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A Quiet Revolution: Youth Perception of State and Church Ideology in *Zaire*

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# **A Quiet Revolution?**

**Youth Perception of State and Church Ideology in Zaire**

**Christa Romaldi**

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MA degree in  
Globalization and International Development

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Faculty of Social Sciences  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis focuses on the power struggle between Mobutu's administration and the Catholic Church as it played out in the realm of education. In particular, it focuses on how state ideology, meaning authenticity and Mobutism, pervaded education through textbooks and teaching materials in 1970s Zaïre and how the Catholic Church attempted to resist state ideology through education as well. Discourse analysis was used to determine how state dogma and Church opposition were disseminated to youth via educational materials. Furthermore, I examine how and why youth responded to this power struggle through the examination of painting, music and literature created by the 1970s cohort as they aged. Again, discourse analysis is used to understand the meanings conveyed through the art. Youth, I argue, have rejected Mobutu and his ideologies and remain uncertain, perhaps even suspicious, of the Catholic Church's role in Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo).

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## ***Introduction: Youth Perception of State and Church in 1970s Zaire***

This thesis examines how Mobutu Sese Seko, formerly Joseph Desiré Mobutu, the President of Zaire<sup>1</sup> (1965-1997), disseminated ideology through various educational media in an attempt to create an obedient youth population in 1970s Zaire, how the youth responded to his attempts, and why his attempts were unsuccessful. In particular, I examine how Mobutu's political party, the *Mouvement populaire de la révolution* (MPR), used education to institutionalize an official history of Zaire in an effort to promote pro-MPR sentiment among youth. The Catholic Church, which had been the official state provider of education in the Belgian Congo until the mid-1950s and continued to run the majority of schools beyond independence, resisted the MPR's attempt to manage education. Through the administration of separate school boards, the writing of their own text books, and the creation of state and Church-specific extra-curricular activities, the two institutions vied for dominance in education to shape the youth of the nation. The state-church tensions evident in education were imprinted on youth, which is evident upon exploration of this cohort's (those born close to independence and educated in the 1970s) popular art. It is clear that both the state and Church's attempts to influence youth were largely unsuccessful. The popular art suggests that this cohort trusted neither the state nor the Church to work for the common good. The state did not follow through on promises made in educational material, while the Church could not rid the perception that it was both connected to colonialism and the MPR. Opposition to both institutions is a common theme in the popular art, suggesting that the 1970s cohort wanted change and would act to achieve it.

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<sup>1</sup> I use the historically accurate name of the country throughout the paper. During the colonial period, I use Belgian Congo; 1960-1964 Congo-Léopold; 1965-1971 Democratic Republic of the Congo; 1971-1997 Zaire; and 1997 to present Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

According to Crawford Young, expression of anti-government sentiment and popular participation in anti-government activity diminished following the internal conflict between 1960 and 1965.<sup>2</sup> The violence of the immediate post-independence era had traumatized the population and instilled fear in them.<sup>3</sup> Independence had come swifter than first intended by the Belgian Congo's colonial rulers, who had initially planned on a gradual incorporation of the African majority into the Belgian administration, yielding shared governance between Africans, Belgians, and other Europeans.<sup>4</sup> Africans in the Belgian Congo, however, expressed vocal opposition to the Belgian administration in 1956; rioting followed three years later in Kinshasa. This open opposition led King Baudouin of Belgium to promise independence, which sparked further protest and action against ongoing colonial rule. The state soon lost control of key districts. Popular sentiment, economic losses (including a sharp economic downturn leading to \$1 billion in external debt in 1960), lack of faith in the *Force Publique*, the militia, to protect against nationalist protest and fear due to the French-Algerian conflict, led the Belgians to hold a Round Table in Brussels.<sup>5</sup> The Belgians invited the leaders of eleven Congolese political parties and three Belgian parties to a conference in early 1960 to discuss the terms and timetable for Independence. All Congolese parties, even those sympathetic to the Belgians, wanted immediate independence. The Belgians conceded but on the premise that the transition to Congolese rule would occur after independence and the Belgians would maintain control of the army and the state bureaucracy.

The Round Table agreement scheduled elections for May 1960, with a brief campaign period beginning in February. Although there were numerous political parties,

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<sup>2</sup> Crawford Young, "Zaire: the anatomy of a failed state," *History of Central Africa: The Contemporary Years, Since 1960*, eds. David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin (London: Longman, 1998), 109.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

three figures dominated the early Congolese political sphere: Moïse Tshombé, a pro-Belgian merchant's son from the mineral-rich province of Katanga (later Shaba); Joseph Kasavubu, leader of a Bakongo ethnic association that became a political party; and Patrice Lumumba, leader of the nationalist *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC). These politicians, and the other party leaders, relied on two kinds of appeal: aggressive nationalism and ethnic or regional sentiments.<sup>6</sup> Although Patrice Lumumba's party only won forty-one of 137 seats in the May 1960 election, other regional parties that supported Lumumba's unitary nationalist policy won thirty, giving the MNC a fragile majority. Following independence on 30 June, 1960, the *Force Publique* mutinied, spreading unrest across the country. On July 11, 1960, the mineral-rich province of Katanga declared secession and Belgian forces intervened on its behalf. The United Nations sent international troops to restore order, while many key UN officials became increasingly suspicious of what they saw as Lumumba's 'erratic' and 'irrational' behaviour.<sup>7</sup> Tensions between Prime Minister Lumumba and President Kasavubu peaked when Kasavubu, with the support of British, French, and American Embassies, revoked Lumumba's appointment as PM. The two Chambers of Parliament overturned the dismissal. Shortly after independence, Mobutu, then colonel and chief of staff, announced the army had seized power to neutralize Lumumba and Kasavubu. Mobutu and Kasavubu acted together as heads of state with support from Kinshasa and the anti-Lumumba ethnic groups that resided there.<sup>8</sup> After being placed under house arrest in September 1960, Lumumba escaped only to be caught again and sent to a prison in Lower

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

Zaire. On 17 January, 1961, Congolese troops assassinated Lumumba, making him a martyr and myth in the Congo-Léopold's collective memory.<sup>9</sup>

Following Lumumba's death, his supporters continued to resist Kasavubu's new government, as did Tshombe's supporters and later Katangan radicals, through armed insurgencies. United Nations forces and the central government's army supported by American and Belgian intelligence agencies remained in the nation during 1963 and 1964. In 1965, parliamentary elections demonstrated the nation's internal divide as two factions centred loosely on pro and anti-Tshombe sentiment emerged.<sup>10</sup> Kasavubu denied Tshombe the PM appointment, but his choice for Prime Minister was not approved either, creating a political impasse. Mobutu took this opportunity to stage a coup that enjoyed some degree of popular support due in large part to many people's desire for peace and security.<sup>11</sup> Initially, Mobutu claimed his regime was 'transitional'<sup>12</sup>, however as years progressed, it became clear that he was unwilling to share or transfer power by democratic or other means. His party reigned from 1965 to 1997, using both obvious means of oppression and repression, for example limiting the media or imprisoning and killing political opponents, and more subtle means of coercion and indoctrination. The state did not, however, proceed unchallenged. The Catholic Church, a powerful institution in the Congo-Léopold since the colonial period and, "the only other locus of significant economic, social and political influence,"<sup>13</sup> initially supported the Mobutu regime. However, as the regime became increasingly oppressive and suspicious of Church power, the Catholic Church began to oppose the regime often through public criticism and a refusal to bend to Mobutu's demands.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid..

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid..

<sup>12</sup> Ch. Didier Gondola, *The History of Congo* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2002), 132-3.

<sup>13</sup> Michael G. Schatzberg, *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 117.

Both Mobutu's state and the Catholic Church were aware that youth were a powerful demographic group capable of triggering social upheaval and therefore were heavily invested in the youth of the nation. State and Church were involved in the education of youth via the formal methods of schools and popular methods of education through the media and youth groups. The importance of youth in the Congo-Léopold led to my particular research interest: the use of textbooks and teaching materials to disseminate state ideology, the Catholic Church's opposition to the state through the same media, and the resulting opposition of students who were educated in the 1970s.

### *1. Research Objectives*

This project focused on Zairian youth's decision to reject state ideology evident in educational materials in 1970s Zaire. After winning the 1971 election, Mobutu called for mental decolonization, or a return to 'authenticity,' meaning a return to Zairian life prior to the colonial presence. This idea was problematic in no small part because it assumed a uniform past among all people who lived within the territory of the polity called 'Zaire' in 1971; it nonetheless seemed to legitimize Mobutu's autocratic reign. As the decade progressed, authenticity was replaced with Mobutism: a cult-like worship of his person. Mobutu consolidated his leadership role, turning increasingly to nationalist rhetoric to legitimate his rule and gain popular support. In seeking to muster or maintain popular participation, nationalist movements often call on youth to serve particular political purposes.<sup>14</sup>

After careful examination of educational materials--textbooks and teaching materials used at schools, radio broadcasts, and extra-curricular activities like youth groups, student

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<sup>14</sup> G Thomas Burgess, "Imagined Generations: Constructing youth in revolutionary Zanzibar," *Vanguard or Vandals: youth, politics and conflict in Africa*, eds Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel (Brill: Leiden, 2005), 75.

politics, and required government activities--I determined that the state used education as a tool to disseminate authenticity and Mobutism to the students in the 1970s. In the MPR's plans, Zairian youth were to play a supporting role in keeping the nationalist fervour alive and maintaining Mobutu's popularity well into the future. This plan never materialized because the MPR failed to fulfill its role as provider of opportunity and basic needs. However, the state did not have full control over the educational system. The Catholic clergy, due to their historical role as educators in the colonial state, still managed the majority of educational facilities. Education, therefore, was an arena in which the Church was capable of resisting and challenging the state machine, which it did with vigour for the majority of the 1970s. Many Zairian youth, however, criticized the Church as well, not seeing it as hero or liberator because of its connection to the colonial past and certain clergy's close relationship with the regime. The cohort's rejection of Mobutu's ideologies and its suspicion towards the Catholic Church were evident in popular art produced by those who were youth in the 1970s (the 1970s cohort).

Defining 'youth' requires overcoming the term's ambiguity, especially in the African context. In some contexts, youth may be defined biologically as an age range prior to adulthood, lasting until the end of schooling or training. However, the, "initiation of the young into adult society—that in many societies used to be ritually marked by rites of transition and a period of seclusion and training—can no longer be properly accomplished in Africa."<sup>15</sup> Thus my definition of youth is social instead of biological, allowing for people who might otherwise be considered adults, in strict chronological terms, to be defined as 'youth.' I extend the label of "youth" in Africa to those who finished schooling or training,

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 7.

but were without work in the formal sector and without the funds to start a family.<sup>16</sup> Youth, in this context, refers to those who are still dependent on adults. I examined primary and secondary education, but not beyond, so my exploration of youth involved those who experienced some form of primary, secondary or popular education during the 1970s.

I also employed a broad definition of the term education. In 1970s Zaire, children who attended school regularly, for long durations or graduated were rare. In the ten years following independence, school enrolment increased 100%.<sup>17</sup> Despite the increase in class sizes both in primary and secondary education, many students left school before completing their program.<sup>18</sup> For example, in the 1971/72 school year, there were 899 513 students in first grade. In the sixth grade, only 259 510 students remained.<sup>19</sup> Of the fifty-three thousand students enrolled in secondary programs, only two hundred graduated.<sup>20</sup> To make matters worse, 60-70 % of primary school graduates were not accepted into post-primary or secondary programs, meaning very few students completed enough education to yield skilled positions in the workforce.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, education was not providing youth with the opportunity to earn a decent income and become independent of their families. Knowing that most students did not complete primary and secondary programs, both the Church and the government utilized various forms of media, including brochures, manuals, radio, and television as well as highly organised youth groups, for example the *Jeunesse Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (JMPPR), to educate youth. Education that occurred outside of schools I refer to as popular education. My research, therefore, included sources that were

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<sup>16</sup> Donald B. Cruise O'Brien, "A Lost Generation? Youth Identity and State Decay in West Africa," In *Post-colonial identities in Africa*, eds. Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (London: Zed Books, 1996). 57.

<sup>17</sup> Wyatt McGaffey, "Education, Religion, and Social structures in Zaire," *Anthropology and Education quarterly* 13.3 (Autumn 1982): 244.

<sup>18</sup> Albert H. Devos, *Les structures de l'enseignement du second degré de l'ancien Congo belge à la République du Zaïre: Evolutions et problèmes: 1955-1973* (Louvain: Séminaire Voor Comparatieve Pedagogiek K U Leuven, 1978): 83.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>20</sup> James C. Ching, "Public Education trends in the DRC. 1960-1967," *Comparative Education Review* 12 3 (October 1968):333.

<sup>21</sup> MacGaffey, 244

not necessarily used in school, but rather instructional and educational tools disseminated among the youth.

The term generational identity refers to the tendencies of an age cohort to react, respond and behave similarly due to a common history and common memory. In Zaire, a demographic boom and an economic downturn in the mid-1970s increased the number of youth both in a chronological and social sense: more children were born and more young adults could not afford to live independently from their family. Youth therefore had an overwhelming presence and ability to exert pressure in Zaire.<sup>22</sup> Despite its size, the 1970s youth cohort was marginalized, but as others have suggested, this “perceived marginality and liminality of youth place[d] them squarely in the centre and generate[d] tremendous power.”<sup>23</sup> The MPR assumed that the youth would heed their teachings and remain docile, however, youth, whose wants and needs were often ignored, were highly motivated to resist the MPR. Though Zairian youth were not homogenous and their opinions and decisions varied, the examination of popular art reflects commonly expressed attitudes toward state and Church; these attitudes cohere in a consistent generational identity of the 1970s cohort. By popular art, I refer specifically to visual, aural or written art forms produced in any conventional mode of expression, meaning fictional literature, visual arts (with a focus on painting), or music.

## 2. *Rationale*

My initial research interest was education, but I did not want to examine its impact on economic development. Instead, I was interested in how youth interpreted the

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<sup>22</sup> Abbink, 11

<sup>23</sup> Filip DeBoeck and Alcinda Honwana, “Introduction Children and youth in Africa. Agency, Identity, and Place, *Makers and Breakers: Children and youth in Postcolonial Africa*,” eds Filip DeBoeck and Alcinda Honwana (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 2005), 10.

educational material they were exposed to both inside and outside of school. I focused on Zaire in the 1970s because Mobutu had consolidated his rule and was promoting authenticity and Mobutism. I hoped to uncover if and how Mobutu used education to convey official state discourse. Upon further reading of the literature, I recognized a significant gap in the historical examination of education in Zaire. Although literature existed regarding the education in the 1970s, it was sparse compared to colonial education and contemporary education studies. Furthermore, aside from a few key works<sup>24</sup>, very little literature engaged with primary educational materials, for example textbooks or youth group pamphlets.

I also noted that the bulk of the scholarship on the conflict between Mobutu's state and the Catholic Church focused on the formal political sphere, meaning the examination of policy changes and public debate. However I found no literature that examined how the conflict between state and Church was reflected in other spheres such as in teaching materials. My goal, therefore, was to provide research to bridge the gap in literature regarding Zaire's educational system and examine how the expressions of this youth cohort reflected the teachings and tensions that pervaded educational material. As my research progressed, it became clear why education had not effectively conveyed state and Church ideology.

### *3. Literature Review*

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<sup>24</sup> Specifically Augustin Odimba Omakoko, *L'enseignement de l'histoire en République Démocratique du Congo (ex Zaire) Diagnostic 1960-1980* (Bern Peter Lang, 1999) and Kitenge N'gambwa, "Regime legitimation in education in Zaire," (Phd diss., Cornell University, 1997)

Existing scholarship on educational practices in 1970s Zaire is relatively scant; there is a massive amount of work written on colonial education in the Belgian Congo, but little extended beyond independence.<sup>25</sup> Although this work proved helpful as a foundation, it does not address the educational methods of Mobutu's state or the influence of the Church in education following independence. Instead, here I engage with theoretical literature that addresses how education can be used to disseminate ideology and inculcate youth, historical literature that covers the post-independence period and explains the tensions between state and Church, and primary literature that demonstrates how state and Church engaged with youth through education.

### *3.1 Power and Knowledge: Discourse in Education*

The purpose of the theoretical structure of my work is to illustrate the relationship between institutionalized knowledge and identity, which I consider to be composed of behaviours, morals, beliefs, and norms. Post-structural theory suggests that knowledge is passed to youth via educational institutions, which are important sites of social regulation and cultural inculcation. I chose to employ Michel Foucault, a post-structural theorist, because his work illustrates the way in which power permeates institutions through discourse. Bearing the tools of power, namely institutionalized means of access to truth, norms and objectivity,<sup>26</sup> the State and the Church possessed a capacity to manipulate youth to serve their own agendas, specifically achieving obedience and loyalty. Because youth

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<sup>25</sup> Although there are too many sources to provide an exhaustive list, please see for example Bernard B. Fall, "Education in the Republic of the Congo," *The Journal of Negro Education* 30.3 (Summer 1961): 266-276., J.S. Harris, "Education in the Belgian Congo," *The Journal of Negro Education* 15.3 (Summer 1946): 410-426.; and Barbara Yates, "Structural Problems in Education in the Congo (Leopoldville)," *Comparative Education Review* 7.2 (October 1963). 152-162

<sup>26</sup> Mark S. Cladis, "Durkheim and Foucault on education and punishment," In *Durkheim and Foucault. perspectives on education and punishment*, ed. Mark S. Cladis (Oxford: Durkheim Press, 1999), 10.

were expected to represent and protect the nation,<sup>27</sup> they were supposed to reflect the discourse that formed national identity. At the same time, youth could resist inculcation, thereby rejecting the agendas or goals of the powerful body (bodies).

Youth are particularly appropriate for Foucauldian analysis because they represent ‘docile bodies,’ ones, “that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” for political ends.<sup>28</sup> However, Foucault also states that, “Power, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counterattack in that same body.”<sup>29</sup> He therefore suggests that youth have the ability to resist, or at least negotiate with, the powers that were dictating ‘knowledge.’ Furthermore, Foucault believes that power, and the negotiation over this power, informs knowledge; power produces knowledge.<sup>30</sup> As I worked through the primary sources, it became evident that both state and Church crafted knowledge through the inclusion, exclusion and description of historical events. The construction of history became a key space for the conflicting state and Church to disseminate their beliefs subtly in everyday learning, in constant negotiation over the loyalty and support of the population.

I used Michel Foucault’s discourse analysis to examine written data, for example education policy, textbooks, and literature. According to Foucault, discourse analysis, “stresses the historical constitution of knowledge.”<sup>31</sup> Discourse may be considered a kind of social action whereby social institutions and practices create ‘truths,’ which, in turn,

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<sup>27</sup> J.A. Mbembe, *Les jeunes et l’ordre politique en Afrique noire* (Paris: Harmattan, 1985), 17.

<sup>28</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 136.

<sup>29</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980),56.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Valerie Walkerdine, “Post-structuralist theory and everyday social practices: the family and the school,” In *Feminist social psychology: developing theory and practice*, ed. Sue Wilkinson (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986), 64.

combine to structure society.<sup>32</sup> In order to examine discourse, a variety of different lenses must be used, for example historical, ideological and anthropological lenses. Also, one must examine how the engagements and conflicts emerge within discourse, and not expect formalized, empirical answers but a body of knowledge that must be analyzed and re-analyzed.<sup>33</sup> After using discourse analysis, I synthesized a body of knowledge to decipher the official state discourse evident in education, the Church discourse that resisted the state, and, in popular art, youth's resistance of both institutions' discourses.

Many of my research materials were not written; painting played a very important role in my analysis of generational identity. When examining painting, I used Roland Barthes, who also employs discourse analysis, but does not believe discourse is limited to written or spoken language. Language, according to Roland Barthes, is visual as well as verbal.<sup>34</sup> Like discourse, images are imbued with historical meaning that the audience can understand because they share collective memory. They tell stories and draw connections that, without analysis, act purely on the subconscious. Barthes explains that, "what is invested in the concept is less reality than a certain knowledge of reality."<sup>35</sup> Therefore the reality that the youth learned in 1970s Zaire was expressed in visual images. Barthes is not alone in this belief; Bogumil Jewsiewicki has stated that images are an integral player in the reproduction of identity and popular consciousness.<sup>36</sup> Discourse analysis was used to decipher messages in written, spoken, sung and painted material throughout this project.

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<sup>32</sup> George L. Dillon, "Discourse: 2. Discourse Theory," in *John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (<http://litguide.press.jhu.edu.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/cgi-bin/view.cgi?eid=78&query=discourse%20analysis%20and%20foucault>) Accessed January 6, 2009

<sup>33</sup> Robert de Beaugrande, "Discourse. 1. Discourse Analysis," in *John Hopkins guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (<http://litguide.press.jhu.edu.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/cgi-bin/view.cgi?eid=77#top>) Accessed January 6, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York City: Hill and Wang, 1972), 111.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>36</sup> Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Presentation: Le langage politique et les arts plastiques en Afrique," *Art and politics in Black Africa*, ed. Bogumil Jewsiewicki (Safi, Morocco: Canadian Association of African Studies, 1989), 5.

After his seizure of power, Mobutu used official discourse to disseminate authenticity and Mobutism through formal and popular education to achieve specific goals: create a national identity,<sup>37</sup> decolonize mentally, pacify ethnic tensions and erase socio-cultural barriers, like class tensions and the urban-rural divide. Mobutu's use of official discourse reflects Homi K. Bhaba's claim that there can be no homogenous national identity, only one dependent on discourse.<sup>38</sup> Every nation is composed of various cultures: religious, ethnic, linguistic or otherwise, and thus is never truly a cohesive whole. In order to create a national identity, administrations may create or emphasize similarities or construct mythology surrounding the nation's history and struggles. The official discourse conveys these myths to the public and creates bonds among them until they, too, believe that they are and have always been a cohesive whole. However, official discourse never goes uncontested. Resistance or alternative discourse is possible in both the private and public sphere and may be expressed by bodies other than institutions, for example family, community, ethnicity, and regional groups.

In the book *Cultural Politics and Education*, Michael W. Apple claims that educational policy results from struggle and compromise, and therefore multiple power relations are inherent in policy and practice.<sup>39</sup> In 1970s Zaire, the Church, with its Western origin and largely Western-born clergy, was intrinsically linked to Western notions of modernity and progress, conflicting with Mobutu's return to authenticity, which promoted pre-colonial practices. However, authenticity often had less to do with pre-colonial Congolese practices and focused instead on what suited Mobutu and the MPR. The

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<sup>37</sup> Peta Ikambana, *Mobutu's Totalitarian Political System An Afrocentric Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 24

<sup>38</sup> Cited in Kara McDonald, "Learning Whose Nation?" In *Curriculum as Cultural Practice Postcolonial Imaginations*, eds Yatta Kanu (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 305

<sup>39</sup> Michael W. Apple, *Cultural Politics and Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996), xvi

authenticity campaign was, in part, an open attack on the Catholic Church, the only other institution that could mobilize the masses against the administration.<sup>40</sup> Education became an integral space of struggle between state and Church.

### 3.2 *Generational Identity: Youth and Memory*

According to one theory of generational identity, generations are built upon three existing structures: the generational location, or the opportunities afforded to a group of people; the generational actuality, or a bond created through exposure to, “social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic destabilization;”<sup>41</sup> and generational units, which are the structures of knowledge that express generational location.<sup>42</sup> This model suggests that generational identities are based upon situation at birth, shared trauma or experience, and knowledge that expresses these. Thus, the medium of education was particularly crucial in the formation of generational identity for the 1970s generation in Zaire because it gathered people of the same age cohort together, forced them to remember an experience, for example Belgian colonial rule, or the violence of post-independence conflict, and developed or even imposed an official discourse to describe these events. This point is reinforced by Halbwachs, who states that generations are formed through the institutionalization of collective memory.<sup>43</sup> According to Eyerman, direct experience of a trauma is not necessary for it to affect identity. The means of representation which disseminates the shared event to a wide audience are sufficient to create the memory and are crucial in the development of identity, as each generation learns from the representations of

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<sup>40</sup> Wyatt MacGaffey, “Am I Myself? Identities in Zaire, Then and Now,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> series 8 (1998): 301

<sup>41</sup> June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner, “Introduction: Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics,” In *Generational Consciousness, Narrative and Politics*, eds. June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner (Lanham, MD Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2002), 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 5

<sup>43</sup> Cited in Edmunds and Turner, 5.

the previous generation.<sup>44</sup> Thus my research focused on learning material, which conveys experiences, including traumatic ones, from generation to generation to see how the 1970s generation produced popular art in response to these experiences.

Remembering and forgetting coexist to create a shared narrative that constitutes the memory of a generation. According to Johannes Fabian, a generation's act of 'remembering' and the act of forgetting (not forgetting content) are critical and subversive.<sup>45</sup> The generation can create a narrative that conflicts with the ruling hegemony's official history and academic history thereby creating a counter memory. This shared counter memory, also called the collective or popular memory by Fabian, is construed as a secret but is widely understood by the public.<sup>46</sup> This memory remains popular, regardless of being widely accepted, as long as it is not canonized or promoted officially.<sup>47</sup> A generation's collective memory underlies the narratives expressed through their art. Therefore, the art of a generation can display a collective, or popular, memory that runs counter to the official history of a nation.

'Generation' can play an important role in political and social movements; the formation of generational identity and motivation is crucial when attempting to assess the possibilities for the future of a society. In "The Problem of Generations," Karl Mannheim claims that a role of age cohorts is as agents of social change and carriers of intellectual and organizational alternatives to the status quo. As such, generations can form the base of

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<sup>44</sup> Ron Eyerman, "Intellectuals and the Construction of African American Identity Outline of a Generational Approach," In *Generational Consciousness, Narrative and Politics*, eds June Edmunds and Bryan S Turner (Lanham, MD Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2002), 63

<sup>45</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Memory Against Culture* (Durham Duke University Press, 2007), 78 79

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid* , 94

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid* , 104

opposition.<sup>48</sup> In the context of Zaire, one method of opposition was via popular culture. Popular culture was one of the few venues where open critique of the MPR and Mobutu could occur without punitive repercussions. Anti-Mobutu and anti-MPR themes were common in painting and literature; modern music was often a movement against the old guard. The reaction against the MPR was born of the inability of the domineering administration to convince the youth of state supremacy and meet the expectations the state had created for itself.

### *3.3 Education in Zaire: Structure and Statistics*

Much of the literature on Zaire's education policy focuses on its relation to economic prosperity and growth,<sup>49</sup> ignoring its effects on the development of youth identity. This may be because education in Congo-Léopold had been perceived as stable at independence. Both Paul-Albert Emoungu and Patrick Boyle agree that decolonization was a relatively smooth transition in the education sector.<sup>50</sup> Education was, both in colonial and post-independence times, the Catholic Church's territory. The Church remained relatively stable through the transition to independence, thus major political changes did not affect education as much as other institutions. Bogumil Jewsiewicki and V.Y. Mudimbe make clear that independence and decolonization did not necessarily indicate a 'de-Christianization.'<sup>51</sup> In fact, despite state opposition, the colonial educational infrastructure, meaning the Catholic education system, remained intact for the duration of Mobutu's reign. After independence, the

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<sup>48</sup> Cited in Edmunds and Turner, 4.

