on objects provided a different but complementary field to the text-focused study of the colonial discourse. The concept of “structuration” provided a fruitful tool to treat the sources on leopard men, both texts and objects, as mediums through which colonial agents shaped their

experiences of a colonial phenomenon (Giddens, 1984). In other words, instead of considering objects as sources with a fixed meaning, I considered them as we might consider texts: as media in a dialectical, historical process.

The structuration approach enabled to treat textual accounts and ethnographic display alike, reflecting both the creation of knowledge and mythologisation as part of the same process. As White (2000: 66) asserted with regard to African vampire stories : *“Can accounts of the real ever really purge themselves of the fantastic, especially when the fantastic contains debates about the real? And how do people report things that do not conform to their own norms of experience?”*. This applies to Lindskog’s understanding of “leopard men” as a Western metaphor which labels and defines a phenomenon to which the Western mind is not accustomed. The scholarly engagement with objects is equally lingering between myth and fact. While the objects are scientific proof attesting to a reality, objects are also the “stuff” of myths. Thomas (1991: 175-176) writes: *“...the crucial role of material culture and of the optical illusion that it constantly offers us (is that): we take the concrete and palpable presence of a thing to attest to the reality of that we have made it signify; our fantasies find confirmation in the materiality of things that are composed more of objectified fantasy than physical stuff.”*

Stoler (1992) elucidated this process of structuration by demonstrating how colonial agents competed in providing their understandings of colonial violence in a ‘hierarchy of credibility’, which was linked to their aspirations and social status. They did this by shaping their stories according to culturally reasonable conjectures, using rhetoric strategies and rumours to highlight the points they wanted to make. Social pressure ensured that colonial agents, despite their different opinions and practices, and through their unequal mastery of a cultural logic, acted and expressed themselves to meet a socially agreeable understanding. The emergence of a colonial leopard men mythology have been considered accordingly: as a process that started in the context of the colony in a tentative way, underscoring the invention of tradition in which some stories eventually obtained the stamp of validated knowledge, from official institutions such as the museum (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983).

In Chapter 4, I discussed how Joseph Maes’ curatorial engagement with the leopard men objects, provided the basis for an influential display. He created a display and built up a story-line around the objects, in line with a learnt expertise, and informed by the documentation and field photographs of the colonial agent who collected them. While I considered objects equally as mediums in this dialectical process, I wanted to point out the special character of objects as scientific proof. I approached the objects methodologically as person-like, having a biography and agency, affecting people in emotional and physical ways, using Gell’s concept of enchantment. This concept has been very fruitful for highlighting the process of people trying to understand the objects from the colony, which leads to speculation and mythologisation. Thomas (2003: 80) captures this process of scholarly

engagement with objects in his anthropological and historical inquiry into the meanings ascribed to Polynesian ponchos:

*“But there is perhaps a deeper affinity between this [scientific] inquiry and the popular fictions of the mystery genre, which are so often focused around enigmatic, coveted or missing objects. The scholar who tries to build a historical or anthropological inquiry around artefacts in museum collections, or artefacts that appear in old illustrations or photographs, can be in a situation very similar to that of the investigator in a crime story. There is frequently a highly unsatisfactory contrast between the sheer physicality and tangibility of the object before one, and the paucity of whatever story one can tell about it. For Sherlock Holmes, the artefact may be replete with clues of all kinds but just as often it is a missing or valuable object on which peoples’ passions and aspirations are focused. Objects like the diamond, the Moonstone, in Wilkie Collins’ novel of that title (1868), often seen as one of the founding works of the mystery genre, have obscure, highly-charged, cross-cultural histories. ... It could be suggested that, in this literature, material culture has a dangerous potentiality that it has never acquired in social theory.”*

It is exactly this ‘potentiality’ of the leopard men objects which this study has sought to put forward. Thomas points out that even scholarly interpretations of colonial objects linger between myth and fact.

In a similar way to rumours, objects have been put to the fore as evidence, in line with the ‘regime of value’, the cultural categorisation of objects from the colony (Kopytoff, 1986: 64-68). Even if they may have been rather marginal to the real events, some objects have been singled out as props to support a certain idea or story, as were rumours. Some are more likely to be picked up by the colonial agents, provoking more compelling understandings, and to receive larger public attention, as was the case for the leopard men costumes and claws. The authoritative role of the museum as an institution creating scientific knowledge, based on the study of objects, has been a crucial factor in colonial mythologisation of leopard men. The knowledge became part of the public knowledge, dispersed via the museum display and related publications. The negotiation of ‘hierarchies of credibility’ of accounts, and of ‘regimes of value’ of objects occurs independently, but they are interrelated because they appeal to the same logic. However, the major difference between textual and object mediums is the fact that objects provide an undeniable, material link with the original context of study as proof. Let us focus in this summary on the specifics of object and museum processes in the production of scientific colonial knowledge.

As Gell (1998: 97) argued, the cognitive deciphering of objects characteristically occurred in the context of science, religion and arts in view of

re-enchantment in the post-Enlightenment world. In the process of enchantment, the cognitive indecipherability of objects creates a feeling of wonder which is reminiscent of religious attitudes to objects. In the post-Enlightenment world, scientific epistemology competed with religion as a new base of truth, in which modern social identities and hierarchies are rooted in a newly invented tradition essentialised by objects.<sup>239</sup> Scholarly and museum visitor's attention is characteristically focussed on authentic objects linked to a remote past, or remote exotic cultures. In line with Gell and Thomas, we can argue that scientific analysis of objects, though its point of departure is the desire to know them, can also provoke a mythical understanding. More potency can be ascribed to the objects studied or manipulated than they actually possess, in relation to a quest for new truths.

As institutions of yearning, museums provide people with stories they want to believe, or stories they are looking for. Nostalgia and topos (utopia or dystopia) play an important role in this yearning (Kopytoff, 1986: 80-81). The modern museum display reconstructs of lost realities, such as civilisations and prehistoric animals such as dinosaurs, providing people with existential roots in history. Ethnographic objects, like those of leopard men, provided proof to substantiate this kind of mythologisation of history, distinguishing civilisation from previous phases of history. Seeing these objects and relating to them, may inspire awe or even sacred feelings which are comforting or pleasing to people, as proof of existential roots. The attraction of ethnographic objects, leading to collecting and contemplation in museums, consists in the fact they provide a graspable reference to an ungraspable context of origin, one that is bound to disappear in the process of colonisation. Enchantment is of central importance to the public ritual of the museum visit. It is instrumental in letting people engage with the official discourse of colonial culture. Visiting the museum entails coded behaviour adapted to the culturally constructed environment. The architecture, rules, regulations and atmosphere of this environment contribute to the aura of the objects displayed as proof and move the visitor to endorse the colonial social order presented in it as scientific truth. Even if not experienced equally as enchanting by all visitors or scientists at the museum, this can explain to a certain extent why the leopard men objects in the RMCA collection and the stories associated with them have not been more extensively scrutinised in terms of their actual historical trajectory (Bourdieu, 1977: 164; Saunders, 2005: 76-77; Miller, 2005: 7-10).

The parallel approach in this study has been beneficial in the sense that

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<sup>239</sup>Unknown or found objects, for example archaeological artefacts, can be interpreted, not only by scientists to support their hypotheses but also in relation to religious beliefs. An example of the latter is the presumed Aztec crystal skulls which turned out to be a European invention but which were reinterpreted by new age people (anthroposophists) as religious objects. Aldred (2000); Sax, Walsh et al (2008); Morton and Thomas (2012).

the study of mythologisation in the sources enabled to make better use of them as sources of a historical reality, and vice versa.

## **2. Disentangling myth and fact: reconstructing leopard men history**

A large part of this work consisted in the reconstruction of the history of leopard men, that which has been shed and forgotten in the process of structuration on the part of the colonisers, as a subaltern history. The purpose has been to get a better idea of the kind of social reality from which leopard men narratives have been derived.

First of all, in terms of the structuration approach, I have tried to obtain a dialectical understanding of the colonial context as a situation in which different social groups interacted. Instead of rejecting colonial sources because of the potential biases they entail, I have used them to elicit information in two main ways. On the one hand, I have used them to reconstruct the micro-histories of particular cases by assembling the most firm bits of information, such as names of people, villages, dates etc., reflecting empirical data as collected by colonial observers. This enabled me to reconstruct a number of principal conflict clusters, identify major chiefs and key population groups, point out links between them, and situate them in space and time. On the second hand, I have relied on primary reports of colonial observers because they contain fragments of thick description and rumour of the local context, illuminating the atmosphere among people- in other words, the dialectical processes between social groups. As indicated, some of the colonial observers providing this kind of information were very committed to understanding local people's relationships and motives for committing leopard men killings, and provided insight into the way the gangs organised themselves and interacted.

Secondly, I considered the micro-histories in relation to major events under the foreign occupation, such as military struggles, administrative reorganisations, forced labour and the repression of tax strikes. Outlining this history helped to understand better the bottom-line political purposes of leopard men killings as a reaction against the poor living circumstances, the loss of self-determination and internal rivalries under the colonial regime. The role of leopard men killings as a reaction against forced labour is demonstrated for example, by its association to new cults, such as *basa* and *ambodima*, which were at the basis of rubber tax strikes. This also ties in with local power relations as linked to social and political institutions and their historical development.

Reconstructing the history of leopard men has also meant contextualising it, not only as a consequence of historical interactions between social groups, but also especially culturally, from a local perspective. I wanted to obtain an understanding of how leopard-men activity was experienced locally, as a counter-balance to the coloniser's perspective presented in the official sources. Firstly, I tried to see the leopard men phenomenon in light of the regional cultural history, in relation

to the development of other social and political institutions. Inspired mostly by Vansina (1990a; 1990b) and McMaster (1988), I treated leopard men as a cultural phenomenon which probably developed as a “military” strategy, in symbiosis with the boys’ initiations network or brotherhood *mambela*. Leopard men candidates were chosen among *mambela* initiates. In this way, leopard men associations originally provided a basis for larger-scale collaboration in the political competition with better organised rivals. It was also partly rooted in pre-existing hunting traditions among the Buan Bantu . Cultural borrowing and institutional innovation occurred along the networks of brotherhoods like *mambela* and probably caused the practice of leopard men associations to spread to Beni, where they were associated with the *lusumba* boys’ circumcision. Secondly, I tried to achieve a more anthropological understanding of leopard men associations, as part of the regional political culture. Ethnographic data from the wider region demonstrate the importance of the leopard as a symbol of traditional chieftaincy, referring to the potential viciousness and occult power of the chief who can strike in unexpected ways. The ferocity and suddenness of leopard men attacks can be interpreted as a metaphor for the power of true chiefs, and for their ways of dealing with those who did not pay due respect.

