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**DECOLONISATION THROUGH 'DEVELOPMENT FILMS':  
CONSTRUCTING AND RE-CONSTRUCTING THE ZAIRIAN SPIRIT  
ON FILM**

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**DECOLONISATION THROUGH ‘DEVELOPMENT FILMS’:  
CONSTRUCTING AND RE-CONSTRUCTING  
THE ZAIRIAN SPIRIT ON FILM**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
the University of Westminster  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## ABSTRACT

This study critically contributes to the understanding of decolonisation in postcolonial Africa through documentary films by investigating a decolonial moment, a bold attempt to disentangle an ex-colonised part of the world from coloniality by infusing the indigenous Zairian spirit into national film. This is a study of the cultural politics, on film, of the Second Republic of Zaire (1965-1997), now the Democratic Republic of Congo, the research explores the portrayal of the national image on film. This study identifies a particular mode of filmmaking that contributes to nation-building through the concept of 'development films'. The term proposed for Zairian films is drawn from Domatob and Hall's (1983) analysis of the rise and limitations of development journalism in Black Africa since independence. Through this study, the author intends to rediscover a collective understanding of the function of film as a tool to promote and educate towards progress in the newly born nation of Zaire by looking at filmmakers' participation in promoting the government's ideals through the Pan-African practice of development journalism, and political activism through media. The research project *Decolonisation Through 'Development Films': Constructing and Re-Constructing the Zairian Spirit on Film* is based on interviews with Congolese filmmakers who were active during the Zairian period, together with the author's research and digital restoration of films, including *Salongo* (1975) and *Election 1970* (1970), which had been written off as being lost or unusable. These were found through fieldwork in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Belgium. Through textual analysis and extra filmic information, this research explores these films as reflecting and sustaining the ideological changes brought about by Mobutu's cultural revolution and the expressions of Zairian culture that are imagined for the population. The research's aim to reconstruct the Zairian spirit is not to revive a political momentum that is associated with a political flag, rather, it is to acknowledge a lost national filmography as part of the history of the country which has been erased by the political elite that followed, as well as being erased by natural agents in the archives, which therefore deprived the country of the possibility to reflect critically on its own history through part of its national iconography.

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My son Raphael, who motivates me to always be better.

My husband Kalaa, who has taught me that patience and focus go a long way; here we are, looking at a finished manuscript, together.

## **STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP**

I hereby confirm that this thesis is the product of my own work. All sources used are referenced.

Signed:

Date:

## INTRODUCTION

*Decolonisation through 'Development Films': Constructing and Re-Constructing the Zairian Spirit on Film* is a study of the cultural politics of the Second Republic of Zaire (1965-1997) on film. Zaire is now the Democratic Republic of Congo, and this research explores the portrayal of the national image on film. This study identifies a particular mode of filmmaking: films as contributions to nation-building, through the concept of 'development films.'

The research for this study took place mainly at the national film archives, which are known as the Ciné et Médiathèque - Cinémathèque of the Democratic Republic Congo, which is housed in the building of the national broadcasting company, Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise (RTNC), in Kinshasa. I first received access to the Cinémathèque in 2013 when, whilst making a feature documentary on the disappearance of cinema theatres in Kinshasa, I met with filmmakers who worked at RTNC. To edit the film, entitled *La Belle At The Movies* (2015), I had hoped to access old footage of the country during both its Congolese and Zairian historical times and to be able to use it to enhance the narration with panoramic views of the capital, Kinshasa, which is popularly known as 'Kin la Belle', 'Kinshasa the beautiful'.<sup>1</sup> The film's shot-list included a series of historical images which I thought I could access from the archives in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In particular, the shot-list included footage of Mobutu Sese Seko, the then President of Zaire, which was needed in the edit to cover a segment of the documentary narrating the sudden nationalisation of cinemas under his regime. This request was turned down immediately as, apparently, there was no available footage at the RTNC. I was told that at the Cinémathèque there were no old films, no archive images on film or tape and that the few images still existing were unusable. I was told the situation was due to a combination of an advanced state of decay, and that even if some films could be saved, they were in incompatible formats and the television station did not have the machines able to read

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<sup>1</sup> The title of my film was to homage the time when 'Kin la Belle' was known for its modernity and was the "Kinshasa, which used to be called Kin-La-belle (Kin the beautiful) is presently called Kin-La-Poubelle (Kin The Garbage Can)"(Kisangani and Bobb, 2009, p469)

them. To create the visual historical narrative that I required for the film, I purchased the rights to use images of the collection Radio-Télévision Belge Francophone (RTBF) from the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA) in France. As a filmmaker, it was unanticipated that Congolese documentary filmmakers in Democratic Republic of Congo would have to contact international archives to be able to purchase the rights to use historical footage of their own country for their stories. Although I was advised by the RTNC, and by filmmakers such as Balufu Bakupa Kanyinda, that this was the norm in many sub-Saharan countries, I wanted to understand how this alleged absence of footage could happen. By looking at the room that held the archives, I trusted that some readable images could be found and that their existence would express the ideas of a national film production. Furthermore, I envisaged that finding and restoring the films would possibly give an insight and would retrace the 'spirit' and cultural system that animated the building in which I had carried out the interview that was captured by my film. The intention was not simply to recover the presence of Zairian national filmmaking by finding the films but, further, to understand the role of a wave of post-independence filmmaking in constructing a Zairian national identity. Additionally, the process of the recovery of the films serves to elucidate the implications of the disappearance of the images that captured this cultural change, and illustrates the process required for salvaging the important film documents that were deteriorating in the archive.

The focus of this research is the analysis of the construction of a Zairian 'spirit' and therefore how post-independence filmmaking by the state was used in order to contribute to the decolonisation of the country through the establishment of a practice of 'development films'. 'Development films' I identify in the course of this research, embody the nationalism of the Second Republic. The aims of this study are to establish the following:

- First, to understand the impact of national media in relation to the Second Republic (1965-1997).
- Second, to trace the attempted process of decolonisation through government films produced by the then Zairian national broadcasting company. This intends to piece together the transformation of national culture and identity through the creation of a Zairian imagery on film and ascertain how this was formulated in 'development films'.
- Third, to materially re-construct the existence of 'development filmmaking' by finding films that were considered lost, restoring and digitising the footage for research access, and interviewing the film directors and cameramen who worked on 'development films' as witnesses and contributors.

The research was conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo, at the national film archives of the RTNC, and at the Cinematek - Cinémathèque Royal de Belgique (Royal Belgian Film Archive) in Brussels, with the purpose of exploring the films produced by the government of the Second Republic, used to introduce national policy changes and to promote Zaire; Congo's independent and *authentic* identity.<sup>2</sup> To this end this study aimed to address the following research questions:

- *How did the political reforms of the national party Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution (MPR) affect the national filmmakers' scope of themes and style during the Second Republic?*

This question serves to establish the history and context of the media practices imposed by the Second Republic and to ascertain whether this influenced the overall production mode.

- *Did the political vision of Mobutu turn government slogans and animation practices into a distinctive film style aimed at decolonization?*

In this thesis I discern the impact of the ideology of *Authenticity* on the creation of a distinctive film style which portrayed a cultural shift towards an *authentic* identity.

- *What are the defining features of 'development films' and can we define 'development films' as a Zairian film genre?*

The research identifies 'development films', or 'development filmmaking', as a Zairian filmmaking mode that engaged in decolonisation.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1, 'Political Thought, Media Assimilation' explains the historical context of the birth of Zaire as a postcolonial African nation, and the political system of the Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution (MPR), which introduced the ideology of *Authenticity*, as well as its later developments, which were expressed in the policies of *Zairianisation* and *Mobutism*. The chapter presents the media assimilation into the MPR strategy and political ideology. To further understand the national ideology, I will be referring to Mussia Kakama's (1983) analysis of the way that the government's policies expanded into a cultural revolution by firstly turning the policy of *Authenticity* into a lexical system of communication between the government and the population, a policy which was then assimilated by the media. Drawing example on some significant documentary film productions

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<sup>2</sup> The adjective *authentic* in italics, throughout this work, refers to the Congolese and later Zairian policy of *Authenticity* which will be explained in Chapter 1.

such as *Voyage Royal Au Congo (Royal Voyage to Congo)*(1970) and *Gbadolite, Un Exemple, Comme Toujours (Gbadolite an Example As Always)* (1979), the chapter attempts to introduce the political context and media presence during the period examined by the thesis.

Chapter 2, ‘An *Authentic* Studio System for ‘Development Films’” presents the concept of ‘development films’ as born from a timely search for development media and its expansion on the African continent. Further, it explains how the identification of ‘development films’ is based on the ideas proposed by Thomas Elsaesser (2014) under the scope of media archaeology, these being ‘film as event’ and the re-framing of factual film through the rule of *Three As*. The chapter further defines the canons of ‘development film’ with an introduction to the studio behind these productions, *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, currently the Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise RTNC, as the main a compound created by the MPR to establish a national centre for all audio-visual production. At the heart of this studio system, for Zairian film, it is possible to distinguish the particular mode of documentary filmmaking which, centred on notions of development media, as discussed by Domatob and Hall (1983), contributed to nationalist activism in the country. To assess the emergence of ‘development filmmaking’ in Congo/Zaire the chapter also explores the different ideas surrounding the establishment of post-independence African filmmaking in terms of African cinematic representation and national filmic expression. This will be approached by reflecting on the writings of African film scholars, amongst whom are Manthia Diawara (1992), Rik Otten (1984) and Pierre Pommier (1974) with the focus principally on sub-Saharan Francophone film studies as a way to draw from a common historical and language heritage. These perspectives are further illustrated through the point of view of Congolese/Zairian film director Mweze Ngangura, whose critical account and understanding of the role of cinema in the country is important to address notions of *authentic* and national film, a way to understand further ‘development film’.

Chapter 3, ‘Constructing and Re-Constructing the Zairian Archive’ explains the approach undertaken to carry out the research, and how this was executed in the fieldwork that took place in both Belgium and the DRC, which led to the retrieval and digitisation of four films: *Election 1970* (1970), *Salongo* (1974), *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* (1975), *Gecamines - La volonté de reussir* (circa 1986). The chapter attempts to illustrate the application of Elsaesser’s *three As* in terms of carrying out the research process of re-construction of the archive. It also engages with Paolo Cherchi Usai’s (2001) notions of film’s materiality to explain the

interpretative process that is required in order to understand the fragmented information that is available about the films analysed. To accomplish the interpretative approach, the methodology was partly based on archival ethnography that was undertaken at the RTNC, which is explained with an introduction to the interviewees.

Chapter 4 examines the documentary film *Election 1970*, which was produced by the government and which introduces the population to the concepts of universal election and the voting protocol for citizens. The analysis identifies the notions of citizenship that are evoked by the film, including equality and inclusivity, whilst introducing concepts of pre-colonial tradition. Its focus is to capture the cultural cohabitation of political modernity with the figure of the traditional Chief that was performed by the President of the Second Republic.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to the analysis of the film *Salongo*. This never-released documentary film, which is about the practice and cultural policy of Salongo, gives an insight into the visual and oral rhetoric that was used to sustain the national ideology and the single-party system of the MPR. It evaluates the use of collective displays, such as *animation*, the practice of collective dance, which was utilised as performative reverence, as well as the then accepted allegory of Mobutu being trusted in his role as the Chief awakening the nation.

Chapter 6 analyses two ‘development films’ which were commissioned by the national corporations: *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* - The Zairian Shipping Company, and *Gecamines Générale des Carrières et des Mines* - The National Mining Company. As expressions of Zairian industrialisation, these films are a testament to the political activism performed by state companies, and the determination to achieve the social and economic empowerment of the country through a visual discourse of modernity, which was significant to independence and decolonisation. The film produced by Gecamines, which is analysed in the second part of the chapter, furthers these notions of independence and emancipation by offering a re-reading of the country’s history in which Congo’s resources were at the centre of historical world events.

The conclusion summarises the findings of the study and explains the implication of the Zairian ‘spirit’ that is captured in these ‘development films’ in order to establish the contribution of this body of films to the country’s decolonisation project. The dissertation suggests the use of the term ‘development film’ to re-evaluate some film productions that have been denied

longevity due to their political content. These documentary films that may be in need of urgent attention across the African continent should be re-addressed and restored as testimonies to attempts at decolonisation, born of a need for independent development, and may be able to express the process of its formulation. Additionally, in this thesis, I recommend the implementation of a national policy for film archives in the Democratic Republic of Congo – in keeping with the guidelines provided by UNESCO for best practice. The adoption of a clear legislation could provide useful guidelines for an archival protocol that may assist in salvaging further national works and therefore allow the preservation of national memory on film which can serve for further study as well as artistic engagement for national filmmakers.



# CHAPTER 1

## POLITICAL THOUGHT AND MEDIA ASSIMILATION

### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the historical context of the advent of the Second Republic (1965-1997) in the Congo and the birth of Zaire, an African nation deciding on its new national identity. The chapter explores how ideas of decolonisation were a generator of cultural change, and how the historical need for progress and freedom was used by the new Congolese government with the N'Sele Manifesto, which was the source of the implementation of the policies of *Authenticity*, *Zairianisation* and *Mobutism*. The hypothesis of this research is that the population was indoctrinated to participate in this transformation with a series of political reforms and ideologies that were reiterated by a state integrated media system and embedded in the national documentary films that were produced between 1965 and 1986. To this end, this chapter will firstly explain the process of decolonisation that was attempted by the country in “Decolonisation and the Second Republic”. This is then followed by a section entitled “The Second Republic, the Zairian spirit and the Party Manifesto”, which introduces the ideological representation acquired by the new nation and the stipulation of its political manifesto, and its impact on the media. Subsequently the chapter will investigate the pivotal historical moments of the Second Republic, beginning with an explanation of the first policy: *Authenticity*, in a section by the same name, in terms of its use as a lexical system of communication between the government and the population, which was adopted by the media to express the national project of decolonisation. The following sections review *Authenticity*'s later iterations: *Zairianisation* and *Mobutism*, and their significance for the creation of the environment for the cultural revolution which was called for by the Second Republic.

## 1.1 Decolonisation and the Second Republic

The 1960s were a decisive decade in shaping the world and in disrupting the behavioural and economic patterns imposed by a European supremacy; from politics to economics, social behaviour and technology, these years were marked by change. In the midst of the world's reshaping, the African continent was going through the long-awaited further turn of independence. In 1960, seventeen sub-Saharan countries became independent, these countries, just like previous nations facing independence, started asking themselves philosophical questions about how they were going to shape their nation, not only politically and economically but also ideologically. These African countries were looking at their sovereignty in a period that has been defined as post-colonial, a term that implies the end of the colony and addresses what happens afterwards. This term, which I will use to indicate the time after the colonisation ends, differs to the term coloniality, a period which starts at independence and denotes that a country is still affected by colonial history and relations. The issue of the presence of a post-colonial coloniality has been addressed by Maldonado-Torres through the exposure of the perpetual presence of this relationship:

... coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of the peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience (Maldonado-Torres cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p.487).

This explanation looks at two aspects in particular, knowledge acquired from the coloniser and that of the self. These distinctions were observed by intellectuals who, by understanding that colonialism was not going to end at independence, were driven to the conceptualisation of a freedom which sought to decolonise the African continent. Movements such as *African Renaissance*, *African Socialism* and *Negritude* recognised the African predicament in that world order and in the

equilibrium that continue to produce alienated Africans who are socialized into hating the Africa that produced them and liking Europe and America that reject them (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p.489).

These movements, which have been often criticised for creating false philosophies and Afro-radicalism<sup>3</sup>, responded to this existential problem with decolonisation. The core idea centred on the need for the African to go through a process of decolonisation, based on an Afrocentric

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<sup>3</sup> See also: Achille Mbembe; On the Power of the False. *Public Culture* 1 (Mbembe and Inggs, September 2002; 14 (3): p629–641)

knowledge of the world and an acknowledgement of the African being. It is at this particular moment in history that Mobutu attempted a decolonisation of Congo by creating the new nation of Zaire, through a series of policies that were prescribed to put an end to the perception of the country as an ex-colony and to instead develop the new free nation according to Afrocentric notions of the nation and its people. It was an attempt to end what was later formulated as coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a). Mobutu promoted a very personal idea of decolonisation through policies that were embedded in popular culture, from songs to films and newspapers. Culture, as a unifying element of acquired knowledge and the being, is at the centre of the decolonisation project that was started by Mobutu with the Second Republic, which he promoted in terms of cultural revolution. Decolonisation was a pan-African ambition which, predominant at the time of independence, was then transformed into a vehicle to sustain different regimes on the continent.<sup>4</sup> Mobutu's Zaire, was one of these revolutionary environments which adopted the ideas of decolonisation and used them for control.<sup>5</sup> Sixty years later, ideas of decolonisation are resurfacing in southern Africa, but they are framed by the new term 'decoloniality', which is free of its problematic history of dictatorships, but which, in principle, seeks to attain the same detachment from the colonial past in order to construct original nations that are devoid of the colonial legacy (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, pp.485–496).

Congo achieved independence from Belgium on the 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1960, and during the next five years it would battle to keep sovereignty whilst this was being contended by Belgian, Soviet and US interests. Patrice Lumumba's nationalist intentions were regarded as a threat to the mining interests of Belgium and his sympathising with communism also alerted the US that the country's abundant mineral resources could end up being Soviet assets. Lumumba's governing plans for the country were cut short by greater global preoccupations.<sup>6</sup> Although the end of Lumumba has been imputed to the US as "one National Security Council staff testified a few years after the fact that Eisenhower's words 'came across to me as an order for the assassination of Lumumba...There was no discussion'...", further research suggests that although it was in the USA's interest, and an attempt had been made to assassinate the premier,

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<sup>4</sup> See also: John D. Hargreaves, *Africa for the Africans?* in *Decolonization in Africa* (Hargreaves, 1996)

<sup>5</sup> Further reading on nationalism and 'personal dictatorships': Samuel Decalo 'African Personal Dictatorships', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol. 23, No. 2 (Decalo, 1985, pp.209–237).