<sup>49</sup> See Mwenene Mukweso et. Al. "Education and Occupational Attainment from Generation to Generation: the Case of Zaire" or Clinton Robinson and Elisabeth Gfeller, "A Basic Education Programme in Africa: The People's Own?" for example.

<sup>50</sup> Patrick M. Boyle, "School Wars: Church, State, and the Death of the Congo," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 33 3 (September 1995): 451. And Paul-Albert Emoungu, "Schooling and Economic Development Revisited: The Case of Zaire," *The Journal of Negro Education* 56 3 (Summer 1987): 293.

<sup>51</sup> B. Jewsiewicki and V.Y. Mudimbe, "Africans' memories and contemporary history of Africa," In *History making in Africa*, eds B. Jewsiewicki and V.Y. Mudimbe (Bieheft. Wesleyan University, 1993), 7.

churches remained in charge of the still Eurocentric education system.<sup>52</sup> The system was flawed, however, and it was difficult for Congolese/Zairian youth to receive an adequate education.

In the first ten years after independence, the number of children enrolled in primary and secondary school increased by 100%, but, “Primary education in the 1960s meant, for most children, meaningless rote learning, privation, and physical abuse, in a rigidly authoritarian framework; a diploma testified to little more than endurance.”<sup>53</sup> In the early 1960s, the government recognized the system’s failures and decided that changes had to be made in the educational sector to improve youth reception and results. By 1967, 37% of the national budget was spent on education, a significant amount for a newly independent and developing country.<sup>54</sup> Pol Georis states that the Congolese administration wanted to use existing structures but complement them with local knowledge; foreign staff would only be present to assist native-born teachers.<sup>55</sup> Despite the administration’s attempt to improve the educational system, there was a large discrepancy in numbers, with official state schools only accounting for 20% of primary enrolment, except between 1974-1976 when education was nationalized.<sup>56</sup> In 1973, just prior to the state taking ownership of schools, 85% of primary students and 60% of secondary students attended church-run schools.<sup>57</sup> The Catholic Church’s continued to be a large part of the complicated education system in Mobutu’s state.

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<sup>52</sup> Wyatt MacGaffey, 245

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>54</sup> Ching, 324.

<sup>55</sup> Pol Georis and Baudouin Agbiano, *Evolution de l’enseignement en Republique démocratique du Congo depuis l’indépendance* (Bruxelles: CEMUBAC, 1965), 89.

<sup>56</sup> Emoungu, 293.

<sup>57</sup> Winsome J. Leslie, *Zaire continuity and political change in an oppressive state* (Boulder. Westview Press, 1993), 78.

The Congolese schooling system was a rather complex structure, involving various streams of education and training. This structure applied to both state and Catholic schools. Six years of primary school were divided into sequential degrees: completing grade two yielded a '*degré élémentaire*', grade four resulted in a '*degré moyen*,' and grade six began a '*degré terminale*.' Those who completed all six years of primary school would then take two years of orientation classes to prepare for high school.<sup>58</sup> Following the two year orientation cycle, students could partake in two to three years of apprenticeship; four years of technical school (mechanical, electric, industrial chemistry, or construction); or four years of one of the following: agriculture, commercial and administrative studies, science, literature or humanities, social sciences, or pedagogy. Completing four years after the orientation cycle provided the student with a diploma from the educational institution. However, after two additional years, the student was able to take state-wide tests and, if passed, received a '*diplôme de régent*' and the opportunity to continue on to university.<sup>59</sup> The other option was to enrol in the short cycle. This included four years, without any required orientation years, and a practical, career-oriented education. This long and complex educational system was difficult to maintain.

Teachers were of short supply in the Zaire,<sup>60</sup> and of those who did teach, in 1965 only 3.1% were fully licensed.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, pay was inconsistent, resources were scarce and conditions were substandard. Thus, teachers became a rare commodity in Zaire. Catholic schools, however, usually had the best equipment and the best teachers.<sup>62</sup> One

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<sup>58</sup> Georis and Agbiano, 94

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 102

<sup>60</sup> I chose to employ 'Zaire' here because the problem was not limited to the period before 1971

<sup>61</sup> Ching, 331

<sup>62</sup> Kitenge N'Gambwa, *Regime legitimization in Education in Zaire* (Cornell University 1997), 120

could infer that this was due to financial resources and foreign teachers that were accessible through the Catholic network of episcopates and the Vatican.

Materials were limited in Zairian schools and the efficacy of those available was questionable. Many of the materials throughout the 1970s were European in origin, despite the nation's, and the Zairian Catholic Church's, push for more indigenous materials. Textbooks of European and Catholic origin in general dominated the secondary school landscape. For example, of forty-five French textbooks listed in LeBoul and Kadiondo's bibliography, less than half, only twenty, were published in Zaire. Moreover, of the twenty French texts published in Zaire, thirteen were published in Catholic publishing houses in Zaire or other African nations.<sup>63</sup> In regards to history textbooks, only nine of twenty-nine were published in Zaire, seven of those published by the Catholic Church.<sup>64</sup> Although Mobutu implemented civics as a mandatory class, only four state texts existed, while five Catholic texts were in use in secondary schools.<sup>65</sup> To further emphasize the prevalence of Zairian Catholic texts, one only had to examine religion texts. Unsurprisingly, Catholic bodies published all of the texts, however, all but one were published on Zairian soil.<sup>66</sup> Thus, it was clear that Catholic publishing houses flourished, comparatively speaking to state publishers, in Zaire. This implied that the Catholic Church was better equipped financially to manage schools, which was most likely a blow to the ego of the newly established administration.

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<sup>63</sup> Pierre LeBoul and Mbelo Kadiondo, *Bibliographe des manuels scolaires en usage en République du Zaire (1972-1977)* (Lubumbashi: Centre de linguistique théorique et appliqué, 1977), 23-39.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-37.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-68.

Despite the large number of texts used in Zaire during the 1970s, they, like teachers, were scarce in number. Concentrated in urban and suburban areas, only wealthier children had access to well stocked schools and licensed teachers. Therefore, eradicating illiteracy and educating children in all regions of the nation was problematic. Public education, specifically the use of mass media as a teaching tool, was necessary. The Congress of Congolese Students, a body of university students, claimed that, “all modern means...must contribute to this process.”<sup>67</sup> They insisted upon the mobilization of radio, television, and movies. The result was that media, even cinema and art, managed by the Minister of Information, was first and foremost about education.<sup>68</sup> Mobutu was aware of the power of media education and used it to his advantage. The President promised that all young people would have the educational resources to become total citizens. Until Mobutu outlawed religious radio programming in late 1972,<sup>69</sup> the Catholic Church also used media to disseminate information and educate the youth. Mobutu’s attempt to create a uniform generational location is obvious: all youth, wealthy and not, were educated according to state standards and guidelines. Hence, the battlefield between state and Church was not only the classroom, but public realms as well.

I did not assume that the state and Church’s ideological rhetoric changed drastically at any one historical moment, but that in the 1970s, when Mobutu’s power peaked, the two institutions were in constant competition through education to gain youth support and loyalty. The Church felt its power was being challenged by the now equally powerful and stable administration. The Church disagreed with many state policies, for example the

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<sup>67</sup> Ching, 326.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>69</sup> Kenneth Adelman, “Church-State Conflict in Zaire: 1969-1974,” *African Studies Review* 18.1 (April 1975): 109.

changing of Christian names to African ones, and thus chose to resist them, hoping education could be a subtle method of gaining support without upsetting the administration. At the same time, the state recognized that the influence of the Church could be lessened through education if the state could teach students that the Church was a foreign or unnatural presence in Zaire.

In order to determine how the youth perceived the administration and the Catholic Church, I sought depictions of each of the institutions in artwork, particularly painting, music and literature. These depictions of the institutions were frequent in the artwork of the following decades. The 1970s generation did not limit their criticisms or their praise of the institutions in that artwork. After careful examination, it became clear that the youth rejected the efforts of the state to create a passive and obedient generation, and rejected Mobutu's flawed authenticity campaign that later transformed into the self aggrandizing Mobutism. The 1970s generation depicted the administration as criminals and thieves, and Mobutu in particular as a witch, illustrating the elite politicians' tendency to sacrifice the well-being of the public for their own benefit. The generation's impression of the Church was murky; the Church was described in various works as powerful, corrupt and moral. The 1970s generation learned, however, that it was necessary to question all powerful bodies, even those that claimed to be working on their behalf.

#### *4. Research Design*

My research utilized numerous disciplines to formulate coherent and applicable knowledge. By applying historical, political, sociological, psychological, and cultural

studies to my topic, I achieved the comprehensive response that filled a gap in knowledge in Zaire's education history. I used qualitative analysis to examine both the educational material and popular art figuring in this project. I used discourse analysis combined with historical research to draw my conclusions.

### *5. Methods and Data Collection*

Firstly, I addressed data used for educational purposes. State educational materials were those that the state sanctioned for use inside or outside of classrooms that were not published by a Catholic publishing house and written by a prominent member of the Catholic clergy or teaching staff at a Catholic university. One civics text was considered a state text despite being published by the *Bureau pour l'éducation Catholique* (BEC) because the text itself contained a letter of introduction from a Minister in Mobutu's government. The BEC did not publish the two subsequent texts in the series. Catholic publishing houses published Catholic materials or clergy or teachers at Catholic institutions authored them.

In order to analyse the education system of Zaire in the 1970s, I assessed teaching materials, specifically history texts. I believe that the inclusion, exclusion and depiction of historical events in textbooks are of particular importance in the formation of memory. I also think history textbooks are particularly indicative of political objectives, such as authenticity or Mobutism, because the description of events reflects how an author wants the public remember an event. State-produced history textbooks were rare; however, MPR civics textbooks were available and essentially described the history of Zaire since

independence. Thus, civics textbooks were used to complement European produced history textbooks.

Because many students did not attend formal schooling, media programming and youth groups were also highly important educational materials. Thus, I examined state-directed programs, such as the activities of the JMPR, animation (meaning celebrations of Mobutu including song and dance), and *salongo*, forced manual labour, as extra-curricular state materials. Despite the MPR's ban of Catholic youth groups, the Catholic Church continued to run groups such as the Xaveri. I examined materials used in Xaveri groups, for example George Defour's numerous textbooks.

Educational data from the 1970s was difficult to acquire due to both the time lapse and the challenge of obtaining resources for field research in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I gathered data from Congolese contacts, specifically a classmate, and conducted research using all available institutions. Since data was limited, I collected as much as I could, however I still utilized secondary resources to complement my primary research.

To discern the relationship between education and generational identity, I examined the popular art the 1970s cohort produced in later years. In particular, I examined painting, modern music, and fictional literature. In addition to my theoretical framework, I required additional tools to comprehend the popular art in Zaire. I examined the inclusion of symbols, metaphor, mythological figures, historical figures and context. The works of Bogumil Jewsiewicki and Georges Defour helped me better understand the context and

symbolism of African art by explaining the significance of particular colours and objects.<sup>70</sup>

These analytical tools allowed me to discover deeper meanings evident in the data, meanings that were perhaps not obvious to the students but still greatly affected their perceptions of the world. Because educational materials and art were often imbued with ideology that was not explicitly stated, these tools were integral to understanding popular art. I also believe that using a wide range of tools improved the reliability of my argument, allowing other researchers to employ the same method of analysis and conclude with similar results.

Popular art was integral to understanding youth because, as Molly Andrews has suggested: we become who we are by telling stories about our lives, thus narrative in all its forms is important as an expression of generational identity.<sup>71</sup> The works were studied regardless of the gender, ethnicity, and place of origin of the creator. Although these factors were noted, no work was excluded because of them.

Generational identity data provided fewer limitations than educational materials due to its more recent production and the internet. Regarding visual art, I chose to examine the School of Popular Painters, including Cheri Samba, Cheik Ledy, and Cheri Cherin. Two other artists, Bodo and Moke, were excluded because of their age, while Maître Syms was included due to his age and his close connections with the School. I examined popular music in Zaire, in particular the recent rumbas that employ dancers and *atalaku*. In terms of literature, I analyzed the works of seminal authors including Bolya Baenga and Emongo Lomomba.

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<sup>70</sup> Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Une société urbaine 'moderne' et ses représentations : la peinture populaire à Kinshasa (Congo) 1960-2000," *Le mouvement social* 204 (July-Sept 2003) 131-148. As one example among many of Jewsiewicki's work on Congolese art and Georges Defour, *A l'écoute de la vie Africaine*, (Bukavu: Bandari, 1971): 172-176.

<sup>71</sup> Molly Andrews, "Generational Consciousness, Dialogue, and Political Engagement," In *Generational Consciousness, Narrative and Politics*, eds. June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2002), 80

## 6. *Data Analysis*

I organized my data into two broad categories. The first category encompassed state and Church educational materials. The works in this section were analysed using discourse analysis. I began by examining popular methods of education, focusing on state and Catholic youth groups and their roles in society. An examination of the development of the Congo from origins to present-day, comparing state and Church materials, followed.

The second category encompassed the popular culture materials that reflect generational identity. I separated works according to medium, using discourse analysis to analyse music lyrics and literature. I drew conclusions, however, examining the works as a coherent whole.

## 7. *Overview*

The following thesis is separated into three chapters followed by a conclusion. Chapter One illustrates the struggle between the state and Church regarding education during pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. In Chapter Two, I examine 1970s educational material, both formal and popular, produced by the state and Church. The examination of state and Church extra-curricular activities is followed by a detailed examination of Zaire's history as expressed through textbooks authored or approved of by state and Church. In Chapter Three, I sketch the generational identity of youth during the 1970s. Using painting, music, and fiction, I examine how youth resistance to the state's attempt at domination was expressed through popular culture. In Chapter Three, material

collected from the early 1980s onwards is analyzed to illustrate how Church and state beliefs and norms permeated the character of this generation.

The conclusion draws connections between the discourse in 1970s state and Church educational materials and the generational identity that followed. It shows how the state's political and social goals permeated education and were later rejected by the 1970s cohort in popular culture materials because of the state's inability to provide for its people. I demonstrate that cohort resisted the official state discourse and the ideology it represented to become active citizens in their own nation, and create an opposition to the bodies that had long dominated their education.

## ***Chapter One: A Brief History of State and Church in Education***

### *1. Pre-Colonial Education*

Before the Belgian powers abolished the various educational systems existing in the Congo River Basin in 1886, indigenous peoples designed and implemented pre-colonial educational practices.<sup>1</sup> Cults and initiation rites served as modes of education for the Bakongo in Lower Congo. Cult, in this situation, referred to community or familial groups that youth entered into upon their induction into adulthood. For the Bakongo, education was a method of transmitting social and cultural beliefs and practices from one generation to another. These cults taught the necessary, practical skills for daily life, or, as Wyatt MacGaffey states, they provided youth with the technical skills necessary for production.<sup>2</sup> For example, youth learned agricultural techniques, food preparation and cooking skills, and other artisanal skills that were useful in daily life. Adolescents participated in prolonged initiation camps, which imposed moral and social discipline in addition to technical skills. Camps and rites also maintained social distinctions between classes; initiation rites bestowed status and power on the participants, distinguishing them from their peers.

Although Portuguese missionaries introduced European forms of education in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, these practices affected only some of those living in the Congo River Basin region; more widespread and systematic changes in education did not come about until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the arrival of Belgian powers came new labour and production demands. Aside from the obvious colonial desire to minimize autonomous indigenous

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<sup>1</sup> Research on pre-colonial education does not uniformly discuss the nation known today as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) It discusses various ethnic groups' practices in the Congo River Basin and other areas that constitute present-day DRC.

<sup>2</sup> Wyatt MacGaffey, "Education, Religion, and Social Structure in Zaire," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 13.3 (Autumn 1982): 238.

power, the Belgians abolished initiation rites and camps because they no longer provided the tools for the demands of the developing colonial economy. In the absence of indigenous cults, the Catholic Church filled a void left in indigenous education. The Church taught technical skills, for example Western agricultural practices, as well as new social norms and expressive codes. According to MacGaffey, “education, besides equipping successive generations individually and categorically with differential values and competences, teaches and confirms the scheme or model of the whole, the world view appropriate to the society in question.”<sup>3</sup> Societies in the Congo River Basin were changing dramatically, thus, education had to reflect that change.

## 2. *Colonial Education*

The Belgian colonialists chose the Catholic Church as the key manager of education to the indigenous population because they believed Catholics could inculcate loyalty more successfully than the Protestant Church.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the Catholic Church, for example Jesuits, managed education in Belgium. The financial and practical burden of directing and staffing schools fell to the religious sects instead of the administration. Catholic missionaries, the Jesuits in particular, initially adopted a method of education that was very similar to indigenous means. They employed a *ferme chapelle*, a camp where believers were housed, purposely separated from non-believers. This practice ceased in 1914 when Catholics began sending believers back into their villages in an attempt to create communities of believers within the indigenous hierarchical structure. The Church’s

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

intention was to increase the Church's influence in villages. The Catholic Church struck a balance between indigenous practices and colonial needs, and was therefore able to maintain its supremacy in education. The Catholic Church was, "much more aware than Protestants of the importance of social context in the maintenance of belief."<sup>5</sup> In turn, certain ethnic groups, especially the Bakongo, perceived European education as an initiation camp. One entered the camp at the cost of a soul, usually a relative sent across the Atlantic, and once completed, one emerged as a member of a cult, the Catholic Church.<sup>6</sup> This notion had originated prior to Belgian colonialism, following the 16<sup>th</sup> century arrival of the Portuguese missionaries, but persisted until 1970.<sup>7</sup> Over time, education and Christianization were conflated in the minds of the population.<sup>8</sup>

Education remained a strictly Catholic project throughout the colonial period, with a mere 1% of schools managed by the Protestant Church.<sup>9</sup> Only the Catholic Church received government subsidies, putting Protestant sects at a comparative disadvantage in supplying and maintaining facilities. Such preferential treatment may have been a punitive action taken by the colonial state against Protestant organizations that denounced abusive colonial practices. Catholic groups remained silent to maintain relations with the established power.<sup>10</sup> The Catholic Church continued to establish educational institutions, opening primary schools, trade schools, teacher training schools and seminaries. The Belgian government believed that Church education would create a middle class that would not threaten colonial power: a group of individuals with basic skills that remained politically

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ch. Didier Gondola, *The History of Congo* (Westpoint, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 82

<sup>9</sup> Richard Dodson, "Congo-Leopoldville," In *Church, State and Education in Africa*, ed David G. Scanlon (New York: Teacher's college Press, 1966), 65

<sup>10</sup> Wamu Oyatambwe, *Eglise Catholique et Pouvoir politique au Congo-Zaire La quête democratique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 16.

unaware.<sup>11</sup> While the Church continued to teach modern agricultural practices, it also provided a humanistic and literary education. Furthermore, Christianity in itself taught that in God's eyes, all humans are equal. Thus, as Congolese became increasingly aware of these Christian principles of equality, they may have begun to question the colonial civilizing mission. Therefore, it was possible that the Church did not create a uniform and passive middle class.

The trifecta composed of Church, state and large corporations (mainly concentrated on national resource extraction) had long dominated the Belgian Congo for much of the colonial era. However, in the 1950s, weaknesses in the system, particularly between Church and state, became evident. Paralleling the School Wars (*Guerre Scolaire*) in Belgium, conflict between the Belgian administration and the Catholic Church over the management of the education system, a void formed between the two institutions. The School Wars spilled into the Belgian Congo in a proxy battle referred to as the *lutte scolaire*. The colonial government infringed on the Catholic Church's jurisdiction by providing the Protestant Church with equal subsidies,<sup>12</sup> ending the decades-long monopoly of the Catholic Church. The following decade saw the changes continue.

During the 1950s, the Church recognized the Congolese people's move towards independence and, therefore, separated itself from the colonial government on which it had long depended for educational supremacy. The Catholic Church foresaw independence and repositioned itself so it would not suffer the same fate as the colonial government, in 1951 creating a Ministry of Education called the *Bureau pour l'éducation Catholique* (BEC). The BEC allowed the Church's educational projects to function without the interference of the

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<sup>11</sup> Gondola, 82.

<sup>12</sup> Dodson, 82.

colonial government. Following this, the Church opened Lovanium University, a Catholic post-secondary institution providing higher education for indigenous people. Thus, the Church had the means to replenish its ranks from within the Congo, making the Church organization more palatable to the indigenous population and further separating the Church from foreign-dominated government employees. In 1953, the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs came to an agreement with the Vatican that limited the authority of the Belgian Catholic Church over the Congolese Catholic Church, thereby severing ties between the Belgian Catholic clergy and the increasingly indigenous Church.<sup>13</sup> The Catholic Church was able to woo the indigenous population and convince them that the Church was separate from the colonial government.

In the following years, the colonial government began to question and criticize the competence of Church education, suggesting that the Church had stretched its resources too thin and was no longer providing sufficient education. The state went so far as to claim that, “missionary education was an economic and political liability,” producing political agitators and not supplying the labour market with new workers.<sup>14</sup> The state heavily criticized the Church’s humanistic and literary curriculum for its lack of practical material, despite the practical skills that were taught alongside the curriculum. Between 1954 and 1958, the Minister of Colonies Auguste Buisseret decided to establish non-missionary schools while at the same time reducing subsidies for African-Catholic school teachers, boarding schools and first level primary education for boys. But through negotiations between the colonial administration and the Catholic episcopate, the Church and state agreed to a system whereby

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<sup>13</sup> Patrick M. Boyle, “School Wars: Church, State, and the Death of the Congo,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 33.3 (Sept 1995): 457.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 459.

45% of Catholic and national schools and 10% of Protestant schools were subsidized.<sup>15</sup> By 1956, Guy Mosmans, later the Secretary of Congolese Episcopacy, was publicly advocating for the complete break between Church and state. His requests were ignored by the colonial government; however, the Church took the necessary steps to separate itself from the increasingly unpopular Belgian colonizers.

That same year, the clergy under the direction of senior clergyman (later Cardinal) Malula positioned themselves alongside the independence movement. The Church made a concerted effort to integrate itself into Congolese social hierarchies and help resolve issues stemming from the realities of everyday Congolese life. It had little choice: the Congolese demanded with the much-celebrated phrase: “Nous voulons une église congolaise dans une nation congolaise.”<sup>16</sup> Pushed by the Congolese elite, the Catholic Church separated itself not only from the state, but from the Western Church as well. However, the Church had little choice but to adhere to the Roman Church. The bulk of its donations were from the West. At the threshold of independence, relations between Church and state were tense and, despite the coming political transformation, continued to intensify post-independence.

### *3. Post-independence Education*

Despite the schism between the colonial powers and the Catholic Church, the Congolese Catholic Church maintained its foreign connections both with Rome, its historical, theological and institutional home base, and with nations that continued to send missionaries to the Belgian Congo, for example Canada. The Church’s hierarchical nature

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 461.

<sup>16</sup> Oyatambwe, 19.

made it almost impossible to break with the West; the Vatican continued to consult foreign missionaries when appointing indigenous clergy to positions in the Congolese episcopate. The connection to the West, however, did not damage the Church's popularity among indigenous Congolese. The Catholic Church continued to function amid the political turmoil that followed independence. The Church prospered under the brief rule of Patrice Lumumba, despite his opinion of the Catholic Church. Lumumba felt that the Church should not have a prominent role in public life and should be satisfied with private worship.<sup>17</sup> Lumumba advocated the separation of Church and state. Malula meanwhile thought this was a Western notion that did not apply to Congo-Léopold. Malula openly criticized Lumumba in "*Présence Congolaise*," a Catholic periodical.

The political turmoil did not stabilize until Mobutu's 1965 coup, when he became the interim president. Initially, Mobutu's relationship with Malula and the Catholic Church was solid. Unlike Lumumba, who was a Protestant, Mobutu was a Catholic who believed that the Church served an important purpose in the then Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). However, as time progressed, it became clear that Mobutu's intended role for the Church differed from the Church's intentions.

Mobutu's reign initially gained positive press worldwide. In 1967, the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR) became the official party of Mobutu's government; each Congolese was included in the MPR, "as members and 'militants',"<sup>18</sup> without contestation. The "*Manifeste de la N'Sele*," a document relating the party's ideological and functional framework, was written that same year by Mobutu and the MPR. The historical preamble portrayed the DRC as a victim and glorified Mobutu: "*La fin de la rébellion permet au*

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<sup>17</sup> Gondola, 124.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Lee Adelman, "The Church-State Conflict in Zaire: 1969-1974," *African Studies Review* 18.1 (April 1975): 103.

*Général Mobutu Sese Seko, commandant en chef des forces armées nationales, de faire preuve de son sens politique profond.*”<sup>19</sup> It outlined the changes necessary in all aspects of Congolese life, agricultural, industrial and cultural, to achieve improved standards of living; the MPR even suggested a move to a truly democratic state.<sup>20</sup> Despite the promises made in the manifesto, there was no mention of specific goals, methods, timelines, or institutions that would be utilized to achieve these vague goals.

With the establishment of the MPR, Mobutu began a centralizing campaign, decreasing the number of provinces from 21 to 12, and finally to 8. Between 1968 and 1971, Mobutu systematically executed rebel leaders and political opposition. Despite Mobutu’s extreme methods of securing power and authority, factions of the Congolese population initially welcomed him as President of the DRC. Michael Schatzberg, using Meillassoux’s model of fathers performing not biological but social functions, explains the tendency of the Congolese to support Mobutu regardless of his behaviour.<sup>21</sup> According to Meillassoux’s model, a father nourishes and protects his children in order to legitimize his authority. Internal chaos that followed independence led to insecurity, which intensified the people’s desire for a father figure, someone to bring stability and peace.<sup>22</sup> Mobutu understood this and employed father/family discourse to legitimize his rule and his most heinous behaviours. Dissent was impossible; Mobutu’s rule was ‘natural,’ like a father in his family, thus he was not politically or violently repressing opposition, he was merely administering paternal discipline, fulfilling his role as a loving, if stern, father.<sup>23</sup> Mobutu’s government took control of the media and used it to emphasize and disseminate the familial metaphors and

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<sup>19</sup> Comité centrale de MPR, *Manifeste de la N’Sele* (Kinshasa: Forcad-IMK, 1984), 10.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Schatzberg, *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 89.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

imagery.<sup>24</sup> The press attributed all progress to Mobutu, interpreting it as a gift bestowed upon his children as opposed to social programs funded by the national budget.<sup>25</sup> In return the citizens had to show gratitude which often took the form of dependence, loyalty, and indebtedness. Therefore, Mobutu's practice of taking money from the national budget for personal use was legitimated; he was merely taking his due. The familial discourse negated the idea of theft and corruption.<sup>26</sup> The father metaphor, or 'Big man' discourse, was not only an allusion to pre-colonial social hierarchies, but it was also a reference to the paternalism of colonial times. Mobutu justified repression, implying that the Congolese required guidance and assistance, and suggesting they were ignorant of the outside world. Using familial discourse was also the first step taken to decrease the influence of the Church. Mobutu the father, generous and merciful, was taking the place of God the father. In lieu of the Catholic Church, Mobutu would make certain that his people, his children, were cared for.