The principal benefit of this multifaceted, anthropologically-informed approach has been to move us closer to an understanding of the human motives behind the killings, as part of a local political culture. In summary, from the case-studies it appears that the commanding chiefs relied on leopard men killings predominantly to enforce their rights over land, resources and people, based on claims to ancestry from the first occupants of the land (Beni) and the rights of the eldest clans and lineages among them (Bali). In the early days of colonialism, leopard men were predominantly an instrument in the hands of conservative forces opposing foreign occupation, used as a means to intimidate and maintain control over land and people in times of fundamental change. The killings were then predominantly aimed at those who were seen as collaborating with outsiders, or against those new power brokers who gained powerful positions which threatened the existing authorities. These authorities were foremost leaders of socio-political institutions which exerted a moral control over local populations, of which the principal ones were the boys’ initiatory institutions. The chiefs representing these institutions inspired awe and were feared, demanding absolute loyalty from their communities. Through leopard men killings they were able to maintain their own way of inflicting justice, while circumventing colonial control. In a way they safeguarded their own community against the abuses of the foreign occupations and fought usurpers or rivals in a secretive way. Some interesting strategies appeared in the cases reported, especially in the Bali region, for instance the practice of casting suspicion on one’s rival by sending leopard men to kill among the latter’s opponent. Another strategy consisted of lending leopard men from several hundred kilometers away, via intermediary chiefs, thus misleading the colonial authorities who could not manage to identify the

killers.

While leopard men killings were in a sense a means of safeguarding society in a time of foreign occupation, leopard men can hardly be idealised as an instrument of solidarity and cooperation among populations. They served to make locals comply with chiefly authority, discouraging them from collaborating with the colonial administration, and at times the population suffered greatly under the constant threat of being attacked. For this study, understanding of the leopard men symbolism in the political culture of the region has mainly been crucial for understanding the moral impact of the leopard men killings on the local population. The secrecy and silence surrounding the killings, both from victims and from accomplices, can be explained by the population's obedience to the moral authority of the initiation leaders of *mambela* and *lusumba*. Fear of repercussions is doubtless among the factors which prevented people from revealing the killings to the administration. This was particularly true among the Bali, where the situation probably altered as the colonial government strengthened its grip on the country and local attitudes changed. Younger generations perhaps came to see more harm in the terror and fear inspired by the boys' initiation and the leopard men killings than in the forced labour and tax duties imposed by the colonial administration.

In the Beni territory history developed somewhat differently, as there forest populations such as the Bapakombe became a minority under threat from the expanding power of Nande political units. Originally the Bapakombe used leopard men killings to extend their control over forest lands and extort food tributes from neighbouring populations. This probably changed as Nande migrants increasingly infiltrated and settled on forest lands controlled by Bapakombe clans. Nande chiefs were more willing to collaborate with the colonial administration. Under these circumstances leopard men killing became a means to fight off the Nande hegemony, threatening the Bapakombe's rights as first occupants. The phenomenon of leopard men killing also gained ground as an instrument of terror in the wider region, for chiefs who tried to obtain control over lands and people which had not been theirs previously. It was also adopted by Nande chiefs for such purposes, in addition to other strategies of usurpation, between 1900 and 1930.

While the approach outlined has been fruitful in getting a better understanding of leopard men, there remain a few paths which promise to reveal further interesting data on the history. Firstly, I believe this work has demonstrated the necessity of devoting further study to the cultural history of the wider region. So far this history has only been studied from very broad perspectives and this work has only discussed one cultural phenomenon in this large context. What characterised Vansina's and McMaster's approaches is the classic combination of comparative linguistics, oral history, anthropology and archaeology, but there is still much ethnographic material to be explored in colonial archives and collections. There remains considerable potential for further study of other anti-colonial movements and cults characteristic

of this region, alongside the leopard men. The study of the ethnographic data of these institutions in colonial archives and of their material culture, in combination with sociolinguistic analysis of the terminology, should bring further insights into the ethno-history of the region, of which the leopard men were but one aspect.

Secondly, the study of museum collections and material culture has proved to be especially relevant to this study on two levels. One of the premises of this work was that scrutinising objects as sources from multiple angles is an important key for obtaining a better understanding of people's bodily and sensory relationships with the material world. It has been an important step for coming to terms with the colonial mythology of leopard men, but it has also helped to study the rootedness of leopard men in cultural history. The discovery of similar costumes worn among Buan Bantu for hunting monkeys has provided an important lead in this respect. Further study of objects and material culture from the larger region would most certainly contribute to a better knowledge of the cultural history.

There still are a few paths which I have not been able to explore in the course of this research. First of all, legal archives which cannot be studied at present will become accessible in the future. Secondly, if the political situation improves, fieldwork in the region of study may become possible again, helping to get a better insight into culturally specific understandings and collective memories of leopard men. From the interviews I was able to conduct in the course of this research, it appears that the collective memory regarding leopard men is lively and is connected to issues of identity.

### **3. The mythologisation of leopard men**

In Chapter 4, I demonstrated the structuring of leopard men understanding, reflecting a fundamental epic structure entailing a moral code. This epic structure involves the heroic victory of civilisation over the uncivilised, which is presented as the victory of good over bad. The alterity of the uncivilised has to be unveiled or dissolved in order to obtain a liberation –a catharsis- from the pre-colonial chaos. Mythologisation occurs when gaps in knowledge are filled out with rumours and stereotypes in order to support this epic structure, and underline the moral message, giving the accounts a propagandist turn. In the reports issuing from the Belgian colony, those involving leopard men came to stand out. The phenomenon was recognised in terms of pre-existing cultural categories of alterity. Colonial narratives about leopard men display similarities with older traditions of narration, for example with medieval accounts about the devil, witches, Jews and Muslims, as animal-like beings which threaten the social order. They were categorised based on epistemological ideologies, in terms of good and bad. This basic moral categorisation equally applies to the leopard men. The ethnographic display, the material proof attesting to the legitimacy of an epistemological category of otherness, became a new and morally charged icon of

alterity serving the colonial discourse.

Building further on Thomas' understanding of enigmatic objects, O'Hanlon (1999: 379-380) focusses on a special kind of enigmatic object which relates to violence on the part of the colonised. Such objects have been instrumental in colonial culture to create a moral image of the colonised. The "enigmatic" objects he discusses in this respect "'text' their context, propagating compelling understandings of it." He discusses the so-called "man catchers" from New Guinea which look like a "mixture of stringless tennis racket and garrotte." They were supposedly used by New Guinean "cannibals" to capture and kill their victims. O'Hanlon notes that such objects related to violence on the part of the colonised typically infiltrated late 19th century fiction. They are characteristic of colonial collections and have been used in an ideological way by colonial agents to essentialise the nature of the colonised, but in many cases they are rather marginal objects. O'Hanlon mentions the 'cannibal fork' from Fiji as another example (Thomas, 1991:165-167). The 'cannibal fork', in fact a fork used by persons of high rank who were not to touch their food as they were themselves charged with a sacred potency (*mana*) which could be harmful (*tabu*) and was used in a derogatory way by European settlers to represent the Fijian population as cannibals. The latter misrepresented the fork as an instrument for consuming human flesh, which they said was *tabu*. Their characterisation was, deliberately or not, based on a complete misunderstanding of local beliefs, and it occurred in a climate where Australian planters wanted to usurp Fijian lands. In the analysis of the sources on man catchers, O'Hanlon (1999: 388) also points to a stereotypical and uncritical repetition of the use of the man catcher. Just as in the case of the cannibal fork and the leopard men claws, there is a predisposition to interpret such objects as cruel and deadly weapons by ascribing a salience to them which they never really had.

Leopard men objects, particularly the claws, display all the characteristics of enigmatic objects related to colonial horror as described by O'Hanlon. Their salience as weapons was exaggerated, as an aspect of alterisation instrumental to colonial propaganda. The trace analysis which I arranged on the costumes, claws and sticks, in conjunction with the archival data regarding the circumstances of the killings, demonstrated that some details about the murders have been ignored in published reports. There were clear traces of wearing on the costumes, but no traces of blood were found. In favour of a standardised narrative, corresponding to the known iconography, the wearing of the costumes and claws was over-generalised. Claws were wrongly presented as the standard murder weapons, while in the majority of cases the victims were stabbed with a knife. Claws were sometimes used to mutilate. Published colonial accounts thus provided a distorted image of the way leopard men operated. The projection of personal and collective desires of colonial agents onto the objects, plays no mean role here.

In line with Thomas' discussion of enigmatic objects, O'Hanlon suggested

that the convergence between the scientific inquiry of objects and the mystery story is particularly strong in stories about murder, or violence. I believe this is indeed an important intersection where objects and texts as mediums collaborate quite strongly, exploiting the moral code to a maximal extent. In Western society, stories about violence are gratefully exploited for entertainment, in both contemporary reporting and fiction. In criminal horror in particular, scientific investigation enhances the mystery and suspense and uncovers the gruesome details. This points out the cultural importance of the basic epic structure entailing a moral rhetoric: the cultivation of suspense, anticipating the discovery of the perpetrator and the liberation of the threat. This ties in with the uncovering of a hyper-realistic alterity based on exaggerated ethnographic detail in fictional and factual accounts about leopard men as discussed in the previous chapter. As explained, the rhetoric strategy consists in the fact that the evil opponent of the hero is enhanced by bringing the gruesome details of its appearance and its action to the fore, which makes the liberation or resolution that follows, the catharsis, all the more effective. In this hyper-realism the boundary between the factual and fictional is a domain of excitement and desire, in which objects as proof and matter of fact details play a significant role.

What I have sought to demonstrate is that such leaps into fictionalising, intended to maximise excitement and leading to the use of stereotypes and exaggerations, clearly had a purpose in sharpening the colonial argument. For this purpose, the most potent rumours and objects selectively make their way into the official and scientific discourse. In this process objects play a special role. In the introduction I pointed out, regarding the concept of the regime of value, that the value of objects emerges from objects resisting people's desire to possess them. In line with Gell, in the case of the enigmatic objects discussed here, this value is enhanced significantly because the objects resist our desire to understand them. Enigmatic objects are thus objects of desire in psychologically complex ways and provide a potent research area in material culture studies. This attraction potentially remains there as long as their secrets cannot be fully revealed. Basically they share the same challenging attraction as does the riddle. The challenge which they objectify can be considered a principal reason why people desire to collect them. This necessarily brings us back to the bodily and sensory aspects of human-object relationships.

What distinguishes the effectiveness of objects from those of textual narratives in the production of the colonial discourse is the specific bodily and sensory experience of the object's materiality. I suggested, in line with Saunders' (2005) and Morris' (2003) discussion of the sculptures at the entrance cupola, which provoke a gendered, eroticised understanding of moral outrage, that a similar experience of bodily knowing may occur for the leopard man display. This process calls upon the mimetic faculty involved in bodily knowing referred to by Gell (1998: 100) – in line with Taussig's analysis of mimesis – in the context of enchantment:

*“To see is to be sensuously filled with that which is perceived, yielding to it, mirroring it –and hence imitating it bodily.”* The visitor potentially draws on his own capacity to imagine the bodily postures observed and related sensory experiences. Perhaps we can best imagine this instance of identification with the bodily postures as a liminoid suspension of disbelief when watching a film scene in which the event displayed, for example the attack by a leopard man, would occur. This capacity to mimic is a potential source of knowledge the visitor resorts to, as an aspect of bodily and sensory knowledge. It is also in this instance of suspension of disbelief that a process of distancing and catharsis occurs which parallels the catharsis in the narratives. The catharsis entails the break from the suspension of disbelief, in which the visitor realises the liberation. It is an example of alterisation through mimesis (Taussig, 1993). The authentic objects are used to represent the other in a ‘reductionist’ colonial fashion, creating a feeling of moral superiority, through evoking the distance between the self and the displayed culture, whilst mimicking it. The costumes and metal claws especially serve this role well, with the claws being falsely exaggerated as weapons, since their form, reminiscent of animal claws, attests to the cultural categorisation of “others”.