<sup>6</sup> The political tensions of the Cold War afflicted national politics in Congo as well as in other African countries, resulting in a new "system of patronage", as explained by Bourgault: "One after another, radical African leaders of the 1960s were overthrown: Patrice Lumumba of Zaire in 1961; Kwame N'Krumah of Ghana in 1966; Modibo Keita of Mali in 1968. In all three cases, the increasingly socialist rhetoric of these leaders and/or their growing coziness with Moscow/Peking were important factors in their demise"(Bourgault, 1995, p.33)

it was not liable for the final outcome, in fact, although "...it [the US] was responsible for setting the stage and providing the impetus, the assassination itself was endorsed by the Belgian government and orchestrated by the Belgian secret service"(Gondola, 2002, pp.126-127). Following Lumumba's assassination, the country was run by President Kasavubu. At first Kasavubu was trying to suppress the secessionist rebellion of Katanga, which was led by its self-proclaimed President, Tshombe, who, after an agreement, in 1964 became the country's Prime Minister, with the promise of putting an end to the rebellions and the continuous spread of violence. Tshombe's attempts to hold peace were supported by the Belgian military and the Armée Nationale Congolaise but did not result in an improvement in the situation. Ethnic rivalries and rebellions spread throughout the country until November, 1965, when General Joseph-Desire Mobutu, who was in charge of the army, performed a bloodless coup d'état and removed President Kasavubu from office (Gondola, 2002, pp.115-129). The story narrated by Mobutu himself, and perpetuated in the country's oral history, depicts him as a diplomatic leader who, in a moment of necessity, was able to create a movement of change through a peaceful change of power. As explained to the journalist Jean-Louis Remilleux, on the 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1965, Mobutu gathered his army majors at his residence, and whilst his wife offered them coffee, they decided to occupy all of the capital's strategic areas. At the house, the group, declaring themselves to be nationalists, wrote an announcement and then informed the President of their intentions, at 5.30 a.m. on the following day, the radio station read the announcement proclaiming a change of government (Langellier, 2017). This narration of the events imbues Mobutu with qualities as a peacekeeper, as a moderate man who already had a privileged relationship with the media from the first day of his presidency, marking through this progressive narrative the beginning of the Second Republic.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> November, Mobutu, just thirty-five years old, installed himself in the position of President, and promised that the mandate would only last for a period of five years, technically allowing him the time required to restore peace throughout the country. Further, it was promised that after this time national elections would be organised. With this commitment the Second Republic began. To assure the continuation of his so-called temporary presidency, and to maintain total control over this position, he changed the constitution immediately, claiming "extra constitutional legislative powers for a five year period and appropriated full legislative authority" (Crawford Young, 1998, p.110). This act permitted Mobutu to rule undisturbed until 1970, when elections were held as promised, but with the peculiarity that he was to be the sole Presidential candidate. Unsurprisingly, Mobutu won the elections overwhelmingly. From the

advent of the Second Republic in 1965, the country was pushed to adhere to an aggressive nationalist agenda, which was expressed through a series of measures that were carefully crafted to change the cultural consciousness of the citizens and to promote a Zairian identity. These ideas of a new nation were further developed with the construction of *La Cité de La Voix du Zaïre* (*The City of the Voice of Zaire*) a compound dedicated to National TV, Cinema and Radio Production. The investment in this studio city, which was colossal and an emblem of modernity, was envisaged to create a centre for national cinematography and broadcast radio and television, at the same time, it became a production facility where the nationalist agenda was actively promoted. Mobutu's ambition for the studio was it to be "the greatest Tam Tam of Africa" (Mualaba, 2012, p.240).<sup>7</sup>

The pivotal change was pushed by the new President who, as a leader of the independent Congo was in the position to alter the equation of independence, from its conventional meaning of freedom from the former oppressor to economic betterment for the population, Mobutu attempted to shift from these meanings of independence to ideological ambitions. The President's goal became to create a unique Zairian identity that would be shared by a diverse population of multiple tribes, and for this new African man to find his place in the world amongst peers, where his nation would be acknowledged and esteemed because of its visionary President.<sup>8</sup> With this change of perspective, we can read an attempt from the new leader not to develop a nation as a postcolonial entity but as a country that exists through disavowing its colonial past and finding its origins in an announced act of decolonisation. In 1971, Congo became Zaïre and General Joseph-Desiré Mobutu changed his name to Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga, Father of the Country. This name change encompasses an ideology that aimed to create a modern, sovereign, African nation that, originally fabricated in the government offices, was at first aimed at inspiring a generation. The cultural revolution which materialised in Zaire used the media as cultural vehicles for the transformation, and film lent itself particularly well to this objective. Film has always been considered in relation to a range of political structures that, in part, determines but is also determined by it.

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<sup>7</sup> My translation. Original text: "Le plus grand TamTam d'Afrique"

<sup>8</sup> The use of the male pronoun and adjectives are to paraphrase all the speeches and interviews of Mobutu read in the scope of this research, and in these he speaks of the betterment of the Zairian man, rather than the Zairian person.

## 1.2 The Second Republic, the Zairian spirit and the Party Manifesto

The cultural identity constructed by government was often referred to as the Zairian spirit. This term, which I noted was recurrent when discussing Zaire with respondents during my field work in Kinshasa, is used by Mobutu several times to refer to a true identity in *Dignity for Africa* (Mobutu Sese Seko and Remilleux, 1989), a book of interviews carried out over a series of private meetings with the French journalist Jean Louis Remilleux. In this book, which covers biographical narration and political views, Mobutu narrates his modest background and the landmark moments of his presidency, but mainly he explains his ideas and visions for the country. In a particular passage, Mobutu explains his government's aims for cultural development:

Our cultural program consisted initially of making each Zairese aware of his own identity. To begin with it was necessary to 'deculturate' him to get rid of the scars the colonial culture had left in him. This was necessary in order to give him back his dignity which colonization had completely destroyed by imposing assimilation and alienation. The dazzling development of Zairese arts since that time may be considered a renaissance, and proves the wisdom of our program....it was a matter of returning to the thousand year old wisdom of our ancestors, to rediscover ourselves again (cited in Mobutu Sese Seko and Remilleux, 1989, p.107)<sup>9</sup>

In these words, it is possible to read Mobutu's preoccupation with 'deculturation', an actual search for decolonisation, which he interprets not as a healing of the scars of the colony but as removing the scars and starting over from an ancient past. As if there were no advantage in recognising a need for healing, this proposition of decolonisation wanted to efface the immediate colonial past and return to a remote past.

The affinity between the regime and the media was evident from the very beginning. On assuming power, the General not only brought the rigour and discipline acquired in the military, but also the sensitivity towards the power of image and words which he had developed as a journalist during the colonial period. A young Joseph-Désiré Mobutu started working in 1956 for *Actualités Africaines* a weekly supplement to the more progressive paper *L'Avenir colonial belge*, which was later renamed *L'Avenir*. He wrote under the pseudonym Jean de Banzy, which he used for a year. The weekly was created by the Belgian editor Pierre Davister, with the intention of establishing a paper written solely by and for the Congolese. Mobutu rose

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<sup>9</sup> This text refers to people from Zaire as Zairese, which is a closer translation to the French term *zaïrois*. In this research I will be using the term Zairian, which is preferred and used in all of the literature by anglophone authors.

quickly in the newspaper and was promoted to the position of editor in chief of the supplement in 1958. Because of his important appointment he was chosen to travel to Belgium, as a representative of the colonial press at the Brussel's World Fair Expo'58 (Langellier, 2017). On a second trip as a journalist to Brussels, he was able to gain a scholarship and work as a trainee at Infor-Congo<sup>10</sup>, "a government agency dealing in information and propaganda on the Congo; he also attended classes in journalism and social studies" (Monheim, 1967, p.16). These experiences and this training are important in recognising a level of media preparation, which was considered extraordinary at the time in comparison to the education received by the majority of the population. The Belgian colonial system in Congo did not promote university or higher schooling degrees for the indigenous population, therefore on independence in 1960 there were only thirty Congolese with a university degree earned either at home or abroad (Gondola, 2002, p.117). This also briefly illustrates how a lack of preparation from the elites of the country, and Mobutu's grounding in colonial communication, created an opportunity for the new leader to advance the dialectics that permitted him to conquer and colonise his own country by also exploiting the media.

Aware of the President's preparation in relation to the media, we can further understand the significance of the date of the inauguration of the National Television system. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1966, precisely one day before the solemn first anniversary of Mobutu's coup d'état, the TV system was ready to broadcast, an indicator of the regime's intention of utilising the media for the beneficial promotion of the new republic. In the early stages of the Republic, Mobutu proposed a technical government to keep the peace in the country, indicating that the government was not supposed to be political, and therefore should not have a party. To bypass this restriction, Mobutu constituted the so-called Corps des Volontaires de la République - CVR<sup>11</sup> – which, in 1967, was transformed into an official party: the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution - MPR<sup>12</sup>, of which he was the President. The national broadcast media were used from its incorporation to establish the importance of the new President and of the two iterations of his party, beyond their government functions, but with an emphasis on the cultural and ideological values that they embodied. The construction of power through the media came to a culmination when the people were incited to glorify Mobutu's image, in a process of interpellation, as these words of Zaire's Minister of the Interior, Engulu explained:

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<sup>10</sup> 'Office de l'Information et des Relations Publiques pour le Congo Belge et le Rwanda-Urundi'

<sup>11</sup> Volunteer Corps of the Republic

<sup>12</sup> Popular Movement of the Revolution

God has sent a great prophet, our prestigious Guide Mobutu. This prophet is our liberator, our Messiah. Our church is the MPR. Its Chief is Mobutu, we respect him like one respects the Pope. Our gospel is Mobutism. This is why the crucifixes must be replaced by the image of our Messiah. And party militants will want to place at its side his glorious mother Mama Yemo, who gave birth to such son (Engulu cited in Crawford Young, 1998, p113)

This exaltation of the President defines the result of a cultural revolution that puts its founder at the centre and shows a definite change of perspective. The process of decolonisation is expressed in this exchange, where old mores and ideological codes brought by the colonial power are replaced with new ones, as is the case when replacing the transcendental power of the Church with the MPR.<sup>13</sup> The shift occurred during the Second Republic through systematic steps, which lead to the radical transformation of the Church of Congo to the MPR of Zaire. The pivotal change of this self-proclaimed cultural revolution, unfolded with a programme in three main strategies: *Authenticity* in 1971, *Zairianisation* in 1973, and finally *Mobutism* in 1974.

All these programs of personal and legislative conversion originate from the N'Sele Manifesto, in which the foundations of the nation were authored. Stipulated in May, 1967, during a weeklong session of secretive meetings between the President and his top officials in the rural setting of the village N'Sele, the manifesto was finalised later in the year and was widely distributed in a little book containing the regime's catechism (Reybrouck, 2014).<sup>14</sup> The manifesto's stated main objective was to "Free all Congolese men and Congolese women from all servitudes and ensure their progress by building a truly social and truly democratic republic" (Ndaywel è Nziem, 2009, p.531).<sup>15</sup>

The births of the MPR and the manifesto are connected, and this period marks the establishment of the national party, which claimed that its main concern was to achieve great cultural change.

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<sup>13</sup> To reinforce this shift in ideals, the MPR announced in June, 1974, that "the people of Zaire would henceforth celebrate Christmas on June 24, the day the country's Constitution was proclaimed" (Johnson, 1974)

<sup>14</sup> Reybrouck, in his book *Congo: The Epic History of a People* (2014), writes that it was as a little green pamphlet, reminiscent of Mao's *Little Red Book*. In *Nouvelle histoire du Congo. Des origines à la République démocratique* (2009), Ndaywel è Nziem writes about a pamphlet which was distributed after *Authenticity* (1971) which, inspired by the Chinese book containing the teachings of Mao, was known as *Petit livre vert* and contained citations of Mobutu (Ndaywel è Nziem, 2009, p.535). The only copy of the N'Sele Manifesto I have been able to find is a "reviewed and corrected" edition of 1984, which is available at the British Library. Its cover is off-white.

<sup>15</sup> My translation. Original text: "Libérer les congolais et congolaises de toutes les servitudes et d'assurer leur progrès en édifiant une république vraiment sociale et vraiment démocratique"



The party therefore presented its plans and articulated its mission in terms of assuring a revolution of *authentic* nationalism and ending all political infighting; for which, in 1970, it justified the formation of the single-party state as the only feasible solution. The MPR was to be accepted as the only party, the absolute point of reference for the country, and consequently for all of the media. “From now on, the text stated, every inhabitant of Congo belonged to the MPR. ‘Olinga olinga te, ozali na kati ya MPR’, people sighed, ‘Whether you like it or not, you are a member by definition’” (Reybrouck, 2014, p.342). By following the logic of the government in power, if all citizens belonged to the MPR, this forcibly included all media practitioners. The interpellation of the citizen became, of course, the interpellation of the media practitioner through the party membership. The government’s desire to associate exemplary citizenship with the engagement of the media was primary and was justified by a logic of the development of the country through a cultural revolution. Mobutu “who is not only a soldier but also a journalist...explains the prime importance he has given the mass media in affairs of state” (Botombele, 1980, p.10) relied on media adhesion as expressed in Zaire’s communication policies with these words:

Social communication and national independence are inseparable: for national awareness is impossible unless the nation is perceived and apprehended as such, as a whole and in each of its parts. The undeniable achievement of the Second Republic is to have produced this national awareness, chiefly through the instrumentality of the mass media. This is the very essence of the cultural revolution (Ibid.)

This declaration recognises the role played by the media in supporting the national ambitions prescribed by the government. To achieve this, the media were organised, associated and incorporated, in other words, they were set up and recognised as an arm of the state.

During the same year as the institution of the N’Sele Manifesto, the first indigenous film association was formed, *Organisation des Cinéastes Congolais*, OCICO. It was created by the members of a production house run by Kinshasa University students: Daniel Luntadila Luzolo Mantwila, Gerard Mulongoy Kalafufu and, lastly, Esele and Luboya, the writers of Congo’s first international success, the short film *La Kinois* (1967)<sup>16</sup>, which was directed by the Belgian André Drossart (Convents, 2006). Convents suggests that it is possible to discern that the birth of OCICO was closely related to the government’s ambitions, since its first client was the Ministry of Culture, who commissioned the film *Retour A’ La Terre* (1967)<sup>17</sup> (Convents,

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<sup>16</sup> *The Kinshasa Girl*, my translation

<sup>17</sup> *Back to the Land*, my translation

2006). The objective of the organisation was to promote national cinema and to gain support it sought to collaborate with national institutions. It is important to mention that the majority of the filmmakers in the country were concomitantly working for national television, their daily tasks were defined mainly by the employee roster, and whether hours were dedicated to filming the news or filmmaking, not by artistic inclination (Zoppelletto, 2016b). This continuous shift within a system that did not have real boundaries between documentary filmmaking and journalistic filming for the news forcibly established a very strong association between the filmmakers and the Press association in matters of ethics and conduct. Although I have not come across an official censorship document for filmmakers, it is plausible to believe their job was considered no different to the broadcast media and was therefore affected by the same regulations. Zairian or Congolese filmmakers have not directly addressed the issue of independent filmmaking, with the exception of the Director Mweze Ngangura, whose film *La Vie Est Belle (Life is Rosy)* (1987) found international acclaim and distribution. Ngangura has addressed the issues and challenges faced by African filmmakers who aspire to make films that do not adhere to the ruling party's strategy, and that might carry an anti-party message. Although the following critique of the production system offered by Ngangura refers to a pan African issue, it is my assertion that it directly concerned the Zairian system, and he may have been unable to express it directly:

...if a filmmaker wants to push the message to its logical conclusions, he or she would inevitably end up making films that disturb the political powers that be and run up against the problem of freedom of expression, which is very limited in most African countries. The least that could happen is that the filmmakers work is banned in his or her country (Ngangura, 1996, p.61)

It is possible to deduce from this declaration that working in the audio-visual industry in Zaire implied a fidelity to the government, and never using the medium to denounce or question its actions. In addition to Ngangura's interpretation of the political climate and artistic freedom, it is necessary to look at the wider context in which newly trained national filmmakers and broadcasters learned their practice in a conditioned environment and therefore had a predefined scope for the media and its functions. This is a point raised by John Akomfrah<sup>18</sup> in an intervention on the concept of the 'national' in African cinemas, when explaining the attitude of film companies and TV stations that served the state post-independence: "Many took this idea of service to its logical conclusion and bought wholeheartedly into the idea that what you do as a filmmaker is to film the president or the prime minister on and off the plane"

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<sup>18</sup> John Akomfrah, CBE, is a British artist, film director and film theorist. He is of Ghanaian descent.

(Akomfrah, 2006, p.276). An indication that perhaps underestimates the practitioners' *modus operandi*, and that does not recognise the legitimate excitement of national filmmakers in capturing their fellow countrymen in government positions and wanting to celebrate the project of cultural assertion which their position of power represented, in other words, a visual documentation of decolonisation. Notwithstanding this, both these insights indicate that the swearing of allegiance by media practitioners to the MPR was an inescapable result of the environment.

The press association, *Union Nationale de la Presse Zaïroise*, a few months after the conception of the N'Sele Manifesto and the new constitution, gathered for an extraordinary meeting that resulted in the Press Manifesto, in which some of the fundamental principles were laid out:

The Nation: Without the energetic and salutary intervention of Citizen-President J.D. Mobutu, the vicissitudes of the past would have brought the disintegration of Zaïre's national unity .... The Zairian press rejoices at the results already achieved, and regards itself as mobilised to reinforce aiming at economic and social progress. It reiterates its adherence to the doctrine of authentic Zairian nationalism, and will spare no effort to develop and strengthen national awareness and the public weal (cited in Botombele, 1980, p.47)<sup>19</sup>

The advancement of mankind: In accordance with the spirit of the N'Sele Manifesto, the Zairian press will publicly explain the deeper meaning of the revolution and help to build smoothly, and without compulsion or conflict, a Zairian personality proud of its uniqueness and oriented towards technical progress (cited in Botombele, 1980, p.48)

These citations are of interest because they pinpoint the specific matters in which the press association declares itself interested and actively involved, while promoting in unison with the government, economic and social progress and a national awareness of an *authentic* identity. However, what is also remarkable in these, is how they were reconstructed in 1980 for the study commissioned by UNESCO. In *Communication policies in Zaire: A Study*, the author, Botombele, refers to the press association as *Union Nationale de la Presse Zaïroise*, as the study was published in 1980, but, at the time of their gathering for the extraordinary meeting in 1967, they would have been known as *Union Nationale de la Presse Congolaise*.<sup>20</sup> To this

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<sup>19</sup> J.D. Mobutu stands for Joseph-Désiré Mobutu

<sup>20</sup> The press association is currently called *Union Nationale de la Presse Congolaise*. The association's website explains that the association was born in 1960, but then changed its name at different historical moments: in 1963 it changed its name to Association de la Presse Congolaise APC, then, in 1967, to Union des Journalistes Professionnels Congolais UJPC, in 1971, Sakombi Inongo created the Union Nationale de la Presse du

end, the UNESCO publication adds a footnote: “In this document, the words Congo and Congolese have been replaced by ‘Zaire’ and ‘Zairian’ in order to comply with Zairian authenticity” (Botombele, 1980, p.47). This shows how *Authenticity*, which will be discussed further in this chapter, was used as a tool to attempt to decolonise the country, not only from the foreign colony, but from any power that came before the Second Republic. This is expressed in terms of a linguistic decolonisation that also attempted to erase from the country’s historical memory all government iterations that were born immediately after independence, and before the rise of Mobutu.

1970 was a pivotal year for the country, since the MPR held its first extraordinary congress to elect the party’s candidate for the Presidential elections, Mobutu was chosen, and as a consequence he stood, and he won the election process, in which there were no other candidates (Ndaywel è Nziem, 2009, p.532). From the film database compiled during this research, not many films were produced that year, these were:

*Election 1970* (1970), *Pour L’Abondance* (1970), *La Main Au Feu* (1970), *Le Mont Amba Ou Lovanium Ou La Colline Inspirée* (1970), *L’Atome Au Service De L’Homme* (1970).<sup>21</sup>

There is very little information available about these films beyond their titles, except for *Election 1970*, which has now been recovered and digitised, and *Pour L’Abondance* (1970) which translates as *For Abundance*, by Tshitenge Nsana, which was commissioned by two State companies: the Économat du Peuple and La Société Generale d’Alimentation (Convents, 2006), which can be translated in The People’s Budget and The General Food Supply Company. This film title, in particular, already expresses an institutional voice, resonating with the credo of the press association wanting to promote the advancement of the people through national engagement with the economic and social policies originated by the government.