Recognizing the challenge, the Catholic Church took issue with many of Mobutu's practices. Shortly after the establishment of the MPR, the Church began criticizing Mobutu's violence and his disregard for the nation's impoverished. For example, he did not make education a top priority, rather Mobutu, "inherited the colonial tradition of negating the importance of education as a pre-requisite for national development."<sup>27</sup> Instead Mobutu focused on nationalizing foreign-owned businesses and allotting them to Zairians, often his friends or family, in a process called Zairianization (1973). On 4 January 1969, Cardinal Malula spoke out against the regime. At a mass commemorating the Martyrs of Independence, Malula denounced the regime for allowing the ordinary citizens of the

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid* , 76

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 79

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid* , 81

<sup>27</sup> Dickson A Mungazi, *To Honor the Sacred Trust of Civilization History, Politics and education in Southern Africa* (Cambridge, MA Schenkman, 1983), 235

country to suffer for the nation, while the politicians lived in luxury.<sup>28</sup> The President was in attendance, making Malula a fast enemy of the state. Intensifying the Church's dislike of the regime, on 4 June 1969, student demonstrations on a university campus turned violent; the military killed between 60 and 100 students. Nonetheless, university students continued to oppose the party's rule. Mobutu's response was to close campuses and conscript the students into the army, forcing them into two years of service. Simultaneously, and in large part to gain student support, the MPR appropriated the memory of Lumumba, the man Mobutu had helped assassinate, and made him a national hero.<sup>29</sup> The regime quickly recognized the power of a young, educated and passionate population.

Senior clergy recognized the patterns of oppression. In addition to the closing of university campuses and conscription, the Bishops' Permanent Council experienced oppression first hand: the nationalization of church campuses and the appointment of religious leaders to university posts without consulting the Church.<sup>30</sup> In 1970, Malula again publicly attacked the regime at a mass commemorating 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence. With the Belgian King in attendance, Malula condemned government elites for their injustices against the impoverished people and lavish spending while the population starved. This second public humiliation at the hands of the Catholic Church exacerbated the relations between the Church and the state. After initially promising not to involve the Catholic Church in the *Jeunesse Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (JMPR, or youth wing of the MPR) hierarchy, Mobutu reneged on his vow and installed the JMPR in all schools including seminaries, in December 1971. Although Mobutu hoped to use the JMPR as informants,

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<sup>28</sup> Adelman, "Church-State Conflict in Zaire", 105

<sup>29</sup> David Renton, David Seddon, and Leo Zeilig, *The Congo Plunder and Resistance* (London Zed Books, 2007), 118

<sup>30</sup> Adelman, "Church-State Conflict," 106

their presence was intended to mould, direct, and mobilize youth.<sup>31</sup> The Bishops offered a compromise, offering to install JMPR wings in the small seminaries (secondary schools that taught all subjects) but not in the grand ones (university level schools to train priests).<sup>32</sup> The government rejected the compromise and the Bishops closed the grand seminaries. After negotiations, the government and Church agreed on a deal that limited the effectiveness of the JMPR, but the press reported the compromise as a government victory.<sup>33</sup> The compromise stated that the JMPR representatives could not urge the seminarians to participate in political activities, the religious superiors in the seminaries would act as liaisons between the party and the JMPR members, and no outside officials could be appointed to manage the JMPR.<sup>34</sup>

By November 1970, Mobutu's election victory facilitated the entrenchment of the major structures of new regime. There had been little doubt he would win because he was the only candidate. Mobutu began promoting himself as '*le Guide*,' a political saviour. In 1971, he implemented the policy of Authenticity, more specifically at this point calling it the '*retour à l'authenticité*.' He announced the policy in Senegal, as opposed to Zaire, making his proclamation of international interest instead of merely domestic. He framed the concept using Western philosophy and Western theorists like Heidegger and Sartre and used discourse that the West accepted and understood: "By 're-traditionalizing' power, Mobutu drew on images of Africa that the West 'knew' and was comfortable with."<sup>35</sup> Prior to the Belgians arrival, Zaire was portrayed in the West as a dark and mysterious world full of heathens and cannibals. This was evident in fiction, for example Joseph Conrad's *Heart of*

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Schatzberg, "Fidelite au Guide The JMPR in Zairian Schools," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 16 3 (Sept 1978) 417

<sup>32</sup> Adelman, "Church-State Conflict," 107 Please note as well that "grand" is Adelman's adjective, not a translation by this thesis' author

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>35</sup> Kevin Dunn, *Imagining the Congo the International Relations of Identity* (New York Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 118

*Darkness*, and news media that depicted Zairians as savage and violent. Mobutu attempted to recreate the image of Zaire by, “manipulating past discourses, images, and symbols.”<sup>36</sup> According to Kevin Dunn, Mobutu successfully altered the dominant image of Zaire in the West through the use of nationalist discourse, Western philosophical rhetoric, colonial imagery and Cold War narratives.<sup>37</sup> American officials thought the MPR was, “the most ‘civilian’ of tropical Africa’s military regime.”<sup>38</sup>

Mobutu explained authenticity simply in a speech in 1973: “Being oneself and not how others would like one to be; thinking by oneself and not by others, and feeling at home in one’s culture and country.”<sup>39</sup> Mobutu sought to use authenticity to create national identity<sup>40</sup> and legitimate his single-party rule: like a chief over a village, there could only be one ruler of Zaire; dissent and opposition were unnatural. However, Mobutu conveniently disregarded the traditional checks and balances available in chiefdoms to limit, or even remove, abusive chiefs.<sup>41</sup>

Mobutu’s “return” to authenticity was manifested in both superficial gestures and matters of national importance. The Western suit and tie was replaced with the *abacost*, for the French ‘à bas le costume’, which, although it was supposedly rooted in traditional dress, mimicked the dress of Mao. Mobutu adopted his infamous leopard patterned garb that, as he saw it, reflected the authority of traditional chiefs. In August of 1971, Mobutu nationalized the universities, including the Catholic Lovanium University. This allowed Mobutu and the

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>39</sup> Kenneth Lee Adelman, “The Recourse to Authenticity and Negritude in Zaire,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 13.1 (March 1975): 134.

<sup>40</sup> Jeffrey M. Elliot and Mervyn M. Dymally, eds. *Voices of Zaire: Rhetoric or Reality* (Washington: The Washington Institute Press, 1990), 43.

<sup>41</sup> Gondola, 142.

MPR to control the teachings and practices of the university more effectively. Mobutu understood the importance of limiting the power of higher education institutions, which were often bastions of opposition. In October, the Democratic Republic of the Congo became Zaire, supposedly a move towards an authentic place-name. Ironically, Zaire was the Portuguese mispronunciation of the Kikongo word for river, *nzadi*, whereas Congo was the name of the Congo River basin ethnic group, Kongo.<sup>42</sup> Not only was the nation's name changed, but cities and towns names were changed to reflect pre-colonial culture. On 5 January 1972, Mobutu enacted a law forcing residents to change their Christian names to African ones.

Though authenticity suggested an alternative or challenge to Western values, its embrace of pre-colonial practices was intended to appease Western nations. Many of the movements towards authenticity were based on changes in discourse and imagery that did not threaten the West because they upheld the Western perceptions of self and other.<sup>43</sup> Mobutu wanted to maintain good relations with the West because many Western nations provided large amounts of investment capital. In turn, these Western nations were committed to the administration's continued existence.<sup>44</sup> The Catholic Church, on the other hand, was a formidable opponent to the state machine, dominating public health and education and having a greater presence in the hinterland.<sup>45</sup> Authenticity, therefore, became a tool to reduce the Church's public influence.

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<sup>42</sup> Collette Braeckman, *Le dinosaure: Le Zaire de Mobutu* (Bruxelles: Fayard, 1992), 171.

<sup>43</sup> Dunn, 119.

<sup>44</sup> Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 65.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

The Zairian Catholic Church was the largest and most powerful Catholic Church in Africa. Almost half the population was Catholic<sup>46</sup> and, as mentioned previously, the bulk of school children still attended Catholic schools. Because Zaire was so large and densely populated and the worldwide Church structure so developed, the Church had a broad network of staunch support as well as significant resources.<sup>47</sup> It could potentially mobilize a large number of people and receive support from external bodies, such as other Catholic episcopates. As such, it was the greatest potential threat to Mobutu's authority,<sup>48</sup> a potential realized in the early 1970s when the Catholic Church led the resistance against the MPR and Mobutu's policies.<sup>49</sup> The Catholic Church was vehemently against the switch to African names; Cardinal Malula once again criticized Mobutu and the MPR publicly. An anti-Mobutu editorial attributed to Malula was published in *Afrique Chrétienne* warning against a return to the past. Mobutu's reaction was harsh and decisive: Malula was given 48 hours to leave his residence (which Mobutu made the headquarters of the JMPR) and the nation. An anti-Malula radio campaign raged, calling him "a renegade of the revolution."<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, Mobutu banned Church radio and television broadcasts and dissolved all Church-sponsored youth groups. By banning radio broadcasts, "the Church was deprived of an effective means of evangelizing and spreading the religious message. Quite clearly, the government wanted to be the sole source of information and indoctrination in Zaire."<sup>51</sup> These actions, aimed at increasingly centralizing government power, targeted in particular the authority of the Catholic Church.

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<sup>46</sup> Gondola, 10.

<sup>47</sup> Young and Turner, 66.

<sup>48</sup> Adelman, "Church-State Conflict," 102.

<sup>49</sup> Gondola, 148.

<sup>50</sup> Adelman, "Church-State Conflict," 108.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

With Malula banished from Zaire and being heavily targeted by the MPR's repressive measures, the Catholic Church attempted to placate the government. In February and March 1972, the episcopate wrote *L'Eglise au service de la nation Zairoise*, a document attempting to reframe the Church's role in national affairs. The state continually attacked the Church, despite its attempts at reconciliation. State officials were no longer allowed to attend religious ceremonies in an official capacity, nor were the ceremonies included in the official program of state functions. In early 1973, the MPR banned confessional newspapers and periodicals of all denominations; most were Catholic. Shortly thereafter, the government dissolved the Episcopal Assembly of Zaire and prohibited the travel of Bishops outside their diocese on official Church business. However, on 24 June 1973, following another public disagreement between the Mobutu and the Church, Mobutu claimed that the schism between him and Malula had mended. Although this peace lasted only a year, it yielded a sudden turnaround of repressive measures. In December of 1973, Mobutu met with the bishops, reinstated their right to travel and meet for conferences, and allowed them to examine the status of the Church in Zaire. Once the priests promised compliance, Mobutu softened. In March 1974, Mobutu stated that priests loyal to the government in Zaire were allowed to hold Episcopal meetings.<sup>52</sup> Three faculties of theology were reopened at UNAZA, the national university, four months later.

By 1974, the Vatican had negotiated with the MPR, securing the return of Malula. In turn, he limited his criticisms of the regime, and made the Africanization of the Catholic Church his priority.<sup>53</sup> The Malula affair had an ironic twist: Malula had been a proponent of independence and what could have been called, in some sense, authenticity. Malula had

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<sup>52</sup> Oyatambwe, 53.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

focused on adding indigenous traditions, dance and song into the Catholic mass, and translating the mass into local languages. His combination of indigenous practice and Catholicism was a move to authenticate, in a deeper sense than Mobutu's 'authenticity', the Western Catholic Church. Still, Mobutu was not prepared to relinquish power and the people's loyalty to the Catholic Church. Instead Mobutu enacted minor policy changes and rhetoric to promote his programmes and undermine the authority of the Catholic Church. The Malula affair forced the government to move from the '*retour à l'authenticité*' to the '*recours à l'authenticité*,' which was described as the, "selective process of choosing only those elements in the past which fit in to the modern world."<sup>54</sup> Mobutu recognized the influence of the Church over almost half of the population and continued a discrete campaign against it for the bulk of the decade.

Mobutu's criticisms of the Church were often hypocritical. He wanted the Church to maintain its role, established during the colonial era, of providing social and educational services but without opposing state policies. However, he also believed that the Church, "represent[ed] both the colonial past and foreign domination."<sup>55</sup> On 9 April, 1973, he complained publicly in the "*Le Soir*" newspaper, that the colonial administration and foreign-owned corporations had stepped down at independence and that the Church should have done the same.<sup>56</sup> He decried the foreign control of the Church, namely the Vatican, but many scholars have argued that Mobutu was also influenced and supported by foreigners.<sup>57</sup> Mobutu often cited moral qualms with the Catholic Church to justify his limitation of Church power. Mobutu claimed that the Belgian Congo's dependence on and loyalty to the

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<sup>54</sup> Adelman, "Church-State Conflict," 108.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>57</sup> Renton, Seddon, and Zeilig, 118-119, 131.

Catholic Church was an attack on religious freedom.<sup>58</sup> Mobutu stated: “Although I am a devout Catholic, I abolished religious inequality and placed all religious denominations on equal footing.”<sup>59</sup> However, Mobutu’s approval of denominations depended heavily on churches’ loyalty to his policies. Nor did inequality any other sector of the economy or social structure faze Mobutu.

Authenticity affected the economic arena as well as the social and political. In 1973, Mobutu called for Zairianization. Initially, this meant that foreign-owned commerce, small industry, construction firms, farming, property-holding and transportation agencies became the property of Zairian citizens.<sup>60</sup> Foreigners, mainly Belgians, who until then were the nation’s only supply of skilled labour, emigrated. Ownership and management of businesses were doled out to Mobutu’s friends, relatives and loyal henchmen, most of whom were inexperienced and inept. This policy led to economic disaster. Radicalization of Zairianization, announced in December 1974, involved the nationalization of commerce, industry, manufacturing, transportation and all businesses the members of the MPR acquired through Zairianization, and promoted the mobilization of the masses in agriculture, civic duties and the military.<sup>61</sup> By this time, the MPR’s reach had extended greatly to include government, the economy, schools, and the media. Kimbanguists, followers of an indigenous form of Christianity begun by the self-proclaimed prophet Simon Kimbangu, and Protestants worked alongside the regime, while the Catholics remained neutral.<sup>62</sup> Certain members of the Catholic clergy, however, adhered to Mobutu’s rule and were generously

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<sup>58</sup> Elliot, 21.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>60</sup> Young and Turner, 327.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 352-353.

<sup>62</sup> Oyatambwe, 53.

rewarded, often with cars. Mobutu could not command the clergy's complete loyalty and support, but for a brief time he received their passive indifference.

As Mobutu's reign progressed, the notion of authenticity, which had received approval from certain factions across the continent and in the West, faded. Mobutu began to place more emphasis on the government as a divine body. In a 1973 interview in "*Salongo*," the party newspaper, Mobutu said the, "M.P.R. equals service. When we say that, we mean that we should love each other, understand each other....work hand in hand to combat hunger and misery. ...All that God asks, we do through the M.P.R."<sup>63</sup> His discourse shifted from one drawn on the authority of the chieftdom to one rooted in monotheism and Christianity. As Michael Walzer explained, in a nation where many ethnicities were being united under one nation, national identity was created through political discourse. In order to make citizens of one state become one people, it was necessary to make citizenship into a religion.<sup>64</sup> Mobutu not only made nationality a religion, he made the MPR the Church, and himself the Messiah.

In July 1974, Mobutu launched the new official doctrine of Mobutism, defined as, "the teachings, thought, and action of the president-founder of the MPR."<sup>65</sup> The party adopted religious rhetoric in its documents, paraphernalia, and media programming. Mobutu was called "the Prophet of 21 million Zairians," the anniversary of his coup was referred to as "Our National Resurrection," and party halls were called temples. Christ was replaced by Mobutu: "Party chants actually employ[ed] church hymns with the words changed to praise Mobutu rather than God or Christ. The liturgical phrase was changed to: 'Oh, that Mobutu

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<sup>63</sup> Cited in Adelman, "Church-State Conflict," 103

<sup>64</sup> Michael Walzer, et al, *The Politics of Ethnicity* (Cambridge Belknap of Harvard, 1982), 8

<sup>65</sup> Thomas M Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle Zaire in comparative perspective* (New York Columbia University Press, 1984), 173.

may be with you!”<sup>66</sup> The television and radio reinforced this discourse. Every night on the evening news, Mobutu would descend from the clouds like a divine figure descending from the heavens.<sup>67</sup> The constitution was altered making Zaire a lay state. Christmas was deleted from the official calendar and was no longer a state holiday. Religion class was forbidden in public institutions, including primary and secondary schools, and replaced by civil education. The faculties of theology at UNAZA were again closed. The Department of Youth was placed under presidential authority. In public institutions, particularly in Churches and hospitals, crucifixes were removed from the walls and replaced by photographs of Mobutu.<sup>68</sup> Mobutu justified this action claiming he was not God, but pictures of him would remind his people how much he had sacrificed for his state.<sup>69</sup>

This image of President-Saviour was propagated in popular culture as well. The famous band leader Franco was placed, “*au service de la gloire présidentielle.*”<sup>70</sup> He wrote songs praising Mobutu and the MPR that were played across the nation. In return, Franco received Mazadis, a large record pressing plant. Between the plant and his plethora of albums, Franco became a very wealthy man.<sup>71</sup> Mobutu had therefore achieved near total domination of state institutions and finances. Public life was under constitutional control,<sup>72</sup> meaning there were few left who could undermine his power.

The MPR and Mobutu experienced a decline in popularity beginning in 1975, although not necessarily due to the efforts of opposition. Economic decline, along with the two wars in the Shaba province, were the root cause of the sharp decline in Mobutu and the

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<sup>66</sup> Adelman, “Church-State Conflict,” 103.

<sup>67</sup> Braeckman, 170.

<sup>68</sup> Edgar O’Ballance, *The Congo-Zaire Experience 1960-1998* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 108.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>70</sup> Braeckman, 169.

<sup>71</sup> Renton, Seddon, and Zeilig, 128.

<sup>72</sup> Peta Ikambana, *Mobutu’s Totalitarian Political System: an Afrocentric analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 31.

MPR's popularity. There were two armed revolts in Shaba (Katanga), a mineral rich province in Zaire that had earlier attempted secession following independence. Mobutu quelled the violence using foreign and national troops who, according to the residents of Shaba, were unnecessarily violent against Shaban residents. A large part of the public was already questioning his commitment to his people's welfare. In the mid-1970s, the price of copper, Zaire's largest export, plummeted. Between 1974 and 1978, inflation doubled; the common person, already impoverished, could not afford basic necessities. Inputs from foreign and domestic investors halted. The nation's debt increased to \$5 billion, the same amount as Mobutu's estimated personal fortune.<sup>73</sup> Mobutu's response was retrocession; from 1975-1976, Zairian businesses were returned to foreign ownership. The management of educational institutions was returned to the Church in 1976. The Catholic Church officially regained ownership in February 1977, despite Archbishop Eugène Kabanga's indictment of the regime in a pastoral letter in 1976. The second half of the decade yielded relatively peaceful relations between the Church and state regardless of the mutual mistrust and dislike that remained between the two parties. As of 1976, 47 of the Catholic Church's diocese still relied on state subsidies.<sup>74</sup> The Church managed schools, but the state still played a role. It had organizational power and decided on national curriculum via the Ministry of National Education. The state was able, to a certain extent, to regain influence over the Zairian youth.<sup>75</sup> Due to a 1977 Convention between the two, the Church dealt with teacher strikes, which were frequent. During prolonged strikes, the Church and the MPR supported one another. A symbiotic relationship developed between Church and state for a brief period during the mid to late 1970s.

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<sup>73</sup> Gondola, 151.

<sup>74</sup> Schatzberg, *The Dialectics of Oppression*, 121.

<sup>75</sup> Oyatambwe, 54.

The Catholic Church continued to subvert the state's purpose through subtle criticisms and providing services that rendered patrons loyal to the Church before the state. Although the Church had long been the provider of education, the economic instability made their role increasingly necessary. The Church supported the education system and offered credit, advice, facilities and resources for teachers; this earned the Church the loyalty of many Zairians.<sup>76</sup> Mobutu, however, was occupied elsewhere. From March to May 1977, Shaba I occurred, the first war involving rebel groups as well as foreign troops in the mineral-rich province of Shaba. Mobutu was criticized for his handling of the situation and for the use of foreign soldiers on Zairian soil. The detente between the factions was short-lived. May 1978 saw the return of conflict in Shaba II. Again, Mobutu was heavily criticized for the involvement of foreign, both European and African, soldiers, and his militia's treatment of locals.

By this point, all three denominations, Catholics, Protestants and Kimbanguists, had turned against Mobutu. The three churches banded together for national solidarity, and organized a prayer day for peace. In 1978, the Episcopate published a document denouncing '*le mal zairois*': the corruption and injustices of the MPR's single party rule, the paralysis of national institutions, the government's lack of morals, and the misery suffered by the population.<sup>77</sup> For the first time since Mobutu's coup, the Church called for democratization.<sup>78</sup>

The final two years of the decade were far less turbulent than the previous eight. Financially restrained and politically disabled, Mobutu was more willing to compromise and

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<sup>76</sup> Schatzberg, *The Dialectics of Oppression*, 122.

<sup>77</sup> Oyatambwe, 55-56.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

work with the Catholic Church. Despite making religion a strictly private practice in 1978, three days of mourning followed the death of Pope John Paul I. Under Pope John Paul II, Cardinal Malula and President Mobutu were brought to the Vatican and signed a truce. Mobutu even reinstated Christmas, arguably more as an effort to regain popularity than to appease the Church.<sup>79</sup>

As mentioned previously, the discord between the Church and state was not uniform. Many clergy were more than pleased to adhere to the MPR's requests in exchange for gifts. It was not unusual for Mobutu-friendly clergy to own Mercedes-Benz and receive gifts regularly.<sup>80</sup> Thus even clergy were divided among one another according to their wealth.<sup>81</sup>

The tension between Church and state trickled into all aspects of Zairian life, including education. In the following chapter, I analyzed how these tensions were reflected in educational material. In particular, I demonstrated how Church and state discourse seeped into educational materials, shaping the minds, beliefs, and practices of Congolese youth.

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

## *Chapter Two: State and Church in 1970s Education*

Education was an important tool that Mobutu's administration and the Catholic Church used to attempt to influence youth's perception of the state and the Church. Both institutions employed curricular and extra-curricular activities to impart messages to Zairian youth. The *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR) utilized three key extra-curricular practices to reach youth beyond teaching material: the *Jeunesse Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (JMPR), the MPR's youth wing; animation, political marches and theatrics in honour of Mobutu; and *salongo*, manual labour that youth were required to perform. The administration's curricular material was largely produced in Europe, however, the MPR did produce a series of textbooks that were required teaching in secondary school. The Catholic Church also employed youth groups to engage the young people of Zaire. Georges Defour, a Belgian-born priest and leader of Xaveri, a populous youth group that spanned east and central Africa, produced numerous texts for the youth group that figured prominently in this study. As well, the Catholic Church produced numerous textbooks, published in Europe and Zaire. I examined these sources to determine how the state and the Church engaged with youth and attempted to influence their beliefs and behaviours through their representation of history in education.

### *1. Contesting Education in the Classroom: Actors and Debates*

The initial years after Mobutu's coup resulted in a debate between state and Church over national/state education. The MPR wanted to institute a nation-wide educational program that focused on mental decolonization, meaning ridding the population of beliefs and practices that the Belgians attempted to instil in them during the colonial period.

Initially the Catholic Church opposed the notion in general, understanding that nationalized education would lessen Catholic influence in Zaire. Once Mobutu won the 1970 election, Church rhetoric shifted. Martin Ekwa, on behalf of the *Bureau pour l'éducation Catholique* (BEC), concurred with a nationalized education system, but stated that it differed dramatically from state-controlled education. According to Ekwa, nationalized education was merely a nation-wide program that promoted unity and brotherhood, but state education was a vehicle for regime indoctrination. As much as Ekwa believed that school played a large role in uniting the nation,<sup>1</sup> he also strongly believed that school should promote the respect of spiritual pluralism in Zaire.<sup>2</sup> Ekwa often compromised between agreeing with state policies and adapting them to include the Catholic Church. Pluralism, he felt, was crucial in the development of the nation, but, at the same time, Ekwa was aware that of all denominations, Catholicism was the more prevalent and the most powerful. The Catholic Church had reason to be hesitant to agree to state education.

Mobutu's curriculum attempted to teach Zairian students loyalty to the MPR and to Mobutu. According to Buana Kabue, a Zairian journalist, "*Tous les thèmes d'un cours élémentaire d'éducation politique y passent: l'amour de la patrie, la fierté d'être africain et zairois, la lutte contre l'impérialisme, la vigilance, les grandes victoires de la révolution, le recours à l'authenticité et bien entendu l'attachement indéfectible au père de la Révolution Zaïroise, Mobutu Sese Seko.*"<sup>3</sup> As the following analysis shows, the same goals were present in secondary education as well. Thus, a basic education provided little practical knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Ekwa, *Pour une société nouvelle l'enseignement national textes et discours 1960-1970* (Kinshasa BEC, 1971), II

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, III

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Kapalanga Gazungil Sang'Amin, *Les spectacles d'animation politique en République du Zaïre* (Belgique Cahiers Théâtre Louvain, 1989), 116

and sought only to impress the children with a sense of national pride and loyalty towards Mobutu.

State ideology centred on authenticity and later Mobutism. Authenticity was a pillar of Mobutu's political philosophy, promoting a return to pre-colonial or ancestral practices intended to decolonize Zairian people mentally. However, much of his promotion of authenticity was superficial and politically motivated. Authenticity soon gave way to Mobutism, or fidelity to the words, thoughts, and beliefs of the Founder-President Mobutu.<sup>4</sup> After the inauguration of authenticity in 1971, few authentic texts followed. State-approved European textbooks, as well as Zairian civics textbooks, did not focus on pre-colonial practices. Despite his stated desire for authentic education, education remained low on Mobutu's list of priorities.

Authenticity was the supposed motivation behind the 1974 move to eradicate Catholic education. Although reversed only two years later, Mobutu claimed, in 1974, that *“Le système actuel de notre enseignement ne correspond pas à notre authenticité, et ne prolonge pas ses racines dans notre humanisme communautaire... Désormais, l'école sera dans l'authenticité zairoise, une école adaptée à nos réalités.”*<sup>5</sup> Mobutu believed that Catholic education focused too fervently on European materials.

Mobutu's movement towards an authentic education included the use of familial discourse in a series of civics textbooks. Babudaa Malibato, author of the state published civics texts, frequently addressed inclusion and community, as well as duty and loyalty, in his discussion of the MPR and familial discourse. Mobutu's familial metaphors, employed

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas M. Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle. Zaire in comparative perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 173.

<sup>5</sup> “Les décisions du 30 décembre 1974”, *Zaire-Afrique* 92 (February 1975). 125.

to describe the MPR and himself, were pervasive in the civics texts. Malibato wrote that, “*Son PRESIDENT, élu au suffrage universel, c’est-à-dire par le peuple, pour cinq ans, est le Chef de la grande famille zairoise, le père de la nation.*”<sup>6</sup> In keeping with this line, father Mobutu was generous, benevolent and forgiving, his children, the citizens of the Zaire, were to respect his authority.<sup>7</sup> Even the Constitution, included in part or in its entirety in these textbooks, incorporated this rhetoric. The texts addressed “*une autorité contestable au Chef,*” which, “*assure la stabilité et la continuité de l’unité politique.*”<sup>8</sup> Students were taught to follow Mobutu without question despite his failures to live up to his own ideological principles, as father to provide for his ‘children’. Mobutu attempted to reinforce this notion of a unified heritage through the adoption of specific symbols.