The special potency of objects in the public ritual of the museum visit ultimately collides with textual accounts in the production of a consensual colonial discourse. As in the case of the strategies of detemporalisation described by Saunders (2005), creating a distance between the self and the other, processes of distancing underscore the public ritual of the museum visit in multiple ways. It is built into the rules of behaviour to which the visitors are bound during their visit and connected to the spatial arrangement of the museum building. Whether in the display or in storage, interaction with the objects is restricted to certain people and subject to specific rules and regulations. The physical access to museum objects is restricted to specialists and qualified museum staff. These restrictions enhance the object’s enigmatic potential, contributing to its aura in the setting of the museum. The quality of authenticity ascribed to an object is intrinsically linked to its materiality, which contrasts with the remoteness of the alterity it embodies. This remoteness, and the challenge of it, provides an interesting parallel between, on the one hand the interaction of a spectator with the objects in a museum context, and on the other the interaction of the colonial hero with the leopard men in narrations. The tension between remoteness and proximity, characteristic for the enigmatic object as described by Thomas, also ritually enhances the experience of the colonial museum visitor. The material presence of the objects contradicts the ungraspable, whimsical character of the leopard men in the colony. The rarity of these pieces is symbolic of the extraordinary ‘catch’. This tension constitutes the core of the enigmatic experience. To a colonial spectator these contradictions and the rarity of the pieces may evoke an even stronger feeling of value and victory. These museum processes thus further enhance the moral opposition between the coloniser and colonised, creating a tension which equally

underlies the narratives: the more gruesome and elusive the adversary is, the more powerful the colonial hero who subjugates him.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Postcolonial museum critiques have generated unease with regard to colonial museums and their collections, viewing them as biased remnants of colonial culture. Subjects related to violence on the part of the colonised have been avoided as research subjects. Critiques of the leopard man display, presenting the colonised as morally inferior and animal-like, have ironically not led to investigations of the display and the history behind it. But as long as such displays remain unrevised and unaltered, and scholars refrain from thoroughly engaging with them, the ideological formations they embody are there for the visitor to pick up on, seeing certain ideas of Africa, or the Congo, reconfirmed. In the case of the leopard men this meant that enchanting ideas of leopard men in relation to colonial horror stories have given them a long life as exotic props in expressions of popular culture such as comics. With this research I have highlighted the importance of re-engaging with colonial collections and with controversial display, trying to retrieve their history, considering it from different angles. In this process it has been my goal to call attention to the particular instrumentality of objects in social relationships, especially power relations, by demonstrating how they can convince people through provoking emotions and ideas. I have demonstrated the importance of analysing these processes, not only in the function of textual discourses, but particularly in their own right. The question still remains how the museum could deal with leopard men objects and representations in the future. This I will explore in the epilogue.

## Epilogue

The leopard man display by Wissaert has been a key element in the permanent display of the RMCA for nearly a century, appealing to both young and old visitors. While the sculpture has been contested quite strongly, according to many it deserves to keep a place in the permanent display of the museum, as a well-known element of the colonial legacy.

It will be hard to rule out the enigmatic qualities of the sculptural setting, at least to a part of the public. The question arises as to how the museum can deal with such a display in the future. Given the fact that the RMCA is currently preparing for a large-scale renovation, I want to offer some points of reflection and outlines for future possibilities regarding the potential roles of the leopard men display. This reflection departs from the idea that the museum proved an important historical place where perceptions of the Congo were created, and despite contestations, it remains so today. The argument presented here centres around what the museum could do to alter perceptions of the leopard men, dealing with the colonial legacy the display entails, as well as with the contestations it provokes in a balanced way.

### 1. A critical reflection on museum cultures in “the second museum age”

As previously explained, in the postcolonial museum crisis, the unilinear version of history as propagated by the nation state, was shattered and ideally replaced by multiple histories including perspectives of antagonists and subaltern groups. In ethnographic museums the perspectives of colonised “others” had previously been ignored. This is interconnected with critiques of museums as institutions where social distinctions were maintained on the basis of “taste” (Bourdieu, Darbel et al, 1997). One of the ways to escape from the museum crisis was the new museology as opposed to the old one, also referred to as the ‘second museum age’ (Vergo, 1997; Phillips, 2005). More space was created for diversity, for the history from below, for contacts and collaboration with “source communities”. The museum had to become a more public friendly, democratic “contact zone” which also dared to engage with aspects of popular culture and history, and to deal with critical reflection and even contestation with regard to their historical, ideological foundations (Clifford, 1997).

In response to the existential crisis of museums, many western museums and their governing and funding bodies, started re-thinking their role in society, which resulted in new experiments in exhibition-making, large-scale renovation projects, and the closing down of old, and appearance of new museums. For the past decade, I have been working in different museums where such things were happening. In this section, I want to outline two developments characteristic of the second museum age, which I observed, and which have been discussed in scholarly literature (Phillips,

2005; Levitt, 2012; Ross, 2004; Gielen, 2011). I want to position my reflection on new ways of dealing with the leopard men display at the RMCA in relation to them. These developments, while departing from the same premise (i.e. a non-elite positioning of museums in which social diversity is mediated) result somehow in opposition. The first development entails experimental exhibition making which is inspired by a representational activism, often aimed at revealing the dialectics in colonial history, claiming a place for subaltern perspectives. This development may develop from within the museum (rather than from the governing bodies it depends on) as initiatives from curators or directors; or external to the museum, as initiatives from independent scholars, artists and curators trying to find a place for their project in a museum. The second development is the re-invention and reorganisation of museums, following neo-liberal corporate models, in which appealing to a wide range of “customers” becomes the principal goal. This development is directed more by governing and funding bodies and ties in with the democratisation of museums, evading the elite character.

The representational activism in exhibition experiments which, as already mentioned, tries to reveal the dynamics of colonialism and its ideological formations, reveals examples of colonial stereotyping and propaganda and its impact until today. Such projects actively try to create awareness of how our behaviour and thoughts are driven by “habitus”, by the processes of structuration we are caught in, ruled by and regenerate (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1977). Examples of such forms of artistic or curatorial activism include the following. Kuratorisk Aktion, a Danish Curatorial Organisation trying “*to raise consciousness on the politics of representation and translate this consciousness into practice [...] through [...] representation of minoritarian and majoritarian subjectivities respectively in all our productions, at the same time as we open this procedure up to critique as part of the curatorial methodology.*” In this way they try to alter perceptions on Danish colonialism in Greenland for example. The documentaries and art works by Jan Dietvorst, Roy Villevoeye and Johan Grimonprez, do something similar by trying to bridge the representational dichotomy between the western world, the Netherlands in particular, and the Asmat of New Guinea, in the former Dutch colony of Indonesia. The artist Renzo Martens in his documentary *Enjoy Poverty*, helps to make Congolese people realise that they could earn money by photographing the misery in their country for western press reporting, instead of Western journalists.<sup>240</sup> In a very cynical way he informs Congolese people of how to do it. All these projects invite people to look at things differently, challenging, shocking even, in order to actively try to alter people’s perceptions. At the MAS museum in Antwerp I worked with the Peace

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<sup>240</sup>See the website *Re-thinking Nordic Colonialism* by Kuratorisk Aktion; for example the films *And the Trumpet Shall Sound* and *The New Forest* by Jan Dietvorst and Roy Villevoeye cf. websites in bibliography; *Enjoy Poverty* by Renzo Martens.

Factory (Vredesfabriek), a Dutch organisation developing educational installations for youngsters within exhibitions. The Peace Factory promotes peace education and especially focuses on phenomena such as stereotyping and racism in contexts of war.

An important feature of representational activism projects is the collaboration with curators, artists or representatives from “source communities”. This also underlies the idea of the museum as a “contact zone” which Canadian museums have especially pioneered, and which has now become a standard practice in many Western museums on different levels (Phillips, 2005; Brown and Peers, 2013). Working with African artists or spokesmen has also become a regular practice in exhibition making at the RMCA. The first exhibition to do this was the *Exit Congo* exhibition at the RMCA in 2000 (Wastiau, 2000). A basic part of this exhibition concerned the recovery of the cultural biographies of the objects, how they were collected and ended up in the museum, as illustrative of social relations in the colonial context. Another part of this exhibition contained work by contemporary artists, for example, the Congolese artist Toma Luntumbue who displayed high art masks in shopping carts in his installation, which shocked the art-loving public, and was meant to make people reflect on collecting practices in the past and today.

Representational activism projects go beyond simply providing different perspectives, by putting reflexivity at the heart of the display, trying to provoke a critical awareness of the collecting and representational practices underlying it. Such projects are often embedded in intellectual paradigms, and may perhaps be more difficult to accept for a mainstream public, even though additional efforts are usually made to better disclose the message to a larger public. As also mentioned, such projects are occurring more often as experiments, on a small scale, as initiatives from individual curators, scholars or artists. Even though many former colonial museums probably have integrated aspects of representational activism in their mission, as the examples above illustrate, public museums and their governing bodies often shy away from such projects.<sup>241</sup> In the democratic culture of the second museum age, these are probably considered as being too complex, or too bold, for the larger public one wants to reach, and messages are preferably communicated in more moderate and accessible ways. This ties in with the second development I want to discuss.

As noted earlier, the second museum age is characterised by the renovation of museums, in light of the democratisation process, often following neo-liberal corporate models, appealing to a wider public. It certainly seems that this development is directed more by the governing and funding bodies, and has consequently also infiltrated into museum management. Several museologists have described such phenomena in museums (Gielen, 2011; Ross, 2004; Boast, 2011). Culture on offer has increasingly become seen as a commodity and has to compete

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<sup>241</sup>This was also the case for the *Exit Congo* exhibition for example. In the foreword of the catalogue the Director distances himself from the viewpoint of the curator (Wastiau, 2000).

with the other products available on the market for passing one's spare time. Communication and marketing strategies consequently play increasingly significant roles in the conception, design and marketing of exhibitions. They go hand in hand with the promotion of tourism and city-marketing for example. Pascal Gielen (2011) described this development for the museum where I last worked, the MAS (Museum aan de Stroom, Antwerp). In a pamphlet on the city of Antwerp museum policy, he writes that the heritage sector learnt to transmit a positive message that can raise people's spirits, uniting and reconciling them, making them feel at home. Such a movement implies some historical selectivity, as celebratory history sells better than human misery; and amusing anecdotes are easier to digest than complex socio-political or economic discussions. The latter stories are also told but they lose impact within the total experience of the museum visit which neutralises their effect. This kind of development obviously compromises the educational role of the museum which has to compete with other roles. Gielen touches upon the discourse of "inclusion", which has also been addressed by other scholars (Bennett, 1998; Boast, 2011). In several European museums the discourses of "inclusion", officially valuing the diversity in the democratic society, focusing on similarities rather than on differences, on reconciliation rather than on contestation.