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Congo UNPC, which then changed to UNPZ, *Union Nationale de la Presse Zairoise*, but the website does not give the specific year for the change of name (Kasonga, no date)

<sup>21</sup> *Election 1970 – Election 1970, Pour L’Abondance - For Abundance, La Main Au Feu – You can bet on it, Le Mont Amba Ou Lovanium Ou La Colline Inspirée - Mount Amba in Lovanium, the Inspired Hill, L’Atome Au Service De L’Homme – The Atom at the Service of Man*, my translations

### 1.3 Authenticity

Following the election year, the thoughts and beliefs of the N'Sele Manifesto were defined and officially named *Authenticité*, a programme of self-assertion. Inspired by Léopold Senghor's philosophy of *Négritude* (Crawford Young, 1998, pp.96–113), it aimed to transform the idea of a cultural revolution into tangible actions, whereby the government tried, through a process of decolonisation, to extinguish all links with the colonial past. As with other 'solutions' to coloniality, coining a term is the first element in the decolonising subjectivity, firstly, creating a vocabulary of disavowal of the colonial past and recognition of the self.<sup>22</sup>

*Authenticity*, which was founded on the concept of an “*authentic Congolese nationalism*” (Ndaywel è Nziem, 2009, p.534) was not formally presented to the nation as a protocol, but as an ideology that would instigate the cultural revolution.<sup>23</sup> In fact, it was only during his address at the United Nations in 1973 that Mobutu officially presented the concept of *Authenticity* (Ibid.).<sup>24</sup> The ideology was often criticised for wanting to re-establish a past embedded in nostalgic notions, rather than in realities about pre-colonial society. “To avoid criticisms from those who condemned in advance the dream of an idyllic return to the past, it was necessary to specify that the ideology advocated the recourse (and not the return) to authenticity” (Ibid., p.543).<sup>25</sup> Although it was advocated as a recourse, the return to *Authenticity* is often found in literature and is spoken more often than recourse.<sup>26</sup>

While *Authenticity* can be explained as a political programme, as this chapter will elucidate, it also claimed to be a philosophy, to define what makes anything and everything *authentic*, ranging from a dress to a film, we need to bring to light the diverse meanings given by the Party to this word. Mussia Kakama, professor at the *Institut Pédagogique Nationale Kinshasa-Binza*,<sup>27</sup> calls the word a ‘lexical system’ in the political discourse of the country (Kakama,

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<sup>22</sup> See Mignolo's chapter ‘Further Thoughts on (De) Coloniality’ (Mignolo, 2014, pp.21–51). Mignolo writes about Fanon's work. *Sociogenesis* is explained as a repositioning of subjectivity through vocabulary which is transformative as it addresses the experience of the many oppressed, which could not be done with the phylogenesis and ontogenesis used to explain a Western, Christian white view of the world.

<sup>23</sup> My translation. Original text: “*nationalisme congolais authentique*” emphasis in the text.

<sup>24</sup> In the text, Ndaywel è Nziem refers to the speech that took place on the 4th October, 1974, in fact, the correct date is the 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1973.

<sup>25</sup> My translation. Original text: “Pour se tenir à l'abri des critiques qui condamnaient d'avance le rêve d'un retour idyllique vers le passé, il était nécessaire de préciser que l'idéologie prônée était le recours (et non le retour) à l'authenticité”

<sup>26</sup> From its first enunciation at the United Nations the idea had been lost in translation. The original French text read at the UN assembly, and transcribed by the organisation, claimed “The recourse to authenticity is not a narrow nationalism” (My translation, original: “Le recours à l'authenticité n'est pas un nationalisme étroit” but the official UN translation reads: “A return to authenticity is not narrow nationalism” (Mobutu Sese Seko, 1973, p.9)

<sup>27</sup> The study was carried out at the *Institut Pédagogique Nationale Kinshasa-Binza* which has been renamed

1983, pp.31–58). This explains the multiplicity of uses of *Authenticity* during the cultural revolution, and how its uses have created what can be identified as a Zairian spirit, and which characteristics will be explained throughout this dissertation. Through an analysis of Mobutu’s speeches and the content of *Salongo* and *Elima*, Kinshasa’s daily newspapers at the time, Kakama was able to determine that the word “authenticity” was used with four different meanings. The first, indisputable meaning is *Authenticity* as doctrine, the proper noun of the MPR’s beliefs, deeply rooted in Zairian affirmation. This was defined by Mobutu himself, in these words, at his 1973 address to the UN:

It is the refusal of the people of Zaire to blindly espouse imported ideologies. It is the affirmation of the worth of the Zairean, or of any man, as he is and where he is, with the mental and social structures that are his own. For authenticity not only implies a profound knowledge of one’s own culture, but also a respect for the cultural heritage of others (Kakama, 1983, p.36)<sup>28</sup>

*Authenticity* was presented as a universal expression and as a doctrine needed for all humanity, “an expression of a new humanism, a humanism that frees men from all oppressions” (Mobutu, cited in Kakama, 1983, p.36).<sup>29</sup> This is where we can read its definite source in decolonisation.

The second meaning of the word is method or principle, which was elucidated by Mobutu by the use of these words: “Nonetheless, because our Revolution is one of action, we have also thought of authenticity as a method” (cited in Kakama, 1983, p.37).<sup>30</sup> In this we can read the necessity to transform the doctrine, not just into a philosophy to influence the people of Zaire, but as a practice and implementation method through which to transform the ideas of the MPR into action in the everyday life of citizens, from private life to the work environment. I argue

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*Université Pédagogique Nationale UPN.* The location of the institute is relevant, as it was at the heart of national political thinking even before the coup d’état of 1965. Binza, a wealthy neighbourhood of Leopoldville (later Kinshasa) has been known since independence as being the intellectual hub of Mobutu’s supporters. Between 1960 and 1965 whilst “governments rose and fell in Leopoldville, real power was held behind the scenes by the ‘Binza Group’ a group of Mobutu supporters named for the prosperous suburbs where its members lived”(Meditz and Merrill, 1994, p.46) Some of these members were “Justin Marie Bomboko and Etienne Tshisekedi” (Kumba, 2013, p.13). Étienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba (1932-2017) became the leader of the opposition in 1982 by forming the political party *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social*. His son Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo is currently the President of the DR Congo, elected 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Official UN translation. Original text cited by Kakama: “C’est le refus du peuple zaïrois d’épouser les idéologies importées. C’est l’affirmation de l’homme zaïrois ou de l’homme tout court, là où il est, tel qu’il est, avec ses structures mentales et sociales propres. L’authenticité est non seulement une connaissance approfondie de sa propre culture, mais aussi un respect du patrimoine culturel d’autrui”.

<sup>29</sup> My translation. Original text : “L’authenticité est l’expression d’un humanisme nouveau, un humanisme qui libère l’homme de toutes les oppressions”

<sup>30</sup> My translation. Original text: “Cependant, notre Révolution étant celle de l’action, nous avons également conçu l’authenticité comme une méthode”

that, without exception, this method or scheme is also found in film production, such as in the specific case of OCICO<sup>31</sup>, where it was integrated into the government structure. These party manoeuvres were possible also with press endorsements, particularly those of the newspaper *Salongo*, which praises the system with these words: “The head of state has spoken also of authenticity, indicating that it is the MPR’s weapon”<sup>32</sup>(Salongo, 1973, in Kakama, 1983, p.37), thus assigning to the philosophy a prescribed role of delivering effective party communication.

*Authenticity* meant ‘one’s own personality’, in the third definition identified by Kakama. It reflected a personality, but also, as mentioned in Mobutu’s words at his address to the UN, these include mental and social structures. This definition implies the term that is considered to be the person as a whole, and therefore includes not only the qualities but also the flaws of the person and the structure. By looking at the definition in this wider sense, it can be argued that one of the strengths of the term *Authenticity* is that it can condone and accept some of the choices of its founder, as they will be seen as being part of a person’s innate character, his mental structures. This interpretation is also supported by one of the government’s most active promoters, Sakombi Inongo,<sup>33</sup> in the *Memorandum de FAZ* “For this encourages us to accept ourselves with our qualities and faults, in other words, within our authenticity” (cited in Kakama, 1983, p.37).<sup>34</sup> By referring to “our qualities and our faults”, Sakombi hints at the unifying traits of a population that can evoke the concept of heritage and this is when the term *Authenticity* becomes the equivalent of tradition; this being the most apparent meaning of the word, or the one that sums it up, as Kakama argued. Tradition is an easily perceived and identifiable concept that can involve the public emotionally. A representation of this link between heritage and emotion can be found in these words from Mobutu, in a 1972 speech: “The notion of a child with an unknown father dates back to colonisation and it is therefore against the Zairian authenticity” (Mobutu cited in Kakama, 1983, p.39).<sup>35</sup> These words aim to

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<sup>31</sup> *Organisation des Cinéastes Congolais*

<sup>32</sup> My translation. Original text : “Le chef de l’État a parlé aussi de l’authenticité qui, a-t-il indiqué, était l’arme du MPR”

<sup>33</sup> Sakombi Inongo (1940-1970) “During most of Mobutu’s presidency he served as minister of information and propaganda and as such was responsible for engineering Mobutu’s public image of a benevolent autocrat. During the transitional period he retired from politics to engage in religious activity with the Business Men of the Full Gospel, proclaiming himself a born-again Christian and minister” (Gondola, 2002, p.192)

<sup>34</sup> My translation. Original text: “Car cela nous incite à mieux nous connaître et à mieux nous accepter avec nos qualités et nos défauts, c’est-à-dire dans notre authenticité”

<sup>35</sup> My translation. Original text: “La notion d’enfant de père inconnu date de la colonisation et est donc contraire à l’authenticité zaïroise”

construct ideas of a profound Zairian ethic, passed on through the generations, meaning that the discourse of identity implies not only that tradition is heritage, but it is also morality.

The fourth significance, and the use of the term identified by Kakama, attributed *Authenticity* to the value of 'true independence', not the independence gained by receiving freedom from the colonialist, but the independence of being. Further, Kakama explains this connotation with a quote of the party, from the newspaper *Le Couraf*<sup>36</sup> addressing independence in these terms: "Until 1965, we only had a nominal independence. Since the 24<sup>th</sup> November 1965, the people have resolved that we are on the path to a real independence, a concrete one. That is what we call authenticity" (*Le Couraf*, 28 December, 1971, in Kakama, 1983, p.39).<sup>37</sup> The term is used to signify the need for personal independence, in terms of a Zairian choice. We can then see how this association of the terms attempts to affirm *Authenticity* as a choice of independence, rather than as a political one of the MPR.

These four expressions of the concept had the potential to radically change people's ways of thinking about themselves, along with their nation's place in the world, explaining why the media were absorbed in implementing the changes and serving that purpose. At its centre is a human problem: to give dignity and psychological empowerment to the African people, who suffered for almost a century oppression that meant they had to revere European ideals of morals, culture and behaviour. This is the core challenge that the party seemed to want to address with the *Authenticity* measures, which we can also read in some of the speeches of Mobutu. During the MPR 1972 conference, Mobutu addresses this problem: "Amongst the most harmful consequences of colonisation, we must mention the mental alienation of the colonised, the denial of his being and all his values" (cited in Kabue, 1976, p.195)<sup>38</sup>. The concern raised in this speech over the alienation of the being and values, is at the centre of decolonisation movements. Mignolo points out that "decolonisation is a communal and collective work grounded in the self-awareness of the decolonial subjects" (Mignolo, 2014, p.36). In this respect, Mignolo presents decolonisation as a force arising from the people, but

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<sup>36</sup> *Le Couraf*, as indicated by Kakama, is the short form of *Le Courrier d'Afrique*, a daily newspaper that was started in colonial times, "Began with Jan. 12, 1930 issue; ceased with Mar. 5, 1972" (*Le Courrier d'Afrique*, n.d.)

<sup>37</sup> My translation. Original text: "Jusqu'en 1965, nous n'avions qu'une indépendance nominale. Depuis le 24 novembre 1965, le peuple a dû juger que nous sommes dans la voie d'une indépendance réelle, concrète. C'est cela qu'on appelle l'authenticité"

<sup>38</sup> My translation. Original text: "Parmi les conséquences les plus néfastes de la colonisation, on ne peut manquer de citer l'aliénation mentale du colonisé, la négation de son être, de toutes ses valeurs"



Mobutu's striving for *Authenticity* may be understood as a top down process which was imposed, however, the initial participation of the people and their support may indicate that the decolonisation process had already started, and the government's actual addition to the process was to be able to frame it in an ideology for which they found a name and a derivative vocabulary (*abacos, citoyens*, etc). As highlighted in Mobutu's speech, the shift of perception required to achieve decolonisation asks the population to embrace the self, something that was denied by colonialism.

The fight and search for *Authenticity* were presented as a real concern of President Mobutu, but some have questioned whether this reflected more personal aspirations, rather than a legitimate quest for the progress and advancement of the Congolese people. Amongst the critics of the regime, Emmanuel Dungia advances a different reading of this particular search for a decolonisation which wanted to pass not only as nationalist, but also as philosophical. Dungia, a former insider of the regime who worked as a diplomat and secret agent for the President, became critical of the system and, once exiled, wrote a memoir denouncing the leader, in which he attributes the invention of the philosophy of *Authenticity* to the President's complexes of self-importance and vanity. In *Mobutu et l'Argent du Zaïre* (1993), Dungia claims that the enlightened thinking that inspired the recourse to *Authenticity* was triggered by Mobutu's envy of the other heads of state on the African continent, who, at the time, were receiving great visibility and praise, as they aspired to change the populations' vision of themselves by establishing their rights and dignifying their community. In the immediate post-independence period Senghor, the first President of Senegal was universally praised for the concept of *Negritude*,<sup>39</sup> as well as the first President of Tanzania, Nyerere, who started the socio-economic development policies that were named *Ujamaa*, from the Swahili 'familyhood'. These movements, which were much admired, both by the intelligentsia and the people, were taunting the pride of Mobutu, who did not want to be left out of the intellectual movement. Dungia believes that the President contrived a more extreme policy of social change with the ambition that it would launch him to international fame and help him obscure the achievements of the other African intellectual revolutionaries who had become heads of state (Dungia, 1993).

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<sup>39</sup> Although *Negritude* was conceived by the group of intellectuals which included Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon Damas, and promoted by the Nardal sisters, Paulette and Jane, the ascent of Senghor to the presidency of Senegal, helped establish his name as the father of *Negritude*. Furthermore, some of the concepts that were pivotal in the consolidation of the idea of *Negritude* were already explored by the earlier writings of Jane Nardal (Sharpley-Whiting, 2002)

*Negritude*, one of the movements that Mobutu allegedly tried to emulate and better, was born in the context of men trying to overthrow colonial power, *Ujamaa*, instead, was born out of independence, but Mobutu's invention of *Authenticity* not only came from a position of independence, but especially from one of considerable power, as it was introduced in a country with a single political party. It is possible, nonetheless, to see how they share the same catalyst.

African scholars engaged with the question of coloniality of being from the vantage point of what they termed 'African Personality' and 'Negritude' among many other registers used in the African decolonial search for restoration of denied ontological density, sovereign subjectivity, as well as self-pride and self-assertion (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p.490)

These movements share with *Authenticity* the common experience of colonial humiliation and a focus on striving for self-identification through decolonisation. *Negritude*, a 1930's intellectual concept of protest against French colonialism and racism, was to awaken the affirmation of black culture, "the affirmation of the values of civilization of something defined as 'the black world' as an answer to the question 'what are we in this white world?'" (Diagne, 2014, p.1). The brainchild of Aimé Césaire, Leopold Senghor and Léon Gontran Damas, the term, provocative in its nature as it derived from the derogatory term 'sale nègre' (from the French: dirty negro), was reinvented and re-appropriated as symbol of culture, rather than savagery (Diagne, 2014). This term, which was meant to irritate and draw attention to the possibility of including the African people and the Africans of the diaspora as producers of art and thinkers, quickly translated into a new wave of political thought. Césaire explained it as:

"a fact, a revolt and the acceptance of responsibility for the destiny of [my] race". For Senghor, *Negritude* represented "black cultural patrimony, that is to say, the spirit of its civilisation," whereas Damas regarded it as the explicit "rejection of an assimilation that negated [my] spontaneity and as a defence for my condition as Negro and Guyanese (Sharpley-Whiting, 2002, p.6)

The three fathers of the term, whose different contributions to its development are clear from these points, became involved in politics, and subsequently became part of the French Parliament, but the one who pursued the career to its summit was Senghor, who became Senegal's first President, and who was in office from 1960 to 1980.

Understandably fascinated by this theorist and poet, it is possible to see how Mobutu might have been inspired and came to desire his own immortality in political philosophy, and have been further motivated to find success in a concept that turned out to be *Authenticité*. Although Dungia also mentions *Ujamaa* as the possible inspiration, the Zairian government does not

address the Tanzanian model of African socialism directly, whereas the relationship between *Négritude* and *Authenticity* was discussed straightforwardly on various occasions by Mobutu. Throughout the available reflections of President Mobutu, in the form of speeches, it is possible to understand more about his character and identify the sense of jealousy discussed by Dungia, as he seems keen to address and place the philosophy of *Authenticity* onto a higher level than the one studied by the Senegalese head of state. By referring to Mobutu's speeches, we see his explanation of the differences between the two. Mobutu claims that his concerns, epitomized by the birth of *Authenticity*, originate from a wider sense of legitimacy that has to do with the nature of the human being, rather than the continent from which the person may come. Mobutu explains that Senghor searched for the affirmation of black people and the acknowledgement that their way of being is directly linked to their wider African heritage, whereas he exposed a human need for acceptance. In Mobutu's vision, the aim of *Authenticity* was to create a movement in which the affirmation of the Zairian should be as natural to him as the affirmation of any other man, not just the contributory factor to a decolonisation process, as this excerpt from a speech reveals:

All these great African figures, artisans of our liberation, showed us the way so that a colonized person may regain his dignity as a free man. In our turn, we preach authenticity, which is a global philosophy. With authenticity, it is the human who is concerned wherever he may be, whatever he may be (Mobutu cited in Kakama, 1983, p53)<sup>40</sup>

The above statement only slightly shifts the thinking from a particular predicament of a marginalised or oppressed subject to a universal need for the people's sense of worth. However, Dungia's accusations of Mobutu's sense of self-importance and need for affirmation of his intellectual stature, can be found in some of the press articles of the time, which were in line with the government, such as those in the national newspaper, *Salongo*. The writing frames *Authenticity* as a superior understanding of the human condition and explains it thus: "Authenticity is the mother of negritude...negritude translates the values of the black world, as they complete the values of a universal. Authenticity, (is) a political philosophy that rejects all imported ideologies" (Salongo, 1973, cited in Kakama, 1983, p.54).<sup>41</sup> Most of Mobutu's references to *Négritude* are meant to give the perception that Senghor's philosophy was an

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<sup>40</sup> My translation. Original text: "Toutes ces grandes figures africaines, artisans de notre libération, ont donné la voie à suivre pour qu'un colonisé recouvre sa dignité d'homme libre. A notre tour, nous prêchons l'authenticité qui est une philosophie plus globale. Avec l'authenticité, c'est l'humain qui est concerné où qu'il soit, quel qu'il soit"

<sup>41</sup> My translation. Original text : "L'authenticité est la mère de la négritude...la négritude traduit les valeurs du monde noir, telles qu'elles complètent les valeurs d'un universel. L'authenticité, philosophie politique qui récuse toutes les idéologies d'importation"

afterthought to *Authenticity*, although, just by looking at the matter of temporality, i.e., which came first, since this one followed forty years after *Négritude*. Another emblematic quote from the President shows this attitude: “...négritude was well cradled on its mother’s lap, authenticity” (Mobutu, cited in Kakama, 1983, p.53).<sup>42</sup>

Whilst understanding how the picture portrayed by Dungia may be founded on the experience of working at the core of Zairian diplomatic services, there are also reasons to believe that Mobutu’s call for action on psychological oppression was genuine. From Mobutu’s first article, published in 1956 in *Actualités Africaines* under the pseudonym J.D. Banzy, there was a direct provocation to change the way Congolese were regarded at large; the article read “Grant us a concession, a place at the university for black lawyers” (Langellier, 2017, p.37)<sup>43</sup>. His first opportunity to make himself heard was used to attempt a significant change to the *status quo*, as the Congolese were not allowed to undertake law studies, either in their own country, or in Belgium, as they were considered subversive (Langellier, 2017). Mobutu’s activism can be read as meaningful, if we take into consideration that he was living through a period of collective action towards an effective decolonisation. The idealism that was born out of independence allowed for grand gestures of detachment from the former European coloniser, and a search for identity which Mobutu, with the help of the MPR, formulated into *Authenticity*. The first of these gestures, which claimed that to decolonise the country consisted in disowning the colonial intervention and was expressed in the language, entailed changing the name of the country. The country’s name was changed in order to abandon any psychological debris attached to the linguistics of the Belgian Congo, therefore the name ‘Congo’ was substituted by the more *authentic*<sup>44</sup> name Zaïre.<sup>45</sup> This measure of the programme of *Authenticity* has often been referred to as the de-baptisation of the country (Braekman, 2016, p.19).<sup>46</sup> The simple, yet effective, battle against foreign names was not only symbolic, but was thought of as key to constructing the figure of the new Zairian. Mobutu explained, during the 1972 MPR conference: “The Zairian had thus lost the authentic meaning of the name, the name that places him genealogically, fully personalises him, this name which constitutes a great tribute to his

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<sup>42</sup> My translation. Original text: “la négritude était bien bercée sur les genoux de sa mère, l'authenticité”

<sup>43</sup> My translation. Original text: “De grâce, une place à l’université pour les juristes noirs.”