Mobutu promoted the Zairian landscape as part of the Zairian people’s heritage: “*Nos monuments, nos cathédrales, c’est le patrimoine que nous ont légué nos ancêtres, essentiellement la NATURE.*”<sup>9</sup> In place of Catholic relics or European monuments and statues, the natural environment represented Zaire. The administration also decided that Zaire required national heroes and chose, ironically, nationalist leader and the nation’s first Prime Minister following independence, Patrice Lumumba. In the first instalment of the civics texts, Lumumba’s words and image were used to illustrate patriotic courage: “*Dans le bonheur comme dans le malheur, je resterai toujours à vos côtés.*”<sup>10</sup> His words echoed Christian rhetoric, but his position as a national martyr provided him with credibility in the MPR’s eyes. In the texts, Lumumba replaced Christian heroes like Joan of Arc, studied in previous European textbooks. Ironically, Mobutu was later proven to be in cahoots with

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<sup>6</sup> Babudaa Malibato, *Education et Instructions Civiques 3<sup>e</sup> secondaire le citoyen dans la communauté nationale* (Kinshasa BEC, 1974), 16

<sup>7</sup> Ibid , 71.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid , 73

<sup>9</sup> Kitenge N’gambwa, “Regime legitimation in education in Zaire,” (Phd diss , Cornell University, 1997), 43

<sup>10</sup> Malibato, *Le citoyen dans la communauté nationale*, 86

Lumumba's murderers.<sup>11</sup> This practice of replacing Christian, particularly Catholic, and European cultural and social symbols was beneficial to MPR goals, facilitating the mental decolonization for which Mobutu was hoping. It attached the Congolese identity to notions of a shared history and geography. It is important to note that the majority of the population, "understood, accepted and praised,"<sup>12</sup> authenticity, and that even some international governments applauded Mobutu's efforts.<sup>13</sup> It was, however, the turn towards Mobutism and the blatant and occasionally clumsy promotion of Mobutu-worship that de-legitimized his policies.

Mobutism was constantly changing and dependent completely upon the mindset of the President-Founder.<sup>14</sup> Although it faced opposition and indifference, Mobutism was relatively successful in that the population participated in animation and party events at least throughout the decade. Authenticity, more respected and better understood by the indigenous population,<sup>15</sup> was also used to undermine the Church and formed the basis of many of Mobutu's arguments that legitimated his reign. Being the MPR's dominant ideology, authenticity permeated all the civics textbooks, even after Mobutism became a greater focus. This may have been because authenticity was a tangible and clearly understood theory, while Mobutism remained muddled and incomprehensible to most people.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen R. Weissman, "Opening the Secret Files on Lumumba's Murder," *Washington Post* (July 21, 2002) Online at [http://africawithin.com/lumumba/murder\\_of\\_lumumba.htm](http://africawithin.com/lumumba/murder_of_lumumba.htm) (Accessed August 4, 2009)

<sup>12</sup> Michael G. Schatzberg, "Fidelite au Guide: The JMR in Zairian Schools," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 16.3 (Sept. 1978): 427.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Lee Adelman, "The Recourse to Authenticity and Negritude in Zaire," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 13.1 (March 1975): 137.

<sup>14</sup> Schatzberg cited in N'Gambwa, 141.

<sup>15</sup> Schatzberg, "Fidelité au Guide...", 426.

<sup>16</sup> N'Gambwa, 141.

Christian teachers, both clerical and lay, were responsible to the nation, but above all to the Church.<sup>17</sup> The Catholic Church intended to impart Catholic values to secondary school students. In school, catechesis teachings followed the life of Jesus and explored Church doctrine. The Church felt that following Jesus' example developed important virtues, for example diligence, self-sacrifice, courage, consideration, and respect, among others.<sup>18</sup> The grading system was important, and applied to catechesis, but the real importance lay in knowing God and living the gospel. Martin Ekwa, a Jesuit priest and President of the BEC, wanted to incorporate the Catholic curriculum into the national curriculum and promoted compromise between state and Church as the solution.

In 1972, the plenary assembly of the Congolese episcopate wrote a report entitled *L'église au service de la nation zaïroise*.<sup>19</sup> The title was very important; it publicly acknowledged the Catholic Church's role in Zaire: servant to the nation. The report, in a sense, was a continuation of Ekwa's prior works, promoting compromise between the two bodies for, according to the Church, the betterment of the people. But hoping to appear as less of a threat to Mobutu's administration, the Church changed its rhetoric. The Church wrote that state and Church served different purposes: the state's goal was to maintain social order for the common good, whereas the Church's role was as a servant: teacher, mentor, and protector. The Church maintained its position on many subjects, arguing that political and religious power did not have to contradict one another.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Martin Ekwa, *Le Congo et éducation: réalisations et perspectives dans l'enseignement national Catholique* (Leopoldville: BEC, 1965), 70.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Delanaye, "The Catechesis of children of Zaire," *Lumen vitae* 37.2 (1982): 223.

<sup>19</sup> *L'Eglise au service de la nation Zairoise: Actes de la XIe Assemblée plénière de l'épiscopat du Zaire (28-2 au 5-3 1972)* (Bruxelles: Max Arnold, 1972).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

The Catholic Church was promoting compromise and service, but was also evaluating the state's work. This implied that the Church was an autonomous and more developed institution. The state, according to the Church, should not be exempt from adhering to a higher order. *L'Eglise au service* stated, "il faut obéir a Dieu plutôt qu'aux hommes."<sup>21</sup> Thus, although the state had a mandate, its overarching premise should be to adhere to God's will above its own. The duty of the Catholic Church was to serve the state by helping it adhere to God's laws. The clergy requested that the state include human rights and freedoms in the Constitution, allowing the Church to fulfill its functions without challenging the state's position.<sup>22</sup> The clergy also applauded the state's attempts to quell regional and ethnic divisions, and hoped that there would be further progress in this direction.<sup>23</sup> This stance toward the state led to a series of state restrictions, as mentioned in the previous chapter, on Church radio programming and youth groups. Mobutu did not want the Catholic Church to challenge him or demonstrate his weaknesses to the public.

*L'Eglise au service* included an educational program that responded to community needs and was based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. As hopeful collaborators in a national education plan, the Catholic clergy looked to incorporate itself into the national structure and conform to nationalized regulations regarding programs, administration, quality of personnel, and inspection and evaluation.<sup>24</sup> Catholic education, claimed the Church, was merely an alternative to public education for those who desired it.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, the Church curriculum did not include civics, which the state deemed necessary, nor did the Church want to include certain state practices like performing songs that praised Mobutu or

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

memorizing party slogans. The clergy believed that performing songs and learning slogans, as the students did daily at state schools, were insufficient instructive practices.<sup>26</sup> Mobutu did not appreciate these exclusions, knowing that he implemented them specifically to promote, protect, and glorify his reign.

In reality, the Church did not hesitate to use familial metaphors as Mobutu did to persuade the youth of its legitimacy. However, the Church's family did not include Mobutu as the father. According to Martin Ekwa, head of the BEC, Zaire formed a brotherhood based on human nature instead of nationality.<sup>27</sup> God was the Father and the believers were his children. To be a part of the Church meant to be a part of something bigger than the family or the state. Learning about this family, or catechesis, was part of the curriculum in Catholic schools prior to 1974. As such, Church educational practice challenged Mobutu's authority, even if at times unintentionally so.

The JMPR, the youth wing of the MPR, was a contentious issue for the Catholic Church. *L'Eglise au service* claimed the JMPR was intolerant of other youth movements in the nation.<sup>28</sup> Because all those under 25 years of age were automatically members, there were often conflicts of interest for those involved in other organizations, specifically religious ones. The clergy felt the state was too controlling of youths' lives and suppressed youth's freedom. The Church recognized the importance of creating national pride, unity, and love among youth, but believed there were negative repercussions to school being built around two hierarchies: educational/scholarly and civic/JMPR.<sup>29</sup> The episcopate thought the

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, 99.

<sup>27</sup> Ekwa, *Le Congo et education*, 9.

<sup>28</sup> *L'Eglise au service de la nation Zairoise*, 113

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, 117.

administration should have been content with Christian educated youth who worked towards a common good, regardless of the regime in power.<sup>30</sup>

The MPR's decision to install JMPR branches in all primary and secondary schools was controversial. The purpose of the JMPR, according to a member, was as follows:

Mon travail c'est pour former et encadrer la jeunesse dans le bon chemin et dans la fidélité au Guide; à l'attachement inconditionnel au Président-Fondateur. Pour leur apprendre à être responsable, être productif. Pour leur préparer à leur vie future comme l'élite du pays.<sup>31</sup>

The intended function of the JMPR was to guide and mobilize the youth, lead pro-administration activities, and, according to N'Gambwa, serve as spies for the regime.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the government legislation, the JMPR had trouble becoming entrenched particularly in rural areas. Primary schools maintained a passive relationship with JMPR activities.<sup>33</sup>

The teachers and administrative staff acted as supervisory personnel, but being both busy and often under or unpaid, teachers had little motivation to take on the additional responsibilities the JMPR required. The JMPR offered little more than the opportunity to learn chants and slogans. Once again, students were limited to rote learning with little substance, merely the praise of the MPR and Mobutu.

Secondary school required more active involvement in JMPR activities on both the part of the students and the teachers. Students constituted the council, while classrooms were cells. The cell chief and principal were the highest ranking JMPR members in a secondary school. One student would be elected cell chief to govern meetings and organize JMPR activities. A JMPR leader said that elections were fair because students knew who

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>31</sup> Schatzberg, "Fidélité au Guide," 417.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. and N'Gambwa, 139.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 421.

was an effective leader.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, a secondary school inspector claimed that students' choices were influenced to choose the most militant leader, but he did not state by whom.<sup>35</sup> Outside guidance sometimes encouraged students to do the opposite: "students deliberately elected the least militant member of their class so that they would not have to be bothered with party activities of any kind."<sup>36</sup> Many students did not want to be active participants in the JMPR. The JMPR was often subordinate to pre-existing forms of student government that functioned in many schools. Many school teachers and administrative staff resented forced participation in government cheerleading and many found excuses or openly refused to participate; they would not salute the flag, sing the anthem or cheerlead every morning, as was expected.<sup>37</sup>

The forced inclusion of JMPR units in Catholic schools in addition to the government's banning of all youth groups was a strategic blow to the Church's position among youth. A prominent institution in young people's lives, the Catholic Church often provided extra-curricular activities and services for youth. The administration's decision to ban non-state youth groups notwithstanding, the Catholic Church continued to support and run youth groups.

Throughout the 1970s, Georges Defour, a Belgian priest living and working in Zaire, authored a number of textbooks intended for the Xaveri youth group, which flourished throughout central and east Africa. The texts included lessons on practical life guidance, bible passages, proverbs, games and community activities. The texts attempted to connect to what Defour presented as ancestral African values with those of Catholicism. For example,

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 422.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 428 and N'gambwa, 148.

in the text *A L'écoute de la vie Africaine*,<sup>38</sup> Defour explained that little was invested in homes because when the owner died, the home was abandoned. Thus, the message he sought to impart was neither pre-colonial Africans nor Catholics were materialistic.

Defour applied Catholic doctrine and biblical passages to folktales, teasing out Christian morals, like in *A l'écoute de la sagesse Africaine*. Defour's instructions explicitly claimed that the material helped, "*former son propre jugement, apprécier lucidement les diverses façons d'aborder les choses et les êtres.*"<sup>39</sup> Oddly, it was Defour, a Belgian priest, who aimed to reconnect the youth with the values and wisdom of their ancestors.<sup>40</sup> While Mobutu's administration sought to create an "authentic" Zairian history, it was a foreign-born clergyman who authored textbooks that genuinely attempted to create a historical link between Zaire's pre-colonial past and present. Defour expected his use of tales would impart local knowledge while providing the foundation for knowledge of human behaviour, critical analysis, and balanced decision making. Youth were agents of creation and change, according to Defour, and he intended to give them the tools to achieve as much.

Questions and discussion followed each tale, pertaining both to basic comprehension and Christian morality. The discussion began with a list of the characters' attributes framed in a Christian context. For example, Zizi, a little kitten that was almost eaten by his aunt, was described as polite and courageous,<sup>41</sup> while the aunt that tried to cook him was dishonest.<sup>42</sup> After careful analysis of the characters, Xaveri group members were asked: "*elle [la grande chatte] fait semblant de bien accueillir Zizikinissi, bien qu'elle ait*

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<sup>38</sup> Georges Defour, *A L'écoute de la vie Africaine*, vol. 3 (Bukavu : Bandari, 1971).

<sup>39</sup> Georges Defour, *A L'écoute de la Sagesse Africaine* (Kinshasa: Bandari, 1976), 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

*l'intention de le manger...Que devrait faire un chrétien?"*<sup>43</sup> Oftentimes, biblical passages were included or referred to so the students could ascertain what Christ would do when tested in a similar circumstance: "*Comparer ce conte et les événements qui s'y déroulent avec la parole du Christ: 'Vous avez entendu qu'il a été dit. Oeil pour oeil, dent pour dent! Et moi, je vous dis de ne pas tenir tête au méchant!'"*<sup>44</sup> This process was repeated for each tale. When a young girl, betrayed and abandoned by her sisters, was given the opportunity to seek revenge, she was merciful: "*Rafara a pardonné ses deux soeurs... Que signifie la parole du Notre Père: 'Pardonne-nous nos offenses comme nous pardonnons aussi à ceux qui nous ont offensés?'"*<sup>45</sup> Defour applied Christian values and rhetoric to folktales in an attempt to develop or influence students' morality.

Although many of the morals and values included in the material were not problematic in themselves, their inclusion in the texts demonstrated that the Catholic Church continued its attempt to dictate right and wrong in Zaire as it had during the colonial period. Defour used folktales and referred to an ancestral past, in a bid to render his texts "authentic", but, intentionally or otherwise, undermined authenticity by referring to the bible and applying Christian morals. Politically speaking, this could be read as a move to challenge Mobutu and adopt authenticity with different ends. Educationally speaking, this may have taught the children that Christianity, or more specifically Catholicism, was part of Zaire's identity, having been inherent in tradition and local teachings.

Defour included more "authentic" Zairian lessons in his text *Kafikiri et ses copains*. In a series of dialogues, a group of boys discussed issues pertinent to Zairian life such as

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

illness and remedy, witchcraft and literacy. The traditional role of elders was discussed; the youth compared tradition to modern practices, claiming that much of what the elders said was superstition: “*Oh! Les vieux disent tant de choses sous prétexte de coutumes et traditions, on nous oblige à faire des clowneries extraordinaires!*”<sup>46</sup> However, in response Kafikiri said, “*Ce n’est pas seulement une question d’obéissance à une règlement, c’est une façon de vivre ensemble.*”<sup>47</sup> While supporting tradition, Kafikiri advocated combining it with his modern Zairian lifestyle. Again, Defour provided an example of Christian children adhering to traditional practices and virtues, illustrating that the two were not mutually exclusive.

Inspired by a youth group in a neighbouring village, Kafikiri and his friends wanted to organize the youth community to complete local projects and speak on behalf of local youth. Defour addressed this desire using both traditional proverbs and bible passages. He related it specifically to Peter’s calling to begin Jesus’ work.<sup>48</sup> The youth in Defour’s text taught the Xaveri they had the agency and the power to change the status quo. The key differences between the Catholic movements like the Xaveri and the JMPR were the option to participate and the freedom to decide upon the group’s purpose and direction.

## 2. *Extracurricular Activity: Contestation in the Media and Informal Education*

The JMPR and schools in general played a large role in political animation, the practice of using song, dance, and theatre to celebrate the new regime. Not an optional

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<sup>46</sup> Georges Defour, *Kafikiri et ses copains* (Bukavu: Bandari, 1976), 15.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

practice, animation was yet another channel to disseminate the teachings of Mobutism,<sup>49</sup> and it soon became an integral part of spreading Mobutu's idea of the revolutionary spirit. In 1973 the first festival of animation was held.<sup>50</sup> The government required that citizens, in particular the JMPR, participate in animation.

Animation, an extension of civic education, utilized one of Zaire's most popular media, song, to disseminate the MPR's revolutionary message. Sang'Amin, a scholar who authored a book focusing on animation, provides phrases from animation songs that illustrate the blatant propaganda that became part of Congolese children's education: "*Qui peut me séparer de Sese/Celui-là ne réussira pas/Sese a reconstruit le Zaïre/Sese protège le Zaïre.*"<sup>51</sup> This lyric reinforced the idea of dependence on Mobutu and demanded faith and loyalty to him. It implied that Zairians did not take an active role in the nation's reconstruction and that they owed Mobutu allegiance for completing the task on their behalf. This message was not limited to animation songs and was found in civics texts as well.

In some respects, Mobutu's political animation mimicked the Catholic ceremony and was an attempt to displace religion. In one choreographed performance, a chorus of animators bowed their heads in prayer, saying: "*Chaos, Anarchie....Rébellion, Sécession.*" Upon finishing, the leader said "1965" and all the instruments chimed. The chorus responded with "*Vive la Révolution/Paix, justice, travail/Un seul peuple/Un seul Parti/Un seul chef.*"<sup>52</sup> Devoted citizens also changed the lyrics to church hymns to praise Mobutu instead of God or Jesus. For example, in Lower Zaire and Kinshasa, the capital region and neighbouring province, that the following song was heard:

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<sup>49</sup> N'Gambwa, 149.

<sup>50</sup> Sang'Amin, 136.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-155.

Quand Mobutu m'a demandé de le suivre/J'ai répondu avec  
empressement à son appel/ Car c'était bien la voix de Sese (Seko)  
qui m'a appelé...La voix du Papa...Dieu de nos ancêtres/Bénissez  
Sese Seko...Afin qu'il puisse continuer à travailler pour conduire la  
nation zaïroise vers les meilleures destinées."<sup>53</sup>

This religious hymn's words were changed to describe Mobutu who, according to the song, was sent by the ancestors to save Zaire. He was often referred to as the saviour of Zaire.<sup>54</sup>

In spite of Mobutu's distaste for the institution of the Catholic Church, he attempted to mimic its practices, hoping perhaps to garner the loyalty and devotion that the Zairians showed the Church.

Two additional songs that praised Mobutu were mentioned frequently in various academic sources. "*Cent ans à Mobutu*" was a hymn that wished Mobutu one hundred years of rule. The song claimed that one hundred years of Mobutu's administration was equivalent to one hundred years of service. The song described Mobutu as benevolent and selfless, as if his rule was completely for the good of the people. The second song, "*Djalelo*," was also a popular song in Mobutu's Zaire. The song bestowed the status of king upon Mobutu: "Today, revere King, God Mobutu/If you see Him, revere King, God Mobutu/ If you see Him, revere, adore the boss of the land/ The people of Kivu, lele-lele, King, God Mobutu."<sup>55</sup> These songs could be heard at school, at animation parades and on the radio.

Mobutu used the mass media to ensure his message was disseminated. Radio was a crucial tool for this regime to disseminate information; by 1974, 85% of Kinois, those residing in the capital of Kinshasa, listened to the radio.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the radio had a large following, relatively speaking, and was a key conduit for education. Educational radio

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 155

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>55</sup> N'Gambwa, 233.

<sup>56</sup> Kasareka We Lubiro, "La presse écrite et la culture zaïroise," *Paper presented at La Culture Zaïroise à l'école. Actes du colloque de Kinshasa April 8-11* (Kinshasa. Presses de l'institut de recherche scientifique, 1981), 150

programming allowed for a large number of listeners to learn from experts who sometimes hosted broadcasts. Qualified teachers were increasingly accessible to the masses through radio broadcasts. Still, radio, like civics textbooks, had to adhere to the MPR's standards; authenticity was the foundation for cultural and educational programming.<sup>57</sup> The programs incorporated regime slogans and speeches.<sup>58</sup> Party ideology was not limited to radio dissemination.

By 1974, urban areas like Kinshasa had begun purchasing and watching television. According to Lubiro, 46% of Kinshasans watched television.<sup>59</sup> Although it was not widely available in rural or impoverished areas, television was another medium for education and inculcation. Television, like all other Zairian institutions, was state controlled, and authenticity and Mobutism were integral programming features. Television programs covered subjects such as customs and traditions, traditional and modern music, dance, and cuisine.<sup>60</sup> One program about the 'Zairian life' aired episodes on Mobutism and 'the problem of youth.'<sup>61</sup> These lessons could reach as many or more people than a textbook or even a public parade could.

*Salongo*, compulsory manual labour, was required of all citizens, including primary and secondary school students, as part of the academic civics program beginning in 1973.<sup>62</sup> The purpose was to develop a sense of shared and personal responsibility.<sup>63</sup> *Salongo* was supposed to teach children agricultural techniques and was a required duty to the nation: "le

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<sup>57</sup> Kahindo Balangaliza and Mweze Balangaliza, "La radio nationale et la culture zairoise," *La culture zairoise à l'école Actes du colloque de Kinshasa 8-11 avril 1980* (Kinshasa: Presses de l'institut de recherche scientifique, 1981), 157.

<sup>58</sup> Sang'Amin, 157

<sup>59</sup> Lubiro, 150.

<sup>60</sup> Ngalasi Ayino and Kataka Kitoko, "La télévision et la culture zairoise," *La culture zairoise à l'école Actes du colloque de Kinshasa 8-11 avril 1980* (Kinshasa: Presses de l'institut de recherche scientifique, 1981), 173-174.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> N'Gambwa, 150.

<sup>63</sup> Sebisoگو Muhima, "Le rôle du "Salongo" (travail manuel) dans les écoles," *Zaire-Afrique* 95 (May 1975): 275

*travail en équipe, le Salongo contribue à renforcer le sens social et communautaire chez l'enfant.*"<sup>64</sup> However, *salongo* had many weaknesses that undermined its goal of collective responsibility.

Many youth resented *salongo*; for some the purpose of attending school was to avoid an agricultural livelihood and manual labour.<sup>65</sup> The fact that children of regime officials did not have to participate in *salongo* exacerbated the resentment.<sup>66</sup> Teachers and school administration often exploited youth labour and had them complete personal tasks.<sup>67</sup> There was little oversight to ensure that students were not being exploited, so many students were used by teachers as unpaid labour. Kitenge N'Gambwa conducted surveys regarding *salongo*. The respondents unanimously agreed that *salongo* was the least accepted and performed of all extra-curricular activities;<sup>68</sup> it did not achieve Mobutu's espoused goal of collective responsibility.

### 3. Zairian Textbooks

Textbooks played an important role in the indoctrination of youth with state and Church ideology in 1970s Zaire. Many European history texts were used in Zaire during the senior years of secondary school, a level attained by few, meaning that a majority of students probably were not exposed to them. Zairian published texts were used in primary and early secondary grades. Two of the state produced history texts were published in Europe, two history texts were published in Zaire, and two civics textbooks were also published in Zaire.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Schatzberg, "Fidélité au Guide...", 429.

<sup>66</sup> N'Gambwa, 152.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 152.

The two European textbooks, L. Genet's *Les civilisations du monde contemporain* and Paul Labal's *Histoire: Le moyen age*, are older than the Zairian published texts, written in 1966 and 1959 respectively. The European texts cover a more general world history. *L'histoire 6e Primaire: le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde* (1971), written by a group of Zairian teachers, and *Histoire du Zaïre* (1976), by Tshimanga wa Tshibangu, focus on the history of Zaïre. The former is clearly from before the changing of place names, evident in its title's reference to the 'Congo,' while Tshibangu's text adheres to authenticity using the name Zaïre. The state-produced civics texts are entitled *Le citoyen dans la communauté nationale* (1974) and *Le citoyen dans la développement nationale* (1975). Although officially civics texts, the two served as contemporary history texts since they discuss Zaïre since independence.

Following Mobutu's authenticity campaign and the evolution toward Mobutism, the state produced a series of civics textbooks for third, fourth and fifth year secondary school. Written by Babudaa Malibato, the texts are similar in style and organization to one another and become increasingly detailed as the student progressed from third to fifth year. The texts are essentially a social and political history of Zaïre since the 1965 *coup d'état*. Each text contains a copy of the Manifesto of N'Sele in addition to various constitutional and legal excerpts. The final text contains the entire constitution. The third text, published in 1981, is not extensively addressed here, but mentioned when it corresponds with or contrasts starkly with the two previous texts.

LeBoul and Kadiondo, authors of *Bibliographie des manuels scolaires en usage en République du Zaïre*, show, as mentioned previously, that more texts were published by Catholic houses than secular. Despite this, it was more difficult to acquire Catholic texts.

Still, I uncovered Albert Leysbeth's *L'histoire de l'Afrique*, published in 1970, and F. Bontnick's *L'évangélisation du Zaïre*, the transcript of his 1973 radio broadcast. These two texts, in addition to the numerous extra-curricular sources, show how the Catholic Church resisted state discourse in education. The following assessment examines how the history of Zaire is portrayed through Church and state textbooks, beginning with the history of the pre-colonial Congo River Basin and concluding with the post-colonial era.

### 3.1. *Antiquity and the Pre-colonial Era in the Congo River Basin*

According to L. Genet's *Les civilisations du monde contemporain*, a state approved textbook, the origins of civilization, including Zairian civilization, are rooted in Christian and European practices. Genet claims that, "*la civilisation occidentale est à la fois localisée et universelle*,"<sup>69</sup> thereby creating a common heritage among all people. Like Genet's text, *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde*, also a state text, claims Rome as the birthplace of African civilization. It praises the Roman Empire for providing the foundation of civilization that Zaire inherited.<sup>70</sup> The text's authors, a group of Zairian teachers, use the first person plural 'nous' pronoun, suggesting that Zaire is part of the civilization established by Rome.

The connection between Europe and Zaire, however, was something that Mobutu was trying to sever. Authenticity was supposed to create, or in another sense, recover, an authentic Zairian identity without European influence. Backed by political force, the discursive message could have had an effect on identity formation, but the state-produced textbooks show that Mobutu was not unequivocally committed to ridding Zaire of the notion

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<sup>69</sup>L. Genet et al., *Les civilisations du monde contemporain* (Paris: Hatier, 1966), 31.

<sup>70</sup>*Histoire 6e Primaire: Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde: Des origines à nos jours* (Kinshasa: Okapi, 1971), 52.

of European roots. The MPR intended their civics texts to create an authentic history, yet they still maintained a relatively shallow reading of the Zairian past and present. In spite of authenticity, the texts suggest that Africans did not have an authentic history to call their own.

The introduction of the state text *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde* recognizes the importance of the African tradition of oral history, acknowledging that it sometimes serves as historians' only source.<sup>71</sup> Nonetheless, the authors of *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde* claim that history began in 4000 B.C., after the invention of writing,<sup>72</sup> and that writing became common practice in Zaire only when the Belgians arrived.<sup>73</sup> Tshimanga wa Tshibangu, author of the state text *L'histoire du Zaïre*, agrees that oral history is fallible and written texts are more reliable: "*Par conséquent, pour étudier l'histoire de notre pays nous aurons recours soit à des documents écrits.*"<sup>74</sup> According to Tshibangu, Zairian sources, until the colonial period, were untrustworthy sources. This delineation implies that Zaire was 'pre-historical' and uncivilized until the arrival of the Belgian powers.

Furthermore, *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde* calls Diego Cão's arrival in Zaire one of the great discoveries of the European peoples, claiming that he "discovered" Zaire.<sup>75</sup> Tshibangu's text claims the same thing in near exact phrasing: "*la découverte de l'embochure du Zaïre par le Portugais.*"<sup>76</sup> The texts continually credit the Portuguese with 'discovering' a location and peoples that existed long before the European explorers.