Shelton (2008), promoting research in the domain of critical museology, draws attention to the fact that despite the postmodern museum crisis still being fresh in our memory, hardly any research is done on how internal museum practices relate to the "front stage", to their socio-political contexts. In hindsight of this study on representation, I believe it is necessary to ask the question whether the "democratisation" of museums in the western world does not threaten to give rise to a renewed form of political propaganda for which the museum provides a stage. In contemporary museum circles, the idea that museums have to help develop and change society by promoting mutual understanding is widespread (cf. above, the representational activism integrated in their mission). The shadow side of this is that museums might give a better, more polished image of the democratic society than it really is, for example through a discourse of inclusion, while in the daily reality the balance between social groups is challenged. Museums should not be expected to dilute or whitewash problems which local governments cannot overcome, by providing a mirror to people of the ideal version of their society. We have to remain critical as to how new museological projects promote a new ideal of the society in which critiques, contestation, racism and other historically rooted problems are sanitised and presented in a euphemistic way. But, what does this all have to do with the leopard man display?

## 2. Potential new roles of the leopard man display

As I have argued earlier, the second museum age has, in a few specific ways, not been a favourable climate for the research and display of objects. First of all, in postcolonial museum critiques, colonial collections were compromised heavily as sources, diminishing their perceived role to be instruments of colonial power. This particularly applies to those objects related to violence on the part of the colonised. In the end this may have contributed to the perception of certain collections, such as ethnographic collections, as old-fashioned and out-dated. This ties in with “critique of taste” maintaining a social distinction centred around the appreciation of art works at the core of the museum visit (Bourdieu, 1984). The lack of interest for collections may have been supported by the proliferation of technologies, providing more popular and contemporary mediums than objects for getting museum messages across. To some people these technologies may have made the objects redundant in a way, as they can reproduce them in a way that makes them even more discernable than in reality (e.g. macro-photography, radiography) and evoke their contexts of origin, rendering a distant reality closer by making it visible (e.g. film, 3D reconstruction). One of the main purposes of this study has been to reclaim attention for the study of ethnographic collections and the display in which they feature, because they have been, and still can be, used for ideological purposes to shape our experiences of a reality and our social relations. With the case-study of the leopard men, I have demonstrated the importance of considering how this has occurred in the museum in the past, and how this still affects us today, in order to obtain a better knowledge of how the material world shapes people’s thoughts and actions. This previously ignored potency of objects is exactly what I want to put at the heart of this reflection on the future role of the leopard man display in particular, and of museums and their collections in general.

In order to overcome the postcolonial museum crisis, museums have struggled to re-invent themselves and survive, diversifying their messages, trying to meet the needs of a diverse public, and new requirements of funding and governing bodies. In this climate, while a certain level of representational activism has been adopted, especially in former colonial museums, preferably a non-problematic main stream message is still desired, reconciling and putting different parties at ease. This perhaps characterises how the museum has dealt with the critiques of the leopard man display so far. Cheri Samba’s painting was bought and displayed next to it, and comic books have been added to a showcase beneath the display to highlight its role in colonial mythology. The question arises if this is enough? Cheri Samba’s painting calls for removing the painting from the museum. Naturally, putting the painting on display has only been a preliminary strategy in view of the large renovation project which the museum is preparing. However, the way in which the leopard man display was dealt with in these preliminary revisions may be regarded as an attempt at

“inclusion”, by simply including a Congolese perspective on the matter.

In this approach different perspectives on a particular theme are simply presented to clarify that opposing views exist on the matter, recognising the contestation of the display, without making judgements. This “democratic” way of dealing with viewpoints is one of the characteristics of the second museum age. The RMCA has repeatedly used this strategy in the past to tackle the colonial history and critiques have arisen from it.<sup>242</sup> While a first step is taken to incorporate “subaltern” voices, recognising the contestation, what critics probably find disturbing is the rather disengaged way of presenting certain subjects related to colonialism, particularly if they concern issues like abuse or racism. The display of Cheri Samba’s painting shows that some people have problems with the leopard man display, but the problematic nature itself is not really demonstrated or discussed. Some visitors might not understand the problematic nature, believing that the display reflects a historical reality. Perhaps to some people the first step of incorporating the contestation in the form of Cheri Samba’s painting was already soothing enough. But, by not being judgmental and not revealing the injustice and suffering underlying the contestation, the display also sanitises the colonial history in a way. Considering it in terms of representational activism it does not suffice, as a lot of people are still not happy with it, and it does not attempt to fundamentally alter people’s understanding of the subject of leopard men. What could be done about this?

Removing the display from the museum would be the most radical way of dealing with it, trying to erase it from public memory. Yet, this is not easily achieved given its occurrence in popular media such as comics. The likelihood is that it will live on as a myth. Furthermore, it has become clear that at least some people originating from the region of study consider the leopard men to be a symbol of their identity, as people who managed to maintain themselves under difficult circumstances. Would removing the display not do away with such alternative interpretations of it at the same time? And, would it not diminish the opportunity for the phenomenon of leopard men to be questioned and investigated further? This said, what could the best options be to deal with it in the future? Cheri Samba’s contestation of the leopard man display exactly plays on its iconic nature, which has been an asset of the display in terms of its cultural impact. As previously said, museum personnel still consider it to be one of the displays attracting the public.

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<sup>242</sup>This is, for example, the case for the big exhibition project *La Mémoire du Congo. Le temps colonial* in 2005 in which the museum wanted to tackle the often criticised history as a means of making a clean start in view of a large-scale renovation. Academic and press reviews of the exhibition criticised it and the museum in general for being too moderate at best, shying away from dealing with the abuses of the colonial history in a more profound way. For example, Gewalt’s (2006) article on the website of *Intal* (2007) on the selective way of dealing with the colonial past in the exhibition, and the review in the *New York Book review* of the exhibition by Adam Hochschild (2005).

Basically, I think that the clear juxtaposition of the sculpture and the painting should be key visual elements of a new display. But the representational activism needs further development in this case, in order to actively challenge people's perception of leopard men and offer new insights. The leopard men theme and its historical display provides a valuable case study, as yet unexplored in these terms, to help reveal the idea of representation as an instrument of power to a large public. I believe that, besides developing a de-exoticised understanding in which elements of empowerment in the colonial crisis are stressed, it can have potential as part of an educational programme on representation for schools. The historical evidence assembled in the course of this research can help to make apparent how a flawed representation is extrapolated as scientific truth to the public. In a similar way to the Peace Factory's work, which I mentioned above, developing educational games treating themes such as the representation of Jews in Nazi propaganda as greedy scapegoats responsible for economic crisis, the theme of the leopard men can be treated as a form of colonial propaganda representing Africans as wild and cruel to legitimise the colonisation. The Peace Factory makes further parallels between such images of the past and contemporary examples, such as racism in society or bullying in school contexts making pupils reflect on their environment. In the case of the leopard men the link to the contemporary can be made by reflecting on the way Congo is represented today in western media. In combination with a better historical and cultural contextualisation of the leopard men phenomenon in relation to the display, the development of an educational programme revealing the flawed representation, a good level of representational activism could be achieved, while also meeting the requirements of the museum as a public institution. In light of the collaboration with representatives of source communities, two options have come to the fore. The first idea is to make a documentary about it, in collaboration with the Congolese film-maker Jean-Michel Kibushi Ndjate Wooto, presenting the history of leopard men from a local cultural perspective. A second idea which could be explored further in relation to the suggested educational programme on representation, is to juxtapose representations of leopard men in Western popular culture (e.g. in comics) with the "leopard men" in contemporary popular paintings in urban Congo, representing political leaders.



## Tables

BALI	Babandjo Babamba Bad Bafwabu Bafwadjiri Bafwakleke Bafwasea Bafwasola Bafwatende Bakaraye Bamadea Bangatala Bebege Bebengu Bekeni Bemili Betingembi Betingiti Boyulu
BUDU	Bafwaotuku Bafwananzaie

**Table 2: Principal clans and subclans of the Bali and their neighbours mentioned in this research (not exhaustive)**

BAPAKOMBE	Bashu Bapakombe Baswaga Bapakombe Batangi Bapakombe Babira Bapakombe
NANDE (not exhaustive)	Wanisanza Baswaga Bashu Batangi Bahera (clients)

**Table 3: Principal clans and subclans of the Beni region mentioned in this research (not exhaustive).**

**Table 4: List of objects from the RMCA collection**

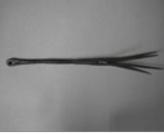
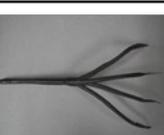
PHOTO	OBJECT NR.	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION
	EO.0.0.12540	tunic	?	Brasseur
	EO.0.0.12541	hood	?	Brasseur
	EO.0.0.17245	hood	Bali	?
	EO.0.0.20797	claw	Bali	Arnold
	EO.0.0.20798	claw	Bali	Arnold
	EO.0.0.2573-1	claw	Bali	Delhaise
	EO.0.0.2573-2	claw	Bali	Delhaise
	EO.0.0.2573-4	claw	Bali	Delhaise
	EO.0.0.2573-5	claw	Bali	Delhaise
	EO.0.0.2574-1	stick	Bali	Delhaise

Table 4: List of objects from the RMCA collection				
PHOTO	OBJECT NR.	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION
	EO.0.0.2574-2	stick	Bali	Delhaise
	EO.0.0.2985	stick	Bali	Delhaise
	EO.0.0.3068-1	tunic	Bali	Delhaise
	EO.0.0.3068-2	hood	Bali	Delhaise
	EO.0.0.3069-1	claw	Bali	Delhaise
	EO.0.0.3069-2	claw	Bali	Delhaise
	EO.0.0.3069-3	claw	Bali	Delhaise
	EO.0.0.3399-1	hood	Bango	Coclet

**Table 4: List of objects from the RMCA collection**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR.	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION
	EO.0.0.3399-2	hood	Bango	Coclet
	EO.0.0.35655 (sewn together with hood)	tunic	Bali	Henry
	EO.0.0.35656 (sewn together with tunic)	hood	Bali	Henry
	EO.0.0.35658	trident	Bali	Henry
	EO.0.0.35659	claw	Bali	Henry
	EO.0.0.35660	stick	Bali	Henry
	EO.0.0.36403	claw	Bali	De Lust

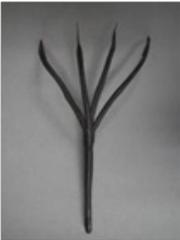
Table 4: List of objects from the RMCA collection				
PHOTO	OBJECT NR.	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION
	EO.0.0.42665-1	tunic	Bali	Stasse
	EO.0.0.42665-2	hood	Bali	Stasse
	EO.0.0.42666	stick	Bali	Stasse
	EO.0.0.42667	claw	Bali	Stasse
	EO.0.0.42668	claw	Bali	Stasse
	EO.0.0.42669	claw	Bali	Stasse
	EO.0.0.42670	claw	Bali	Stasse
	EO.0.0.4715	hood	Binja	Hutereau