<sup>44</sup> Throughout this text the term *authentic* in italics does not express its literal translation as legitimate or original, but, rather, refers to the adjective of belonging to the policy of *Authenticity*

<sup>45</sup> Zaïre is the French spelling.

<sup>46</sup> The practice which, despite the name, does not entail any religious disavowal, has been popularly known as de-baptisation (Braekman, 2016, p.19) or re-baptisation (Wrong, 2000, p.285)

ancestors”<sup>47</sup> (Kabue, 1976, p.196). In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1984), Ngugi wa Thiong’o analyses the use of language by exposing its function to enable communication, but also to hand down culture. Mobutu’s change of language from the French to the Congolese languages for the names, directed the country towards a rediscovery of its own culture. Ngugi wa Thiong’o explains that:

Culture embodies those, moral, ethical values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses, through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe. Values are the basis of a people’s identity, their sense of particularity as members of the human race. All this carried by language. Language as culture is the collective memory banks of a people’s experience in history (Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, 1986, p.15)

The renaming process was a twofold form of decolonisation, firstly, in ceasing to prolong the foreign presence through the language and, further, by erasing the collective memory of the colony in the language. The direct attempt at decolonisation with *Authenticity* resorted to measures that encompassed culture from the changes in people’s personal names to the way the population dressed; the Zairian people were to embrace this new self-image at once. Gone were the Madame and Monsieur, as European appellations were changed to the more anonymous, but democratic, *Citoyenne* and *Citoyen*, simply translated into: citizen. In an even more personal move that was to affect every citizen, all people were forced to abandon their Christian names, which had been adopted during colonial times, in favour of traditional Zairian names. In 1972, the President himself became Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga “ ‘the powerful warrior whose stamina and willpower carry him from victory to victory, leaving behind only fire’ (but also, ‘the rooster that leaves no hen unruffled’, depending on the translator)” (Reybrouck, 2014, p.348). To Mobutu, however, and according to the logic of the ideology of *Authenticity*, this name established his origin and his place in the line of succession in the “warrior Ngbandi tribe” (Mobutu Sese Seko and Remilleux, 1989, p.110). Unlike Joseph-Désiré, which reflected a colonised identity, the tribal name also hinted at a detachment from the Christianity that was associated with the colonial names and the beginning of a difficult relationship with the Church.

Names of people and places were changed, every city name was Africanised, from Leopoldville to Kinshasa, Elizabethville was renamed Lubumbashi and Stanleyville now known as Kisangani. People were instructed to be profoundly true to their roots, not only by transforming their names, and therefore deleting the foreign language from their everyday

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<sup>47</sup> My translation. Original text : “Le Zaïrois avait ainsi perdu le sens authentique du nom, ce nom qui le situe généalogiquement, le personnalise pleinement, ce nom qui constitue un insigne hommage rendu à ses ancêtres”

conversation, but they were also asked to change the way they looked. European clothing was officially banned and was replaced by a non-western suit, called the *Abacos*,<sup>48</sup> for men (from the sentence “A bas le costume” “Down with the suits”), and full length dresses made of African cloth<sup>49</sup> for women (Meredith, 2011). The traditional dress, unlike other countries in Africa, was worn with two *pagnes*, promoting a sense of pride and identification when recognising other Zairian women throughout the world by their attire. Men and women were encouraged to embrace their natural beauty, which was transformed into a signifier of political action, representing an *authentic* beauty. “Only natural hairstyles were allowed. Extensions and the “conking” or straightening of hair was forbidden. Even more strongly forbidden were preparations for lightening the skin” (Reybrouck, 2014, p.352). The aesthetics of *Authenticity* were quickly resolved and adhered to as representations of a philosophy that was in a continuous process of design.

There was going to be a new way of living and thinking, and the media served to communicate the change. The “new man”, the Zairian, was born through a process of signifiers and methods of *Authenticity* that were established by the MPR. This transformation was channelled in all aspects of life, from within the home to the institutions, including the OCICO (*Organisation des Cinéastes Congolais*), which had to rebrand itself OZAC: *Organisation Zairoise des Cinéastes*. Amongst its executive members, the respected director “Gérard Mulongoy Kalafufu assured the government representatives directly that the organisation was to produce films that were ‘authentically Zairian’ to better disseminate their own culture through cinema” (Convents, 2006, p272).<sup>50</sup> As OZAC promised an *authentic* representation, and *Authenticity* claimed to celebrate the original Congolese and not the westernised, denatured version of the population, it is important to identify this rediscovery and celebration in film of a national image and its relationship to the *authentic* image. The next chapter will address the relationship between *Authenticity* and national filmmaking.

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<sup>48</sup> The suit is referred to as *Abacos*, but also as *Abacost*, both names being accepted

<sup>49</sup> Meredith chooses the term African cloth, which, in Congo, is known as *pagne*

<sup>50</sup> My translation. Original text; “Gérard Mulongoy Kalafufu Souligne devant des représentants du gouvernement que l’organisation veut produire des films authentiquement zairois pour mieux diffuser leur propre culture grâce au cinéma”

## 1.4 Zairianisation

“The measures of Zairianisation reflected the desire of Mobutu’s regime to regain its economic independence”<sup>51</sup>(M’pereng, 2012, p.72). *Zairianisation* can be explained as an economic framework for *Authenticity*, and it came into full effect in 1973, whereby there was an appropriation by the government of commercial enterprises owned by foreigners, in order to benefit the nation of Zaire. Businesses were taken away from their foreign owners and were redistributed to the Zairian population under a policy of the patrimonialism of national resources, “roughly 1,500 to 2,000 enterprises were taken from their non-Zairian owners, and members of the political aristocracy...acquired them” (Callaghy, 1984, cited in Gondola, 2002, p.145). The Congolese media infrastructure adapted to these measures even earlier, as they went through a nationalisation process a year ahead of the policy. In 1972, the Ministry of Information was renamed the Department of National Guidance<sup>52</sup>, a new name that indicates the shift of relationship between the party in power and the population, as the ministry changes its declared mission from Information to the one of Guidance. The department set out a new proposal of incorporating into the state machine all of the once independent film and tv production companies, which all had foreign owners or investors. RENACT, *Régie Nationale des Actualités Cinema et Télévision*, a newly formed state institution, acquired the country’s most prolific independent production company, Congovox. At the same time, the government also decided to create a cultural and educational arm of audio-visual production by creating a sister company, RENAPEC, *Régie Nationale des Productions Educatives et Culturelles*, which became the proprietor of the once church-owned TéléStar, a broadcasting company that was focused on educational content.

As soon as these measures and acquisitions took place, the content was rebranded in what might be called *authentic* standards. The film *Mboka Na Ngai (Back to our Roots)* (1972) by the filmmaker Talangai I Kambianuma, is a significant example of this, with its title capturing the desire to search for *Authenticity* whilst, at the same time, expressing the government’s vision (Convents, 2006). Directly after the economic changes brought by *Zairianisation* started taking shape, the politics of patrimonialism became visible, as the “confiscated foreign

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<sup>51</sup> My translation. Original text: “Les mesures de zairianisation traduisaient la volonté du régime Mobutu de recouvrer son indépendance sur le plan économique”

<sup>52</sup> The title of Minister of Information also changed to Commissaire d’État à l’Orientation Nationale, State Commissioner for National Guidance (Botombele, 1975, p.76)

companies were allocated to members of the political elite” (Young and Turner 1985, p 328, cited in Gondola, 2002, p.145). As the policy of *Zairianisation* spread across the media industry, all film and television production became part of National Television, meaning that all production and distribution was fully *Zairianised*, in other words, it was nationalised (Zoppelletto, 2015).

Zaire’s communication became important during the period of the Second Republic, especially as Mobutu’s background in colonial media allowed him to understand the possibilities available to him and his government with a nationalised system like colonisation, both in material and ideological terms. It is possible to see how this led to his accepted role of Guide, Chief and Father of Zaire. Similarly to the methods used by the coloniser, the President created a new sense of submission in the citizens by using powerful cultural roles. During colonisation, the Belgian Kingdom took a position of superiority which confined the Congolese population to a position as ‘eternal children’, who were supposed to be taught and disciplined, and, as a result of their alleged perennial immaturity, they would be prohibited from attaining places of responsibility. This was an attitude that was pervasive in all aspects of colonial life. Some examples of this may be found also in the relationship that was shaped by the Belgians between the Congolese audience and cinema. One of the active promoters of cinema in the Belgian Congo, Father Van den Heuvel, in a 1958 paper presented the general attitude towards the indigenous population:

For this audience that we call primitive, we must make films for Africans. The scenarios will be simple and will deal with few characters. The characters will be easily distinguishable from one another, and they will each have well defined habits...The technique for such films will generally be analogous to the one used when filming for children. The content however will be different...(Diawara, 1992, p.17)

This attitude, and the consequences of a distorted image of the Congolese population, remained even after independence, and was publicly denounced by Mobutu himself. He claimed to have abolished it with his work: “Thanks to the Revolution, the image of the ‘Negro, eternal child’, imposed on the world by the coloniser, has revealed itself to be so immense, so ridiculous, that it has been definitely buried”(Mobutu cited in Kabue, 1976, p.257).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> My translation. Original text: “Grace à la Révolution, l’image du ‘Nègre éternel enfant’, imposée au monde par le colonisateur, s’est révélée d’une telle énormité, d’un tel ridicule, qu’elle est définitivement enterrée”



This statement of praise of the cultural revolution hides a contradiction in terms of how Mobutu and his government looked at the citizens. Having, very early in the political journey of the party, used the image of Mobutu as ‘Father and Chief of the Zairian people’, this concept was popularised through all of the media; television, radio, press and songs. This consequently allowed the President to assume the same patronising relationship with the population, who would ultimately become his subjects rather than his fellow citizens. The African political expert, Michael G. Shatzberg, approaches the regime’s sustainability through its dialectics. Once the regime had acquired power through a martial take over, it was faced with the challenging task of controlling and keeping power. In Shatzberg’s analysis, it was achieved by “encouraging citizens to accept valid symbols and metaphors of authority” (Schatzberg, 1991, p.72). In this context, we can assert that *Authenticity* functioned to promote the ideas and symbols of a traditional authority that became fundamental to Mobutu’s implementation of *Zairianisation*, as this popular metaphor of the time elucidates: “...two Chiefs could not sit on the same leopard skin!”(Ndaywel è Nziem, 2009, p.535).<sup>54</sup> The past tense of this metaphor indicates how even the language was used to direct attention to notions of a better pre-colonial past which, if resumed, would bring an *authentic* order. Patrimonialism was possible for the government along with the assignment of the country’s commercial and economic resources to the political elite because of the undisputed imagery of an authentic democracy in which the Chief could endow his people and the elders with different national assets.

The recurrent symbol used is one reverting to the pre-colonial era of the Chief, who has to guide his village and is responsible for his people with his fatherly care. From the top of the political establishment to the nameless lower level clerk, cited by Shatzberg (1991, p.71), Mobutu was accepted as being the natural superior of all of the citizens:

A good Chief is a father of the family. As a father he must punish his children, but first he gives advice and directives. But if the children do not obey, they will be punished, but that is not his fault (Schatzberg, 1991, p.71)

Through the choice of language and imagery that lead to constant metaphors relating to family morality and hierarchical traditions, there was an attempt to create a relationship of dependence between the father and his children, and thus Mobutu and the population. As a consequence of

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<sup>54</sup> My translation. Original text: “Deux chefs ne pouvaient s’asseoir sur une même peau de léopard!”. The same saying is quoted in Langellier’s book *Mobutu*, but the text differs “there is no space for two Chiefs on one leopard skin”, my translation. Original text: “Il n’y a pas de place pour deux chefs sur la peau de léopard.” (Langellier, 2017, p.226)

the promotion of his status as Chief there is the obvious explanation for the population: that it believed in Mobutu's cultural and divine right to absolute decision making and its consequence for them. Similarly, the coloniser held the same power of decision over the Congolese in a disguised role as teacher and protector, a role which would only be employed to assure the constant role of privilege over men and land. This way of maintaining power was then emulated by Mobutu's neo-colonialism, which claimed that the origin was to be found in the traditional and *authentic* Zairian way of life, however contradictory such an ideology may be. By associating the role of President to that of a traditional Chief and, furthermore, to that of a father, the ideas of national wealth and personal property were synonymous. This shift in perspective implied that every state development, whether a school, a hospital or roads, was to be perceived as gifts that were offered to the population by their magnanimous Chief and father (Schatzberg, 1991). This mindset may be found in the pre-colonial indigenous way of life but, according to the hypothesis of this research, it will be also found in government communication and audio-visual production, which produced a new identity for the population, now the children of the Chief.

The changes in the country's media landscape which, as mentioned earlier, were brought about by the *Union Nationale de la Presse Zaïroise* and OZAC's promise of an *authentic* filmmaking, meant that by 1972 artistic work had a moral obligation to follow the government agenda, and this was characterized by ambitions for international recognition and influence. As suggested by the former diplomat Dungia (1993), the need for affirmation with his contemporaries pushed Mobutu to making flamboyant gestures. The determination to establish Zaire's place as a relevant player in the international arena became apparent as a great deal of effort and funds were spent for developments of epic magnitude. Whether these developments, all financed in the name of *Zairianisation*, can be read as being undertaken for the benefit of Mobutu's own ego or for the good of the country, the President seriously attempted to ensure that the nation's name resonated globally as an assertion of its people.

The fact that Mobutu did not lead the independence of 1960,<sup>55</sup> was compensated for by the media's efforts, as most of the material viewed within the scope of this research has been found

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<sup>55</sup> Mobutu was in Brussels at the time of the round table negotiations for independence, but was not allowed to participate, since he was there in the capacity of student following an internship and he did not belong to an official delegation. Although he was not allowed in the room where the meetings took place, he was present around the Congolese delegation as much as he could, in order to make himself visible (Langellier, 2017, pp.59-60) We might say he was able to watch history being made, rather than participating in it.

to show that a critical component of the country's communication is a perpetual reminder that, in the years that followed, there were more conclusive victories for freedom for the people that were gained by Mobutu. The distinction is often present in the Party's rhetoric, in which the first independence brought freedom from oppression, but with Mobutu's Second Republic there was independence from political unrest, which was followed by a philosophical independence:

the third independence, is the independence of the intellect, mental independence. It is the true meaning of this ongoing research that is resorting to authenticity: it tends to reveal to the black man, more particularly the Zairian, that he too can create, make something, that he is someone ( Mobutu, 1975, cited in Kabue, 1976, p.256)<sup>56</sup>

Thereafter, Mobutu the Guide came to establish, with precise directives on cultural norms and economic policies, what the country could achieve, and how this success was to be embodied by the Zairian spirit.

From theory to practice, *Authenticity* had to demonstrate the achievements in relation to emancipating the country, and *Zairianisation* was perceived as the vehicle for it. One of the projects of engineering pride and symbols of independence was the Inga-Shaba powerline, which allegedly contributed to bankrupting the country. The grandiose development was completed in 1983, but it was six years behind schedule and cost one billion US dollars, four times its initial estimate (Crawford Young, 1998, p.120). The project, for many years the longest high-voltage direct current line in the world, was, as was norm at the time, captured in a film, *Inga* (1975), which was directed by a prominent member of OZAC, Jean Baptiste Komba Kayumba. Although this specific film is not available in any of the archives that were consulted during this thesis' research, an earlier film production, *Voyage Royal Au Congo* (1970), shows the Inga Shaba project to emphasise the narration of the development of the country during the Second Republic, and the technical modernisation brought by autochthonous action. A celebratory introduction to the power line can be found in this documentary film, available at the Brussel's Cinematek where the archives hold the 35mm reel of the 24 minutes documentary, produced by Congovox.<sup>57</sup> This is one of the many examples of a Congolese film production which is not catalogued in any of the available texts regarding

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<sup>56</sup> My translation. Original text: "La troisième indépendance, c'est l'Indépendance des esprits, l'indépendance mentale. C'est le vrai sens de cette recherche permanent qu'est le recours à l'authenticité: elle tend à révéler l'homme noir, plus particulièrement au Zaïrois, que lui aussi peut créer, apporter quelque chose qu'il est quelqu'un"

<sup>57</sup> Later known as RENACT

African or Congolese film, probably because of its distribution, which may have been limited to national television, and because it does not have any opening or closing credits, other than Congovox, so it would have been difficult to attribute to any filmmaker. This production, although it had been long forgotten in the Belgian archives, can offer significant information on the media's approach to the President's role and persona.