Bontnick, a Professor of Catholic Theology at the *Université nationale du Zaïre*, describes

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Tshimanga wa Tshibangu, *Histoire du Zaïre* (Bukavu: Ceruki, 1976), 7.

<sup>75</sup> *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde*, 93-98.

<sup>76</sup> Tshibangu, 16.

the first evangelizing missionaries in the Congo River basin as heroes discovering a new world.<sup>77</sup> The relationship began well, claims Bontnick, and the indigenous people welcomed the Portuguese amicably.<sup>78</sup> This suggests that the indigenous populations in the Congo River basin willingly accepted foreign intervention.

Unlike the state texts, Leysbeth, in his Catholic text, claims that history in African began with oral practices.<sup>79</sup> This idea, novel for its time and place, credits the Africans with constructing their own history using a method which did not stem from Western academic practices. This statement grants value to a practice that was otherwise thought primitive. The students' perceptions of different depictions of oral history were important.

In the state texts, a foreign nation, namely Portugal, 'discovers' Zaire and includes Zaire in the developing global economic and political system, and Belgium brings written script to Zaire. This suggested to the 1970s cohort that Zaire could not assert itself and that the Portuguese or the Belgians, who incorporated Zaire into history, were owed gratitude. The Catholic text, on the other hand, recognizes oral history as a legitimate academic practice and recognizes Zairians as authors of their own history.

Both *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde* and *L'histoire du Zaïre*, state texts, are organized according to Western historical concepts. For example, in *Le Congo en Afrique*, the birth of Jesus figures as a communal starting point for African civilization, while 1789 marks the commencement of contemporary times. Major events in the Western calendar dominate the Zairian historical framework. This practice continues to link the history of Zaire with the history of the Western world. Simultaneously, it suggests that events within

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<sup>77</sup> F. Bontnick, *L'Évangélisation du Zaïre* (Kinshasa: St. Paul, 1980), 10

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>79</sup> Albert Leysbeth, *Histoire de l'Afrique* (Kinshasa: St. Paul, 1970), 9.

Zaire are not important enough to constitute epochal turning points. This portrayal of history taught the 1970s students that the Western world was inherently more important than Africa.

Paul Labal's text on medieval history, a state text published in Europe, was used in the majority of fourth year classes in the long cycle (the institutional path that led to university study). The text focuses on European political and military history, with a particular emphasis on conflicts between the Popes and the heads of state, specifically Emperors. Although Labal claims that nations did not exist, his rhetoric suggests the opposite. He discusses Europe in anachronistic terms, referring to Italy, France, England and other contemporary countries as modern states, implying a natural organizational structure. This depiction of medieval Europe reads the modernity of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe backward, while suggesting the rest of the world was still savage.<sup>80</sup> L. Genet's state-produced textbook is organized in a hierarchy of civilizations, which results in the same depiction as Labal's text. His table of contents is as follows:

*Les civilisations du monde occidentale*  
*Civilisation du monde communiste européen*  
*Le monde musulman*  
*Le monde de l'océan indien et du pacifique*  
*Le monde africain noir.*<sup>81</sup>

Quite simply, the book proceeds, in Genet's perspective, from most civilized, meaning the most powerful and important nations, to the least civilized, or least powerful nations. This relation between Europe and the rest of the world immediately creates a continuum on which Africa lays at the unorganized and uncivilized extreme. Thus the European model is presented as the desired outcome for any non-Western state.

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<sup>80</sup> Paul Labal, *Histoire: Le Moyen Age* (Paris: Hachette, 1959), 178.

<sup>81</sup> Genet, 5.

Genet simplifies African peoples, representing them as a homogeneous and stagnant people. He states that, “*ce qui frappe dans ce pays de Noirs c’est sa grande diversité, qui ne doit pas nous masquer cependant une profonde unité fondée en grande partie sur la relative homogénéité des conditions géographiques.*”<sup>82</sup> Thus, in this text, African people are understood as one people with the same social structure, the same language, and the same cultural practices. Genet addresses the elements that constitute a civilization: a political philosophy, a social structure, an economic structure, a system of intellectual and moral values, and religious beliefs.<sup>83</sup> Genet’s text reflects the Western belief that Europe brought all of these elements to Africa. As presented in his text, Africans did not have a proper religion before European exploration.

When discussing the near and far East, and Africa, Genet explains their history using the terms family, clan and tribe. In contrast, Europe’s history is discussed using states, heads of state, and popes. According to Genet, Europe has always been composed of powerful, political bodies who rule large numbers of people while Africa was composed of small, self-governing groups. Genet portrays Africa as leaderless and therefore in need of leadership to become civilized. European nations had the resources to fill that void. Augustin Omakoko, whose 1999 work examines how history was taught in Zaire, claims that most textbooks reflect the same belief: “*la conquête devient un élément constitutive de la civilisation dans nos manuels.*”<sup>84</sup>

Both state and Church texts describe the Church as a civilizing institution. Omakoko illustrates that in European textbooks, Christian conquest is described as the ultimate road to

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-14.

<sup>84</sup> Omakoko, 165.

civilization.<sup>85</sup> Catholicism, specifically in the Western, medieval context, is also considered a unifying force. Labal states that, “*En l’an 1000, il n’existe pas de «nations» mais il y a toujours une Chrétienté.*”<sup>86</sup> The Church is seemingly eternal and, thus, is superior to the nation-state. Both Labal and Genet assign the Catholic Church an all powerful and righteous position in the European context, making it essentially Western Europe’s ruling body.

Leysbeth, author of *L’histoire de l’Afrique*, states that prior to colonialism, Africans had contact with the Mediterranean, but he does not dwell on it. Instead, he focuses on the Asian influence in Africa, stemming specifically from Malaysia, for example the planting and harvesting of rice paddies, banana, cocoa, and cotton.<sup>87</sup> Arab influence and early Christian resistance to it are also addressed. Although Leysbeth does not focus solely on European influence, he discusses foreign influence before he discusses indigenous ingenuity.

Leysbeth’s text delineates the fifteenth century as the commencement of European colonization, and suggests the initial goal of European exploration was religious conversion.<sup>88</sup> As Leysbeth explains, the Church gained followers initially, but it was not a deep conversion. European states, aside from missionary work, found reason for colonizing in the slave trade. According to Leysbeth, the Catholics, among other denominations, fought against slavery.<sup>89</sup> Leysbeth generally attributes religious resistance to Protestant sects not Catholics. It is difficult to decipher if Leysbeth is favouring the Catholic Church, or if other authors aim to damage the Church’s image. Still, according to Leysbeth, the Catholic Church did not exploit the indigenous population during the colonial period.

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>86</sup> Labal, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Leysbeth, 16.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

*Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde*, a state produced text, also examines the relationship between Christianity and the slave trade. Although the text mentions that Catholic missionaries accompanied the Portuguese and other European powers, its narrative maintains a clear division between the European figures enacting the slave trade, and the religious missionaries who directed schools and hospitals.<sup>90</sup> Tshibangu's state text accepts this tenet and suggests that the Portuguese state developed the slave trade and instigated violence between the new settlement in Angola and the Kongo people.<sup>91</sup> The Church, therefore, is not associated with the slave trade while the European powers it accompanied to Africa are held responsible.

The state texts published in Europe do not describe in great detail the peoples who inhabited Zaire prior to the colonial era. Such description as there was goes little beyond evoking a state of perpetual "tradition," with little or no discussion of their reactions to the European arrival or resistance to it. Mobutu's approval of the use of these European texts suggested that a historical narrative focused on African agency and the integrity of African societies was not a great concern to him, the creator and proponent of authenticity. School children taught at home and through the media to honour their ancestors learned in state-produced textbooks that their ancestors were less important than European actors and openly welcomed the people that oppressed and mistreated the indigenous populations for almost four centuries. Students may have been upset to learn that, according to these textbooks, their ancestors passively allowed their people to be dominated by foreign powers.

*Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde*, a state text, examines the kingdoms and ethnic migrations that characterized Zaire's pre-colonial history. The text draws a link

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<sup>90</sup> *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde*, 119.

<sup>91</sup> Tshibangu, 16.

between the early “Bantu” people and contemporary Zairians.<sup>92</sup> It celebrates the political and social organization of various tribes, applauding familial authority in “Bantu”<sup>93</sup> peoples. However, because the text was published prior to the doctrine of authenticity and the renaming of places, pre-colonial empires and kingdoms are labelled using colonial place-names. For example, the Kongo Empire stretches to Stanley Pool, the reservoir named for the colonial explorer and administrator Henry Morgan Stanley. This text’s attempt to discuss pre-colonial kingdoms and populations is successful compared to the previous texts, but still falls short. Most importantly, the text does not discuss these ethnic groups or polities beyond the arrival of the Belgians. According to this text, and Genet’s state text as well, indigenous groups and polities cease to exist quite suddenly upon the arrival of the Europeans, regardless of how few Europeans initially inhabited Zaire.

Leysbeth, in his Catholic text, discusses in great detail the populations of Africa before the arrival of the Europeans. He acknowledges the brilliance and decadence of certain ethnic groups, mentioning particularly the Luba Empire. He notes that the Luba functioned more like a political body than a clan.<sup>94</sup> He suggests that many pre-colonial ethnic groups were politically advanced, functioning much like states prior to the arrival of European powers. Thus, Leysbeth’s text imparts to students that political organization was not taught to Africans by Europeans, but instead was practiced without any formal instruction. Similarly, Leysbeth celebrates the Bantu peoples: “*On peut parler d’une réelle civilisation, de caractère original, et vraiment africaine.*”<sup>95</sup> Leysbeth claims that Bantu societies were economically, politically, and socially organized according to indigenous

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<sup>92</sup> *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde*, 62.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Leysbeth, 38.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

custom and practice, but were also inherently religious.<sup>96</sup> This statement can imply a variety of meanings. Firstly, being a BEC textbook, it can be celebrating religion as a tool of development. Secondly, it can be suggesting that religion is necessary in contemporary Zaire in order for it to develop as a state. Or thirdly, it can be comparing traditional Africa with early modern Europe, which relied heavily on religion for political guidance and governance. Regardless of the particular motivation, students were taught that civilization required religion; Catholicism had deep roots in Zaire and therefore was the obvious choice as the religion that could further develop the nation.

### 3.2. *The colonial era*

Zairian history books tend to cover the history of the Congo River basin ethnic groups until the second wave of colonial powers arrived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Then Zairian history is ignored; instead the authors examine Stanley, Livingstone, Leopold II, and the Berlin conference, for example. Zairian people are excluded from their own history during the colonial era.

The texts address the exploration of Zaire, and the conquest and allocation of African lands to European powers. Tshibangu's state text describes decisions made by King Leopold II and other European heads of state. Without irony, Africa is discussed like a commodity or a game being played by colonial powers: "*Cette conférence marque un tournant fondamental dans l'histoire de l'Afrique, car elle fixe le règles du jeu et les conditions générales du partage.*"<sup>97</sup> Zairians, or any other African populations, are not

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>97</sup> Tshibangu, 43.

mentioned in Europe's exploration and exploitation of Africa. The Catholic Church's association with these European powers is not always addressed either.

Bontnick's text, of Catholic origin, describes Catholicism as natural to Zaire, despite its initial arrival coinciding with the Portuguese. Bontnick claims that the Church did not work with the Belgian colonial administration to achieve Belgium's goal of increasing its wealth.<sup>98</sup> Political and religious collaboration occurred when the interests of the state and Church met, but the Church never took orders from the colonial administration: "*Cette collaboration que les missions ont fournie, je ne la qualifierais pourtant pas de collusion ou de soumission aveugle et servile.*"<sup>99</sup> Bontnick maintains that the Church was not involved in any violent or oppressive measures against Zairians.

Tshibangu's state published text includes descriptions Zairian's of resistance to the colonial regime while the other history texts do not. The text does not go into great detail, but mentions armed resistance against Leopold II's administration.<sup>100</sup> The mere mention of opposition, armed opposition in particular, evokes Zairians as historical actors, finally depicted as actively determining their own fate. This text provided many students in the 1970s with their first written versions of their ancestors' resistance against the colonial powers. *L'histoire du Zaïre*, therefore, taught the youth that their ancestors in fact were not passive, as other texts suggested, but actively engaged the Belgian powers.

The state text *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde* claims that colonialism had its benefits and its disadvantages, but was still a positive experience in Zaire.<sup>101</sup> According to

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<sup>98</sup> Bontnick, 42.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>100</sup> Tshibangu, 21.

<sup>101</sup> *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde*, 119.

this text, Zairians accepted their fate as subjects of benevolent Belgian powers. Leysbeth, author of the Catholic text, also agrees that colonialism had many positive outcomes, including the instilling of religious values, “detrribalization”, and general improvements in the Zairian quality of life.<sup>102</sup> He also states that Zaire benefitted economically from Europe’s interest in its natural resources.<sup>103</sup> However, Leysbeth is critical of the Belgian colonial system, which he refers to as particularly paternalistic. He does not exclude himself from the system, using the first-person plural “*nous*” pronoun to recognize his position in colonialism.<sup>104</sup> Leysbeth promotes colonialism as a civilizing force, but also recognizes one of its failings.

The Catholic Church is described as a powerful body in both state-approved and Church texts. Genet describes the Church as a powerful source of opposition against unjust and tyrannical leaders. In reference to opposition to the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, Genet states that, “*la principale force d’opposition est religieuse dans les pays de tradition catholique, c’est l’Eglise romaine.*”<sup>105</sup> This statement reinforces the ability of the Church, even in the contemporary era, to provide an alternative to government power.

Even the author of the state text, Tshibangu, describes the Catholic Church between 1918 and 1945 as: “*à l’évangélisation, à l’éducation ainsi qu’à l’instruction des populations de notre pays...Bref, le but des missions aussi bien catholiques que protestantes est la formation d’une Eglise autochtone.*”<sup>106</sup> Tshibangu’s inclusion of one of the Catholic Church’s goals espoused by Cardinal Malula, an open critique of Mobutu, emphasizes the

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<sup>102</sup> Leysbeth, 107-108.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>105</sup> Genet, 92.

<sup>106</sup> Tshibangu, 68.

importance and good will of the Church in Zaire. The state approved texts promote the Catholic Church despite their role to undermine its influence.

Students may have been confused regarding the role of the Church considering the varied discourse on the subject. European powers that developed the slave trade also brought the Catholic Church to Africa. However, the overall sentiment in the texts is that the Church, whether one agreed with its actions or not, is a powerful body that developed a system of education and social services.

### 3.3. *Independence and the Post-Colonial Era*

In *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde*, a state text, the march to independence is described as being led by a small and elite group of leaders, which disempowers the masses and describes them as a passive body waiting to be liberated.<sup>107</sup> The textbook concludes with praise of Mobutu, the leader whose army freed the people. There is little or no mention of Patrice Lumumba or Joseph Kasavubu, both leaders who played much larger roles in Congo-Léopold's independence. The rhetoric differs from the later texts, which glorify more than describe Mobutu, but he is still credited with the liberation of the Congo-Léopold.

Tshibangu, the author of a state text, addresses different aspects of the independence movement. He first examines the movement towards cultural independence: literature, in both French and vernaculars, painting, produced for both foreign and local markets, music, and sport. He then discusses the political movements that followed. The Belgian Round Table (1960), attended by, "*les hommes de toutes les formations politiques et les chefs coutumiers*," was a less elitist event according to Tshibangu, because it included both

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<sup>107</sup> *Le Congo en Afrique et dans le monde*, 141.

‘modern’ political leaders and ‘traditional’ chiefs.<sup>108</sup> He also emphasizes Lumumba’s role in the process, quoting him frequently and providing the entire manuscript of his historic independence speech. Lumumba’s speech, given on Independence Day on June 30, 1960 in front of the Belgian officials including King Baudouin, was about the misdeeds of the Belgian colonial powers and the strength of the newly independent nation. He discussed inclusion, unity, and national pride, which perhaps explains the speech’s addition in the more recent textbook. Mobutu’s adoption of Lumumba as a national hero around 1970<sup>109</sup> would require his inclusion in any discussion of independence. Lumumba’s death was, however, mentioned only in passing, without discussing Mobutu’s role in the assassination, which was at best compliant and at worst criminal.

In Tshibangu’s *L’histoire du Zaïre*, the period following independence is described in great detail, with emphasis on the chaos that enveloped Zaire. The ever-growing plethora of political parties and the attempted secessions of numerous provinces implied that the masses wanted change. Some people did not perceive Zaire as a single unified nation. However, the text reflects an assumption that statehood, adhering to colonial boundaries, was a necessity. Hence, in the text, Mobutu and his ability to unite the nation are praised. Tshibangu claims that the MPR is, “*le seul parti politique de notre pays*,” and that, “*toutes les autres institutions de la République lui étaient subordonnées et fonctionnaient sous son contrôle*.”<sup>110</sup> The centralization of administration is depicted as successful, as is Mobutu’s decision to become sole leader of the MPR and the government. According to the text, Mobutu’s purpose was to unify the nation under the MPR, which explained his decision to

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<sup>108</sup> Tshibangu, 97

<sup>109</sup> Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 210

<sup>110</sup> Tshibangu, 155

call his party a ‘movement’.<sup>111</sup> An inclusive political movement meant that all citizens could feel like they played a central role in the new nation. Whether this role was ever actualized is questionable. Students in the 1970s were allotted a place in society as members of the JMPR, but were not given the freedom to create the political system or elect the political leaders of their choice.

The text concludes with a description of authenticity. Tshibangu calls it, “harmonious and natural,” claiming it is a refusal of “imported ideologies.”<sup>112</sup> Imported ideologies are not limited to Western, colonial beliefs, but also religious beliefs born in other parts of the world. The conflict between Cardinal Malula and Mobutu due to Malula’s criticism of authenticity is depicted as, “*un violent conflit*,” because, according to Tshibangu, it was an attack on freedom and sovereignty.<sup>113</sup> This implies that the Church was against the liberation of the Zairian people. In its final pages, the text criticizes the Church and promotes the government’s image as benevolent, rational and successful.

In the concluding chapter of this text, the 1970s cohort learned both that the MPR under Mobutu’s leadership saved the nation and that the Catholic Church was trying to destroy it. Initially, the students might have believed that. But due to the lull in Mobutu’s popularity after the economic decline (from 1974), the failure of Zairianization (1976), and Shaba I (1977) and II (1978), one can imagine that eventually students realized Mobutu was fallible and his policies often misguided.

The state civics texts authored by Babudaa Malibato are essentially a mixture of civics education and propaganda. The textbook includes the MPR’s purpose: to develop the

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

intellect and love of the nation.<sup>114</sup> Mobutu's photograph opens each text along with an inspirational quotation; the first opens with Mobutu's explanation of the MPR as an all inclusive movement and not a political party. In fact, Mobutu, "Portrays [the] MPR as emanating from the people. And it [is] this version of the genesis of the MPR...that teachers were required to teach."<sup>115</sup> Instead of Zairians being merely passive subjects of the government, Mobutu's rhetoric includes them in the political process. Mobutu's discourse often portrayed inclusion in the movement as empowering, but the reality of the situation differed greatly from the discourse. Membership in the MPR was mandatory regardless of whether one was an ecstatic follower or silent dissenter. Zairian people had little freedom of choice.

The second book in the series, *Le citoyen dans la développement national*, reinforces the idea that Zairian citizens had a duty to Mobutu and the nation. A reading entitled "*Le bien-être de la Nation par l'Épargne et l'effort de tous*,"<sup>116</sup> clearly explains that each citizen had a responsibility to save money so the nation could flourish financially. But this rhetoric is not limited to savings: "*Chaque citoyen a le devoir de contribuer au bien-être de la Nation en accomplissant la tâche qui lui est assignée*,"<sup>117</sup> to guarantee the nation's prosperity. The nation is described as a family and all citizens had a duty to ensure each member's well-being.

In addition to the contemporary party doctrine and the legal documents, the civics texts also include proverbs. Proverbs are a simple way of including traditional wisdom

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<sup>114</sup> Malibato, *Le citoyen dans la communauté nationale*, 4.

<sup>115</sup> N'Gambwa, 134.

<sup>116</sup> Babudaa Malibato, *Éducation civique et politique 2. Le citoyen dans la développement national. 4e secondaire* (Kinshasa: Department de l'éducation national, 1975), 74

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

without actually providing any substance or context. Thus, Malibato can present a lesson in contemporary terms and subsequently use a proverb to state the same thing. Malibato can therefore honour the ancestors and appear ‘authentic’ without having to note that the proverb had its origins in a different social structure and historical context.

#### 4. *Concluding Remarks*

In earlier textbooks, the differences between state and Church materials are not particularly striking, but the details definitely matter. State and Church textbooks both promote the Church as an important governing and spiritual body, but also relate it to the Western powers that oppressed and abused the indigenous population. The state, more specifically the MPR and Mobutu, are largely ignored by most texts except for Tshibangu’s text and the civics readers produced at Mobutu’s order. The discourse in Leysbeth and Tshibangu’s texts, one Church and one state, describe Zairians as having agency and voice in their own fate, while the remaining history and civics texts as well as state-run extra-curricular activities imply that Zairians were passive bodies in their history. Simultaneously, Leysbeth and Tshibangu praise the father, God and Mobutu respectively, suggesting that despite their agency, the Zairians owed allegiance these higher powers. Mobutu made a larger impact in the extra-curricular sphere with the establishment of the JMPR, animation, and *salongo* as mandatory practices. At the same time, these practices led to resentment, which may have encouraged the students to resist the ideologies Mobutu promoted.

After discussing 1970s generational location in Chapter One, meaning the generations’ circumstances at birth, and generational actuality in Chapter Two, meaning how

they were taught to understand their situation, I have addressed how the educational experience was actualized through generational units, or artistic products in Chapter Three. The schism between state and Church played a large role in how the youth perceived and understood their surroundings. Perhaps we may begin to understand how discourse in education affects students' values and perceptions without them recognizing it.

## *Chapter Three: A Sketch of Generational Identity: Evidence in the Arts<sup>1</sup>*

The following chapter examines how the 1970s cohort understood and expressed state discourse and state-Church tension evident in its education, and why the cohort rejected both bodies' ideologies to a certain extent. As Chapter Two demonstrated, despite Mobutu's attempts, no single discursive message dominated the education system. European, state and Church materials illustrated fragmented views of history, reflecting the constant tensions and struggles that permeated Zairian society. The 1970s cohort was taught varying perceptions of state, Church, the West and themselves and the roles they all played in Zaire's development. In this chapter, I examine painting, music and written literature to discern how the 1970s generation perceived these institutions and themselves as well. In this way, generational units, or the artefacts expressing their experience, illustrate how the 1970s cohort understood, and ultimately rejected state ideals evident in learning materials. Youth questioned, but not wholly rejected, the teachings of the Church. Because, "creative and innovative forms of popular culture—theatre, arts, music and dance—are often the exclusive domain of the young,"<sup>2</sup> their consciousness is often reflected in visual, musical and literary works. These artistic works were a movement towards creating a reimagined or reinvented tradition,<sup>3</sup> something distinct from the elder generations whom some youth believed had

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<sup>1</sup> Due to difficulties acquiring copyright permission, I am unable to include images of the paintings in this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Filip DeBoeck and Alcinda Honwana, "Introduction. Children and youth in Africa. Agency, Identity, and Place," *Makers and Breakers. Children and youth in Postcolonial Africa*, eds Filip DeBoeck and Alcinda Honwana (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 2005), 1

<sup>3</sup> Filip DeBoeck, "Postcolonialism, power and identity. local and global perspectives from Zaire," *Post-colonial identities in Africa*, eds Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (London: Zed books, 1996), 100.

been selfish, had not managed the past, and had left younger generations without the resources or the opportunity to succeed.<sup>4</sup>

Youth in Zaire used the arts as an outlet because socially and politically speaking they were marginalized. According to scholar A. Marie, youth constituted the majority of the marginal population who lived in ghettos.<sup>5</sup> Bogumil Jewsiewicki states that aesthetics, morals, and politics are intrinsically linked, allowing for marginalized youth to act outside of institutional frameworks to critique the political sphere.<sup>6</sup> Visual, musical and literary arts not only provide spaces to form and express identity, but a safe space to critique the nation's powerful bodies, including the administration and the Church.

The 1970s cohort's art works demonstrate that the 'memories' that the state conveyed through education were rejected. Instead alternative collective memories became the basis for this generation's identity. As Johannes Fabian suggests, in his work on music, painting and religion, collective identities are forged through African popular cultures, which renegotiate the collective memory of the cohort and express "the preoccupations of daily life."<sup>7</sup> As one delves into Zairian painting, music and literature, this becomes very evident. Artists focus on the challenges and injustices of daily life, many of which are linked to particular memories in the minds of this generation. To previous generations in Zaire, this may have meant tying social and political problems to colonial rule. But, as one examines the 1970s generation's work, it becomes clear that the collective memory focuses on Mobutu and the injustices that he and the MPR wreaked upon young people.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid , 7.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in: J.A. Mbembe, *Les jeunes et l'ordre politique en Afrique noire* (Paris. Harmattan, 1985), 146.

<sup>6</sup> Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Presentation: Le langage politique et les arts plastiques en Afrique," *Art and politics in Black Africa*, ed Bogumil Jewsiewicki (Safi, Morocco: Canadian Association of African Studies, 1989), 2

<sup>7</sup> Cited in: Ch. Didier Gondola, "Dream and Drama: The search for elegance among Zairian youth," *African Studies Review* 42.1 (April 1999): 24.

Nor, however, is the Church entirely exempt from critique. Although representations of Church and clergy are mixed, it is obvious that the youth are uncertain of its loyalties and intentions. Initially thought to be “incurably religious” by academics studying ethnology and “africanism,” a movement toward dechristenization exists in Africa.<sup>8</sup> Achille Mbembe claims that all societies have spiritual foundations, but under certain circumstances, they will rebel.<sup>9</sup> In this case, the Zairian youth seem to ponder rebellion to institutional Christianity, but refuse to commit to it. The Church and Christianity in general still provide space for expression that the state does not allow, a space where youth can join together, be creative, and escape real life.<sup>10</sup> Despite this, Mbembe claims that Christianity has failed to adapt to the needs of youth in contemporary Africa. He says that the Church limits its interactions with youth to teaching sexual responsibility, the sanctity of Christian marriages and the sacraments, and teaches that God created Black people to be unhappy on Earth.<sup>11</sup> The Church promotes complacency in the face of poverty. African youth turn to humour and joy to cope with the poverty and discontent and create new cultural practices from these hopeless situations.<sup>12</sup>

The following examination of generational identity is separated into four sections: perception of the state, perception of the Church, perception of the West, and perception of self. These foci were chosen because they permeated state discourse and educational material. In these four sections, reflections of the educational discourse will be apparent, including resistance and adherence to particular views and beliefs that the state or the Church attempted to inculcate via education. In some cases, the cohort refuses outright notions

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<sup>8</sup> Achille Mbembe, *Afriques indociles: Christianisme, pouvoir et Etat en société postcoloniale* (Paris: Karthala, 1988), 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>10</sup> Mbembe, *Les jeunes et l'ordre politique*, 171.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 149

posed in the educational practices and texts. The works are chosen based on availability, year of production and the creator's year of birth. If their creators were born close to independence, between 1955 and 1965, to ensure they were exposed to Mobutu's discourse during the 1970s, then the works were included. Where additional biographical information is available, I have provided it. Generally, I tried to choose works that were created in the 1980s and 1990s, avoiding anything produced in the new millennium to minimize works that are wholly focused on post-Mobutu politics or society. Works from the 1990s are particularly important because they followed Mobutu's announced, but superficial, move towards democracy in 1991. The opportunity for political, and other, opposition facilitated the expression of opposition in various art forms. Lastly, I attempted to include works that were referenced in academic sources. For example, Bolya Baenga was frequently referenced in academic material on literature. His work *Cannibale* is cited most frequently, however, it was unavailable so I chose instead to study *La polyandre*.