**Table 4: List of objects from the RMCA collection**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR.	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION
	EO.0.0.4756	tunic	Binja	Hutereau
	EO.0.0.5301-1	tunic	Boa	Hutereau
	EO.0.0.5301-2	hood	Boa	Hutereau
	EO.0.0.6410-1	hood	Azande- Abandia	Hutereau
	EO.0.0.6410-2	tunic	Azande- Abandia	Hutereau
	EO.1954.134.27	claw	Bali	Edkins
	EO.1954.134.28	claw	Bali	Edkins

Table 4: List of objects from the RMCA collection				
PHOTO	OBJECT NR.	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION
	EO.1967.63.4126-1	claw	Bali	Stevens
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-2	claw	Bali	Stevens
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-3	claw	Bali	Stevens
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-4	claw	Bali	Stevens
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-5	claw	Bali	Stevens
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-6	claw	Bali	Stevens
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-7	claw	Bali	Stevens
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-8	claw	Bali	Stevens
	EO.1980.2.2189	claw		Walschot
	EO.1980.2.2190	claw		Walschot
	EO.1987.35.1-1	hood	Bali	Pauwels
(no photo)	EO.1987.35.1-2	tunic	Bali	Pauwels

**Table 5: Test results of the analysis of traces on objects at the RMCA**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION	TEST	RESULT
	EO.0.0.3069-3	claw	Bali	Delhaise	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.0.0.2573-5	claw	Bali	Delhaise	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.0.0.35658	trident	Bali	Henry	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.0.0.2573-5	claw	Bali	Delhaise	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.1954.134.28	claw	Bali	Edkins	Microtraces lab	/

**Table 5: Test results of the analysis of traces on objects at the RMCA**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION	TEST	RESULT
	EO.1954.134.27	claw	Bali	Edkins	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.1980.2.2189	claw		Walschot	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.0.0.20797	claw	Bali	Arnold	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.0.0.20798	claw	Bali	Arnold	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.0.0.2573-1	claw	Bali	Delhaise	Microtraces lab	/

**Table 5: Test results of the analysis of traces on objects at the RMCA**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION	TEST	RESULT
	EO.0.0.2573-2	claw	Bali	Delhaise	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.0.0.2573-4	claw	Bali	Delhaise	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.0.0.3069-1	claw	Bali	Delhaise	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.0.0.3069-2	claw	Bali	Delhaise	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.0.0.35659	claw	Bali	Henry	Microtraces lab	/

**Table 5: Test results of the analysis of traces on objects at the RMCA**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION	TEST	RESULT
	EO.0.0.36403	claw	Bali	De Lust	Microtraces lab	Corrosion; rusted iron
	EO.0.0.42667	claw	Bali	Stasse	Microtraces lab	Red-brown spot on the leather ; no blood
	EO.0.0.42668	claw	Bali	Stasse	Microtraces lab	
	EO.0.0.42669	claw	Bali	Stasse	Microtraces lab	Red-brown spots on the attached strings ; no blood
	EO.0.0.42670	claw	Bali	Stasse	Microtraces lab	/

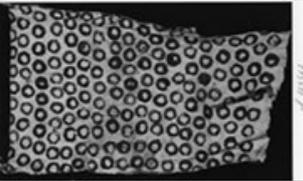
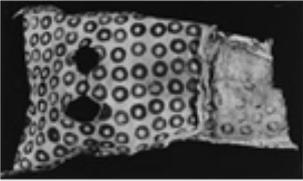
**Table 5: Test results of the analysis of traces on objects at the RMCA**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION	TEST	RESULT
	EO.1967.63.4126-1	claw	Bali	Stevens	Microtraces lab	/
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-2	claw	Bali	Stevens	Microtraces lab	/
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-3	claw	Bali	Stevens	Microtraces lab	/
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-4	claw	Bali	Stevens	Microtraces lab	/
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-5	claw	Bali	Stevens	Microtraces lab	/
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-6	claw	Bali	Stevens	Microtraces lab	/
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-7	claw	Bali	Stevens	Microtraces lab	/
(similar to the above)	EO.1967.63.4126-8	claw	Bali	Stevens	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.1980.2.2190	claw		Walschot	Microtraces lab	/
	EO.0.0.42665-1	tunic	Bali	Stasse	Genetics lab: test with pollight; samples taken from the right and left sleeves and the front.	/

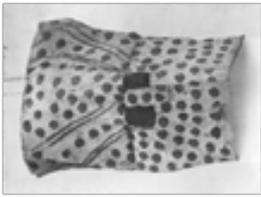
**Table 5: Test results of the analysis of traces on objects at the RMCA**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION	TEST	RESULT
	EO.0.0.42665-2	hood	Bali	Stasse	Genetics lab: test with polilight	/
	EO.0.0.3068-2	hood	Bali	Delhaise	Genetics lab: test with polilight.	/
	EO.0.0.3068-1	tunic	Bali	Delhaise	Genetics lab: test with polilight.	/
	EO.0.0.35655	tunic	Bali	Henry	Genetics lab: test with polilight.	/

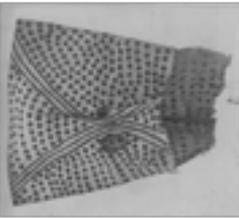
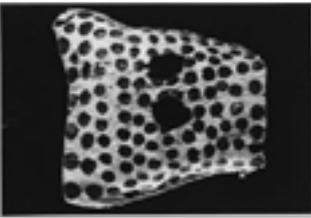
**Table 5: Test results of the analysis of traces on objects at the RMCA**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION	TEST	RESULT
	EO.0.0.35656 (Sewn together with EO.0.0.35655)	hood	Bali	Henry	Genetics lab: test with pollight: traces of saliva visible; samples taken.	/
	EO.0.0.6410-1	tunic	Azande-Abandia	Hutereau	Genetics lab: test with pollight: piece of coagulated blood?; samples taken.	The sample contained grease in which non-identified substances are present; no blood
	EO.0.0.6410-2	mask	Azande-Abandia	Hutereau	Genetics lab: test with pollight: no specific traces visible.	/

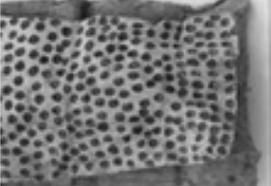
**Table 5: Test results of the analysis of traces on objects at the RMCA**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION	TEST	RESULT
	EO.0.0.3399-2	Hood	Bango	Coclet	Genetics lab: test with polilight: traces of red cosmetic?; sample taken.	Vegetable fibres of a red colour : Pterocarpus
	EO.0.0.5301-1	Tunic	Boa	Hutereau	Genetics lab: test with polilight: no specific traces visible.	/
	EO.0.0.5301-2	hood	Boa	Hutereau	Genetics lab: test with polilight: no specific traces visible.	/
	EO.0.0.12540	Tunic	?	Brasseur	Genetics lab: test with polilight: piece of coagulated blood?	

**Table 5: Test results of the analysis of traces on objects at the RMCA**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION	TEST	RESULT
	EO.0.0.12541	hood	?	Brasseur	Genetics lab: test with polilight: no specific traces visible.	/
	EO.0.0.4715	hood	Binja	Hutereau	Genetics lab: test with polilight: no specific traces visible.	/
(no photo)	EO.1987.35.1-2	tunic	Bali	Pauwels	Genetics lab: test with polilight; samples taken to verify if it has been worn by different people.	The costume appeared to be worn by different people.
	EO.0.0.17245	hood	Bali	?	Genetics lab: test with polilight: no specific traces visible.	/

**Table 5: Test results of the analysis of traces on objects at the RMCA**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION	TEST	RESULT
	EO.1987.35.1-1	hood	Bali	Pauwels	Genetics lab: test with polilight: traces of rust.	/
	EO.0.0.4756	tunic	Binja	Hutereau	Genetics lab: test with polilight: traces around the neck related to use.	/
	EO.0.0.3399-1	tunic	Bango	Coclet	(absent)	/
	EO.0.0.2574-1	stick	Bali	Delhaise	Microscopic investigation	Dark organic material and quartz grains (soil) on the paw surface.

**Table 5: Test results of the analysis of traces on objects at the RMCA**

PHOTO	OBJECT NR	DESCRIPTION	ORIGIN	COLLECTION	TEST	RESULT
	EO.0.0.2574-2	stick	Bali	Delhaise	Microscopic investigation	Very clean, the substance on the paw surface has partly partly been removed. Contains a tubercule filled with earth of a soil-inhabiting insect.
	EO.0.0.2985	stick	Bali	Delhaise	Microscopic investigation	No traces of soil on the surface.
	EO.0.0.35660	stick	Bali	Henry	Microscopic investigation	Traces of soil (clay, red ochre) on the paw surface.
	EO.0.0.42666	stick	Bali	Stasse	Microscopic investigation	Traces of soil (clay-silt containing iron) and clear traces of usage on the paw surface (claw and heel).

**Table 6: Costumes in the collection of the Instituts des Musées Nationaux du Congo at Kinshasa**

PHOTO	DESCRIPTION	USE	ORIGIN	COLLECTOR	INV. NR
(costume not seen)	Costume and hood Material: natural bark with charcoal spots Vernacular name: engulu	Worn for monkey hunting	Population: Bua Geographical location: Banalia, Bangba, Bobalima	Mission North Zaire Seeuws, Nestor 1973	73.220.621
(costume not seen)	Costume and hood Material: bark Vernacular names: etui, musoko	Worn for monkey hunting	Population: Bua Geographical location: Banalia, Kole, Bokwamba	Mission North Zaire Seeuws, Nestor 1973	73.220.683
	Costume and hood (only the hood was seen) Material: / Vernacular name: etui baga	/	Population: / Geographical location: Banalia, Kole, Bongonja	Mission North Zaire Seeuws, Nestor 1973	73.220.668
(costume not seen)	Costume and hood Material: natural bark Vernacular name: musoko	Worn for monkey hunting	Population: Ngelima Geographical location: Buta, Monganjuru, Benge	Mission North Zaire Seeuws, Nestor 1973	73.220.640

Table 6: Costumes in the collection of the Instituts des Musées Nationaux du Congo at Kinshasa					
PHOTO	DESCRIPTION	USE	ORIGIN	COLLECTOR	INV. NR
	Tunic Material: / Vernacular name: mosoko	Hunting costume	Population: Ngelima	Collected by Limbali Monga, 1972	72.680.62
	Costume and hood (belt is missing) Material: bark-cloth, black spots Vernacular names: agege (tunic); mabibi (hood); agbodo (belt)	Hunting costume	Population: Lika Geographical location: Ubundu, Bananga	Collected by Nzembele-Saf, 1975 Obtained from Kasongo, 1975	75.160.485
	Hood Vernacular name: lotulu	Worn for camouflage; used in combination with an instrument imitating the cry of animals	Population: Mbole Geographical location: Oriental Province, Opala, Yawlema, Yangenja moke	Collected by Mingo Mbengele, François, 1971	71.88.31

**Table 6: Costumes in the collection of the Instituts des Musées Nationaux du Congo at Kinshasa**

PHOTO	DESCRIPTION	USE	ORIGIN	COLLECTOR	INV. NR
	Costume and hood  Material: bark-cloth  Vernacular name: lig-bokongo	Dancing costume	Population: Budja  Geographical location: Province Equateur, Bumba, Yandongi, Bundunga	Minyangu, 1975	75.67.2
	Costume and hood	/	/	/	/

Table 7: Details regarding the <i>modus operandi</i> of the killings provided by Joset (1955).						
	<i>Victims</i>	<i>Attacks</i>	<i>Weapons/Wounds</i>	<i>Cannibalism</i>	<i>Source</i>	
<b>1. Aniotto among Bali, Ndaka</b>						
<b>1.1. Dance cult ontuni, Maïda</b>	Victims were generally children between the age of 7 and 12, but also toddlers.	Three gangs operated in this conflict. Attacks usually occurred on isolated victims both at night and during the day, near the village or in the forest.	Most victims had numerous cuts to the throat.		Joset, 1955 : 57-8, 70-4.	
<b>1.2. Northern Bali 1920-1924</b>						
<b>1.2.1. Abopia and Alebi</b>	Victims were mostly women and children.		The victims were generally killed with knives.	Two cases of anthropophagy occurred.	Joset, 1955: 67-68.	
<b>1.2.2. Mabilanga of the Babamba</b>						
<b>1.3. Eastern Bali 1928-1934</b>						
<b>1.3.1. Bangambe of Wangata</b>	Victims were usually women and children.	The killers operated in a gang. One of them committed the killing, sometimes with an accomplice. The others kept at a distance watching the area.	Murders were committed with a knife, by cutting the throat. For several murders the “anioto” knife is mentioned, but the description fits with a regular knife, e.g. Budu knives “sape”. Wounds at the throat were often multiple. Other wounds and mutilations also occurred (e.g. breast cut off).		Joset, 1955: 55-56, 67-70. The official report of the court case is added as an appendix to Joset’s book (1955: 200).	