The film follows the royal visit by King Baudouin in 1970, on his first trip back to Congo since independence, and his consort, Queen Fabiola's, first visit to the country. Congovox was commissioned by the government to make the documentary, and it was significant in marking the country's ten years of independence. This Royal visit, as documented by the film, was a chance for Mobutu to display his vision of sovereignty and for the independent country to be regarded as a peer, rather than as a developing nation, by those who ruled it for over half a century. It is possible to get a sense of this particular aim of the film from the first opening sequence of the arrival of the King and Queen of Belgium at N'Djili Airport. A French voice-over comments on the image of the two statesmen, Mobutu and the King of Belgium, standing in military attire, smiling for the cameras and the crowd: "On the podium, two men, two friends, an African and a European. Partners with the same duties, interpreting the destiny of their people" (*Voyage Royal Au Congo*, 1970).<sup>58</sup> The fifteen-day visit is reported and is filmed with attention to all the local traditions and the wealth of resources, from the River Congo to the mining sites, to the final and crowning visit of the Inga dams. We see the Belgian and Congolese delegations looking over the immense landscape and the chief engineer explaining the project to them, whilst the voice-over explains: "This project, that has been contemplated by Belgium for many years, has been successfully undertaken by Mobutu" (*Voyage Royal Au Congo*, 1970).<sup>59</sup>

This Congolese production is an early example of the theme that will then carry the party's ideologies. Most African films, in the view of the film director Alain Aubert, cited by Pommier (1974), are subject to a main theme of tradition versus modernity, but as *Voyage Royal Au Congo* shows, both can be used and entwined to introduce a further major theme that is present in the Second Republic films: development. Pommier explains that, it is usual in African film to show the conflict of heritage and change, which is expressed by two main storylines, one of

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<sup>58</sup> My translation. Original text: "Au podium, deux hommes, deux amis, un africain et un européen. Associées des mêmes devoirs, interprétations des destins dès leur peuples"

<sup>59</sup> My translation. Original text: "Ce projet étudié depuis des années par la Belgique, Mobutu le réalise"

a clash between generations, which finds its roots in a specific African context, and the one of modernity which arises from the idea of the conflict between Europe and Africa (Pommier, 1974). In the Congolese and later Zairian context, the idea of tradition is enhanced and glorified through the expression of *Authenticity* and its actualisation in *Zairianisation*, which means that the themes of generation and modernity can still be present in the film narrative, but a major theme to discover, which is alluded to by many of the recorded titles, is the one of the modern development of the land of the forefathers. It may be a peculiarity of both the country and the period of post-independence construction, but an obvious prerogative in Mobutu's plans is the development of the land and its unfolding on film which reconfirm the President's role as builder/father of the nation, and as a superlative citizen.

The emphasis on construction and development in the media are some of the aspects that have been identified as 'development journalism', which will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter, and which has also been recognised as a phenomenon in Zaire and its neighbouring countries by Marie Soleil Frère, in her study *Journalistic Identity and Audience Perceptions: Paradigms and models under construction in the African Great Lakes region* (2015). Although in most media environments journalism and filmmaking may share some specific interests, in Zaire, with the consolidation of all media so that those media become a large state operation, the principles of one can be applied to the other, as journalists and filmmakers become subservient to the same system. This thesis will therefore consider Frère's study on journalists and their practice to be directly relevant to Zairian filmmakers. These professionals:

were subjected to an essentially external, authoritarian and unilateral (non-consultative) definition of the nature and missions of their profession, the media existing under a state monopoly, whether *de jure* or *de facto* (Frère, 2015, p.79).

In this context, it is Sakombi, State Commissioner of the Department of National Guidance, who clarifies the government expectations of the media. "The Zairian journalist is an officer committed to the realization of the MPR's vision of society" (Sakombi, cited in Frère, 2015, p.79). To truly communicate the vision, we might add that the media practitioner was supposed to understand the genesis of the Party doctrine and its application to the territory, so as to be able to convey a so-called *authentic* approach. It is with this reasoning that Sakombi's department founded the *Institut des Sciences et Techniques d'Information (Institute of Science and Information Technologies) – ISTI*, in 1973, of which he became director with the objective

of educating the future voices of the country, giving them knowledge that was adequate to fulfil the MPR.

Sakombi estimated that “The training given in European or American schools to future journalists from developing countries takes place in a socio-political context different from the one in which these agents will one day have to work”(Frère, 2015, p.80). The issue raised by Sakombi, although it only looks at journalism, determines the provenance of education as a defining factor of media production, in the same way that Pommier (1974) pointed to a western sensibility influencing African work, and therefore expressing the concern of decolonisation at the media’s source. Although the intention of the Party, the MPR, was to enable national training to sensitise journalists to the government’s ideas and to frame their role as being:

...at the service of national development of which he really is the tool (...) It is in the context of the party that he in fact enjoys the freedom of expression in his dual capacity as an activist and a citizen. This freedom to exercise his profession is both conceived and practised in the context of the National Party (Sakombi, cited in Frère, 2015, p.80).

Through these actions, the MPR was able to form a systematic relationship with the people. It became the creator of a distinctive philosophy for those people, *Authenticity*, a school for that philosophy, the sole icon of the philosophy and its enactment in society through *Zairianisation*, as promoted by its students. The role of documenting the country’s development and the promotion of the process of *Zairianisation*, in other words, the nationalisation of companies and further Zairian development, was inescapable for the filmmakers, who were compelled to partake in this process of emancipation, especially by making films about state companies.

### **1.5 Mobutism**

National identity, engendered by Mobutu’s concept of a Zairian spirit, was partially modelled on ideas of the Congolese pre-colonial way of life, along with the traditions that had been rediscovered, and sometimes overtly fabricated by, Mobutu and his government. This re-negotiation of history is emblematic of what has been addressed by Hobsbawm in assessing revolutions and progressive movements, which express their rupture with the past by mobilising only the relevant past, by the repetition of historic or invented traditions (Hobsbawm, 1992, pp.1–14). In this particular case, the Zairian spirit and its expression in real life disengages from the colonial past and actively appropriates some of its traditions. The most culturally significant tradition, as discussed earlier, is that of the Chief. The Chief’s undisputed role was created for the public imagination in less than a decade following Mobutu’s coup

d'état, and it encompassed a national identity that was fully taken on by the President. Within this decade, the General's military attire was discarded and was substituted by the revered leopard hat and traditional carved wooden cane of the Chief. The ultimate recognition of this shift in perception is identifiable in the last doctrine: *Mobutism*. Explained by Mobutu himself to a broadcast journalist: "It is the ensemble of all that I have preached since my emergence. Since the historic day, 24th November, 1965, and it is summarised in this: the teachings, the thoughts and the actions of the founding President of MPR" (Zoppelletto, 2015).<sup>60</sup> The teachings cover all aspects of state and civilian life, whilst simultaneously creating social models to respect. With no choice, since there were no other political parties that were allowed to exist or to form, and only one possible party leader and father, all Zairians were not just *authentic* citizens but, in effect, *Mobutists*.

The most famous, and at first popular, *Mobutism* was *Salongo*, which was celebrated as a feature film, *Salongo* (1974). This documentary feature film was produced with the intent of being an impressive Zairian production with a large scale and budget, but the film was never released. Once the film was edited, it was sent to Belgium to have the negative master copy made, but neither copy was ever returned, and it was therefore never circulated in the national television buildings, and so it was never seen again. The film literature on Zairian cinema and the country's media industry give inconclusive information about it, and erroneously refer to it as *L'Esprit de Salongo - The Spirit of Salongo* (1975). During the course of this research, I was able to locate the film reel, digitise it and analyse its content (see Chapter 5). Concurrently, knowledge on the word "salongo" itself is just as uncertain. Salongo is a word that is understood to mean "work", but it does not originate from any particular Congolese language, was introduced in Mobutu's speeches, and was already being used in 1972 to rename the national newspaper *Le Progrès* (*Le Progrès*, 1962) which, under the name *Salongo*, became known as a "newspaper of national action" (Salongo, 1972).<sup>61</sup>

Salongo became a powerful slogan, since it inspired songs and celebratory dances that were performed during party rallies, but it was also absorbed into popular culture as Franco, the country's most revered Congolese rumba singer, recorded the single *Salongo – Alinga Mosala*

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<sup>60</sup> Translation by SUB-TI Ltd. Original text: "C'est l'ensemble de tout ce que j'ai prêché, depuis le début de mon action. Depuis la date historique du 24 Novembre 1965 et ça se résume en ceci: les enseignements, la pensée et l'action du président fondateur du MPR"

<sup>61</sup> My translation. Original text: "Quotidien d'action nationale"

(*Salongo – Love to work*), in which he uses the Party slogan and other *Mobutisms* in the lyrics (Franco & OK Jazz, 1973), such as “Moto na Moto ya Bongisa” meaning “Each and every one has to improve himself” (Mobutu Sese Seko and Remilleux, 1989, p.97).

The word *salongo* was accepted as the ‘*Mobutism*’ of communal work, and claimed to find its roots in traditional Zairian ethics for the community, but can be summarized as obligatory civic work. There are no official sources that identify either the expression or the practice that comes from a pre-colonial tradition. We can instead observe, through the findings of this research, that due to the implementation of the word in media and popular culture, and the perpetuation of the story of its origin in the country’s ancestry, both the term and its practice were legitimised. This collective work, claiming to be beneficial to society, glorified in TV ads and songs promoting a utopian nation, was later denounced as having different objectives. The joyful chants whilst working and the slogan on billboards “*Salongo Alinga Mosala*”<sup>62</sup>, whilst the President and father of the country proclaimed “Happy are the people who sing and dance” (Mobutu, cited in Covington-Ward, 2016, p.130) differ from testimonies that shed light on *Salongo* which, for almost a decade, was boosted by collective singing and participation.

Officially described as a revolutionary attempt to return to the values of communalism and solidarity inherent in the traditional society, *Salongo* was intended to mobilize the population into the performance of collective work with enthusiasm and without constraint. But, in fact, *Salongo* was forced labour....failure to comply carried penalties of one month to six months in jail (*USA International Business Publications*, 2007, p.79).<sup>63</sup>

Whilst the President worked so that his *Mobutisms* would achieve legitimacy in order to contest any speculation that, once again, the colonial style forced labour was in place, Ramsey Lewis, the famous American jazz musician, entitled his 1976 album *Salongo*, to which the music database Discogs reports the artist gave the meaning, “We come together to create something beautiful out of love” ( Ramsey Lewis - *Salongo* (CD, Album) at Discogs, n.d.). This is a testament to how alleged forced labour, monitored by the military, was taking place inside the country, whilst the outside world was receiving a very different image through how this practice was presented, mainly by its accompaniment with, and celebration in, song and dance.

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<sup>62</sup> “*Salongo Love to work*”

<sup>63</sup> Please note no author’s name is given for this book. The text is edited by the group ‘USA International Business Publications’.



The communal work aimed at developing the nation in peaceful unison is a constant theme in Zaire and it was articulated as a *Mobutism*. An all-encompassing philosophy, *Mobutism* has been evaluated in terms of authoritarianism:

The regime's official doctrine - referred to as Mobutism since 1974 - is clearly not an elaborate and guiding ideology, but rather a distinctive, if eclectic 'mentality'. The mobilization achieved by the state-party apparatus is relatively extensive, but it is certainly not intensive. Finally, President Mobutu definitely exercises broad power within formally ill-defined limits, but limits to the effectiveness of this broad personal power clearly do exist... The mentalities of authoritarian regimes are usually an eclectic and often haphazard blend of ambiguous, fluctuating, and often derivative legitimating formulas that attempt to give the impression of being an ideology. In fact, however they lack coherence, complexity, and clear articulation of specific assertions and explicit commitments. As a result, they also lack sustained mobilizational power (Callaghy, 1984, pp.7,9).

In this regard, the efforts of the regime to bring habits and traditions, such as Salongo, did not have a lasting impact because they were based on an ideology that, as Callaghy explains, lacked coherence, one of the reasons why this may have failed. The *Mobutism* of Salongo, a work method, similar in ideas to the *Ujamaa* created in Tanzania, in trying to establish cooperative economic work, finally waned, as the formula did not find sustained support and the people were finding themselves trapped by empty slogans. However, the government pursued and reinforced the ideals of *Mobutism* by building on the image of the President and his developments. As seen in the period of *Zairianisation*, development is at the heart of filmic themes.

A case that shows how this theme is the focus of Zairian film production is the documentary *Gbadolite, Un Example, Comme Toujours (Gbadolite an Example As Always)* (1979)<sup>64</sup>, a 105 mins film in 16 mm, which is not listed in any of the African and Congolese film texts but is available at the *Cinamatek*. Directed by Lundu Lusala Khasa, this documentary portrayed the strength of the regime's teachings, as well as presenting an aspirational model of a way of life. Gbadolite was a small village in the area where Mobutu's father was born. A rural abandoned area, it became of interest to the President, who decided to develop it as the ideal Zairian town, not a Belgian-constructed city which was then renamed and restyled with new government buildings, as was the case for all the major cities in the country, but an *authentic* African town.

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<sup>64</sup> My translation

The film's opening titles run over footage of a beautiful tropical landscape bearing just one non-Zairian name, already a contrast to the opening titles of just a few years before, when Belgian surnames would have led the production. From these first images the film aims to show that the MPR had succeeded with the measures of *Zairianisation*, the foreigner was out, and everything is run by Zairians. President Mobutu is portrayed walking in a lush green plantation landscape, admiring the land. From these establishing shots the film cuts to an introductory interview with the President. Sitting amongst traditional sculptures and masks, the President talks of his Gbadolite project and its value. "I preach to my people since 1966 that agriculture is the biggest heritage"<sup>65</sup> and he adds to this consideration a statement that further enhances his position as citizen and father: "I received you here, not in Kinshasa where it is too formal. So that you will be able to see what the President, the citizen Mobutu does. In N'Sele it is the Chief, here is where I work." (Landu Lusala Khasa, 1979).<sup>66</sup> The President refers to his government role in the capital city, Kinshasa, the role of traditional Chief in the village of N'Sele, made famous by the manifesto, and finally the role of the citizen who builds and develops his country in the plantations and town of Gbadolite.<sup>67</sup>

This film is exemplary in expressing the focus of *Zairianisation* and *Mobutism* for work, commercial and agricultural development. It is work and the results of it that are on display in this film. From images of the endless fields to shots of the farms, we are given a meticulous account of what the President has developed out of a bare land. Intermittently, from the descriptions of the vegetation planted, the film cuts to interviews with agricultural engineers who swear by the knowledge of the President and are grateful for his foresight. From the working of the land to the hospital that has saved many people from the burden of goitre, an illness common to the area, and the banks which are now coming into the town, which the voice-over<sup>68</sup> explains in what I categorise as 'development filmmaking': "The economic development of the region has created a harmonious development of the health system for the

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<sup>65</sup> My translation. Original text: "Depuis 1966 Je prêche à mon peuple que l'agriculture est notre plus grand héritage."

<sup>66</sup> My translation. Original text: "Je vous reçois ici, pas à Kinshasa où c'est trop formel. Pour que vous puissiez voir ce que fait le président, le citoyen Mobutu. A N'Sele, c'est le chef, mais c'est ici que je travaille"

<sup>67</sup> The *Historical Dictionary of Zaire* entry for the town: "GBADOLITE. A town on the Ubangi River in the Equateur Region, 400 kms upriver from Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic. The Mobutu family originally is from Gbadolite, although he was born and raised in Lisala. Gbadolite has become a model town with electricity, paved roads, and relatively developed health and social care facilities. It also is the home of the shrine to Mobutu's mother, Mama Yemo." (Bobb, 1989, p.90)

<sup>68</sup> Voice over narrator : Lumbana Kapasa

region” (Landu Lusala Khasa, 1979).<sup>69</sup> Gbadolite is presented as a dream settlement for those who just have the will to work, to endeavour to build their land, as the President and journalist reiterate in a litany throughout the film. The feature documentary ends with the promise of an international airport, and as the President leaves in his helicopter to get back to state work, there are iconic images of him getting onto the aircraft with the accompaniment of an exultant voice over: “A challenge for himself, an example for his collaborators, a hope for an entire people” (Landu Lusala Khasa, 1979).<sup>70</sup>

Films, slogans and songs are the output of a government which specifically constructed a state machine for the media with the purpose of reflecting a national image formulated by a canon, which was directed and examined by the Department of National Guidance and, in particular, Sakombi, in the name of development.

Much of the country’s expansion, which is identified as a governmental priority and a major ideological mission of its national cinema, was costly in operational expenses, but it also allegedly included the corruption costs to accomplish the new vision of the country. Although nobody ever questioned these, as “the Chief does not have to justify that to his subordinates”(Schatzberg, 1991, p.95) the economic downturn of the mid-seventies was starting to weigh on the country.<sup>71</sup> The presidency was allocated as much as twenty percent of the official budget by the government, as well as receiving large foreign exchange sums from the Bank of Zaire for its operational and upkeep costs (Crawford Young, 1998, p.119). Yet another donation of the Father of the Nation, this time the inauguration of the *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, temporarily obscured the problematic economic context of the country.

## 1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the main ideology introduced by Mobutu’s government and its different developments in the years after the coup d’état, as they are ideological markers for changes in the cultural and media environment. Through *Authenticity*, *Zairianisation* and *Mobutism* it is possible to retrace the themes of development; firstly, of the African people as

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<sup>69</sup> My translation. Original text: “Le développement économique de la région a créé le développement de la santé en façon harmonieuse pour la région”

<sup>70</sup> My translation. Original text: “Un défi pour lui-même. Un exemple pour ses collaborateurs. Un espoir pour tout un peuple.”

<sup>71</sup> The end of the war in Vietnam and the subsequent fall in copper prices are often indicated as the negative turning point in the Zairian economy (Reybrouck, 2014).

*authentic*; then, as being in charge of their economy through *Zairianisation* and, finally, as the subjects of a fabricated ‘traditional’ modernism with *Mobutism*. With the necessity to form a national identity, the government of the Second Republic appropriated the visions of decolonisation within the scheme of a cultural revolution in three phases, which formed a new way of conceiving the notions of the country, as well as of its people. Mobutu and his government attempted decolonisation by eradicating structures and implementing new ones that were strictly linked to traditional culture and African modernity, which were interpreted as freedom from coloniality, although the country could not effectively free itself from the past. The African modernisation produced in the country was also physical, and was pushed with the construction of new buildings that would reflect and continue producing the cultural change from within. This was the core idea behind the construction of the *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, one of the country’s symbols of African modernisation through culture, which will be discussed in the next chapter. A symbol of national development where ‘development films’ were conceived and produced.

## CHAPTER 2

### AN *AUTHENTIC* STUDIO FOR ‘DEVELOPMENT FILMS’

*The concept of development is fashionable. It has taken a prominent place in economic literature, although economists are not the only ones to make use of it. Sociologists, geographers, lawyers and even the man on the street today speak fluently of development and underdeveloped countries*

(Mutuza, 1987, p53)<sup>72</sup>

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter will define the term ‘development films’ for this thesis and situate the term in relation to African and national film, the concept of development and further how these films may be revalued if read as film events using Thomas Elsaesser’s proposition of ‘film events’ and the *Three As*. To begin with, the chapter will look at the emergence of development media as a possible solution to the issues of national expression and identity faced by the African continent. “Development media and Zairian ‘development films’” will address the international notions of development and how these are traceable in ‘development films,’ giving a framework for the genre. The proposed film category can be outlined in government commissioned filmmaking that is in documentary form and wants to attest to the social and economic advancement of the independent nation with themes of modernity and industrialisation. The films indicated as ‘development films’ were conceived under Mobutu’s authoritarian rule therefore it could be argued that the ideological content of the film productions relegates them to propaganda. This is why the thesis will attempt to adopt a different interpretation that shifts the classification from a focus on propaganda to ‘film events’.