### *1. The Arts: Painting, Music, and Literature*

The painters of this generation, who attended school in the 1970s, are often untrained or self taught artists who produce works for local consumption.<sup>13</sup> Initially much of the painting in Zaire was intended for an urban, literate audience. However, by the late 1980s, this changed. Memories of colonialism and independence remained the focus of adults, but those born close to and after independence focus their painting, music, and literature on social injustice, daily violence, political arbitrariness and new tensions between gender and

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<sup>13</sup> V.Y. Mudimbe, " 'Reprendre': enunciation and strategies in contemporary African arts," *Africa Explores: 20<sup>th</sup> century Art*, ed. Susan Vogel (NYC: The Centre for African Art, 1991), 280.

generations.<sup>14</sup> This generation has become the key producers and consumers of these art works because their collective memories and perceptions provide the subject matter for much of the art. To ensure that paintings are accessible to the general public, paintings are placed in public places like bars and street corners. Thus, painting is no longer restricted to a narrow elite,<sup>15</sup> but speaks to a broader mass audience, particularly the marginalized who seek a voice.

Painting in Zaire, and particularly in Kinshasa where many artists are based, is a public practice. Artists create large paintings to fill public spaces even if they do not sell. The purpose is not to make large amounts of money, although making a living is not frowned upon. The purpose is to display the works to those who understand and appreciate them. Cheri Samba, for example, hangs his new paintings on a mango tree near his workshop. Many artists work in shops on busy roads and at major intersections so passers-by can witness them at work and see their finished products.<sup>16</sup> This new form of painting created and exhibited in public spaces has intensified the formation of icons of collective memory.<sup>17</sup> Symbols that represent the collective memory, which inspires much of Zaire's urban painting, are reproduced repeatedly and exhibited publicly before being purchased. In this way, even those who could not afford to purchase paintings for their homes see their memories presented publicly. Their perceptions of certain events and people are reinforced through the public's corroboration.

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<sup>14</sup> Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Painting in Zaire From the invention of the West to the representation of the social self," *Africa Explores 20<sup>th</sup> century Art*, ed Susan Vogel (NYC The Centre for African Art, 1991), 130

<sup>15</sup> T K Biaya, "L'impasse de crise Zairoise dans la peinture urbaine, 1970 1985," *Art and politics in Black Africa*, ed Bogumil Jewsiewicki (Safi, Morocco Canadian Association of African Studies, 1989), 97

<sup>16</sup> Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Memoires picturales et sense du present peinture urbaine au Congo Contemporain," *Du musee colonial au musee des cultures du monde actes du colloque organise par le Musee national des arts d'Afrique et d'Oceanie et le Centre Georges Pompidou, 3 6 Juin 1998*, ed Dominique Taffin, 138

<sup>17</sup> Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Une societe urbaine 'moderne' et ses representations la peinture populaire a Kinshasa (Congo) 1960-2000" *Le mouvement social* 204 (July-Sept 2003) 138

Some question the legitimacy of painting as representative of Zairian identity, suggesting it is a foreign mode of expression implemented through contact, often oppressive contact, with the West. However, the Western pictorial model is accepted as legitimate, much like French is accepted as a legitimate language in Zaire.<sup>18</sup> Like language, painting is accepted because this foreign medium has been adapted to represent the Zairian people; it is, one could say, a Western language with a Zairian accent.

Painters illustrate how the past is remembered in contrast to how it is represented according to official sources. Understanding how the past is remembered may convey more about popular perceptions than official history because such memories are rooted in the masses and not forced upon them from above. Pictorial language often uses memory in lieu of official history to express how the artist and their generation understand the past.<sup>19</sup> Zairian artists accomplish this by taking symbols, both of Western nature and from previous genres of painting, and redefining them.<sup>20</sup> Because this generation feels disconnected from their elders and marginalized in general, they are not part of the accepted order and, therefore, do not blindly accept the established signifiers. Legend reproduces official state history, for example the famous legend of the boy Mobutu slaying a leopard. Urban painting, on the other hand, utilizes image or sign to express what is known through other, unofficial channels.<sup>21</sup> Painters correct history by illustrating the past as the popular consciousness remembers it instead of how it was depicted by the regime.<sup>22</sup> Rewriting history allows the people to construct their history and reject the official history of the regime.

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<sup>18</sup> Jewsiewicki, "Painting in Zaire," 131

<sup>19</sup> Bogumil Jewsiewicki, *Mami Wata La peinture urbaine au Congo* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 28

<sup>20</sup> Deboeck, "Postcolonialism, power and identity," 81

<sup>21</sup> Jewsiewicki, "Painting in Zaire," 146

<sup>22</sup> Jewsiewicki, "Une société urbaine 'moderne' et ses représentations", 147

In Kinshasa, painting is dominated, and has been dominated since the late 1970s, by a group of painters who call themselves the School of Popular Painting. It includes Cheri Samba, Cheri Cherin, Cheik Ledy, Bodo and Moke.<sup>23</sup> Maître Syms, in addition, apprenticed with Cheri Samba and is often associated with the school despite not being an official member. Bodo and Moke, although they are officially members, are not addressed. Both were born before 1955 and did not attend school in the 1970s. Thus they do not fit the necessary profile to be included in this thesis.

Born in Kinto M'Vuila in 1956, Cheri Samba is a self taught painter and self declared "Master of the Impossible."<sup>24</sup> In 1972, Samba left secondary school to apprentice with sign painters in Kinshasa. In 1975, he started using his now trademark style of word bubbles, like those used in comic strips, in his paintings, both for narrative and commentary and to market his work: people on the street would stop to read his word bubbles and thus notice them more than others.<sup>25</sup> As a *sapeur*, meaning a well dressed man, Samba is known as much for his ego as his work. Despite his international success, Samba continues to paint Zairian subjects, commenting on domestic issues and challenges.

Cheik Ledy, a skilled painter who studied under his brother Cheri Samba for ten years, was often accused of mimicking his style.<sup>26</sup> His pieces are more difficult to obtain than Samba's and those found online are often small and difficult to see. However, thanks to a small number of key collections, it is possible to study some of Ledy's works.

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<sup>23</sup> Hegel Gonfrier, "Popular Painting from Kinshasa," *The Courier* 2 (Sept/Oct 2007) [www.acp-eucourier.info/popular-painting-from-Kin-131-0.html](http://www.acp-eucourier.info/popular-painting-from-Kin-131-0.html) (Accessed online June 2, 2009)

<sup>24</sup> Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Cheri Samba and the postcolonial reinvention of modernity," *Callaloo* 16 4 (Autumn 1993) 779-780

<sup>25</sup> African Contemporary Art Gallery, "Featured Artists," [www.africancontemporary.com/Cheri\\_Samba.htm](http://www.africancontemporary.com/Cheri_Samba.htm) (Accessed online June 2, 2009)

<sup>26</sup> Camille Lowry, "Strength in Numbers," *Swindle* [www.swindlemagazine.com/issue15/congo/](http://www.swindlemagazine.com/issue15/congo/) (Accessed online June 2, 2009)

Born in 1955, Cheri Cherin differs from the similarly aged Cheri Samba in that he attended the Academy of Arts in Kinshasa, graduating in 1978. This means that Samba, who left high school in the mid-1970s, maintained his youth status while his practical education continued. He was exposed to the same media and education that other school-aged children encountered. Cheri Cherin, however, attended a post-secondary education beginning in the mid-1970s. Thus, he became an elite member of society and was exposed to university-style teaching. That is not to say that he did not encounter the materials discussed in Chapter Two, but one could infer that he experienced a greater variation of influences and opinions in higher education, where education material was less restricted. Another contentious issue with Cheri Cherin is the difficulty finding any work from the 1980s or early 90s. Despite being seven years older than Cheik Ledy, most of Cherin's work is from the late 1990s and 2000s. Avoiding anything completed after the turn of the century, the focus will therefore be on his work from the late 1990s.

Born in 1957 in Kinshasa, Maître Syms became an apprentice to Cheri Samba in 1976. Although he was not being formally educated, he was still a youth in the social sense, exposed to Mobutu's media machine and living in the void between childhood and adulthood. He began with rubber stamps, silk screening, printing and portraiture. He opened his own workshop in 1977, at the age of twenty. He is an openly religious man and has said: "I am inspired by the Bible."<sup>27</sup> Syms, however, is intensely critical of those who claim to be good Christians but do not adhere to Christian morals and guidelines. Painting is not the only medium of expression and critique that the 1970s generation employs.

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<sup>27</sup> Kin Moto Na Posada [www.posada.be/kinmotonaposada/painters/syms.htm](http://www.posada.be/kinmotonaposada/painters/syms.htm) (Accessed June 2, 2009)

Music is an integral and celebrated part of Zairian culture, particularly the rumba of the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Internationally successful and played throughout Africa, the great rumba musicians of this era were synonymous with wealth and fame. Franco, for example, was a world renowned artist. However, some of his success stemmed from his relationship to the regime. He often sang Mobutu's praise and for this was given a record pressing factory that earned him a substantial income. In this way, Mobutu intended to keep musicians dependent upon the regime.<sup>28</sup> There was also a significant American influence from the 1970s to 1990s; Aretha Franklin and Otis Redding among others were popular in Zaire.<sup>29</sup> But this group of rumba artists, despite their popularity, were not the voice of the youth. They represented the old guard, the group of artists benefitting from Mobutu's reign and smothering the youth's voice.

Nearing the end of the 1970s, many famous rumba band leaders, including Grand Kallé, began new groups involving local unemployed youth; many were born in the neighbourhoods of Kinshasa. The structure of these new bands paralleled the structure of authoritarian rule: to some, band leaders were gluttonous, aggressive and intolerant.<sup>30</sup> The new, young musicians entered the band at the bottom of the hierarchy. These new bands quickly strayed from the classic rumba of their fathers' generation. *La musique moderne* arrived with heavy guitar, music videos featuring cars, romantic love and fashion.

The most important addition to the Zairian band came in the early 1980s, an addition the youth summoned: the *atalaku*, a male who shouts and dances during the dance sequence of live performances. Animation during the Mobutu regime and suffering record sales

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<sup>28</sup> Bob W. White, *Rumba Rules the politics of dance music in Mobutu's Zaire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 67.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid* , 45-46

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 226 and 11.

inspired the emergence of the *atalaku*.<sup>31</sup> Illegal tape sales led musicians to seek out other methods of making money. Zairian musicians began putting on concerts that involved choreographed dances. They also changed the style of the dance song. During the early 1970s, the Western song style of verse-chorus-bridge was abandoned. A prolonged musical segment called a *seben* was placed at the end of the song. During this portion, which followed a slow, lyrical opening, dancers would perform on stage. Even the musicians would involve themselves in the dance. It was during this extended solo that the young band members saw a need for an *atalaku*.

The *atalaku* drives the music forward with shouts, inciting the audience at live shows. The shouts come from various sources. There is a common pool of trendy shouts that are adapted from everyday situations. Many are born from local languages or urban slang. During live performances, “he [the *atalaku*] borrows words and rhythms from unidentified sources of ‘traditional’ knowledge.”<sup>32</sup> However, the *atalaku* does not appear in the videos, nor is he considered a singer.<sup>33</sup> He is both a traditional artist placed in modern music, and a break with the recent past, a stark contrast to his rumba predecessors. The youthful musicians are rejecting the power of Mobutu and his generation and severing the lines of dependence that he tried to establish through familial discourse in educational practices.

The live show is an extension of the music, but it is also an opportunity to stray from the standard performance. According to Mbembe, “*au milieu de la spontanéité, l’expression*

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<sup>31</sup> Bob W. White, “Modernity’s trickster: ‘dipping’ and ‘throwing’ in Zairian popular dance music,” *Research in African Literatures* 30.1 (Winter 1999): 158.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

*verbale et musicale se libère.*"<sup>34</sup> Many older rumba fans saw the arrival of the *atalaku* as crass and unnecessary. However, the youth welcomed the *atalaku*, partially because it challenged the hegemony of the "musical 'elders'."<sup>35</sup> According to Bébé Atalaku, one of Zaïko Langa Langa's first *atalakus*, "Zaïko had been playing pretty much the same music for ten years. We brought a breath of fresh air to the music. At first they said all we did was scream and shout, but now they respect us. We were proof that the older generation was dead and buried."<sup>36</sup> Thus this movement in music mirrored the political change that many youth desired. What was impossible in the political realm became reality in music. Music is a powerful medium because the average Zairian listens to it and understands it. Literature, however, is limited to those who can read, and, in particular, read French.

Literature in Zaïre has different implications than painting and music. In order to create a work of literature, one must be highly educated. Thus many Zairians would note a difference in status between the author and themselves. Furthermore, many Zairians would not be able to read literature written in French. This does not imply that highly educated individuals, meaning those who have attended post-secondary, do not understand Zaïre, but that they describe it and experience it differently. Despite recognizing a difference, according to Pius Ngandu Nkashama, youth and students see authors as an important force, able to subvert the regime, and therefore are supportive of their work.<sup>37</sup> The themes that authors address are pertinent to the Zairian psyche. As one proceeds through this chapter, it is possible to draw definite parallels between the themes addressed in painting and music and those described in literature.

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<sup>34</sup> Mbembe, *Les jeunes*, 171.

<sup>35</sup> White, "Modernity's Trickster," 160.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in *ibid*, 160

<sup>37</sup> Pius Ngandu Nkashama, "La littérature congolaise contemporaine (1980-1993): romans, recits, et contes," *Littératures du Congo-Zaïre Actes du Colloque international de Bayreuth 22-24 July 1993*, eds Pierre Halen and Janos Riesz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 36.

## 2. *Perception of State*

The 1970s generation's rejection of Mobutu and his teachings is clear in Zairian painting, music and literature. Cheri Samba's critique of Mobutu's regime and its Western supporters is evident in many paintings. For example in *Les linges sales*<sup>38</sup> (1993), a white man, a priest and Mobutu are placed in the background, contrasting greatly with the group of average Zairian in the foreground who wash their clothes in a basin. The three spectators in the background ask why the people are washing their clothing in that manner.<sup>39</sup> This piece juxtaposes the wealth of the three beings with the poverty of the masses. As well, the three individuals in the background are questioning the behaviour and knowledge of this group. Their traditional ways vary from the accepted modern methods of completing tasks and thus they are judged ignorant. Samba's focus is the arrogance of the three elites who know nothing of the common plight, but judge the common people regardless. He also illustrates Mobutu's own ignorance of 'authenticity'. Despite his '*récours à l'authenticité*', Mobutu was still intrinsically connected to the powers in the West and not his own people.

In the 1994 work *Zaire Moto*<sup>40</sup>, a fat-bellied supporter of the government pulls a parade float behind him. On it, emaciated people sit next to simple homes. The fat man in the red coat is representative of the wealth that is accrued through blind obedience to the regime. According to Jean François Bayart, successful individuals exploit, conquer and kill by witchcraft and eat the substance of others.<sup>41</sup> Mobutu's administration fed off the hard work of the people and became wealthy and fat while the people starved. Mobutu is also increasingly associated with witchcraft, depicted in certain paintings with fangs and

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<sup>38</sup> Bomoï Mobimba, *Toute la vie* (Ville de Charleroi: Palais de Beaux Arts, 1996), 127.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in: Wyatt MacGaffey, "Am I Myself? Identities in Zaire, then and now," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6.8 (1998):304.

participating in witchcraft. Red, the colour of the man's coat, can symbolize many things according to Georges Defour. Although it can have positive connotations, suggesting joy or courage, it also represents the carnal, the transitory and the individual life.<sup>42</sup> This may suggest that while the fat man is wealthy at the moment, it is merely material gain that will not benefit him when his earthly body dies.

Another interesting piece that openly criticizes Mobutu's administration is the 1991 painting *Coopération Libano-Zaïrois*.<sup>43</sup> In this piece, a Lebanese officer is sitting on the back of a Zairian man while a member of Zaire's administration takes a large stack of money from the Lebanese man's hand. Samba suggests that a trade deal was struck that benefitted solely the Lebanese and Zaire's administration. In the background, a single Zairian man looks across the water at a white figure, back to the spectator, who carries with him an abundance of goods. The regime betrayed the Zairian people for money. This is particularly poignant when viewed through the familial metaphors Mobutu imposed. Their 'father' abandoned them for wealth but still expected loyalty in return. Samba illustrates this betrayal and is therefore speaking for the abandoned masses.

Syms, too, assails the wrongdoings of political figures in an explicit assault on the regime's oppressive measures. In 1992's *La Corruption à la CNS*,<sup>44</sup> a number of politicians are being bribed by a well dressed man with a suitcase full of money. On his knees, he implores the politicians: "*Je vous demande d'adopter tous la géopolitique compris?*"<sup>45</sup> Of the four politicians, three take the money without question. One man stands behind the rest

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<sup>42</sup> Georges Defour, *A l'écoute de la vie Africaine* (Bukavu: Bandari, 1971), 174.

<sup>43</sup> Mobimba, 110.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

and ponders his next act: “*Prendre cet argent! Alors je tue le peuple.*”<sup>46</sup> Syms illustrates the self serving nature of most politicians but suggests that there are still politicians who have the Zairian people’s interests in mind.

He reinforces this in *Victoire Tshisekedi*,<sup>47</sup> painted in 1992. In 1982, Etienne Tshisekedi, one of thirteen parliamentarians who tried to oppose Mobutu and was imprisoned, formed among others of the thirteen the opposition party *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social* (UDPS). In 1990, a limited multi-party system was reinstated. In 1992, Tshisekedi was appointed Prime Minister and approved by 70% of the delegates.<sup>48</sup> In the painting, Tshisekedi is shown with his hands raised in victory with severed shackles around his wrists. It represents the liberation from Mobutu’s dictatorship and the success of his appointment; it signifies the intended transition to democracy. The imagery of shackled hands recalls an earlier theme: *la colonie belge*. In earlier paintings, the shackled prisoner was a common synecdoche representing colonialism. This painting, therefore, equates the oppressive colonial era with the oppressive regime of Mobutu. According to Jewsiewicki, in the post colonial context, the breaking of chains suggested the coming of the modern state, paid work, and freedom from oppression.<sup>49</sup> Syms’ piece symbolizes freedom from Mobutu and the oppressive regime of the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR). Behind him, a crowd cheers in support, which emphasizes the importance of the Zairian people in their own future. Again, the first painting illustrates that the youth no longer believe Mobutu’s self-proclaimed paternal magnanimity. The second painting more clearly shows that the youth will not be dependent or loyal as Mobutu

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>48</sup> Crawford Young, “Zaire: The Anatomy of a Failed State,” *History of Central Africa: The contemporary years, Since 1960*, eds. David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin (London: Longman, 1998), 125.

<sup>49</sup> Jewsiewicki, *Mami Wata*, 38.

required. Syms is clearly showing that the public supports the opposition, a dangerous sentiment under Mobutu's regime.

With the same purpose, Cheik Ledy welcomes a new leader in *Entrée de la deuxième République*,<sup>50</sup> completed in 1992. The unnamed leader steps forward into reality from a rip in the scene shaped like Zaire. A tiny Mobutu not wearing his traditional leopard skin hat grips tightly onto the man's leg, but is being left behind. Although he is five years prior to Mobutu's departure, Ledy, like Syms, welcomes the arrival of a multiparty system and the National Conference.

Often critiques of the regime are indirect, but Maître Syms openly attacks Mobutu in his paintings. In the 1991 work *Le Massacre Clandestin*,<sup>51</sup> Mobutu sits in the middle of the painting carrying his cane and wearing his leopard hat. A cauldron of skulls sits in the foreground, no doubt the result of Mobutu's work. Soldiers stand on either side of him, their fangs just visible from behind their lips. Behind Mobutu is a coat of arms which reads: *injustice, vol, massacre*. Not only is this piece an attack on Mobutu, it relates his doings to witchcraft, like Samba's *Zaire Moto*. The pile of skulls and the men with fangs correspond in the national consciousness with witchcraft. The piece illustrates the contemporary fear and mistrust of Mobutu and therefore the failure of his earlier attempts at inculcation.

Cheri Cherin's two chaotic paintings, both from 1999, express a mistrust of Mobutu and welcome the new political leaders. *Ci-gât M. Zaire*<sup>52</sup> encompasses a number of images. In the centre, a white cross marks the grave of M. Zaire. Its dates mark Mobutu's initiation

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<sup>50</sup> Mobimba, 101.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>52</sup> Jewsiewicki, *Mami Wata*, 46-47.

of authenticity to his removal from power (1971-1997).<sup>53</sup> Poison, a skull and the book *Fleur du Mal*, reminiscent of the *mal Zairois* Mobutu embodied, lie around the grave. Mobutu coined the term *mal Zairois*, which he originally used in a speech in 1977 condemning the flaws of Zaire's regime, but not himself. In 1980, the thirteen politicians who opposed Mobutu published an open letter, claiming he was the incarnation of *mal Zairois*.<sup>54</sup> To the right of the grave, a politician and a lawyer are shaking hands over the parliament building representing, according to Jewsiewicki, democracy and recalling the Round Table held in Brussels that yielded independence.<sup>55</sup> To the left of the grave, Laurent Kabila, the leader of Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo who succeeded Mobutu, dressed as a doctor, administers medication to a *kadogo*, or child soldier. Behind him, an army marches through the street, a crowd cheering them onwards. As Mobutu and his wife flee towards a jet, Mobutu's leopard tail wraps around a *kadogo* marching apart from his fellow soldiers. The *kadogo*'s body is taking the place of a tree that is being ripped out of the ground by Mobutu's followers. According to Georges Defour, in folktales, trees symbolize fertility, wealth and power.<sup>56</sup> The young boy is replacing the tree, becoming himself the symbol of fertility, wealth and power.

Although about the death of Mobutu's Zaire, this painting is one of optimism and renewed hope. However, the image of Kabila as doctor and, therefore, saviour, is reminiscent of the perception of Mobutu at the beginning of his reign. The disillusionment of the Mobutu era did not hinder Cherin from adopting the same expectations of Kabila.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Young, 122.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Defour, *A l'écoute*, 192.

This painting again rejects the teachings of ‘father’ Mobutu instead projecting that image onto Kabila and emphasizes Mobutu’s cowardly abandonment of his people.

*Mystique Congolaise*,<sup>57</sup> completed in 1999, is similar in style to *Ci-gît M. Zaire*. As a series of stories woven into one image, it is a complex and overwhelming painting. In the right foreground, Cherin has placed *Mami Wata*, this time a black female talking on a cellular phone, while behind her in the water, a crocodile is attacking a man in his fishing boat. Although *Mami Wata* is black in this painting, she is talking on a cellular phone, a symbol of modern technology that suggests the West. The crocodile, according to Jewsiewicki, symbolizes witchcraft.<sup>58</sup> Behind this a medicine man sits in front of his store mixing a concoction for patiently waiting clients. The sign on the front of the store claims he treats AIDS, witchcraft, diabetes, blindness, and luck, among many other things. This phony healer, along with the representations of witchcraft, is, according to Jewsiewicki, representative of the vices inherited from the Mobutu era.<sup>59</sup>

Behind this, a large Bible is open acting as shelter for a group of parishioners who sit at a priest’s feet, enthralled and passionate. The priest, dressed all in white, has his back to the viewer; from this angle, we can see his leopard legs and tail, the latter which has wrapped itself around a naked, struggling woman. One can assume, and Jewsiewicki corroborates, that this priest is Mobutu in disguise.<sup>60</sup> This implies that the Church still has an undeniable hold on the population and to reach them and attain their loyalty, Mobutu poses as a priest. However, this also implies that the Church was complicit in his exploitation of the nation. Despite the conflicts between the two bodies, they have now

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<sup>57</sup> Jewsiewicki, *Mami Wata*, 112.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

become intrinsically linked in the Zairian consciousness as two powerful bodies that are prone to manipulation. This representation displays the discontent surrounding Mobutu's regime and the underlying suspicion of the Church. Behind the preaching Mobutu a man sits on the edge of a graveyard and a skeleton sits on a freshly dug grave. The sky is littered with witches flying on broomsticks. These again are references to witchcraft and unhappiness. Both the man and the skeleton appear forlorn, hopeless and destitute, with their heads hanging forward. In the centre of the painting at the very top is a monkey devil creature presiding over the events. With long clawed fingernails and a pitchfork, he appears to be the conductor of this brutal opus. Cherin suggests that God has abandoned Zaire and the Devil has replaced Him. The painting rejects both state and Church familial metaphors: the father figures that each body promised would attend to the nation abandoned it and the people are left destitute and betrayed.

Instead of directly attacking the regime, Cheik Ledy critiques the soldiers who represent the administration on the streets. In *Souffrance des artistes*,<sup>61</sup> painted in 1992, Ledy depicts soldiers harassing an emaciated artist outside his home. Bumped and bruised, the artist claims that he is not against the soldiers,<sup>62</sup> however his painting hung outside his house in the background illustrates otherwise. The image is of soldiers shooting down a door. The soldier who is currently abusing the artist has a large gun in his belt and, like his partner, sports a big belly. Besides the obvious implication that those who work for the regime can afford to eat, the fat belly, according to Jean-François Bayart, relates to 'the politics of the belly', the Cameroonian term he uses to describe post-colonial politics.<sup>63</sup> The

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: the Politics of the Belly*, trans. Mary Harper, Christopher and Elizabeth Harrison (London: Longman, 1993), ix.

term is both a description and criticism of corruption, implying that the elite ‘eat where they are tethered’, but not beyond that.<sup>64</sup> The elites ingest all of the nation’s resources, leaving everyone else to starve. Ledy emphasizes the control and power allotted to the common soldier in the name of the government and the discrepancy in wealth between the average Zairian and regime devotees.

Soldiers are also vilified in many of Maître Syms’ works, including the 1992 work, *Les martyrs de la démocratie*.<sup>65</sup> Soldiers have opened fire on the headquarters of the *Union démocrate pour le progrès social* (UDPS), Tshisekedi’s opposition party. *Etouffement de la presse écrite au Zaïre*,<sup>66</sup> from 1992 as well, adheres to the theme of military violence against the press and the repression of political opposition. Two soldiers beat a man who was holding a stack of newspapers. The papers are now all over the ground, their headlines visible to the viewer. One reads: “*du blocage de la conference nationale souveraine[sic]*.”<sup>67</sup> This refers to Mobutu’s refusal to recognize the new government and new constitution adopted at the 1992 National Conference and his reinstatement of his former parliament.<sup>68</sup> In scrawling printing across the top of the painting reads what looks like an afterthought: “*à bas la dictature/vive la démocratie.*”<sup>69</sup>

Syms’ *La Marche des chrétiens*,<sup>70</sup> completed in 1992, again focuses on soldiers, however this time they are attacking a Christian street demonstration. Two kneeling priests, one black and one white, are leading the group, facing the soldiers directly. A third priest in the background is urging his followers not to flee. The Church confronts the regime: they

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Young*, 125.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

are peacefully resisting the soldiers, displaying a solemn strength against an oppressive regime. This painting shows that educational materials, when reinforced by political action, can create a lasting perception of the Church. The majority of the school texts praised the Catholic Church's ability to resist unjust administrations.<sup>71</sup> Its ability to follow through on this claim allows the Church to maintain a privileged position in Zaire despite the suspicions that sometimes surround its intentions.