Table 7: Details regarding the <i>modus operandi</i> of the killings provided by Joset (1955).					
	<i>Victims</i>	<i>Attacks</i>	<i>Weapons/Wounds</i>	<i>Cannibalism</i>	<i>Source</i>
<b>1.3.2. Mbako of Avakubi</b>	In total 41 murders and two attempted murders. Half of the victims were women. Sometimes the victim was in the company of another person. A few surviving victims testified in court.	The attacks occurred both at night and during the day, in the fields, or sometimes in the forest and on the road. The killers usually operated in a gang wandering through the forest until the opportunity arose. They were sometimes accompanied by a guide whose task was to spot the victim. The attack was carried out by one person, closely followed by an accomplice who might help and who usually inflicted further mutilations on the body. The body was then dragged away. The rest of the gang watched over the area while their accomplices attacked. Only in one murder case were traces of leopard paws observed at the crime scene; in two other murders traces of footsteps were found.	The victim was usually killed by cutting the throat with a knife. Usually there were stab wounds on other parts of the body, such as in the belly or the upper leg. In several cases mutilations were inflicted; the head or the arm might be severed, or a woman's breast cut off. In total there were six victims with a severed head. Of all the victims only three bore the traces of an <i>arimoto</i> knife or claw. The husband of one victim, killed by cutting the throat, observed a leopard claw stuck in the right thigh, which had been used to tear open the flesh. This was probably a metal claw. In several cases parts of the body instance the whole decapitated body had disappeared.	In this court case it was admitted by Mbako and his women that the flesh obtained in the attacks had been sent to Mbako and that it was cooked by the women in his company and eaten by all. It was also said that the killers removed the eyes from the victims in order to prepare a medicine in which the knife was dipped to be more efficient as they supposedly killed with their eyes closed.	Joset, 1955: 59-60; 79-87.

<b>Table 7: Details regarding the modus operandi of the killings provided by Joset (1955).</b>					
	<b>Victims</b>	<b>Attacks</b>	<b>Weapons/Wounds</b>	<b>Cannibalism</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>1.3.3. Anieto among Bafwaotuku</b>	In total this conflict amounted to 22 killings. Among the victims were 12 men and 10 women.	Two gangs committed the killings. They had a guide who localised the victims for them (like Badokwisha for Mbako's gang). Attacks were usually performed by one person while the others watched over the area. Attacks occurred during the day and at night. The gang were active in the forest near the routes and construction sites. Several murders, for example, occurred on the road between Stanleville and Wamba. Some of the victims were labourers working on the road. In 10 cases, the victim was caught by surprise whether in the field, the forest or along the way, and three were near their houses.	For the first time all the bodies were systematically subjected to an autopsy by the medical doctors of the colony or the mining companies in the region (Dr Conzemius, Dr Degotte, Dr Glorieux). A report was drawn up for each case. All victims were killed by cutting of the throat with a knife. Of the victims 10 had severed heads and several had been mutilated with the flesh from the face or the throat taken away. One of the victims had the heart and lungs removed. The general demarcation and cleanliness of the wounds pointed to the use of knives. The killers admitted to the mutilations.	The killers admitted acts of anthropophagy.	Joset, 1955: 61-63, 90.

**Table 7: Details regarding the *modus operandi* of the killings provided by Joset (1955).**

	<i>Victims</i>	<i>Attacks</i>	<i>Weapons/Wounds</i>	<i>Cannibalism</i>	<i>Source</i>
<b>2. Vihokohoko at Beni</b>					
<b>2.1. Wave of killings 1933-34</b>	In total 38 attempts; only 6 fail.	Most murders occurred in the forest or at the river, or at a distance from the village; several victims were killed in their gardens or when isolating themselves for a sanitary break. Generally the weapon used was a small knife. Originally a knife with a double blade was used which was abandoned. Once traces of the stick imitating the leopard paw prints were found at the crime scene.	Autopsies were systematically carried out. Numerous stab wounds were usually inflicted in the neck and sometimes a member, head or sexual parts were cut off. Often victims were severely mutilated. The wounds were inflicted by cutting and stabbing instruments.		Joset, 1955: 18, 20, 33-36, 39, 50, 52.

**Table 8: Types of claws**

<p>TYPE 1</p> 	<p>Trident:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy</li> <li>• Sharp and long points</li> <li>• Could inflict serious injuries</li> </ul>
<p>TYPE 2</p> 	<p>Stabbing object with three or more pins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium heavy</li> <li>• Sharp</li> <li>• Could inflict deeper injuries</li> </ul>
<p>TYPE 3</p> 	<p>Claw with knives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy</li> <li>• Blades are rather blunt</li> <li>• Could probably inflict shallow cuts or scratches</li> </ul>
<p>TYPE 4</p> 	<p>Numerous rings with knives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not heavy</li> <li>• Blades slightly sharper</li> <li>• Could probably inflict shallow cuts</li> </ul>
<p>TYPE 5</p> 	<p>Claw with sharp pins (similar to type 1 but bent):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not so heavy</li> <li>• Rather sharp</li> <li>• Could probably inflict shallow wounds</li> </ul>
<p>TYPE 6</p> 	<p>Claw made of sharp, bent pins or blades:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy</li> <li>• Blades are rather blunt</li> <li>• Can tear the flesh but not inflict deep wounds</li> </ul>
<p>TYPE 7</p> 	<p>Simple claw:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light</li> <li>• Rough edges, but not sharp</li> <li>• Too weak to inflict serious wounds</li> </ul>

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: The *mambela* cycle

Despite regional differences in the sequence of the phases, the names and specific roles of the leaders and the spirits called upon and represented by instruments, most authors mention the following phases and elements of the initiation are distinguished as:

1. Meeting of the dignitaries of *mambela* to decide on the organisation of a cycle and the start of the preparations. The preparation entails the selection of candidates between 10 and 20 years of age and the making of a clearing called the “house of *mambela*” which is made in the forest, at a distance from the village.
2. The start of the initiation consists of a series of flagellations with whips made of several sorts of stick. In the beginning this is a public event. When the sound of the bird spirit of initiation appears, represented by musical instruments such as the bull roarer, women and children flee. Depending on the region this sound represents either the spirits *nasasa* or *maduali*, or sometimes both. *Nasasa*, the hornbill, is the *sumburu ya mambela* or the bird of *mambela*. *Maduali* is the *zizi ya mambela* or spirit of *mambela*. It is the most secret and important of spirits generally represented during the flagellations and scarifications by the bullroarer. It was forbidden to initiates to speak about them. According to a few authors, during this phase, the *maduali* is also revealed in visual form to the initiates of the former cycle. See point 7. A third spirit occurring regionally is the *agbendula* or *aduteli* is the *zizi ya dodo*, or the spirit of the earth.
3. The candidates are led through a gateway, made from the whips of the flagellations, to the clearing called the “house of *mambela*”, in order to receive the scarifications. They are usually blindfolded for receiving the scarifications on the breast. The bird which is supposed to leave the scarification marks is most generally the *nasasa*, the hornbill, represented by a flute on which the lower extension is carved as the beak of a bird. Sometimes, depending on the region, the *nasasa* flute is accompanied by the *maduali* bullroarer during the scarification, while in some regions the bullroarer represents the sound of *nasasa*. The spirit *agbendula* (*ngbindure*, *bindula*) or *adutele* is represented by a simple whistle made of a hollow pipe or a folded leaf held between the lips. In an administrative report of 1917, Brandt mentions feather bunches waved over the breast of the initiates while they are being cut, to invoke the flapping of the birds’ wings. The bravery and endurance of the candidates is valued. Similar instruments with similar roles also occurred among neighbouring peoples during circumcision

rites; for example, among Ndaka and Mbo, who besides the *mambela* also practiced circumcision.<sup>243</sup>

4. The education by the *tata ka mambela*. The candidates learn about taboos on foods, they receive moral guidelines such as respect for elders and for the deceased, and obedience to their fathers and mothers. The moral guidelines are presented in esoteric formulas. The binding fraternity among *mambela* members and their obligation to keep the secrets of the initiation is stressed. It is worth mentioning the *zungua* in this respect, assassins or sorcerers protecting *mambela*. They are said to punish those who reveal the secrets of *mambela*.<sup>244</sup>
5. Several authors mention a nightly feast during which the candidates have to remain silent and during which the elder initiates defecate on them. They have to undergo a series of such humiliations.
6. Finally they wash, shave and dress up to return to the village where they remain in seclusion for a while, but seclusion in the forest is also mentioned by Kawaters and Moeller (1936a: 554) during which the initiates go hunting and fishing and provide services to the leaders of *mambela*. According to Moeller the period of seclusion is ended with the exposure of the head of a random large animal "*libeka*" and the removal of the initiates' hair.
7. According to Bouccin the initiates will only be able to assist at a final ceremony named "dragging the *maduali*" (*kongoki maduali* or in kiswahili *kokota maduali*) when a new cycle of *mambela* begins. See point 2.<sup>245</sup> At that point they will see the *maduali* for the first time. Thus, the beginning of a new cycle of initiations entails a final phase for the initiates of the former cycle. As Bourghelle explained in his report of 1933, when the sound of the bullroarer is heard, the initiates of the previous *mambela* cycle have to track a path through the forest with their bare hands to find and conquer the *maduali*. The ceremony has rarely been seen by outsiders and was particularly kept hidden from Europeans. It is supposedly a large animal represented by the stem of a banana tree enveloped in leaves and dragged along by a rope. The *maduali* is said to be brought to its resting place. While the initiates are dragging the *maduali*, they are making gestures as if they are pulling out weeds. It was pretended to outsiders that the clearance made

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<sup>243</sup>For example among Ndaka only a bullroarer named ngwe was sounded during the circumcision. Among the Mbo three similar instruments occurred, *mongomongo* was the equivalent of the *maduali* bull roarer, *akuteli* of the *aduteli* instrument, and *aduombo* of the *nasasa*. Among the Komo, who only practiced circumcision, the three instruments were respectively called *tuambi*, *kabili* and *mokomo* (Moeller, 1936a: 552).