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<sup>72</sup> My translation. Original text: “Le concept de développement est à la mode. Il a pris une place de choix dans la littérature économique, encore que les économistes ne soient pas les seuls à en faire usage. Les sociologues, les géographes, les juristes et même l’homme de la rue parlent couramment aujourd’hui du développement et des pays sous-développés”

In the section “Thomas Elsaesser’s methods for framing development films”, I explore the Zairian films referred to in this thesis using Thomas Elsaesser’s ‘historio-pragmatic’ classification of films which helps re-address them as ‘film events’ (Elsaesser, 2014) using the rule of the *Three As*. This approach, which looks at re-appreciating factual films in archives, attempts to add to existing archival indexing and researching practice by “extending, revisiting and opening up traditional categories around non-fiction, documentary, industrial film”(Elsaesser, 2014, p32). Therefore, the recommendations of the *Three As*, allows to consider the films as meaningful events of a media composite born from a specific time and commissioning body. This section will also introduce *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre* as the epicentre of these productions, the producer of these film events and therefore locus of *authentic* interpretations of decolonisation and development. To further explain the establishment of ‘development filmmaking’, the chapter will be presenting the ambitions of African cinema at independence in order to represent also the point of view of scholars and filmmakers in the African continent within the scope of the emerging francophone African cinema, who address the issues of development with ambitions and ideas differing from the path adopted by the national productions of Congo/Zaire. These perspectives are captured in the section “The Independent approaches of African and Zairian Film” which will explore ways in which film could communicate change to the people. This will be then explained in relation to differences and similarities brought by the implications of the political context of *Authenticity* which will be explored in the sub-section “African, National and *Authentic* cinema”.

## **2.1 Development media and Zairian ‘development films’**

Development is a contested proposition that, from its apparently innocuous significance and ambition, bears its history and origin in colonialism. The grand projects of modernisation which began during colonialism under the guise of civilising remote areas of the world and bringing wealth to the colonised have proved to be imperialistic opportunism (Craggs, 2014). With this strategy, the imperialist agenda created and disseminated an ideology whereby growth and well-being could only be measured in terms of development as conceived by the West. This model did not cease to exist at independence and the formerly colonised nations, that still had interests with the West, saw development as the way forward to achieve sovereignty. These “[i]deologies which coded the West as developed and the rest as

developing, and which constructed a linear temporal path of development along which the West had travelled further continued (and continue) to hold sway after decolonisation”(ibid., p.9) creating an understanding that everyone else could be or should be ‘uplifted’ to the same standard. Thus, the idea of development settled for a vocabulary of West, and Third World which, from its early political connotation of non-alignment later became synonymous to nations in a different placement, constantly behind. From the 1980s new approaches began to revisit the concept of development and brought to light that development as a blanket term did not work because its origin indicated growth in preconditioned imperialist terms and therefore perpetuated a condition of a rich benevolent West imparting lessons on growth and giving insignificant handouts in return of access to resources. With the incapacity of this system to function and ‘uplift’ nations the idea of development has been re-evaluated even in terms of how it can be measured. An example of this is the early model of Gross Domestic/National Product GDP/GNP, which since 1989 has been revisited by the United Nations with the Human Development Index HDI, as an indicator of overall growth including health and education (Desai and Potter, 2014). Although the world has shifted and attempted to correct its outlook on development, the changes of post war and independence drove towards a development that had as a measurement the Western model and desire for “grand scale, new technology, a desire of industrialisation, a modern aesthetic” (Craggs, 2014, p.7). These are some of the themes that we can identify present in the government sponsored films of the Second Republic, as discussed in the next chapters, that I argue are characteristics of ‘development films’ in line with Mobutu’s national project of cohesion and modernisation. On account of the European post-war period and the attempts to new diplomatic relations of the early post-independence the concept of development was pushed by Western institutions as the solution to poverty and therefore created an important ground for development studies which expressed themselves also in theories of development communication (Potter et al, 2008).

The concept of development communication, or development media is generally attributed to Erkin Childers and, later, to Nora Quebral at the University of the Philippines Los Baños whose department ‘development communication’, became the popular name for the practice of media for development (Quebral, 1976). The United Nations formed a unit called the Development Support Communications Service (DSCS), from which Childers promoted its credo and influenced national governments in financing communication projects because, as he explained “[n]o innovation, however brilliantly designed and set down in a project Plan of Operations, becomes development until it has been communicated”(Childers, cited in Colle, 2003, p.102).

The idea of this field of communication gained momentum, due also to the influential works of Daniel Lerner (1958) and Wilbur Schramm (1964). Owing to the different works produced at the time to support this school of thought, and the general appetite for everything promoting modernisation, in the 1970s, UNESCO recommended development communication at various conferences that it sponsored for newly independent nations from Latin America to Nairobi, with the intent of promoting development communications for the benefit of these nations (Ogan, 1982, pp.3–13). Generally, the concept of ‘development communications’ had been interpreted, at that time, as a tool used by journalists to investigate the success and application of government development projects and to educate the nations about the new opportunities for development in all spheres of life, but mostly the meaning has taken another form which

accepts the media as a tool for development. The development plan is predetermined, usually through one or more government agencies, and the job of the press is to assist in achieving some local or national, social or economic goal (Ogan, 1982, p.6)

This particular interpretation of the original concept indicates its pitfalls, as it represented an opportunity for institutions and governments to make the media a tool for their own development, rather than the reverse. Concurrently, across Africa a facet of the media was to facilitate nation building, which explains its inclusion in government plans, “the rationale for a controlled press is the fact that all segments of society must be mobilised to realise national plans of development” (Wilcox, 1975, p.25). This differing view, which interprets development media as a positive catalyst, is reiterated by governments as well as by practitioners on the continent, who saw the media as the instruments for national consciousness and unity. One such example that is mentioned by Wilcox, is Cire Thiam of Senegal, who claimed that “All news is designed to assist national development. It begins and comes back to that” (ibid., p.24). Since the emergence of development media, its approach has been revalued in line with all revaluations of the term development. From its early inception of promoter of effective governance and citizenship for environments, it has been challenged by a precarious socio-economic landscape and analysed in terms of the perpetuation of neo-colonial power, whereby emancipation is set to a Western paradigm of progress (Xiaoge, 2009). Although its damaging effects have also been theorised in terms of press control, what has become apparent is that since the 1980s world changes of political and economic vision have influenced changes also in development journalism, to this end Angela Romano in *Journalism and democracy in Asia* (2005) “divided development journalism perspectives into the following five categories: (a) journalists as nation builders, (b) journalists as government partners, (c) journalists as agents of empowerment, (d) journalists as watchdogs, and (e) journalists as the guardians of



transparency” (Xiaoge, 2009, p362). These definitions attest to different interpretations of the term which can elicit either assimilation of the media in the government machine or prompt the media into serving the people in securing good governance. In respect to the governance and time period analysed for this thesis, we may interpret Mobutu’s media projects as functioning to nation build and impart government perspectives and knowledge. Romano’s category of nation building conceives this as “news reporting [that] should be aimed at maintaining social stability, building social harmony and strengthening national economy”(ibid.) and a relationship to government in which “press freedom should be subjected to the overriding national interest of social, economic and political development priorities”(ibid.). These terms contribute to the ideological environment for the support of media production that functioned to build an image as inherent to the ‘development’ of nations.

The term ‘development films’, is briefly used in the book, *Directory of World Cinema: Africa* to refer to “films and videos produced and distributed within the context of international humanitarian aid. Films in this category are usually short or feature-length dramatized narratives, some fictional and some documentary, that impart a particular educational message” (Stefanson and Petty, 2014, p.34). The word ‘development’ is further used in reference to colonial filmmaking, with the following explanation:

Development-related-film-making has a generally longer history in Africa than the art of popular industries described above. Useful primary sources from the 1930s to 1950s include reports by P Morton-Williams (1950), LA Notcutt (1937) and William Sellers (1954), and the British Film Institute has made a handful of films available online on their colonial film site (Stefanson and Petty, 2014, p.35).

Both these suggestions for a meaning of the term indicate films made by external and/or foreign institutions, both within a humanitarian and a colonial context, that served the purpose of educating the population through an outsider’s vision of what might be needed for the people of a particular country and what would be considered to be in their best interests.

This thesis conceives of ‘development films’ and ‘development filmmaking’ as manifestations of the projects of decolonisation and development originating from Congo, later Zaire. This Congolese/Zairian ‘home grown’ filmmaking practice I argue was rooted in a way of thinking about decolonisation through filmmaking that made use of the tools for development for nation building and as government partners in the terms proposed by Romano (Xiaoge, 2009). Therefore recognising ‘development films’ as products of a flawed idea of development with

imperialistic connotations but re-purposed to culturally express and vision films for a nationally independent country. The films' analysis offered in this research, in chapters four, five and six, point at the following defining canons of 'development films':

- documentary films, produced by the state-run broadcasting service
- themes discussing the social and economic advancement of the country since independence
- reaffirming and celebrating the sovereignty of a united Zaire
- introducing with imagery and script an iconography of industrial and modern Zaire

'Development films' were products of the national television and cinema studios, *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, an environment where cinema and journalism blended, along with the membership of a diverse range of audio-visual practitioners in the national association of filmmakers, and the hegemony of the press association. To inform this analysis, and support the concept that 'development films' had a nation building mandate, I refer to two particular explanations on the subject of development journalism, as they look specifically at the sub-Saharan context. Starting with *Development Journalism in Black Africa* by Domatob and Hall, which looks at the topic as a way to recognise the special requirements of underdevelopment: to decolonise the countries and to support the nascent nations (Domatob and Hall, 1983). Comparing African nations to the struggles faced by European and Asian countries, the authors see nationalism as an obligatory passage through which to achieve and develop national unity:

Development journalism demands African journalists awaken citizens to the new cultural imagery of nationhood, reminiscent of the goals of nationalist movements in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe. Indeed, Mazzini, the great Italian patriot, spoke of "the need to exist and have a name", and it has been the common problem of all nationalist movements, whether among European peoples of Africa, Asia and America, to rouse their people to the new cultural imagery of nationhood, to force them to accept the inescapable destiny of the modern...to create a new identity which would be spiritually and culturally reconciled with new forms of economic behaviour, new loyalties, new self-identities and citizenship (Domatob and Hall, 1983, p.10)

The requirements of journalism, specified by this definition, transfers ideological power and duty to journalists as media producers who are committed to support a government in its bid to develop and sustain national cohesion. This aim and desire for effective nation building, at the core of development as a topic in the media, is in danger when development becomes a tagline for rigid ideas that are not debated by journalism but only repeated. Domatob and Hall assert how this gave rise to a centralised media; whereby both broadcast media and printed press succumbed to a centralised system in most of Africa, not allowing for private press and where,

in most countries, the news agency became a department of the Ministry of Information, with the exceptions of Nigeria, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya and Liberia.<sup>73</sup> They continue by explaining that questions of a free press, a privatised press or a government press cannot work in the African context, because the democratic notion of the free press neither belongs to, nor corresponds to the model of these countries that operate in the belief that the duty of the press is to educate and develop the country. This may have been relevant to the early 1980s, the time experienced by Domatob and Hall, but Romano's analysis shows how later the conceptualisation of free press was perceived differently for development journalism, which is to serve as

*Watchdogs and Guardians of Transparency...* They both advocate that journalism should monitor the performance of the government and make it as transparent as possible to the public. Without free press and other civil liberties, good governance and economic development will be undermined (Romano cited in Xiaoge, 2009, p262)

By assessing this role of social responsibility, the article by Domatob and Hall also highlights the implications of a governing body exercising ideological and financial control over the media, resulting in a form of absolute power. Further, without judging the ethical grounds for development journalism, the argument is left open by showing how "development journalism is a relatively vague concept charged with political rhetoric. The obvious questions are: who determines national goals? What are these goals and who benefits?" (Domatob and Hall, 1983, p.15). The authors' research of these questions leads to exploring Mobutu's abuse of power and dictatorship, but also advancing the principle of journalism that devotes questions of development for Congo/Zaire. Domatob and Hall note that development should not be subjected to the role of political tool (ibid.), thus suggesting that there is no threat when development and journalism are people-led, rather than party-led. It can be argued that this is not representative of the Second Republic because of the instrumentalization of the country's media but concomitantly this research presents in the following chapters the work of filmmakers who willingly contributed to the government's media strategy because they believed in its mission.

Another conceptual framing of what I describe as 'development films' comes from Lewis O. Odhiambo's *Development Journalism in Africa: Capitulation of the Fourth Estate?* (1991).

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<sup>73</sup> For further reading on the freedom of the press on the continent: Dennis Wilcox, *Mass media in Black Africa; Philosophy and Control* (1975) and William A. Hachten, *The Growth of Media in the Third World* (1993) and for Zaire in particular Georges Tshionza Mata T. *Les Médias au Zaïre S'aligner ou se libérer?* (1996)

Odhiambo similarly discusses the concrete limitations of development journalism, as associated with the mass media in Third World<sup>74</sup> countries. Odhiambo sees development communication as concepts relating to the structural functionalism of the media of the 1950s and 1970s, and that postcolonial structures, or their lack, presented an environment in need of development (Odhiambo, 1991, pp.17–29). Odhiambo expresses this urgency for development as an environment for “historically organic ideologies” (Odhiambo, 1991, p.20), which, when explained in Gramscian terms, are necessary since “they organize human masses and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle...”(ibid.). He goes on to note that although the principle of development could have been historically organic, “later it was ‘modified and denatured’ (Gramsci’s phrase) by established powers in sub-Saharan Africa, thereby making it arbitrary rhetoric” (ibid.). The socio-economic focus on development, which was to enable change and eradicate poverty left by colonial oppression, was seen during that time as an idealistic principle to which all should adhere, especially the media, as they could function by becoming the educational vehicle of positive change. Odhiambo’s analysis of the media, referred to press and broadcast journalists. The purpose of a centralised media city, as conceived by the MPR, *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, united media professions of television and radio journalists, as well as filmmakers. During the interviews held in Kinshasa (2016), journalists and filmmakers were involved in all aspects of media production pooling new skills and pushing the notion of ideological progress and technological advancement for the country. Odhiambo also noted, in reference to the continent at large:

Most journalists did not object to this development and actively supported government nationalization in the belief that this was being done for patriotic reasons, and that politicians would play their traditional role of leadership and leave journalists to play theirs of watchdog and sentinel. Some were effusive in their support (Odhiambo, 1991, p.23)

This journalistic form convinced practitioners as Odhiambo noted, but failed due to the fact that practitioners have become illegitimate means for “unpatriotic governments” to establish personal goals and, in the process, they have prevented African journalism from being relevant or meaningful for actual development (Odhiambo, 1991, pp.17–29). Newly independent

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<sup>74</sup> Odhiambo refers to sub-Saharan Africa as part of the Third World, the journal article dates from 1991. The term was first used in the early 1950s by the economist and politician Alfred Sauvy but, at the end of the Cold War, the term ‘Third World’ ceased to mean non-aligned countries in the war paradigm and, instead, began to imply countries that were afflicted by poverty, disease and were struggling with development. I use the term only in reference to how it is expressed by Odhiambo, but will not otherwise as it reflects a West-first legitimacy and has been used increasingly as a pejorative term (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007). The term is “now increasingly used between quotation marks to signify its problematic semantic scope”(Nayar, 2015, p.212).

African countries from the 1960s onwards including Ghana, Tanzania, Cameroon, Sierra Leone and Zaire, whose governments were building nations, with a fervent expectation of support from the media. President Kwame Nkrumah for example stated the mandate of Ghana's press:

... [it] must carry out Revolutionary purpose. This is to establish a progressive political and economic system upon our continent that will free men from want and every form of social injustice and enable them to work out their social and cultural destinies in peace and at ease. (In this respect)...the true African...newspaper is a collective educator – a weapon, first and foremost, to overthrow colonialism and imperialism, and to assist total African independence and unity (Nkrumah, cited in Domatob and Hall, 1983, p.9)

Media expectations were set by governments across Africa, and they were echoed by Mobutu's ideology, so it was known that in "Zaire...the role of journalists is to help educate the masses and rally support for the government" (Domatob and Hall, 1983, p.12). *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre* became the hub for this project, advocating Mobutu's concepts of *Authenticity*, *Zairianisation* and *Mobutism*. The distinction that needs to be made as significant for the production of 'development films' is that although *Authenticity* presented problematic features of authoritarian rule, such as being introduced by the one party system, it was the first established programme and ideology from the Congo in the post-independence era. Later, the introduction of laws and a power structure evoked by Mobutu through his "teachings", transformed the ideology of personal and national development into the absolutist *Mobutism*. Identifying 'development filmmaking' in Zaire is identifying the Zairian spirit in film, thus the search for *Authenticity*, rather than the implementation of authoritarian rule as *Mobutism*.<sup>75</sup>

The result of the measures for development communication in Zaire are visible when, as in other African countries, all media are completely nationalised. We can identify 1976 as the year in which independent film production was lost, because all private production houses were nationalised and then absorbed into the main structure at *La Cité de La Voix du Zaïre*. The inauguration of this colossal broadcasting and film studio marks a change in industry policy, although it was not formally prescribed, through government statements and Mobutu's

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<sup>75</sup> Definition of Mobutism from the *Historical Dictionary of Zaire*: "Mobutism encompasses all the policies and ideological thoughts of Mobutu, whether they be, for example the Zairianisation of private companies of 1973, or the retrocession of 1974, whether they be the centralization of political power in the 1970s, or the decentralization of some aspects of the political leadership in the 1980s. Despite some contradictions, Mobutu and Mobutism will likely be remembered for several notable trends: the political unification of the country in the late 1960s; the rise of authenticity and Zairian nationalism in the early 1970s; the failure of the economic policies in the late 1970s; the drastic revisions of the 1980s aimed at correcting the economic decline; and the general amnesty of political dissidents of 1983"(Bobb, 1989, p.148)

encouragement in speeches, political activism became industry compliant and anything else was deemed to be unpatriotic. This change affected filmmakers, who were unable to find financial support unless they were making films about the government's achievements or were being commissioned by state companies, thus sustaining the regime.

Film titles help to identify this trend, one film exemplary of the period is the documentary *La Guerre De 80 Jours (The 80 Day War)*<sup>76</sup> (1977), directed by Musoshi Kabela and produced in colour by RENACT (*Régie Nationale des Actualités Cinema et Télévision*). In 1977, a battle was fought against the rebels of the FLNC (Front National de Liberation du Congo) and it was won by the Mobutu regime with support from the allied forces of France, Belgium and Morocco (Mobutu Sese Seko and Remilleux, 1989). The film's title and its provenance from the broadcasting studio of the victorious government, indicate that this film should be a celebratory account of the bravery of the Zairian army and its struggle to defend Shaba, known today as the region of Katanga. Convents describes the film as a propagandist documentary, an example of the subservient filmmaking of RENACT (Convents, 2006, p.298). Although I have not been able to find the film, we can envision the editorial bias in it when we read Mobutu's accounts of Kolwezi, the most famous battle of this war:

I was visited at Kolwezi itself, before the fighting was over, by several African heads of state and the representatives of numerous friendly powers, whose material aid had helped us a lot...It was also a matter of solidarity among the Zairese, and even within the family. My wife had joined me in the field, although the battle was still raging, in order to raise the morale of the civilians. Our soldiers, outnumbered at first, had stood their ground like lions and succeeded in the counter-attack (Mobutu Sese Seko and Remilleux, 1989, p.71).