Clearly, painters in The School of Popular Painting were willing and able to criticize the regime. They were not limited to certain subjects because their consumers, and therefore financial supporters, were willing to purchase paintings even though, and maybe because, they criticized the regime. Musicians, however, faced more limitations. Due to the previously mentioned availability of illegally distributed music, musicians often partially depended upon elites to support their music financially. Thus, the material addressed utilized different methods to criticize the regime than those used in painting.

Bawdy and suggestive, the *atalaku*, or the 'singer' who shouts phrases during the *seben*, or musical interlude, has a joking relationship with the entire band. He, like them, is a star, but he remains anonymous, "a nameless everyman."<sup>72</sup> As an everyman, his shouts correspond to the challenges of everyday life, specifically in Kinshasa. To accomplish this without becoming a political target, *atalaku* sing veiled criticisms through songs of love, fear, and abandonment, employing the medium of plaintive love songs in particular.<sup>73</sup> While they connect with the people and whip them into a dancing frenzy, they also act as a sign of hope: the *atalakus* have a voice. They are able to critique the regime publically without fear

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<sup>71</sup> See Chapter Two of this thesis.

<sup>72</sup> White, "Modernity's Trickster", 162.

<sup>73</sup> White, *Rumba Rules*, 178.

of retribution and take action against the oppressive elites. These criticisms continue the theme of rejection of Mobutu as beloved and dutiful father.

The shouts of *atalakus* critique the regime, but do so subtly to maintain financial support from elite sponsors and to avoid punishment. The audience understands the language of the *atalaku* and therefore recognizes the criticisms, but not everyone does. Often the *atalaku* refers to the leader's abandonment of the people and the poor leadership of the elite. The *atalaku* does not openly oppose or criticize the regime or the elite in general; he requires their support. Instead he shouts, or 'throws', the elite citizens' names during the *seben* and they, in turn, give him money.<sup>74</sup> In the 1990s, Mobutu's son, Kongola, was commonly thrown by *atalakus*. Spies informed him of who was and was not throwing his name during performances. Thus, while critiquing the elite, the *atalaku* must pay homage to them to ensure financial and political support.

The *atalaku* has few limits and can shout the names of financial supporters, producers, and friends in the crowd.<sup>75</sup> Oftentimes, he throws the names of financial supporters who provide funds only once or for short periods.<sup>76</sup> Bob White provides a number of examples of 'throwing' in his works on Zairian music. For example, in Super Chocs 1996 song '*Shabani*,' the lyrics reference various sponsors, many of whom are among the elite (the bold is the author's and refers to names): "Send me on **Air Zaire Papa Kikunda** . . . Set foot in London, and go back to Kinshasa"<sup>77</sup> Super Choc 'throws' the name 'Air Zaire' because they partially sponsored this song. Additional names of sponsors, including the producer, and friends are woven throughout the lyrics. White provides another

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<sup>74</sup> White, "Modernity's Trickster," 165

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 170

<sup>76</sup> White, *Rumba Rules*, 170

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 171

example from Big Stars 1995 song 'Alain Mbiya': "Steve Bimbo, round trip, Kinshasa, Paris. . ."78 Steve Bimbo was one of the bands sponsors. Interestingly, both songs are also about travel, demonstrating that escape was a common theme in Zairian music and a common desire among average Zairian.

Travel and escape reappear frequently in music and fiction because the average Zairian has little sum opportunity. Promises made to them in the 1960s and 1970s in the Manifesto of N'Sele and the Constitution never came to fruition. Impoverished and oppressed, many Zairians feel there is little hope for them and their children. This is expressed in songs as well. A Delta Force song states: "Oh Mama Ndundu please take care of the children! . . .Oh mama, nothing but bread [to eat]."79 General Defao's song depicts the similar desperation of an impoverished family with no options or opportunities: "Kids in my arms, my big brother in prison/A family with no means/ Who is going to help me?"/ "My commerce fell apart, I am going bankrupt/Oh husband, this is hell/Providing for the children has depleted my resources."80 The *atalaku* sings the story of the majority of the *Kinois* population. In this way, the *atalaku* vocalizes everyone's pain and makes it real.

Desperation is a result of the behaviour of the elite and the politicians who mismanaged and squandered the nation's resources. The youth feel that the older generation abandoned them, left them to fend for themselves and solve the mess that they created. This sense of abandonment is conveyed in the *atalaku*'s shouts. Using the analogy of romantic love, General Defao's 'Gégé' laments: "You turned your back on me, Kalonda/My nights

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>79</sup> White, "Modernity's Trickster," 163.

<sup>80</sup> White, *Rumba Rules*, 180.

are filled with worries/ You left me with sadness, you took away my joy.”<sup>81</sup> Koffi Olomide’s 1995 song ‘*Fouta Djallon*’ follows the same theme: “Love, love, love, love/why did you reduce me to nothing?/I was your slave/Why did you decide to kill me before my time?”<sup>82</sup> Even less discrete, *Viva la Musica*’s ‘*Perdue de Vue*’ states plainly: “I have no idea where you went/You ran from me, abandoned me.”<sup>83</sup> In the latter two songs, the artists ask why they have been abandoned. They are looking for answers, but more than that, they are looking for their loved one to return. In political terms, the youth are looking to the elders to resolve the problems they caused and allow for a natural progression of power from elites of the independence era to the younger generation.

Despite the serious and solemn nature of much of the music, Zairian popular music also has a playful side. Humour is commonly used to critique the regime. One example of this is Wenge Musica BCBG: “Oh Smooth One [Kabila] . . . I saw Fantomas [Mobutu] ...running away, running away, he passed this way.”<sup>84</sup> They mock Mobutu and praise Kabila, easing the pain caused by years of Mobutu rule. Music’s advantage is that it is accessible and understood by most. Although the lyrics are rendered in translation from Bob White’s work, most are in local languages. Written literature is far less accessible to the public: generally it is in French and the authors reside in and are published overseas. I am uncertain how widely available the literature used in this thesis is in Zaire, but its critique of Mobutu does not markedly differ from that found in painting and music.

The author of *Une femme en exil*, Amba Bongo, clearly expresses her disappointment with the Mobutu presidency. Never in her work does she call him ‘Mobutu,’ but her

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> White, “Modernity’s Trickster,” 164.

constant references to ‘the President’ clearly implicate him. Early in the novel, the President visits a rural town: “*C’était, sans doute, sa stratégie pour montrer au peuple qu’il était à son écoute, qu’il était son ami, ce qui n’était pas vraiment le cas.*”<sup>85</sup> His superficial attempts to enchant Bongo are insufficient. Anna’s new boss, Kira, the president’s crony, has her imprisoned for her political beliefs. His close connections to the administration allow him to do so. While Anna’s family suffers during her incarceration, Mobutu still flaunts his wealth; he spends days floating on the river in his luxury boat.<sup>86</sup> For Bongo, as for Anna, her protagonist, there is little hope in Zaire and little reason to expect Mobutu will do anything to improve the quality of life in Zaire.

Lwemba lu Masanga’s poetry also reflects the people’s disappointment in Mobutu. In “*Radeau des pêcheurs*,” Lwemba writes of the glories of Zaire: “*Savez vous, Lacs/que votre paradis est un lit gigantesque/ au-délà de Mobutu.*”<sup>87</sup> Although not a direct critique, Lwemba is envisioning Zaire beyond Mobutu, trying to disassociate the nation from the man. Lwemba also directly criticizes the President. In his poem “*Mpoyo Katumba*,” he discusses an actor of the same name who was killed in the Peaceful March of Christians in 1992. In this piece, he refers to Mobutu as Satan.<sup>88</sup> This is an especially vehement attack because Mobutu was a devout Christian.

In “*Histoire en désespoir*,” Lwemba discusses how politics intruded on daily life and agricultural practices. Mobutu’s regime, in a misguided attempt to improve agricultural yields, demanded that Zairians alter their agricultural practices: “*il demanda d’attendre/les*

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<sup>85</sup> Amba Bongo, *Une femme en exil* (Paris: Harmattan, 2000), 19.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>87</sup> Lwemba lu Masanga, *Fins et fin* (Kinshasa: L’UEZA, 1987), 7.

<sup>88</sup> Lwemba lu Masanga, *Champs qui Chantent*, ed. Lwemba lu Masanga (Kinshasa: L’UEZA, 1995), 39.

*récoltes de maïs/et le peuple confiant/resta quiet et naïf.*”<sup>89</sup> While the people awaited instruction and believed that things would improve, nothing did. The wealthy continued to benefit and the masses remained impoverished. The West arrived with money and aid, but: “*Mille élans sympathiques/ venus des mers lointaines/furent . . . Quel triste sort!/confiés aux mêmes ânes!*”<sup>90</sup> Lwemba also depicts the West as being charmed and tricked by Mobutu; Lwemba is actually relieving some of the blame often placed on Western nations and attributing it to Mobutu. Regardless of the ills caused by colonialism and Western influence, Mobutu is the real villain. History texts used in secondary school often did not condemn colonialism or the West, and the 1970s cohort would have no personal knowledge, or historical knowledge, of their failures. Mobutu’s failures, however, were obvious to the cohort who heard him preach liberty and revolution, but saw no results. Lwemba suggests Mobutu’s betrayal of the Zairian people is not forgotten.

Because of Zairians’ disillusionment with Mobutu, he is often depicted as a villain in much of the literature even if is not the central focus. The Zairians clearly trusted Mobutu and felt betrayed when they recognized his indifference towards their well being. According to Jewsiewicki, the inability to achieve the shared dreams of independence was the most difficult realization of the second half of the 1970s.<sup>91</sup> It destroyed the nation’s hope and lost the people’s faith in their leader. In Lomomba’s *L’instant d’un soupir*, Lenga calls Kinshasa ‘*Kin-la-belle*’ and ‘*Kinshasa-des-plaisirs*’. He lives with a civil servant in a beautiful home in a good neighbourhood. But when his host is imprisoned and he must move to a different part of the city, Lenga realizes how most *Kinois* live. Kinshasa was not the beautiful city he

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Jewsiewicki, *Mami Wata*, 25.

had initially thought: “*j’étais tombé du paradis en enfer.*”<sup>92</sup> The root cause of the poverty and despair is Mobutu’s obvious disregard for the welfare of his people. His unfulfilled promises left the cohort feeling abandoned and betrayed.

### 3. *Perception of the Catholic Church*

The Catholic Church is the focus of Cheri Samba’s *L’Eglise Coloniale*,<sup>93</sup> painted in 1993. A priest preaches to a group of clothed African people, while a nude African male sits in the foreground looking at the viewer. Samba’s word bubble states that priests taught Africans: “*heureux soient-ils les pauvres.*”<sup>94</sup> Samba implies that this teaching led many Africans to accept their poverty unquestioningly as the will of God. Priests, on the contrary, did not hesitate to accept the gifts of the wealthy. Wamu Oyatambwe explains that priests often accepted gifts like Mercedes automobiles, homes, or important positions in the diocese from the Mobutu regime as reward for loyalty.<sup>95</sup> Samba, however, critiques the Church less than the state.

Cheik Ledy also focuses less on the Church than the state. In his painting entitled *Martyrs de chrétiens*,<sup>96</sup> completed in 1992, a street is littered with dead bodies, including that of a priest; soldiers are the culprits. Gun wielding soldiers harass a partially nude woman on the right side of the painting. Behind a city wall, a man kneels in a church yard; his cross is visible from behind as he washes himself under a tap. This man has escaped violence and, instead of aiding the young woman or his fallen compatriots, he washes himself of responsibility and guilt. This work both empathizes with the Church’s suffering

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<sup>92</sup> Emongo Lomomba, *L’instant d’un soupir* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1989), 61.

<sup>93</sup> Mobimba, 123.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Oyatambwe, 64 and 67.

<sup>96</sup> Mobimba, 97.

at the hands of the administration and condemns the Church's lack of initiative to stop the administration. The one man who can take action against the soldiers hides behind a wall. The uncertainty that surrounded the Catholic Church's role in history pervades this image: was the Catholic Church perpetrator, victim, or bystander to the atrocities in Zaire?

Like Samba and Ledy, Maître Syms critiques the Church less than the regime, though he is not restrained in his critique of the Church's morals. In his 1991 work *Pasteur Monyato*,<sup>97</sup> a priest engages in questionable behaviour with two women. One woman is bent over in front of him, her rear end visible and covered in sores. Pasteur Monyato kneels and stares longingly at her, treating her malady with holy water. She says to him: "*Je veux te servir sur tous les plans, Amen.*"<sup>98</sup> Another woman sits in the background facing the viewer with her legs spread and her skirt up. A second man pokes his head through an open window, aghast at the situation. The spectator demonstrates how Syms wants the viewer to react: with shock and disgust. Syms criticizes the Church's inappropriate behaviour and questions the Church's morals and intentions, as Tshibangu did in his history text, still suspicious of their behaviour in Zaire.

Cheri Cherin rarely criticizes the Catholic Church. In 1998's *Désolation*,<sup>99</sup> Cherin depicts the 1998 flood of the Zaire River. In a busy urban setting, people attempt to evade the flood waters. Men in suits and women in dresses carrying baskets on their heads are knee deep in water. In the background, a Catholic school is surrounded by a high wall. People are climbing to safety over the wall, implying that the Church is still a safe haven.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid , 155.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> CAACART, "The Pigozzi Collection," [www.caacart.com/pigozzi-artist.php?i=cheri-cherin&m-41&s=300](http://www.caacart.com/pigozzi-artist.php?i=cheri-cherin&m-41&s=300) (accessed June 11, 2009)

Music neither openly praises nor criticizes the Catholic Church. Music does, however, use sexuality to sell, evidenced by the dancing women that accompany the *atalaku* at live shows. Sexuality illustrates that the youth question certain Church tenets and do not adhere blindly to Church rule. According to Mbembe, a new sexuality has arisen from the decrease in Christian influence. It damages Christian credibility, calling into question the practices of chastity and abstinence.<sup>100</sup> In fact, this new sexuality is an affront against Christianity. Dancers use thrusting hips to increase crowd size at shows, and simultaneously to reject the strict morals of an institution that was part of an oppressive colonial trifecta.

New sexuality is not limited to music; it is prevalent in literature as well. In Barly Baruti's piece *La Voiture, c'est l'aventure!*, large breasted women entrance his male protagonists. Seduction and adultery occur, although written with humour and a sense of shame. His drawings are bawdy, depicting scantily clad women in both cities and rural villages. New sexuality is not the only method utilized in literature to address the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church appears frequently in literature. Barly Baruti, a cartoonist, remarks on the Church and its rules of propriety. In *La Voiture, c'est l'aventure!*, Baruti depicts a missionary priest as a conniving thief. The Father quotes Bible passages to the protagonists as he leads them directly to the donation box. He proceeds to take all their money and still tries to sell them the mission's crucifix.<sup>101</sup> This perception of morally lax priests is not limited to Baruti's work. Nlandu Thierry's "*Misère*" questions the role and intention of the Church. One man questions who still wants to be a priest these days. Another responds: "*Les plus beaux fruits de notre société*" / "*Des fruits qui s'intègrent*

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<sup>100</sup> Mbembe, *Les jeunes*, 166.

<sup>101</sup> Barly Baruti, *Mohuta and Mapeka: la voiture, c'est l'aventure!* (Kinshasa: Afrique Editions, 1987), 11.

*parfaitement dans le système.*”<sup>102</sup> Nlandu suggests that only those who bend to the will of the regime succeed in their parishes. His characters are convinced that most Africans are Christians for material gain and ignore the moral guidelines. He describes them as such: “*fidélité à la débauche,*” “*un pacte avec l’argent,*” and “*abandonné l’Evangile.*”<sup>103</sup> At the play’s conclusion, a priest presides over a funeral. He claims that only God can save us from this abyss; whether he is referencing death or life in Zaire is unclear. In response, the protagonists state that priests drive in beautiful cars, but preach poverty and simplicity.<sup>104</sup> Nlandu addresses the double standards rife in the Catholic Church, but also critiques the priest’s willingness to adhere to Mobutu’s policies for material gains. Despite a certain dependence on Christianity, Zairian authors see and speak about the immoral behaviour displayed by the Church.

Maguy Kabamba, author of *La dette coloniale*, opts to take a different route. Her criticism of the Church is packaged in the simple beliefs of the protagonist’s mother. Many Catholic beliefs and practices parallel traditions and therefore are not more correct or important; she compares saints to ancestors because both were human beings. Kabamba illustrates that Catholicism is not superior to tradition, and that the Church does not deserve blind obedience. Kabamba, in many instances, both supports and condemns Catholicism, suggesting it still has a place in Zaire but perhaps Zairians should question its motives and methods of aid. This reflects history texts which also question the role of the Catholic Church in Zaire’s past.

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<sup>102</sup> Nlandu Mayamba Mbuya Thierry, *Misère* (Bruxelles: Lansman, 1994), 10.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

The 1970s generation's lack of faith in state and Church extends to God as well. In Zairian poet Ntumba Biduaya's poem "*Chant I*," he calls to God: "*Oh! Mon Dieu/tu me crées/ Dieu, tu m'envoies/Dieu,tu me confies cette mission/et enfin, Dieu tu m'abandonnes.*"<sup>105</sup> He feels that God has abandoned him and left him without guidance or support. He no longer trusts God to lead him to salvation. Thus, in addition to his administration, his religion and his God have abandoned him too.

The majority of Zairian painting and literature makes it clear that Christianity pervades Zairian life and is still, to a large extent, a pillar of support. It is evident in the small details: for example, in Bongo's *Une femme en exil*, Moseka, the protagonist's sister prays to God when the family is harassed by soldiers.<sup>106</sup> A certain status is allotted the Catholic Church in Baruti's *Viva la Musica!* Papa Wemba is chosen to sing for the *Père Supérieur*, who praises him; salvation and artistic freedom are still found in the Catholic Church.<sup>107</sup>

#### 4. *Perception of the West*

One figure prominent in earlier Zairian painting is used repeatedly still. *Mami Wata*, the mermaid figure, is a hybrid of female and fish. In earlier paintings, *Mami* was often white, a reference to the colonial woman,<sup>108</sup> but more recently, she is depicted as a black woman, a reinvented symbol with new meaning and implications. Stemming from stories of aquatic spirits that pervade Zairian folktales, she now ironically represents modernity. Understood initially as the seduction of colonial success, meaning becoming an intellectual

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<sup>105</sup> Ntumba Biduaya, "*Chant I*," *Champs qui Chantent*, ed Lwemba lu Masanga (Kinshasa L'UEZA, 1995), 34

<sup>106</sup> Bongo, 93-94

<sup>107</sup> Barly Baruti, *Viva la Musica!* (Kinshasa Afrique Editions, 1987), 20

<sup>108</sup> Jewsiewicki, "*Memoires picturales et sense du present*," 134

or a civil servant in the Belgian regime, *Mami Wata* offers wealth in return for the sacrifice of family members. Presently, *Mami Wata* represents both urban, modern culture and sexuality.<sup>109</sup> Although popular in the 1960s and 1970s, *Mami Wata* continues to be a subject in many of Cheri Samba's paintings.

In Samba's 1978 *C'est la Suppression*,<sup>110</sup> Samba depicts himself refusing *Mami Wata*. His narration explains that he previously did not believe in sirens, but then encountered a dark-haired white woman on his walk by the river. He refused her, thus, refusing the Western method of gaining material goods. This theme is repeated in 1984's *La Seduction*.<sup>111</sup> In this painting, an African, fish-tailed female sits next to a river, preening in a mirror. Next to her is a snake, representing the devil. Samba is up in the clouds, his back to us, reading a Bible. His narration reads: "*Ici, le peintre populaire 'Cheri Samba' suggère de résister à ce genre de pratiques magiques pour se confier à Dieu.*"<sup>112</sup> Samba's reaction is both a refusal and an acceptance. He refuses the material goods afforded to him by the West, but uses the Church to help him resist. By turning to the Church, he is accepting a Western institution into his heart, rendering his refusal ironic. This painting shows the Catholic Church's successful separation from the Western world. Despite the teachings illustrating Church's connection to the West, Cheri Samba clearly illustrates that the Church is not only disconnected from the West, but a refuge from it.

The West is seductive in music and literature as well. As previously mentioned, many modern Zairian musicians sing about escape, their destination being Europe, the Promised Land. This theme persists in literature, but further dimensions are examined.

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<sup>109</sup> Jewsiewicki, "Painting in Zaire," 133

<sup>110</sup> Mobimba, 109

<sup>111</sup> Jewsiewicki, "Painting in Zaire", 170.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*

Kabamba describes her young protagonists' disillusionment in their government and in the Western world, which they had thought was inherently moral. The boys think that only Africans are corrupt; repeatedly they witness the bribery and corruption in their own government and think it is limited to Africa. This is reinforced by elders, like their aunt who claims that Whites praise honesty and detest lying and thievery.<sup>113</sup>

The boys learn differently while trying to acquire visas at the Belgian consulate, discovering that Europeans use *pots-de-vin*, or bribes.<sup>114</sup> Once in Belgium, they realize the good life promised to the African in Europe is denied them based on their nationality and race. The men steal and the women sell their bodies, and they describe to their friends and family back home a life that is merely an illusion. This disillusionment is an analogy for the grander disillusionment the Zairians' experience. In a nation so wealthy, that was so hopeful at independence, their world has become one of corruption, lies and poverty at the hands of a man they trusted. And the West, a supposed safe haven, abandons them as Mobutu did.

Although colonialism is not often the focus of many works, critique of the relationship between the West and Africa is central to many works. In Kabamba's *La dette coloniale*, Mutombo asks himself: "*pourquoi les pagnes qui connaissent le plus de succès étaient-ils fabriqués en Hollande?*"<sup>115</sup> Zairians take great pride in their customary clothing, but continue to purchase Western products. Even Senghor, the Senegalese leader and author, and Zairian musicians, who revel in their Africanness and use it as a marketing tool, purchase Western goods that they believe are better quality.<sup>116</sup> Thus, in terms of goods and services, Zaire still depends on the West. Once in Europe, this desire for Western products

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<sup>113</sup> Maguy Kabamba, *La dette coloniale* (Montreal: Humanitas, 1995), 70.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 58 and 60-68.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

intensifies. In *La dette coloniale*, Grand Henri, a Zairian man who survives via criminal activity in Belgium, claims that Africans forget their ancestors' practices and imitate Europeans until they become more Western than the Europeans themselves.<sup>117</sup> Despite the attempt at authenticity, a desire for Western goods still dominates at least the wealthier echelon of Zairian people. This mirrors the realities of the Mobutu regime more than the ideology: Mobutu promoted being Zairian, but secretly reaped the benefits of Western wealth through investment and support.

In Nlandu Thierry's "*Misère*," he states that "Whites" are Zairians' opium and that Zaire's intellectuals are trafficking that opium.<sup>118</sup> He asserts that the West continues to infiltrate African society by dominating the intellectual realm. Furthermore, all Zairians who are active in this intellectual realm become proponents of Western ideals even if this is not their intention; Lomomba concurs that education made one elite.<sup>119</sup> Education and success isolate Lenga, Lomomba's protagonist, from the rest of the villagers. An educated individual is no longer part of village society, but steps into the modern and leaves the village behind. Thierry corroborates this perception, claiming that intellectualism equals corruption. Therefore, despite the desire to achieve success and acquire elite status, the intellectual was isolated from society. The 'intellectual' corresponds to the civilizing mission of the West, and understanding intellect as a fault demonstrates how intensely the Zairian have rejected the West in that realm.

Africans and Westerners are forced to re-evaluate certain assumed traditions via careful examination in literature. Set in Paris, Bolya Baenga's *Le polyandre* centres on

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>118</sup> Thierry, 46.

<sup>119</sup> Lomomba, 28.

polyandry, which certain Zairian ethnic groups practiced. Women's status and power and the double standards of colonial powers, which forbade the practice of polyandry but not polygamy, are addressed.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, the piece focuses on a white woman who attempts to become like the royal women of these ethnic groups and practice polyandry.<sup>121</sup> Not only does the reader see how colonialism worked to enforce inequalities that the West assumes to be a consistent pillar of African culture, but Baenga topples the common Western perception that Africans desire Western lifestyles and goods by depicting a Western woman who covets African tradition. This displays an unexpected self-confidence, a rejection of the 'civilizing' and benevolent West often depicted in history texts.

##### 5. *Perception of Self*

Sexuality pervades painting, music and literature. As mentioned previously, certain paintings depict sexual behaviour, for example *Pasteur Monyato*. Playful, and sometimes crass, sexuality is prevalent in Zairian music, both in lyric and in the dance that accompanies it. The dancers are generally women who move their hips and buttocks provocatively. Their lyrics often address this: "Look at this health"/ "Jeancy! She's dancing! She's dangerous! She's dancing!"<sup>122</sup> The lyrics become more explicit, discussing genitalia and the sex act. Sexuality, like travel, is an escape from a world of misery to one of pleasure. Thus sex has become a coping mechanism. New sexuality, as mentioned previously, is a rejection of Church morals and norms that were taught, among other locations, at school.

This invigorated sexuality does not stop there. Bolya Baenga addresses this new sexuality through an examination of polyandry. Riské for a modern, Western audience and

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<sup>120</sup> Bolya Baenga, *La polyandre* (Paris: Le serpent à plumes, 1998).

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>122</sup> White, "Modernity's Trickster", 162.

perhaps for a Zairian audience too, it is difficult to decipher how true he is to polyandry's roots and how much he is attempting merely to titillate his audience. Still, his use of very explicit sexuality can be seen as both liberating and damaging. This return to certain sexual practices is liberating because it strays from modern, Western expectations and practices, allowing Africans to have their own sexual space. Simultaneously, it sexualizes and fetishizes the African women. Furthermore, the African woman is depicted both as narcissistic and sadistic, not necessarily endearing qualities. Nevertheless, Baenga is challenging the notion of a proper sexuality and socially acceptable marriage practices. Essentially, he is rejecting prescribed Western norms and exploring 'authentic' Zairian practices.

The sexual practices of males are addressed very briefly in Nlandu Thierry's "*Misère*." Men commonly have a wife of thirty-five, a wife of twenty-five and a lover of sixteen.<sup>123</sup> By Western and Catholic standards, this is inappropriate and even criminal, but in Zaire it has become standard practice. This sexual practice is an affront to the Church, which according to Mbembe teaches abstinence and monogamy, and is an attack on the established order.<sup>124</sup> Beyond that, sexuality is merely a meeting place of the traditional and the modern. Baenga's polyandry is both reminiscent of 'authentic' sexuality and connects to a modern sense of sexual liberation. Many of these works explore this meeting place of traditional and modern, a method of understanding Zaire's transition to independence and modernity.

The contrast between customary and modernity pervades many Zairian literary works. Customs are explored but also critiqued, often in the same piece. For example in

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<sup>123</sup> Thierry, 15.

<sup>124</sup> Mbembe, *Les jeunes*, 167.