<sup>244</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 10, 12-13).

<sup>245</sup>RMCA AIMO Bouccin (1933: 6).

by the initiates was made by the large, fantastic beast *maduali*. This was probably told to all non-initiated, including women and children, and to Europeans as well.

## Appendix 2: The genealogy and history of the Bapakombe clans

### 1) The Baswaga Bapakombe

The principal ancestral figure in the history of *vihokohoko* among Bapakombe is Kivete, the ancestor of the Baswaga Bapakombe clan. According to Absil, the Baswaga Bapakombe was the most centrally situated Bapakombe clan at Madiwe. Absil wrote that they emerged from the Baswaga. This group had migrated northward from Malio because of a famine (or a conflict) under the leadership of Kivete. Arriving in the forest region of Madiwe in the area of Mont Matope, they encountered three Pygmies of a chief named Topi, first occupants of the territory, made an alliance with them and received the territory of Madiwe. From the sons of Kivete, three influential families are descended who settled on the hills Mont Voliaki, Mont Maboli and Mont Senga. The descendants of Kivete became a dominant minority in the region. They sought to attach families from neighbouring regions (e.g. Bashu from Malio, Baswaga from Beni) by giving them wives or by sending *vihokohoko* to subject them. The Babira Bapakombe and Bashu Bapakombe clans descended from the marital alliances of Kivete's offspring (Joset, 1955: 31; Bergmans, 1970: 92-94).<sup>246</sup>

### 2) The Bashu Bapakombe

The Bashu Bapakombe emerged from a marriage with one of Kivete's daughters. The ancestors of the Bashu Bapakombe separated from the principal group of Kamisi (the Bashu ancestor?). His third son, Tusilani, was a bachelor when he received the territory of Bakoli. This was discovered for him by three Pygmies looking for territory rich in game. Tusilani also made them look for a wife for him at Madiwe and married the daughter of Kivete (Nguba). From this union the clan of Bashu Bapakombe emerged ( Joset, 1955: 31).<sup>247</sup>

### 3) The Bira Bapakombe

The core of the Bira Bapakombe came from Irumu to Madiwe. Their ancestor *Akuruma* made an alliance with a family member of Kivete named Bomalie, with whom he exchanged blood, and from whom he received the Mont Pandekali. Subsequently *Akuruma* supported a war against the Bira of chief Asala and received Mont Goyo for his services from the chief Ambira. Finally at the death of his blood brother Bomalie, he received the territory of Malese. The descendants of this family allied themselves to the family of Kivete through marriage. According to Joset the family of *Akurumba*, like Kivete, terrorised the country with *vihokohoko* attacks, but not that many specific conflicts are known involving Bira Bapakombe (Joset, 1955:

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<sup>246</sup>RMCA AIMO Absil (1932), Joset (1939: 124).

<sup>247</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 124).

31; Bergmans, 1970: 93-94). Czekanowski (1924: 328, 352-353, 360) came across one Bira Bapakombe chief who rebelled against the colonial occupation in 1907, namely Lukumba Kumba, to the north of the old settlement of Beni in the direction of Mawambi.

#### 4) The Batangi Bapakombe

For the Batangi Bapakombe clan, there were two branches which played a significant and interrelated role in the history of *vihokohoko*. The group of Mwami was located in the Madiwe region, the other group was originally located more to the east, south of Beni (see Map 11). They probably moved westward in the direction of Madiwe around 1923, when the Semliki plains were evacuated, or at least they tried to extend their influence to the west.

According to Absil, the eastern group of Bapakombe, the Batangi Bapakombe, came from Mbulio (Mbulie) near Lubero, following the edges of the Mitumba mountains. They had left the Mbulio region because of arguments with their clan. Under the leadership of Bionga, they settled at Mont Paipia, near the river Tua, until then an uninhabited region. Another Batangi refugee named Tongo from another group, crossed the mountains and met Bionga. He lived with Bionga for a while and received a wife from him. Subsequently the newcomer Tongo imposed himself as chief of the group and made an alliance with the Pygmies (Joset, 1955: 30; Bergmans, 1970: 92-94).<sup>248</sup>

Also Alonzo, a Batangi Bapakombe ancestor and chief of the Tua river, was reported to be living in this area prior to the arrival of slave traders.<sup>249</sup> According to a Batangi Bapakombe tradition Alonzo was the first leopard men chief to attack his own people to extract tribute. It is unknown if and how Alonzo was related to the ancestor Tongo. Amongst Alonzo's successors a certain *vihokohoko* named Soli was a principal initiator of *vihokohoko* at Madiwe and initiated men from many important Batangi Bapakombe families. His direct initiates were involved in the big *vihokohoko* campaign in 1933-34 under the direction of Mwami, in which Karibumba was also involved (Joset, 1955: 31-32). So far there is no clue as to the exact identity of the *vihokohoko* chief Mwami. He may have been a descendant or successor in the line from Alonzo, but no information on his genealogy has been retrieved from the consulted sources. So far, the only connection established between Mwami and Alonzo is that Joset (1955: 31-32, 48) situated both of them in the region of the Tua in the era of the slave raids and that they were leaders controlling the line of *vihokohoko* associated with Soli. Mwami actually lost control over the Tua region when he was forced to leave it to the Batangi chief Meanga in 1924. So far

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<sup>248</sup>RMCA AIMO Absil (1932); Joset (1939: 123).

<sup>249</sup>This is peculiar as Alonzo is clearly a European name. It should however be considered as a possibility that Alonzo adopted this Christian name at a later stage in history.

no clear connection has been established between Tongo, Alonzo and Mwami, about how they are related to each other within the Batangi Bapakombe genealogies, or how they are related to the Mukohomili-Karibumba branch of Batangi Bapakombe. The only relationship mentioned by Joset is that Karibumba tried to usurp control over the Pygmy group, from which Tongo's descendants took their women. While for the Tua-based *vihokohoko* no mention has been made of a link with the principal *vihokohoko* ancestor Kivete, Absil did report an alliance to Kivete for the Mukohomili-Karibumba branch.<sup>250</sup>

When the Europeans submitted the region of the Mitumba mountains and Semliki plain to their control, Karibumba dominated the lands of the Bahera-Wanisanza chief Nzomba. Joset noted that in the era before slave raids, Mukohomili, Karibumba's ancestor had given a part of the usurped land to Kivete, the *vihokohoko* chief and ancestor of the Baswaga Bapakombe. The only relationship mentioned for Batangi Bapakombe is with the ancestor Kivete. Could this have been a tribute to Kivete or a reward for sending *vihokohoko* against Tsege, the ancestor of the later Bahera-Wanisanza groups? From then on the Batangi Bapakombe of Karibumba started to terrorise the Bahera-Wanisanza with *vihokohoko* murders to gain control over lands. Karibumba continued the feud of his ancestor Mukohomili with Bahera-Wanisanza groups in Madiwe, which later came under the influence of Mbene and Kisenge. In 1925 Karibumba sent *vihokohoko* to Tsege's descendants and his son Mutuli, to kill Mutuli's children (Joset, 1955: 37-39).

The Mwami of Madiwe was settled in the Madiwe region in the outskirts of the Ituri forest to the north and west of Beni. He was probably the principal *vihokohoko* chief of the Beni territory in the 1920s and '30s. The notable Mukuniu residing at Malese became an important initiator of *vihokohoko* under Mwami. Other initiators were Kiambali, Batinde and Kimbeta (Joset, 1955: 31-2). In the previous chapter I explained that many chiefs in the surroundings of Beni obtained leopard men from Mwami and Mukuniu. These leopard men would then usually initiate several men of the requesting chiefs, so from that time onwards they possessed their own leopard men and could pass the initiation on to others. This process seemed to have been embodied in the *lusumba* initiation. This relationship originally existed between Mwami and the Bahera chief Kinombe, before they fell out with each other.

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<sup>250</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 123).

### **Appendix 3: A conflict between the core group of Bashu Bapakombe and the Bashu chief of Malio, Mbonzo**

Musubao's grandfather, Tusilani, was a direct descendant of Kamisi, the founding ancestor of the Bashu Bapakombe. Kamisi had married the daughter of Kivete, from which union the Bashu Bapakombe derived.

When the grandfather (Tusilani) was killed by his brother, his son (Abondima) sent for *vihokohoko* to Soli, the initiator of Mwami at Madiwe. Abondima's son, Musubao, was subsequently initiated in order to take revenge for Tusilani's death. However, most of Musubao's later *vihokohoko* actions came to be directed against the Bashu of Malio. Musubao manipulated conflicts among the Bashu to try and gain control over their lands. For example, around 1897 the death of the Bashu man Kivinie, father of Musienene and Mate, eventually caused a war. The conflict started when Henry (de la Lindi) arrived at Beni, during his conquest against the Tetela mutineers in 1897 (Salmon, 1977).<sup>251</sup> To take revenge, Mate commanded *vihokohoko* from Musubao, but the attacks escalated to become a general war which spread through the Malio region. Many Bashu fled southward to the territory of Lubero. Among the people killed was the wife of Mbonzo, Bashu chief of Malio, and mother of the later invested chief Mokalangiro of the Bashu kingdom under the colonial administration. After some months Musubao extorted Mbonzo with demands for a payment in goats to stop the *vihokohoko* attacks. Mbonzo, infuriated, threatened Musubao and the war ceased. However, the Bashu were afraid to complain to the colonial administration due to Musubao's alliances with the *vihokohoko* of Madiwe (Joset, 1955: 41-42).

From 1919 to 1921 Musubao also sent attacks against Kibondo, a notable of Mbonzo, because the latter had received the land Djiavaranga. Around the same time Mbonzo also advised one of his village chiefs to call in the help of Kisenge from Beni in a fight over an elephant tusk. The chief's opponent however called in the help of Musubao who sent for *vihokohoko* to Madiwe. Again people were killed (Joset, 1955: 43-5, 54).

Mbonzo was a relative of Kasumbakali and supported him in his armed conflict for the Bashu leadership, putting a lot of strain on the region (Packard, 1976: 249, 256). This ties in with the grander historical scheme of the region. In Chapter 3 Kasumbakali was mentioned, who was one of the aspirants of central leadership of the Bashu in competition with Vyogho of Isale. Kasumbakali was the grandson of Luvango and Mbonzo was a descendant of Luvango's brother Kamesi at Malio. Mbonzo agreed to pay tribute to Kasumbakali. Kasumbakali's armed efforts were in vain as many people fled from Isale, the region being exhausted by previous raiders of Kabarega and Manyema. The famine resulting from this situation made the

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<sup>251</sup>RMCA AIMO Joset (1939: 18).