Through extra-filmic information we may read and understand this film as an example of 'development filmmaking' in that it is celebratory in its approach, telling a narrative of unity against the enemy, and of a new nation defending itself. These are ideas that will be part of the celebratory iconography key of 'development films' as explored in the films' analytical chapters of this thesis.

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<sup>76</sup> My translation

## 2.2 Thomas Elsaesser's methods for framing 'development films'

I have highlighted the context of search for emancipation in which journalists and filmmakers were working to create films in support of Mobutu's nation building and transformation into the Second Republic. The ideas surrounding post-independence cultural production need to be taken into consideration when revisiting the films produced at the time. To be able to identify and classify productions as 'development films' of the Second Republic we can adopt a method which will not remit their value in terms of today's sensibilities and historical understanding.

I propose in this thesis that Congolese/Zairian government media produced in Leopoldville/Kinshasa since 1965 namely *Election 1970* (1970), *Salongo* (1974), *Gecamines - La volonté de réussir* (circa 1986), *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* (1975) may be re-framed through Thomas Elsaesser's (2014) notion of the 'film as event'. This term, especially relevant to non-fiction film, frees the interpretation and analysis of the films that are discussed in the following chapters from the rigid canons of genre classifications. Elsaesser's study in media archaeology and his proposition of *three As - Anlass, Adressat and Auftraggeber* (Elsaesser, 2014, pp.19–33) are also referred to in conceiving of Zairian films as 'development films'.

Media archaeology is a very diverse field of study which stems from key perspectives by Michel Foucault and Walter Benjamin on the significance of the archive. The discipline tries to explain the relationship between contemporary media and their audience(s), and/or the co-producer, through the media that preceded them. Rather than being an archaeology in the classic meaning of the term, which would look at media materials from the past to understand them better, this particular interpretation of archaeology examines the contemporary through its past (Parikka, 2012). At the same time, this analysis of the past and Elsaesser's identification of a *Medienverbund*<sup>77</sup> or composite media which will be discussed further in this chapter, has allowed for the development of new areas of interest that have led scholars to consider and re-evaluate media outside popular genres, media which were conceived with other purposes than mere entertainment. The productions outside of the entertainment genre have been identified as "S/M histories of cinema and media", indicating:

*epistemological perversions*: a non-main-stream approach to media cultural innovations and applications...S/M perversions of film and media history include

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<sup>77</sup> Elsaesser explains a media landscape deriving from the same source or professional network as a "*Medienverbund*" (Elsaesser, 2014, pp.19–33). *Medienverbund* is German for Composite Media

science and medicine, surveillance and the military...the alternative histories for media culture are sought somewhere on the fuzzy borders of art/science/technology (Parikka, 2012, p.14)

This outlook presents the possibilities to ask questions and form an hypothesis on media which were not produced for entertainment purposes, this can therefore be helpful in reorganising and rethinking notions about the films of Zaire as ‘development films’ by engaging with this discipline which “while media archaeology writes histories of the present, it is also looking for alternative presents and pasts – and futures”(Parikka, 2012, p.13). One of the issues noted in this thesis is how non-fiction films have not been considered by African film scholars in writing the film history of Congo or Zaire, and that with this media archaeology thinking, looking at S/M histories of film we can provides the basis for these films to be considered in a new light. The films approached in the following chapters will therefore provide an alternative reading to their mission which, beyond supporting the government, may be engaged with projecting and thinking about the nation’s future development through a specific decolonising discourse. Therefore, further acquiring the name of ‘development films’.

### **2.2.a Film as event**

Zairian state sponsored non-fiction film productions researched for this project are re-framed using the term “film as event” (Elsaesser, 2014, pp.19–33). The national films collected for this research and analysed in chapters four, five and six are productions conceived by an absolutist regime and therefore have not been addressed or acknowledged for their intrinsic value of documentary films. The influence of the authoritarian rule may relegate these films as propaganda, to this end, I propose they may also be given a new definition as ‘development films’, and thought of as events in the Zairian media landscape. The term ‘development films’ expands the way these films are perceived by addressing their qualities as filmic articulations of a moment of decolonisation which, at the time was perceived as being a Zairian cultural revolution. Rather than a re-labelling mechanism, the term is a new attribution to these films to further address their purpose and their origin.

Propaganda films have been present throughout world cinema since its early productions. They range from Soviet films to Chinese documentaries, as well as European ones, and have found in government institutions agreeable supporters of the medium with the implementation of government structures such as ‘propaganda agencies’, as they were known in the mid-1930s in



the United Kingdom and United States of America. Although governments saw the benefit of documentary filmmaking for the socio-economic improvement of their nations, there was also a certain “propaganda phobia” (Ellis, 2000, p.179) that was raised by ‘creatives’ who saw such cinema practice as being directed at sustaining governmental policies. It can also be argued that fiction filmmaking may also be ideologically driven and perceived as propagandist, and even if it does not formally address political ideologies in its narrative, ideological messages are embedded in the world represented. John Grierson (1898-1972), a leading UK advocate of propaganda films, argued that what is needed is a “purposive cinema...to encompass the concept of social responsibility...[it] is really a case for ‘responsible propaganda’. This is propaganda that is ‘right’ (Grierson, cited in Ellis, 2000, p.344). The discourse on the social advantages of a purposive cinema which may be a ‘right’ one, in other words, an honourable one, may be contentious, because it relies on an adjective that can be used to persuade and educate the audience on matters that may, with time, be proven to be discreditable. The propaganda machines of Germany and Italy during World War II (1939-1945) produced social documentaries that influenced their nations. These presented deceptive narratives in order to achieve what was perceived to be good for the nation.<sup>78</sup> Until the post-war realisation of the effects of propaganda filmmaking, the ideas that defined propaganda cinema saw it as being participatory in the modern scene, and that closely corresponded to the “philosophy of public relations”, placing documentaries as a useful medium in narrowing the gap between public institutions and the public (L’Etang, 2000, pp.83–94). Grierson’s filmmaking proposed to governments and public figures that propaganda cinema was a benevolent instrument. It was no surprise that it was actively supported by leading people, e.g., S.C. Clem Leslie, the communication advisor to the Labour Party in the 1930s and the public relations officer to Coke and Gas. Leslie, who was in “correspondence with Grierson in the 1930s and subsequently recommended that a ministry for democratic propaganda be set up to ‘bring alive the idea of democracy in the public mind’”(L’Etang, 2004, p.35), further wrote that these modern techniques were “to make familiar the nature and meaning of democratic procedure: to ask people to vote...to explain their own institutions to them...to help them understand their own history”(Leslie, cited in L’Etang, 2000, p.88). These definitions of propaganda, as advanced by Grierson and Leslie, point at an educative sphere of action of the genre which can be closely associated with the possible uses of ‘development films’, as one of the films

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<sup>78</sup> Further reading on propaganda film: *Politics and Film* (Furhammar and Isaksson, 1971), *Politics and Propaganda: Weapons of Mass Seduction* (O’Shaughnessy, 2004)

analysed in this research is *Election 1970*, which mirrors Leslie's words; it is a documentary film produced to explain the nature and meaning of the democratic procedure of elections, and it asks the population to engage with this new institution. The nature of propaganda film, as explained by Grierson, seems to be entirely attached to the purpose and ideals of the government that commissions it, indicating that propaganda is not dangerous *per se*. Grierson's suggestion is that it is the exponent of a government that, depending on their intentions, may be threatening to democracy, and will therefore utilise the media available to them for their goals. Due to the political layers that have been added to the term propaganda during the twentieth century, I propose to forego this term for the films that will be analysed so to allow for the original constructive facet of the medium, aspired by the fathers of documentary filmmaking: Grierson, Vertov and Flaherty, which we can consider close to those of 'development filmmaking'. The distinction between the educative and benevolent filmmaking of Grierson and war films is not immediate in relation to general perception, as they are both indicated with the word "propaganda". The difference is clearer in the instance of the films of the Second Republic following the interviews and the responses of the filmmakers in relation to the mission of their films, which they saw as benevolent and educative. This leads us to further define them as 'development films'; films with a social mandate. In addition, as the term propaganda has been used in relation to different political strategies and environments, it may lose the possibility of a concrete and unifying genre identification through aesthetics and narrative, and so it is appropriate to focus the enquiry on the specificity of those films which had the concept of development at their core. By acknowledging the political and cultural context and stripping them of the term propaganda, we are able to not only decipher the specific message of decolonisation carried by the film, but also to acknowledge the film's aesthetics and its accomplishments. As elaborated in the fourth chapter dedicated to the film *Election 1970*, can a film about a single-candidate election to the presidency possibly be classified as educational? To be able to work with the historical attributes of these films, we need to evaluate the possibility of classifications that are more specific to the kind of ideological context in which they were produced and which they were intended to reinforce or help to construct, without confining them in the binary discussion of propaganda and, instead, to review them in relation to their cultural conditions.

The industrial, educative and cultural documentaries produced by the Zairian government present an opportunity for productions which have been labelled in the past as propaganda films to be reclassified and, further, to be used to analyse a cultural moment in the history of

the country's independence. By conceptualising them as 'development films' the new framework provides a classification which stands for films made to develop the nation upon principles of decolonisation which, in Congo, was formulated as *Authenticity*, that to summarise can be characterised by the definition that was given by Mobutu at his UN speech on the 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1973:

The Zairean experience is based on a political philosophy that we call authenticity. This is an awareness on the part of the people of Zaire that they should return to their beginnings and search for the values of their ancestors in order to appreciate the values which contribute to the country's harmonious and natural development (Mobutu Sese Seko, 1973).<sup>79</sup>

Due to the political nature of 'development films', responding to a call to promote *Authenticity* a new perspective is needed. When working on a corpus of non-fiction film in media archaeology, Elsaesser proposes the entire relinquishing of any established classification, in order to avoid political labels:

...in examining a particular corpus of non-fiction films, it is perhaps advisable to suspend all pre-existing categorizations, such as they have evolved in film history around "documentary", "avant-garde", or "experimental", just as much as "advertising film", "fascist propaganda film", or "politically progressive" film making. Rather it is better to assume, in the first instance, that non-fiction filmmaking (but many fiction films as well), especially during the 1920s and 1930s, but possibly at other times as well, functioned as part of a *Medienverbund*. ... [which means] in the first instance, a network of competing, but also mutually interdependent and complementary media or media practices, focused on a specific location, a professional association, or even a national or state initiative (Elsaesser, 2014, p.22)

We can perceive 'development films' as a range of films, some of which are educational in nature, some that are cultural expressions and others about industrial achievement, belonging to a composite media network that defines a Congolese historical time and the Zairian ideological instance.<sup>80</sup> Although Elsaesser is clearly trying to be 'careful' in not assuming categories or types of films or filmmaking that, in themselves, are the objects of study, and he therefore proposes the avoidance of the above classifications, which may delimit their meaning, he acknowledges that we are obliged to engage with the historical connotations of a film in order to analyse it. Elsaesser proposes a new way to frame a non-fiction film, for, looking at "film as event is preferable to the traditional idea of film as text. The event has its own temporal and special coherence" (Elsaesser, 2014, p.32). Key of 'development films' is that we can think of them as events that belong to the decolonisation project. Analysing Zairian films in this way

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<sup>79</sup> UN official translation of the speech

<sup>80</sup> The composite media of Zaire was also expressed in specific autochthonous modes such as *animation*.

shifts the focus and understanding of the value of the films found in the archives and the story that they can narrate when they are pieced together with witness accounts and interviews. The importance of looking at film as event opens us to an understanding of the historical moments to which they are related and those that have particular meanings for the history of Zaire. The film events analysed in the following chapters are part of a network of ideas and composite media, or *Medienverbund*, which defined a cultural revolution in which the role of the Congolese population, as devised by Mobutu and the MPR, was to inhabit a Zairian identity.

### 2.2.b Media archaeology through the *Three As*

By analysing and researching Zairian films, it has been possible to infer that film culture was inherent to Mobutu's decolonisation project. The specificity of the creation of a new nation during the historic period of the Second Republic has been considered in terms of the filmic discourse that was created by government policies with a view to capturing the historical narrative of Zaire within the timeframe and social construct that was imposed by the regime. This framework resonates with the 'historio-pragmatic' view, taken by Elsaesser, in respect of media archaeology. Elsaesser proposes a film classification by the rule of the *three As*. These are to be used to define and interpret a film within the theoretical framing of media archaeology. These three terms are: *Auftraggeber*, *Anlass* and *Adressat*, as explained by Elsaesser:

In this more historio-pragmatic, as opposed to essentialist, perspective I tried to summarize in the rule of the three A's that need to be applied to a non-fiction film when trying to classify it, but also when attempting to read and interpret it. These A's are "wer war der *Auftraggeber*" (who commissioned the film), "was war der *Anlass*" (what was the occasion for which it was made), and "was war die *Anwendung* oder der *Adressat* (to what use was it put or to whom was it addressed) (Elsaesser, 2014, p.23)

To describe the Zairian films available to this research as a corpus of 'development films', I adopt Elsaesser's *three As* to explore their contribution to the Zairian *Medienverbund* - film events. The films analysed in the following chapters are: *Election 1970*, *Salongo*, *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise (The Zairian Shipping Company)* and *Gecamines - La volonté de reussir (The Will to Succeed)*.<sup>81</sup>

The films analysed all have the same *Auftraggeber* or commissioner, as they were created as national film productions of the Second Republic and were in some capacity linked to the government and the national television company, the name of which changes in the film credits

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<sup>81</sup> My translations

according to the policy and name changes that the country went through. From RTNC, as the tv company is credited in *Election 1970*, the production accreditation on *Salongo*, which is dated only four years later, shows the Département de l'Orientation Nationale (Department of National Guidance), formerly the Ministry of Information, denoting that the production was conceived at the height of the nationalistic project. The two films made by state companies, which are analysed in Chapter 6, are co-productions and reflect this in the credits; *Gecamines* is self-produced by GMC Exploitation (Gecamines Mining), and *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* is produced by La Voix du Zaïre and Tele-Zaïre-C.M.Z. (Tele-Zaïre- *Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise*). These films are all produced by the state directly through the Ministry of Information, or by the state company with the support of the state filming unit.

All these appellations lead to *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, the *Auftraggeber* which needs to be explained as a site of inquiry because of its role of studio system that commissioned the 'development films'. This will trace the commissioning studio as it was envisaged by the development politics, by *Authenticity*, as opposed to the site that is investigated in the next chapter through archival ethnography where instead it showcases the demise of the project.

Opening its doors on the 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1976, the compound *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*,<sup>82</sup> was the largest media venture of its kind in Sub-Saharan Africa. Propitiously inaugurated on the anniversary of Mobutu coming to power, the studio city, a substantial establishment, was to be perceived as another gift from the founding father of the nation. It consisted of 600 offices, 6 TV studios, 17 radio stations, 10 edit suites. All of the TV and Film productions for the country from then onwards would be produced there, a place where, on the top floor, one could find the office of the Minister of Information (Otten, 1984)<sup>83</sup> otherwise known as the State Commissioner for National Guidance. The physical proximity of the Department of Guidance and the free broadcast press is indicative of the presence of the state in the media and it highlights the importance that the government gave to the industry by means of this major investment in audio-visual production. It is possible to associate with this decision two equally valid facets. The first, and more obvious, is that the government nationalised the system to provide the media industry the state-of-the-art equipment and location to shift their focus. This helped in completing the process of overthrowing any independent voice via the construction of a wholly controlled production centre for the industry. Through its exciting appearance of

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<sup>82</sup> Sometimes referred to as *The Voice of Zaïre*, my translation is *The City of the Voice of Zaïre*.

<sup>83</sup> Rik Otten in *Le cinéma dans les pays des grands lacs: Zaïre, Rwanda, Burundi* p.65 refers to this office as *Ministre de l'Information*, but by 1976 it was known as the Department of National Guidance

modernity, towering over the cityscape, *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre* reflected the ideas of development fashionable at the time. Therefore, reflecting what was discussed earlier in terms of media as government partners.



Inauguration of *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre* (1976). Recognisable in the picture, Mobutu, and, to his right, Moktar Ould Daddah, the first President of Mauritania, with his wife Marie-Thérèse Gadroy. Photo courtesy of RTNC Photothèque

Nevertheless, the second interpretation of this investment shows the media actively requested to participate in what Romano identified as development media for nation building, defining decolonisation through state media and its expression in ‘development films’. This perception sees this establishment as the commissioner - *Auftraggeber* acting to fulfil a different necessity. Through this lens we can interpret this economic and organisational endeavour as an effort by the President to give a platform to Zairian filmmakers and television producers from which to expand their work and create a sustainable business, which would be good for the state and the population’s appreciation of *Authenticity* and the growth of the country. In keeping with the

ideals of a cultural revolution that would express itself in all areas of life, *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre* can be seen as the available platform for the development of the Zairian industry of culture and arts. The *Auftraggeber* of Zaïre.

*Anlass*, which identifies the rationale for commissioning the films at the time, is the decolonisation that is shared by the four films analysed in the thesis. The decolonisation project formulated by the MPR government in its different phases, from the N'Sele Manifesto to *Authenticity*, *Zairianisation*, *Mobutism*, was presented as the government's action in developing the country. The action of development, and therefore proactive decolonisation, was presented in the films through reforms that encompass topics from the voting process to agricultural policies. *Election 1970* educated the people about universal suffrage, by explaining and promoting the first presidential election as an expression of citizenship and therefore as an act of decolonisation responding to the colonial past. In *Salongo*, which is analysed in Chapter 5, the rationale for the film is the presentation and celebration of 'salongo', the policy of communal work in the fashion of the French-Chinese film *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* (1976),<sup>84</sup> which was greatly admired by President Mobutu. This policy was presented through the film as an *authentic* expression of Zairian community service and its way of life, displaying a movement to decolonisation. The films on the *Zairian Shipping Company* and *Gecamines* are made in celebration and promotion of the industrial achievements of *Zairianisation*, and they thus intend to reaffirm how decolonisation is ideological but also economic in its processes.

The audience for the films researched, or the *Adressat*, is the country's population at large. What changes in different periods, as the collection of films shows, is the name used to address the population. In the first instance, the audience is Congolese, *Election 1970* was made to impart voting knowhow to a new demographic of voters, the Congolese who, until then, had not been allowed to vote. Part of the film is in voice-over narration, but there are also segments of the Minister of Information, Sakombi, addressing the viewer directly by speaking to the camera, thus solidifying the address to the Congolese audience. The Zairian audience (*Adressat*) who would have seen these films broadcast on national television, either on a personal set or on public sets, as well as at cinema screenings, were addressed so that the

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<sup>84</sup> Original title: *Comment Yukong Déplaça les Montagnes*

government could present them with a portrayal of industrial and civic unity leading to the establishment of Zaire.