Lomomba's *L'instant d'un soupir*, Lenga's entire family decides his future.<sup>125</sup> The men come together and discuss what is best for the family. This example of tradition shows the reader how little power Lenga has in deciding his future. When the plans go awry, the reader becomes aware that the family's decision was not ideal. Thus, there are weaknesses in certain customary methods. In Kabamba's work, Mutombo's mother has a dream and goes to a *féticheur* to learn its significance. Mutombo disapproves because his family is Catholic.<sup>126</sup> The tension between pre-colonial practices and Christianity is evident. At the same time, Mutombo openly supports authenticity while his friend abhors it, calling it savage.<sup>127</sup> Using various characters, Kabamba is able to assert both sides of the argument.

Barly Baruti's work *La Voiture, C'est L'aventure!* involves a medicine man who, after giving in to the wiles of a woman, goes on to sell his goods to tourists. In Baruti's work, the medicine man is a fool, suggesting Baruti himself questions the role and importance of the 'traditional' medicine man. These works suggest both acceptance of and resistance to 'authenticity', illustrating that Mobutu's incorporation of authenticity into schools was mildly successful. At the same time, it cannot be ignored that many children learned of customs in other venues, meaning that the acceptance of authenticity may have nothing to do with Mobutu.

Still, there remain very positive connotations of the past. In Thierry's "*Misère*," the street man claims that he and his compatriots do not have scruples, but their parents did.<sup>128</sup> Thierry implies that it would be beneficial to return to a time of scruples. In his poem, "*Renouveau*," Emongo Lomomba looks to the past as a goal for the future. He believes a

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>126</sup> Kabamba, 9.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>128</sup> Thierry, 22.

time will come again when the Zairian will flourish.<sup>129</sup> The present, which is full of hardship and misery, can be remedied with a careful examination of the past.

The everyday misery of the Zairian is a common topic in painting, music and literature in Zaire. Evident in many of Cheri Samba's critiques of the regime mentioned previously, the average Zairian is depicted as emaciated, impoverished, and working to survive. *Sourire Perdu* (1992) in particular emphasizes this point.<sup>130</sup> The left foreground is littered with smiles, purple and frightening. Behind them, a lowly couple, the woman bare breasted, is looking to buy their smiles back from a swarthy white man in a white suit. Money, illustrates Samba, is the only way to regain one's smile. The Western male epitomizes the common evil of daily Zairian life. He holds the key to the average Zairian's happiness, but chooses to sell it to them at a price. This piece illustrates the gap in wealth and happiness between the Western world and Zaire and relates it to the colonial past. Moreover, it illustrates the lack of agency and control many Zairians feel over their own happiness and destiny.

Syms' *Article 15* is the most interesting depiction of misery.<sup>131</sup> "Article 15" was a fictitious article supposedly included in Kivu's constitution that stipulated that the funding provided to the regions was improvised.<sup>132</sup> Essentially it meant that funding was never guaranteed and regional governments were expected to accomplish their political tasks with little or no funding from Mobutu's government. This 1992 piece shows an emaciated man, bare to the waste, eating dinner at a table. The only other items in his barren home are three

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<sup>129</sup> Emongo Lomomba, "Renouveau," *Littératures du Congo-Zaïre Actes du colloque international de Bayreuth. 22-24 July 1993*, eds Pierre Halen and Janos Riesz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 102.

<sup>130</sup> Mobimba, 113

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 163

<sup>132</sup> Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, '985), 228

emaciated animals: two dogs and a cat. They stare at their master, tears rolling down their cheeks, and ask: “*Maître nous sommes ici pour vous! Pourquoi tu nous abandonnes comme ça.*” The master responds: “*La conjoncture[sic] de la 2ème République ne permet pas de vous eberger[sic].*”<sup>133</sup> Thus this piece illustrates the dire situation forced on the people by the Second Republic (1965-1990). More importantly, the piece is an analogy of Zaire in general. The eating man, the master, represents Mobutu. Although not healthy yet, he is feasting, ensuring his improvement in the coming days. His animals, the subordinates, are the Zairian people. They starve while watching their master gorge himself. Moreover, they feel that their loyalty has entitled them to some recompense, but will not receive any. They feel abandoned by the man who vowed to take care of them.

Zairian literature often attributes poverty and misery to Kinshasa, while the villages and rural areas are depicted as relatively happy places. In Amba Bongo’s *Une femme en exil*, rural Africa is idealized; it a paradise where happiness and custom prevail. It is largely ignored by politicians and soldiers.<sup>134</sup> Kinshasa, however, and other major urban centres breed misery. In Lomomba’s *L’instant d’un soupir*, the *Kinois* street people sing of their misery, asking God why he put them in this situation.<sup>135</sup> In Nlandu Thierry’s play “*Misère*,” the three homeless men describe misery as a friend, something shared among Zairian people, a uniting characteristic.<sup>136</sup>

Although urban misery is a more common theme than rural discontent, Biduaya’s poem “*Lamentation des fils*,” goes into great deal describing the misery and oppression of a simple rural life. Misery is part of his ancestry; Biduaya explains he is the son of a humble

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Bongo, 13.

<sup>135</sup> Lomomba, *L’instant d’un soupir*, 80-81.

<sup>136</sup> Thierry, 18.

peasant, an exploited and oppressed man.<sup>137</sup> As a young man, he is also oppressed and exploited by various bodies, but neither the whip, nor prison, nor oppression will frighten him.<sup>138</sup> He refers to colonialism, Mobutu's regime, and poverty and war. Despite all these forces working against him, he is not afraid, and the poem's initial mood notwithstanding, it is optimistic in tone.

Kabamba's focus in *La dette coloniale* is not the urban-rural dichotomy like Bongo, but the difference in past and present. While contemplating Mobutu, Kabamba claims: "*Cependant, la prospérité et la paix donts ils parlaient, étaient devenues étrangères à la vieille génération et demeuraient inconnues à la nouvelle.*"<sup>139</sup> Kabamba illustrates the misery that Africans encounter even after they emigrate to Europe. Unlike Bongo's perception of a happy, successful and peaceful adaptation to the Western life, Kabamba focuses on a darker reality. Although Kabamba suggests that it is not necessarily Africa and African leaders that have led to impoverishment and oppression, the Zairian people also play a major role in their current predicament.

Kabamba questions why the Zairian people have not developed themselves and instead wait for others, meaning the West or Mobutu, to do so. Mario, an educated African in Brussels, says to Mpira, an ex-patriot who participates in criminal activity, that instead of seeking a solution for Zaire, he takes refuge in the oppressor's nation.<sup>140</sup> Instead of legitimate self-improvement and education to improve life in Zaire, most ex-patriots use any means necessary to acquire financial wealth, or at least the appearance of such. Textbooks suggested that Zaire required external forces or Mobutu to achieve modernity. Kabamba's

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<sup>137</sup> Ntumba Biduaya, "Lamentations des fils," *Champs qui Chantent*, ed. Lwemba lu Masanga (Kinshasa: L'UEZA, 1995), 28.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>139</sup> Kabamba, 53.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

work critiques the Zairian belief in this teaching and suggests that Zairians take control of their nation's development.

The prevalent themes of misery and abandonment illustrate the cohorts' recognition of the government's, and therefore the state's, failure. In spite of all the misery and desperation caused by years of mismanagement, this cohort seems certain that if they take action, they will achieve the desired results. This was evident in paintings discussed earlier that welcomed new political leadership to Zaire, but it does not stop there. Cheri Samba's painting entitled *La Leçon des jeunes*,<sup>141</sup> painted in 1992, depicts youth trying to create their own space to live and develop. Samba has written on a banner in the image: "*la leçon des jeunes aux vieux dormeurs. 'Action Kin-Propre': Une des grandes leçons que les jeunes donnent aux vieux.*"<sup>142</sup> The foreground is strewn with unconscious, or perhaps dead, adults. Some lie with their eyes open, others in awkward positions, and some with large bellies. Around and on top of them, young people work: they clean, sweep and carry away garbage. In the background, posted to one of the houses' outside walls, is the MPR symbol. The adults in the foreground symbolize the old guard, those loyal to Mobutu and, as Jewsiewicki claims, left youth feeling abandoned. Here, youth literally wipe away the past and usurp the previous generation, taking ownership of their futures.

Samba addresses ownership and responsibility in *Conclave Politique*,<sup>143</sup> a 1993 painting that depicts a centralized mass of people, including children, who are attempting to lift up a large green ball with the MPR symbol on it. The large sphere appears to be crushing the crowd, which is doing their best to battle it. A man stands in the left foreground

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<sup>141</sup> Mobimba, 112.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

dressed in white, his back to the spectator. He holds a hand up, demanding attention and symbolizing his leadership role. He claims it is not the Whites that will lead us to happiness.<sup>144</sup> In the right foreground, a religious man in white stands with his back to the spectator. Above him, Samba has written the words, “*S’ils ne veulent pas, laissez-les. Nous sommes encore là, forts, solides, et prêts a tous les sacrifices pour vous.*”<sup>145</sup> The Church is dedicated to the Zairian people, but simultaneously is, and always has been, an arm of the Western machine, evident in its role in colonization and political and economic development in Western Europe. Above the mass of people struggling against the MPR’s sphere, Samba has written: “*le prob du Zaïre doit être résolu par les zaïrois eux mêmes.*”<sup>146</sup> Samba is calling to his fellow Zairians to take responsibility for their future and to take action to change their current course. He demonstrates that foreign powers or foreign supported administrations should not direct Zaire’s future. This piece is Samba’s demand for democracy and for an active population. Simultaneously, this piece illustrates the 1970s cohort’s rejection of their school lessons which taught through historical depictions that Zaire constantly required a ‘father’ to lead them, first the Belgians and then Mobutu. Instead, the youth have taken action, like the small guerrilla army that only Tshibangu discusses.<sup>147</sup>

Similarly, in attempt to regain their independence and liberty, many of the authors discuss voice and language. For example in Lwemba’s poem “*Parle,*” he instructs the people to speak. Speaking gives the Zairian people, specifically the youth, a voice and renders them an active part of the community. In Biduaya’s “*Lamentation des fils,*” he too

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> See Chapter Two of this thesis.

uses his voice as a tool to achieve action and, consequently, liberty. He regains his words, and writes them in blood of sacrificed rooster: “*Emprisonné/je lutte/pour me dégager/fils de l’opprimé/je crie/je pleure/aux quatres coins du monde/Liberté! Liberté! Liberté! Liberté!*”<sup>148</sup> Taking this notion one step further, Kabamba discusses how the youth of Kinshasa have created their own language specifically, in this situation, to discuss the Western world. *Kinois* youth rename places, creating references that have little or nothing to do with Western demarcations of geographical space. They are creating a space that they can define as they wish. They call Paris ‘Panama’, Barcelona ‘Barabala,’ and Europe is called ‘Mikili’.<sup>149</sup> In this way, Western names become obsolete and *Kinois* youth usurp the power to name and rename, a practice that was common among colonial powers. The youth are rejecting the ideas that dominated the bulk of history education and choosing to be active participants in their own history.

## 6. *Concluding Remarks*

The generational units, or the painting, music and literature, of the 1970s cohort clearly illustrate that certain perceptions of state, the Church, the West, and self, expressed through historical educational material, influenced youth perceptions. The generational actuality, or the destabilization that occurred due in part to state-Church tensions during the 1970s, yielded inconsistent perceptions of and attitudes toward not only the institutions of state and Church, but toward their ideologies and beliefs. However complex and varying perceptions of state and Church were, certain themes and emotions are carried through the works.

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<sup>148</sup> Biduaya, “Lamentation de fils,” 33.

<sup>149</sup> Kabamba, 43.

Generally, the generation illustrates a sense of betrayal by the MPR and Mobutu's administration. In their civics textbooks, the MPR made numerous promises and claimed they adhered to particular moral guidelines, but the administration's behaviour suggested that this was merely rhetoric. The youth felt betrayed not only by the government, but by elders who created a mess and left the youth to fix it. Although many turned to the Catholic Church for help, painting and literature make it clear that this generation is suspicious of the Church's motives or intentions. The state and Church texts that claimed the Church was a safe haven were somewhat successful. Certain paintings and literary works suggest that the average Zairian wants the Church to continue its social function in Zaire. The West has become a place of dreams for the Zairian, both in a negative and positive sense. The luxuries of the West still tempt the average Zairian, and Europe and North America continue to provide space for escape and fantasy. But in reality, the West is not the bastion of freedom and wealth as the Zairian imagined. It is a place of struggle, like Zaire itself. As for their perception of self, the generational cohort reflects on its misery, but simultaneously celebrates its potential for change.

It appears that this generation chose to reject much of what textbooks and other educational media taught. They refused to sit idly or to accept blindly as they were taught their predecessors did. Instead, this generation resisted their indoctrination and chose instead to learn what was only very briefly ever addressed in their education materials: agency. In the Conclusion, I will address how and why state discourse and state action visible in educational material in particular yielded such results.

## ***Conclusion: Reflections of Ideology in Identity***

After examining educational materials from state and Church institutions, as well as painting, music and literature produced by the 1970s cohort, one can draw certain conclusions regarding the relationship between state and Church discourse evident in education and the development of generational identity. The depictions of Mobutu and the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR) in the arts demonstrate that 1970s cohort rejected Mobutu's teachings, which focused mainly on Mobutism and glorification of himself and the state, and questioned the Church's role in Zaire. An authentic Zairian history is lacking in most of the state education material, however, certain state texts, namely Tshibangu's *Histoire du Zaïre* and certain Church materials, explore and celebrate pre-colonial practices and beliefs. Although painting, music and literature do not create an entirely new Zairian history from pre-colonial times until the present, they reflect and construct new collective memories counter to the official history that Mobutu promoted.

### ***1. Findings: Teaching Materials***

State approved and state published history texts, as well as state directed extra-curricular activities generally do not express 'authenticity'. European textbooks continue to reinforce racial hierarchies, placing black Africans at the bottom. African youth during the 1970s learned that they occupied the lowest rung of the hierarchy and required outside leadership to become civilized. State written history and civics textbooks, and extra-curricular activities reflect authenticity only superficially and often focus on Mobutism instead. The texts and activities glorify Mobutu and the MPR for their heroics following independence and their leadership of Zaire. In addition, the state materials connect much of

Zairian society to Europe and the Catholic Church, endorsing the opposite of authenticity. Aside from Tshibangu's *Histoire du Zaïre*, Zaire's state texts do not discuss the ancestors' resistance to the colonial regime, implying to the 1970s cohort that the previous generations accepted colonialism willingly. This tendency is widespread according to Mbembe: "*La mémoire des longues luttes des peuples africains contre la domination Européenne [est] perdu de vue et négligée par les systèmes éducatifs.*"<sup>1</sup> State teaching materials fail to construct an authentic history or promote authentic practices. History was taught in the 1970s, but it was not the history of the Zairian peoples. Knowledge of a truly authentic history could have led to a more empowered population, understanding and taking pride in their nation's development prior to and in spite of European intervention.

In order for authenticity and Mobutism to be successful and embraced by Zaire's youth, the administration would have had to fulfill its duties and promises laid out in documents such as the Manifesto of N'Sele and the Constitution, and expressed in historical re-tellings of the independence movement. The ideologies had to be promoted and lived. The administration, however, adhered only to superficial authentic practices and did not provide social programs or safety nets to the citizens. Nor did the administration commit to autonomous Zairian leadership in political, military, and economic affairs. Despite the administration's opportunity to teach legitimate political, contemporary history, the MPR chose instead to skim the surface of Zairian history and promote the MPR and Mobutu. The youth read and sang about, but never experienced, Mobutu's generosity, leadership abilities, and vision.

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<sup>1</sup> J.A. Mbembe, *Les jeunes et l'ordre politique en Afrique noire* (Paris: Harmattan, 1985), 164.

Both European and Catholic texts describe the Church as a unifying and powerful force. Opposition and factions within the Church are rarely described; for example, the Babylonian Captivity and the Papal schism are glazed over as if they were a minor blip in Church history. European textbooks depict the Catholic Church as the dominant European institutional body, challenging and defeating emperors and kings and resisting regimes. Thus, Zairian peoples recognize the Church as a body of resistance. The Church is also presented as a source of moral guidance and advice, as seen in Defour's *Xaveri* texts. At the same time, European, state and Catholic texts equate the arrival of Christian missionaries with the arrival of Europeans, and certain state narratives suggest the Church was complicit in colonial injustices. The nature and role of the Church, therefore, is always contested in teaching materials.

Catholic texts and activities tend to emphasize the importance of the Church instead of Catholic teachings. However, Church-run extra-curricular activities in the 1970s successfully incorporated pre-colonial customs and practices, and biblical teachings. In addition, Catholic teaching materials place contemporary practices common in communities and villages in rural areas in a Catholic context, demonstrating that Zairian societies and Catholic beliefs can co-function. Ironically, the Catholic Church better illustrates a legitimate authenticity, meaning pre-colonial practices, than the state. Therefore, students were taught that the Church was both intrinsic in their heritage and rooted in Europe.

## 2. *Findings: Artwork*

This confused perception is mirrored in the generational units, or the structural knowledge that express shared generational trauma, of the 1970s cohort. Evident in literature and painting, the cohort sees the Catholic Church both as part of the colonial civilizing system and as a strong body of opposition to Mobutu's regime. Priests and senior clergymen are depicted both as sinners and saints, sometimes by the same artist or author. This dichotomy persists in painting and in literature, which suggests that Zairians are uncertain of the Catholic Church's intentions, and still do not fully trust the clergy. Despite their apparent good intentions, the clergy still participated in immoral activities and were part of a larger system of oppression throughout Zaire's history.

Unlike the state, the Catholic Church was active among the masses and provided social programs. The Catholic Church's greatest weapon to convince the youth of its legitimacy and to fight against the regime was its presence on the ground. According to scholars Young and Turner, Church workers had a greater presence in rural areas than secular workers.<sup>2</sup> Leaders of the Catholic youth groups, like *Xaveri*, better understood the youth's plight because they actually engaged with the youth in their villages. The presence of a functioning Church in most communities suggests that the Catholic Church was a more prominent force at the grass roots level than the state. It may have taken more man power, but it is possible that the Church was able to reach as many people as the media machine used by the MPR.

Ultimately, grass roots resistance to the regime came from the 1970s cohort itself, although it waited until later years to express this resistance. Sources suggest that in the 1970s, youth participated in required state extra-curricular activities like the *Jeunesse*

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<sup>2</sup> Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 67

*Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (JMPR), *salongo* and animation, but despite this, few surrendered to party ideology. These practices did not effectively create a sense of loyalty or duty in the youth, but led to feelings of resentment. The art produced by the 1970s cohort in later decades illustrates the anger and frustration the cohort has towards Zaire's leadership and the previous generation that allowed Mobutu to become and remain the leader.

Furthermore, the cohort's art conveys a sense of abandonment, both by the administration and the previous generation that neglected the cohort's needs. Jon Abbink agrees, claiming that youth, "often suggest that adults have given up on them or have reneged on their social and moral obligations towards them."<sup>3</sup> Adults in general, and particularly those who benefited from Mobutu's regime, are seemingly responsible for Mobutu's lengthy stay in office because they failed to oppose him. Consequently, they are responsible for the misery that the cohort experienced and continues to experience. The cohort felt powerless against the regime, but they are now able to reject the administration and their elders through the arts, the only space remaining where the 1970s cohort can denounce the regime and its supporters. Art gives the cohort a voice with which they can describe their discontent to other Zairians and the world. This extends into legitimate opposition and numerous calls for democracy from Cheri Samba, Maître Syms, Cheri Cherin, Amba Bongo and others.

The cohort, to a lesser extent, refused Catholicism. Although the Catholic Church is still depicted as a bastion of resistance, many of its teachings have lessened in importance to the 1970s generation, for example abstinence and Christian marriage. The 1970s generation, and later generations, has created a new sexuality that is a movement against Christian morals. According to Mbembe, "*L'ensemble de représentations, des valeurs, des attitudes*

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<sup>3</sup> Jon Abbink, "Being Young in Africa: The politics of despair and renewal," In *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth Politics and Conflict in Africa*, eds. Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel (Leiden: Brill, 2005): 7.

*produites aujourdh'hui par le monde des jeunes rentre en conflit avec les fonctionnements religieux tels qu'ils sont enseignés par les eglises, notamment.*"<sup>4</sup> Although art suggests that the Catholic Church continues to play an important role in Zaire/the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)<sup>5</sup>, art also questions the morality of the clergy, implying that the Church is no longer fit to judge the Zaire/DRC. The 1970s generation has called into question the Church's immoral actions, both past and present, and has expressed its displeasure at the Church's continuing associations with elites in the administration. While it should be noted that priests are sometimes praised in the artwork as heroic and committed, clergymen are often censured for their immorality and greed.

### 3. Findings: Re-Generation

A key movement has developed in Zaire that is apparent in the arts, especially in Samba's *Conclave Politique*, Syms' *Les martyrs de la démocratie* and *Victoire Tshisekedi*, the rise to prominence of the *atalaku*, and Kabamba's *La Dette coloniale*: mass opposition of the status quo and autonomous development. These works hold the Zairian people responsible for their development regardless of who is at fault for their nation's failures. Salvation can only be found in the movement of the masses. Although the notion of agency and empowerment are evident in some educational materials, this movement is, in fact, a movement against the old guard, and against the bodies that managed education during the 1970s. The desire to overthrow the elders and the elites and establish the younger generation

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<sup>4</sup> Mbembe, *Les jeunes*, 164

<sup>5</sup> I use both place-names because the suggestions found in the art extend beyond the official change from Zaire to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

is a common theme in the arts. Vestiges of Mobutu's reign remain, but most of the artists, musicians, and writers seem optimistic that the Zaire/DRC will be reborn.

The theme of self-actualization has revived the 1970s generation following the stifling decade of indoctrination they experienced. Initially, "to be young in Africa came to mean being disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginal in the political and economic sense."<sup>6</sup> While marginalization was, and is, a reality for Zairian youth, the 1970s generation is proof that an oppressive administration can be subverted. The Mobutu administration, like similar authoritarian regimes throughout Africa, expected the youth both to represent and protect the nation,<sup>7</sup> but their artistic expression has shown that they refused this role. The cohort rejected Mobutu, the MPR, and their elders and are trying to redirect the nation. The cohort is using various methods, including art, evident in this thesis, to voice their opinions and beliefs.

The 1970's generation is not homogeneous; internal divisions exist. The generation has both adopted Catholic morals and values, evident especially in Maître Syms' depictions of clergymen, while simultaneously, it critiques the Church for its immorality. The Catholic Church is both an oppressive body, friend to white colonials and Mobutu, evident in "*Misère*" for example, and a space of artistic liberty and a body of resistance against oppression. The state, in turn, is condemned for its oppressive practices and mismanagement of the nation, but is also the space of change, a space youth want to control. Most students want to live in better conditions than the average Zairian.<sup>8</sup> They want to become part of the government, where they can acquire income, stability and power.

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<sup>6</sup> Abbink, "Being Young in Africa," 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

Intellect, too, is perceived both as a gift and a curse. Intellect is equated with the Western world, with elitism and with corruption, seen in *L'instant d'un soupir*. Simultaneously, it is depicted as the path to liberty and power. It is impossible to define the 1970s generation, but it is possible to assert that they rejected their teachings and are constructing for themselves new memories and, therefore, a new history.

#### 4. *Conclusion*

Education is still a highly contested terrain in the DRC. According to Mbembe, schooling leads to aspirations that put the students in conflict with their society and their people because education does not bridge the gap between academic teachings and the youth's reality.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, education is supposed to yield better jobs, ones that provide living wages and room for growth. Although Cruise-O'Brien discusses West Africa, his assertion applies to the DRC as well: the youth's partial education inspires new expectations regarding jobs, income and lifestyle that cannot be met in DRC.<sup>10</sup> The inability to meet these expectations leads to disillusionment and frustration.

Education as a tool for indoctrination requires additional examination. As this project demonstrates, education is not always successful at transmitting ideologies, or achieving an administration's goal of loyalty and pride. The actions of educational institutions are far more influential. The Catholic Church's role in the colonial system and Mobutu's depiction of the Church suggest that youth would mistrust and dislike it. But the

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>10</sup> Donal B. Cruise O'Brien, "A lost generation? Youth identity and state decay in West Africa," *Post-colonial identities in Africa*, eds Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (London: Zed books, 1996), 56.

Church's ability to provide for the people outweighed its past and Mobutu's campaign against it. In the same vein, Mobutu's self-glorification is rejected because he was unable to fulfill his heroic role as saviour.

Had Mobutu actually constructed and employed an authentic history to infuse national pride and loyalty, instead of using mainly European texts and creating contemporary textbooks and media to spew propaganda, he may have more successfully influenced the 1970s generation. History provides a subtle method of undermining the Church without openly opposing it and disseminating ideology without bombarding the citizens. Margaret MacMillan claims that in secular societies, history teaches morality.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, had Mobutu utilized history to its fullest advantage, he could have partially usurped Church authority and disseminated his own moral code. Again, had he been willing to provide social services like the Church, he could have greatly decreased its public presence without ever publicly denouncing it.

The cohort's rejection of Mobutu's 'authentic' history brings them one step closer to creating a history of their own. The eminent British historian, Michael Howard, claims that the historian is supposed to challenge official histories, or 'myths'. The disillusion of the historian and the breaking apart of the national myth are necessary to become part of the adult world and become responsible for the nation's past and present.<sup>12</sup> The artists and creators in the 1970s generation have constructed a revised history becoming, in a sense, historians. By this definition, the 1970s cohort who were denied the resources and opportunities necessary to achieve adulthood, are now able to graduate to adulthood because they tore down Mobutu's myths. The 1970s generation accomplishes this by expressing and

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<sup>11</sup> Margaret MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (Toronto: Penguin, 2008), 21.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 39.

reinforcing its collective memory, which often counters the official state history, in painting, music and literature.

The youth of the 1970s encountered a transition from the chaos of post-independence Congo-Léopold to the structure and renewal of Mobutu's Zaire. They faced a grand shift from the colonial mindset to that of authenticity and later Mobutism; from white supremacy to new social hierarchies; from the optimism of independence to the desperation surrounding its shortcomings. Changes in exterior circumstances, or generational actuality, alter youth development: "it is evident that when technological, economic, social structure and ideological conditions change, the values, beliefs and life styles of the affected generation also change and that these changes have a profound impact on the way new generations are socialized."<sup>13</sup> Zaire's 1970s cohort has decided to change, it seems. They have repossessed methods of communication, such as the arts, to express their perceptions and beliefs to one another. This process has brought to light this generation's decision: to reject the state and the Church's teachings of dependence and focus instead on change led by the masses.

##### 5. *Final Word*

This project has provided me with a better understanding of a nation-state, a culture and a people. Although education and the arts are only a small portion of what constructs or expresses identity, I think they are a starting point in the attempt to understand the psyche and emotional well-being of a nation. From this project, I learned about the frustration and desperation of a people; I learned that self-realization and personal agency are crucial in the

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<sup>13</sup> *The African Child and His Environment*, eds R. Ogbonna Ohuche and Barnabas Otaala in *UNEP Studies*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981), 14.

development of a stable nation and healthy national consciousness. I hope that a project such as this one will inspire researchers not only to analyse numbers and statistics, but to understand the people whose lives they are affecting and understand their past and present circumstances. Development programming and people's lives can be improved through careful examination of identity, meaning a deeper understanding of what people want and what they do not want in their lives and communities.

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