Wanisanza of Lisasa (Mwami Tsombira) withdraw their support from Kasumbakali who, deprived of access to firearms and political support in Isale, lost the competition with Vyogho on the basis of ritual authority. The people of Isale are said to have risen up and driven him out of Isale, forcing him to seek refuge in Malio at the home of his ally and cousin Mbonzo (Packard, 1976: 249, 256).

#### **Appendix 4: List of fictional work and documentaries (not exhaustive)**

##### **Adventure books:**

Burroughs, Edgar Rice. 1935. *Tarzan and the Leopard Man*. E.R. Burroughs, Inc.

Price, Willard. 1963. *African Adventure*. Publisher Jonathan Cape.

Villers, André. 1950. *La Griffes du Léopard*. Ecran du Monde.

Woolrich, Cornell. 1942 (1st ed.). *Black Alibi*. Simon and Schuster.

##### **Comics:**

Charlier, J.M. & Hubinon, V. 1990. Tiger Joe. *Het Mysterie van de Luipaard-Mannen*.

LeFrancq.

Desorgher, Daniel & Stephen Desberg 1997. *Les Aventures de Jimmy Tousseul. Le Royaume du Léopard*. Dupuis.

Hergé. 1931 (black and white), 1946 (colour). *Tintin au Congo*. Casterman.<sup>252</sup>

Leemans, Hec. Baekelandt. *De Luipaardman*. Standaard Uitgeverij.

Leemans, Hec. Baekelandt. *De Wraak van de Klauw*. Standaard Uitgeverij.

Martin, Jacques. 1968. *Alex. De Zwarte Klauw*. Casterman.

Pratt, Hugo. 1972, 2006. *Corto Maltese. De Ethiopiërs*. Casterman.

Richelle, P. & Delitte, J.Y.. 1995. *Donnington. De nacht van de luipaard*. Talent.

Vernes & Coria. 1997. *Bob Morane. La Vallée des Brontosaures*. Le Lombard.

##### **Films:**

*The Leopard Woman*. Wesley Ruggles, 1920.

*The Leopard Man*. Jacques Tourneur, 1943.

*Tarzan and the Leopard Woman*. Kurt Neumann, 1946.

##### **Documentaries:**

Cauvin, André. 1948. *L'Equateur au Cent Visages*.

Hoefler, Paul. 1940. *The Leopard Men of Africa*.

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<sup>252</sup>Some comics were initially published in monthly comic magazines or in journals. This was the case for Tintin which appeared in the children's supplement of the Belgian newspaper Le XXIème Siècle. Other such magazines in which leopard men appeared were, for example, Biggles, a Belgian publication appearing in Switzerland and Morocco, and Jungle Film, an Italian publication in French appearing in France and Canada.

## **Appendix 5: Fragment from Joset (1955: 198-199) : Excerpts from autopsy reports.**

### **The victim Adomoy occurred in the murders by Mbako in 1933 and the victim Bakebona occurred in the series of murders against the chiefdom of Wangata:**

Quelques rapports d'autopsie de cadavres en région de Stanleyville:

#### *Assassinat d'Atobi.*

*La tête était nettement séparée du corps par une incision de la peau et du tissu cellulaire sous-cutané, tantôt à forme circulaire, tantôt à forme ondulaotoire, mais partout à bords nets, et opérée avec un instrument piquant et tranchant.*

*Toutes les parties externes et internes du cou et de la nuque manquaient (peau, muscles, vertèbres, cervicales, organes du tube digestif, de l'appareil respiratoire, etc.). La tête, dans sa plus grande partie, n'existait plus qu'à l'état de crâne osseux, ayant conservé cependant une partie du cuir chevelu à la région de la voûte, et dépourvue partout ailleurs du restant du cuir chevelu ainsi que de la totalité de la peau. Le globe de l'oeil droit persistait dans son orbite, celui de l'oeil gauche manquait. Les deux oreilles manquaient; la langue manquait. Conclusions: dans le cas de la prénommée, toutes les plaies décrites ont été des plaies à bords nets, opérées par un instrument tranchant et piquant dirigé par une main criminelle. Il ne peut être question de plaies opérées par un fauve et notamment par un léopard, c'est-à-dire de plaies par arrachement et à lambeaux.*

#### *Assassinat d'Andomoy.*

*Il résultait de la description des plaies faite par le Dr Conzemius, le 14 janvier 1933, qu'il s'agissait bien d'un crime commis à la façon des Aniato: quelques plaies mortelles vers la région de la carotide, et de petites plaies faites avec le couteau d'Aniato sur tout le corps, plaies simulant les blessures causées par les quatre griffes du fauve. Toutefois, la conclusion du Dr conzemius excluait catégoriquement l'intervention du fauve.*

#### *Assassinat de Papa.*

*Le certificat médical du Dr Conzemius attestait qu'il ne pouvait être question de plaies opérées par un fauve. Le cadavre avait été entièrement mutilé: La tête nettement tranchée du tronc par une incision circulaire partant de la base de la nuque à hauteur des deux épaules, contournant le côté gauche du cou (en passant par la moitié environ de la clavicule gauche), descendant ensuite obliquement vers le sein gauche, qui avait été séparé, pour se diriger de là vers le sein droit, qui avait été enlevé, et remontant de nouveau vers le milieu de la clavicule droite pour rejoindre l'incision première à la base de la nuque. Cette plaie a été opérée par un instrument tranchant. La tête n'existait plus qu'à l'état osseux. La peau, les oreilles et la langue étaient nettement et proprement enlevées et sans lambeaux. Aucune trace de plaies n'a été constatée sur le corps de la victime." (Rapport du 14 décembre 1932.)*

*Assassinat de Bakebona.:*

*Le Dr Conzemius a établi dans le détail les plaies que portait le cadavre de Bakebona:*

- 1) une plaie nette dans la région sus-claviculaire gauche, palie d'une longueur de 2 cm ½ et mettant à nu les gros vaisseaux du cou;*
- 2) une plaie nette d'un cm ½ située dans la même région et légèrement au-dessus de la première;*
- 3) une double plaie nette ne forme de M située dans la même région, un peu en arrière de la première et vers le côté gauche de la nuque;*
- 4) une plaie nette d'un cm ½ située dans la nuque, du côté gauche;*
- 5) une palie piquante large de 5 mm, située dans la nuque du côté gauche et en arrière de la plaie;*
- 6) une plaie nette située dans la région sus-hyoïdienne, longue d'un cm ½;*
- 7) une plaie nette, longue de 2 cm ½, située dans la région latérale du tronc au-dessous du creux occulaire gauche;*
- 8) deux plaies nettes longues de 2 cm ½, situées dans la région occulaire droite;*
- 9) trois petites plaies piquantes situées sur le flanc droit. Il déclara, en outre, que toutes ces plaies avaient été occasionnées par des instruments tranchants et piquants et qu'elles avaient causé la mort de l'enfant.*

**Appendix 6: Fragment from Joset (1955: 34): Description of attacks made by the *vihokohoko* Bangota of the Bahera of Kinombe during an interrogation in 1934.**

*... Après avoir passé deux mois dans l'île, déclara le prévenu, Mukuniu dit à Kisangani (un de ses propres fils) et à moi-même qu'il était temps de nous exercer à tuer des gens. Il nous envoya dans son propre village et nous prescrivit de tuer une de ses femmes. Nous nous rendîmes à la case. Lorsque la femme sortit, je sautai sur elle et lui enfonçai mon couteau dans la gorge. Kisangani fit de même. La victime fut tuée ; c'était sa mère. Nous rentrâmes alors dans l'île. Nous dûmes à Mukuniu : « Ta femme est morte. » Il nous répondit : « C'est bien. » Nous dormîmes quatre jours, là dans l'île. Mukuniu nous dit : « Allez tuer maintenant quelqu'un chez Massumbuku. » Nous arrivâmes dans le village de ce dernier. La nuit tombait. Une jeune femme qui n'avait pas encore engendré sortit pour chercher de l'eau. Comme elle passait sur la piste, je me jetai sur elle et l'empêchai de se débattre. Alors Kisangani la tua. Ce fut la seconde victime. Nous rentrâmes dans l'île. Cinq jours se passèrent. Mukuniu nous dit : « Maintenant, vous irez tuer quelqu'un chez Kibashi. » Nous y allâmes vers onze heures. Un enfant était en train de s'amuser sur le chemin, tandis que sa mère labourait. Kisangani le jeta par terre, et je le tuai. L'enfant cria ; alors, sa mère s'enfuit rapidement. Ce fut la troisième victime. Nous rentrâmes dans l'île. Cinq jours après, Mukuniu nous dit : « Allez tuer quelqu'un chez Alimasi. » Nous partîmes de nouveau, Kisangani et moi. Arrivés près du village, nous vîmes un enfant qui s'amusait à tuer des oiseaux dans un champ. Je m'approchai de lui et le jetai par terre, tandis que Kisangani le tuait. Ce fut la quatrième victime. Après être retournés à l'île, nous reçûmes l'ordre de Mukuniu de rentrer dans nos villages.*

## **Glossary**

AA: Africa Archives, Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

AAE: Annales Aequatoria archives, University of Gent

AIMO: colonial archives “Affaires Indigènes et Main d’Oeuvre”

DE: Dossier Ethnographique, archives of the Ethnography Department of the RMCA

IMNC: Instituts des Musées Nationaux du Congo

KUL: Catholic University of Leuven

MAS: Museum aan de Stroom, Antwerp

NICC: National Institute for Criminalistics and Criminology, Belgium

RMCA: Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren

RMCA AIMO: Archives AIMO, Ethnography Department of the RMCA

RMCA HIST: History Department, RMCA

UGent: University of Gent

UNIKIN: Université de Kinshasa



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383 de Macar, A.H.A.  
817 Henry, Général J. (de la Lindi)  
1145 Stasse, Mme

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AIMO 1397, 4392, 4746, 11164, 11688, 11698 contain specific documents on sects a.o.

*anioto*.

- AIMO 4392 contains a.o. geographical map with dates and number of crimes occurring in villages 20/9/34; list of crimes by Territorial Administrator Tihon, 2/9/1934.
- AIMO 11164 and 11698: Contains data regarding *anioto*, *emba*, *nebeli* and other secret sects among the Budu. A.o. a geographical map showing the location of *anioto* murders among the Budu in 1940.
- AIMO 11688: Letter to the District Commissioner from Territorial Administrator Winckelmans of the Budu. Subject: *Anioto* cases. Wamba, 27/6/35.

AIMO 6486, 6736, 13611, 14534, 1586 (9071) contain documents regarding the colonial administration of the Bali populations.

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Lettre 19/12/34 de Mr comm de Distr L. Libois à Mr le comm. de Prov. de et à Stanleyville ; concernant : rélégation *aniotos*. En annexe des rapports de l'AT Bouccin :
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Letter from Provincial Commissioner R. Dufour to the General Governor at Leopoldville, Stanleyville 10/12/34 (subject: occupation of the Beni territory). The letter contains 10 annexes which are letters and reports leading to the decision to organise a military occupation of the territory:

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 (inventory: [http://www.aequatoria.be/04engels/040archives\\_en/041cat5\\_en.htm](http://www.aequatoria.be/04engels/040archives_en/041cat5_en.htm))

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