These three criteria applied to the films also function in relation to understanding and approaching the archives, as will be elaborated in the next chapter. Firstly, the archives in the DRC and the building that holds them have radically changed in terms of the *Auftraggeber*. Having lost its name as *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, which was immediately recognisable as a centre of Zairian expression, and that promoted the name used in the attempt at decolonisation, the site is currently called the RTNC. It is a withered building, hardly recognisable from the one in the pictures of its 1970s' past and, just like its exterior image, its presence does not hold the power and awe it used to, as it is not the only audio-visual company in the country or the only training centre for aspiring filmmakers. There are now over sixty television channels in the country and a constantly expanding market for Congolese production houses (Zoppelletto, 2015). The *Auftraggeber*, in its new form, is documented as a setting of the change and, the place of the eradication of Mobutu's iconography, making it a very different environment from the one that created the key films for this research. Further, there is the researcher, myself, who is not the *Adressat* or target audience of the productions, and my relationship with these was built through the intermediary, the original *Adressat* of these works, people who experienced and had a relationship with the Zairian films. These were the filmmakers whom I interviewed as prime witnesses of the films that have disappeared, and the archivists who have been managing the archive for the past forty years, with whom I worked to find the films. These factors are taken into account in order to perceive and interpret the *Anlass*, the trigger events, that guided the productions and constructed the cultural system of Zaire.

### **2.3 The independent approaches of African and Zairian Film**

This section will explore both the perception of the continent's Francophone filmmakers of what a new African independent cinema could express, as well as it introduces the debates surrounding an idea of African cinema, rather than a national cinema, which was mainly proposed by Western scholars who attempted to unify its productions by describing them either as having an 'African gaze' or being 'negro-African' films, a view which was supported also within Africa by wanting to single out films with an 'African air'. Presenting these definitions serves the purpose of highlighting the complexities confronted in establishing a new way of making films as well as trying to define them. In doing so, the research wants to acknowledge



how at the time, some African filmmakers were conceiving development through the lens and looking for alternatives.

Throughout the continent in the immediate aftermath of independence, the first debates amongst African practitioners and intellectuals on the future of national cinema, revolved around subverting the colonial interpretation of Africa which produced films that characterised the Africans as people without a culture, who were saved by Western intervention.<sup>85</sup> Film proved to be a powerful tool for the colonies, especially for Belgium, who maintained support at home by using images to demonstrate how their work encouraged the emancipation of the “savage negro” . This sort of depiction was present in colonial filmmaking, as well as in the Hollywood imaginary<sup>86</sup>, which produced commercial cinema with demeaning racialised narratives of Africa. Post-independence meant that African filmmakers could seize the opportunity to counteract these representations of Africans and their countries, as explained by the Malian director, Souleyman Cissé:

African filmmakers’ first task is to show that people here are human beings and to help people discover the African values that can be of service to the others. The following generation will branch out into other aspects of film. Our duty is to make people understand that white people have lied through their images.  
(cited in Thackway, 2003, p.39)

A shared sentiment that drove the formation of associations and federations such as FEPACI (Pan African Federation of Filmmakers); during the organisation’s second congress in 1975, it resolved to promote a legitimate representation of Africa from an African point of view. FEPACI was also adamant in advocating the rejection of commercial and Western film language. Having said this, some directors who were looking to assert an African viewpoint, were opposed to a radical standpoint of absolutist rejection which would not take into consideration the financial opportunities of commercial film and help to develop the birth of a new industry (Murphy, 2006, p.29). FEPACI’s filmmakers largely agreed to actively engage in filmmaking in order to create African stories for an African audience, not African stories sponsored by foreign organisations that aimed to be screened at world festivals. Artistic activism throughout the continent resulted in several ‘auteur films’, which spoke to African audiences, but in the opinion of Mweze Ngangura they did a disservice to the African

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<sup>85</sup> Further reading *African cinemas: Decolonising the gaze*. Olivier Barlet (2000)

<sup>86</sup> One such depiction is the one of the African cannibal present in Hollywood comedies, such as Rastus in *Zulu Land* (1910), further reading *Colonialism, Racism and Representation* (Stam and Spence, 1985)

entertainment cinema, as “[o]ften this did not bring Africans to these films, because they were not made to affect their emotions”(Ngangura cited in Ukadike, 2002, p.136). In this sense, Ngangura considered art films alienated the audience which should have been approached as a commercially viable entertainment cinema of Africa, a popular cinema.<sup>87</sup> Ngangura explains, in an interview with Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike, that the poor man in Africa, exhausted by the daily struggle, does not want to watch a drama about difficulties, which is generally of interest to a foreign audience, but wants to be entertained by a story he is able to relate to (Ukadike, 2002, pp.133-137). A matter of priority to Ngangura, who, having directed two of the most commercially successful Congolese films, the previously mentioned *La Vie Est Belle* and *Pièces d’Identités* (1998), voiced concern over an African imagery in which there is the need for African filmmakers to break the clichés of Africa that are proposed by foreign filmmakers and to champion new imagery in African popular culture (Ngangura, 1996, pp.60-64). These viewpoints from Ngangura highlight how from its early stages the independent cinema of Africa did not follow a homogenous trajectory but was collectively perceived as a means of decolonisation by altering the previous imagery of Africa. Further it expresses the desire of Congolese/Zairian artists for a new cinema that would represent and speak to everyone.

Moreover, these considerations bring to the fore an idea of an African cinema but there is the need to then identify a national filmmaking as the diversity of the continent needs to be considered, and although nations may share similar sentiments because of shared histories of colonisation, the national expression is wholly singular.<sup>88</sup> Blandine Stefanson and Sheila Petty, in reflecting on the notion of African cinema, acknowledge the different environments in the African continent propose to examine modes of production to help in their analysis of African cinema:

A responsible consideration of African film must instead account for varied nuances of internal to this vague category, delineating the specific ways different cinematic contexts across Africa distinguish themselves and interact with each other, as well as how these systems are related to film industries and political economies outside the continent (Stefanson and Petty, 2014, p31)

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<sup>87</sup> Ngangura does not specify which films he considers art films, but it is possible to think of the great African auteurs of the post-independence era, such as Ousmane Sembène (1923-2007), Djibril Diop Mambéty (1945-1998), Med Hondo (1936-2019), to cite but a few. For further reading: *Directory of African film-makers and films* (Shiri, 1992) , *Africa at the Pictures* (Shiri, 1998) *Postcolonial African Cinema* (Harrow, 2007), *Dictionary of African Filmmakers* (Armes, 2008) *Cinema and Development in West Africa* (Genova, 2013)

<sup>88</sup> Further reading in the *Directory of World Cinema: Africa*, the chapter: *Modes of Production What is African Cinema? The Industries of African Cinema*, edited by Blandine Stefanson and Sheila Petty (2014).

To address the singular context of Congolese and Zairian films, this research focuses on notions of sub-Saharan francophone cinema which serves as a platform of interaction as it shares the common ground of language. As also noted by Stefanson and Petty, by looking at a particular system it must be acknowledged that this relates to “film industries and political economies outside the continent”(ibid.). Therefore, even though the common language may create a connection within the wider francophone cinematic output and permits an understanding of certain ideas of African cinema, it also presents a divide in the post-independence management of relationships between France and its former colonies versus the strategy adopted by Belgium towards its former colonies. The work in what we may now call soft power politics carried out by the French government is explored by Professor Lieve Spaas in *The Francophone Film: A Struggle for Identity*, and explains how France maintained a presence in the continent through endorsement and sponsorship, or filmmaking by the agency ACCT (Agence de la Coopération Culturelle et Technique), which in 1993 became the Agence de la Francophonie (Spaas, 2000, p.2). Whereas Belgium did not invest in the country’s film production post-independence, in fact, some of the work developed in Congo after independence was supported by the ACCT, as Zaire became a member in 1977 (*La Francophonie*, n.d.). An important chapter in this text is dedicated to the classification of African film, where:

to speak of an African identity would be to ignore the specific character of each ethnic group and country. However, as André Gardies observed in 1989, it is still difficult to identify national cinemas in Africa, in spite of the political determination of the ‘new’ countries to assert their own identities (Spaas, 2000, p.131)

This observation attempts to address both the desire to describe an African cinema, which of course means a disregard for national subjectivities, whilst at the same time addressing the lack of production that would be able to form a more coherent ‘picture’ of new independent national cinemas. Scholarly work has instead traditionally revolved around identifying the qualities and particularities of an African cinema. One such approaches is Oliver Barlet’s interpretation in *Les cinémas d’Afrique Noire: Le Regard en Question* comments on the notion of an ‘African gaze’, one that is shared by the Bantu populations. By joining people through the ethnic groups and languages of sub-Sahara, Barlet poses the African gaze through the example of Black Comedy in Africa, he states that it is in opposition to its western counterpart; this expression of African gaze does not present a cynical take on life, but uses comedy as a therapeutic act resulting from self-derision and tragicomedy (Barlet, 2000). Another approach to identifying common African traits in film, is explored by Pierre Pommier who, through the definition of

'Negro-African' film, analyses the socio-economic content of the films and their impact on the continent, in *Cinéma et Développement en Afrique Noire Francophone* (1974). Pommier finds that the issue with this cinema is to prove its originality, because of the intense foreign influence at all stages of people's relationship with cinema, which, in the case of Africa, he proposes can be traced through an inverse trajectory; from consumption then to distribution and, finally, at the creation stage. Pommier suggests that foreign influence is embedded in cinemas, at the meeting point between consumption and distribution, where the African audience experiences in cinematic language is emergent from foreign films, the only ones that are screened. This situation continues to have a repercussion on African cinema at the stage of creation, since the filmmaker is familiar only with foreign cinema and, further, Pommier points out that most African filmmakers have received their training either in Europe or the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Pommier then explores the common themes and cinematographic language of 'Negro-African' fiction film to suggest possible canons in the genre (Pommier, 1974). Similar ideas are touched by the Burkinabe literary and cinema critic, Biny Traoré, in *La Problématique du Cinéma Africain*. By exploring the problematics of African cinema, Traoré looks at the nationality of the filmmakers, the content, which should exude an 'African air' and, finally, its audience, who will understand and be receptive to the text and its nuances (Traoré, 1984). The implications of the 'African air' will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

To determine the existence of an 'African air', as proposed by Traoré and therefore trace in film an attempt at decolonising the imagery of Congo/Zaire is difficult as there have been very few publications specifically about Congolese/Zairian cinema. Furthermore, there is a shortage of films that have been produced about and by Congolese/Zairian filmmakers, many of the films are inaccessible, and additionally documentaries which are generally considered propagandist may not have been contemplated as being of interest in terms of cinematographic achievement, however they were conceived. As part of the research process I compiled a database of films produced between 1965 and 1989 from the information gathered from different texts mentioned further in this paragraph, as well as information from the film archive registers consulted; through this I was able to collect seventy-six titles, which included a few titles that I then discovered by finding their physical copies during field work. The list consists mainly of titles of shorts and features which have not been analysed by film historians and scholars but that are mentioned in film literature. The books consulted for compiling this database and learning more about the country's cinema landscape, were Rik Otten's *Le Cinéma*

*Dans les Pays des Grands Lacs : Zaïre, Rwanda, Burundi* (Otten, 1984)<sup>89</sup>, Guido Convent's *Images & Démocratie, Les Congolais Face au Cinéma et à l'Audiovisuel* (Convents, 2006)<sup>90</sup> and *Le Cinéma du Congo Démocratique : Petitesse d'un Géant* by Gansa Ndombasi (Ndombasi, 2008).<sup>91</sup> These books not only deal with information about the films, such as their titles and crews, but also give an awareness of the media industry in the country, from the vestiges of missionary filmmaking to the first Congolese associations for filmmakers and, further, to the films of the new generation of directors, such as Ngangura. In particular, this director's impressions and plans for African filmmaking are the only Congolese/Zairian perspective taken into consideration in a number of interviews and books, and therefore inform this thesis on the particular Congolese/Zairian thinking of independent filmmaking.

In in his book *African Cinema – Politics and Culture* (1992), Manthia Diawara gives an overview of the history of Zairian cinema from its colonial beginnings and explores the two main ideas proposed by the historians and practitioners of African cinema on the possibilities of the postcolonial cinema. One option, in the immediate aftermath of independence, was for countries to continue in the tradition of missionary filmmaking. Diawara explains that Victor Bachy “listed Belgian missionaries as the first African filmmakers...” and that Bachy's imperialist proposition was that missionary cinema made films of African folklore for an African public, since they created “...African cinema, which differed from documentaries, ethnographic films and commercial films, and which was cultural and entertaining” (Diawara, 1992, p.15). The second prospect is presented in the reasoning of Ngangura who, further to his directorial experience, was also a Professor of Film at the National Institute of Arts in Kinshasa. Ngangura proposes complete detachment from the colonial model, including the well-established missionary educational genre, because of its patronising origin and racist connotations (Diawara, 1992). This call for a decolonisation of cinema, reflects the desire to break from the structural racism that was in place during the Belgian colony, which did not allow Congolese filmmakers to evolve an independent cinematographic unit. The director's take on the future of African film in the paper *African Cinema - Militancy or Entertainment?* (Ngangura, 1996, pp.60–64) calls for a popular cinema of Africa as a means of emancipation. However, at independence, this aspiration did not translate into Congolese filmmaking that was entirely separate from European traditions. Instead, a new national cinema was advanced which

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<sup>89</sup> *Cinema in the Great Lakes Region: Zaïre, Rwanda, Burundi*, my translation

<sup>90</sup> *Images & Democracy, Congolese confronting Cinema and the Audiovisual*, my translation

<sup>91</sup> *Cinema of the Democratic Congo: Smallness of a Giant*, my translation

used the documentary form of the European model, reflecting the cinematic language of the foreign educator and anthropologist. This form seems to have been evoked and transformed to meet the great challenge of national development, through ‘development films’ that were produced in the context of RTNC, later known as *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*.<sup>92</sup>

### 2.3.a Aspirational cinema for development

Whilst the questions about what African cinema may be, and what kind of African film should be developed, resonated throughout the continent, another question became important; how can film become an integral part of the development of a nation? Ngangura, who was able to make films that carried an artistic vision, acknowledges the fundamental role of the medium thus: “It becomes evident that the cultural activity most likely to contribute to Africa’s development is to be situated on the level of popular or so called mass culture” (Ngangura, 1996, p.60). This statement focuses on prioritising the communication that can connect and speak to the population at large, a means to reach the masses. His recommendation is that engaged cinema, or ‘auteur cinema’, has to rethink its codes by finding the “necessary conditions for reconciling the African audience with its own cinema: entertaining films, African heroes embodying totally positive social values, a familiar cultural context”(Ngangura, 1996, p.63).<sup>93</sup> Although Ngangura does not specify this, his concerns appear to be focused on the enhancement of fiction film for the purpose of entertainment, aiming to have purposeful images. When asked what the status of the Congolese film industry is, Ngangura answer denotes that, like many others writing about and discussing Congolese and Zairian film, he does not take documentaries into critical consideration:

All I can say is that my film *La vie est belle* is the first feature-length film made under professional conditions in Congo. Some feature-length films have been made in Congo but by nonprofessionals (*sic*). The first feature film ever made in Congo by a Congolese was *Le hazard n’existe pas* (There is no such thing as luck, 1977), by Madenda and Luzolo, and it was filmed in 16mm and in black and white. It was not distributed even in Congo. After that, there is another feature film, *Ngambo* (1986), made by Roger Kwami Mambu. It is an instructional film that was well distributed in schools. Of course, television directors have made many documentaries in Congo (Ngangura, cited in Ukadike, 2002, p.134)

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<sup>92</sup> Brian Larkin (2008) in *Signal and Noise*, points to a process of the ‘colonial sublime’ whereby the ideas and aspirations of modernisation of the colony can find longevity in the content produced in the post independence.

<sup>93</sup> Ngangura, in the interview with Ukadike, then says: “Actually, in 1999, I am happy to observe that the situation has drastically changed and most filmmakers now consider the ‘entertainment factor’ important in their films”(Ukadike, 2002, p.136)

This response indicates and acknowledges that there were documentaries but, similarly to scholars writing about this industry, the director does not consider these works to be films. *La Vie Est Belle* is a 1987 production, which he indicates as the first feature film, but Zaire had produced a few feature films before that, all documentaries. Ngangura's reply does not explain why this body of documentaries is not accepted as being legitimate filmmaking, but what this may express is either their refusal, because of their direct relationship to the government or because, in his opinion, factual filmmaking does not reflect the creative process of the national industry, as the director is bounded by the realistic component of the genre. This last may also be read as a product of its time, since the industry has seen many changes in terms of the popularity of documentaries and the rise of the mixed genre approach to the medium.

In the same interview, Ngangura explains that his focus, and preferred genre, is comedy, as well as "dramatic comedy", a definition he uses for his film *Pièces d'Identité* (Ukadike, 2002, p.148). Although there may be differing opinions on what generic conventions the content might have, the fundamental issue is the values that are brought by the films which Ngangura, as mentioned earlier are summarised as entertaining films with African heroes and positive social values. This research argues that the films pursued during the Second Republic attempted, in the name of development, to deliver positive social values and familiar cultural contexts but in documentary form and as indicated by Ngangura also, mostly documentaries were financed, with the exception of just a few dramas: the short film *La Case Enfumée* (*The Hut Up in Smoke*)<sup>94</sup>, the educational film *N'Gambo, Le Hasard N'Existe Pas* (*There is No Such Thing as Luck*) and *La Vie Est Belle* by Ngangura himself, which did not receive any government funding, but *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre* contributed in kind by providing lighting equipment and a crew (Ukadike, 2002, p.139). Ngangura suggested a formula through which to develop a positive and inspiring African image for the continent's audiences, and this may be compared to what we can deduce the government aspired to achieve in an *authentic* film manifesto, although one had never been formally stipulated. It has to be noted that Ngangura has steered clear of describing his films as 'authentically African', to ensure that this may not be confused with the government's policies of *Authenticity*, a point which is purposely highlighted by Convents, who reports an exchange between the film director and a journalist in Washington in 1988, in which the journalist asked if *La Vie Est Belle* could be defined as an

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<sup>94</sup> My translation

‘authentic African film’, and Ngangura replied that it was a “real African film”(Convents, 2006, p.289). Nevertheless, it is crucial to assess what may be close to, and what may differ, in terms of thinking about African film and *authentic* film, belonging to a Zairian national project. From this filmmaker’s point of view there is a definite discrepancy of vision, but from the standpoint of the Second Republic, we can see a parallel in the meaning of inspiring images, but not in the form of the content with which these had to be delivered: the subject matter would have Zairian heroes, promoting the positive social values of the MPR in a typically Zairian environment, embodying the familiar cultural context. The film productions which I assess to be ‘development films’, on a first reflection, would be antagonistic to the aspirations of directors such as Ngangura, who summarises the problem by stating: “A good entertainment film is already a contribution to development. To achieve that, it does not have to speak of development” (Ngangura, 1996, p.64). Notwithstanding, as this chapter’s opening quotation highlights, the years after independence were marked by a general enthusiasm for everything that led to, and addressed, development: “the man on the street today speaks fluently of development and underdeveloped countries” (Mutuza, 1987, p.53). These words describe a concept that became pervasive and aimed to convince the populations, but it also forewarns of the possibility that this may have to afflict domains such as culture and the media.

From Ngangura’s account, we gather that Congolese/Zairian filmmakers were hoping not only to become ambassadors of an original African expression of cinema, but also promoters of a commercial enterprise with the aim that their work would achieve international success. This may not resonate with the Zairian productions which, as proved by history, did not travel, with the exception of very few films,<sup>95</sup> but it can be argued that Mobutu shared the same wish for the recognition of Zairian cinema. On the occasion of the first international theatre festival in Kinshasa in 1977, the programme’s first page quotes an excerpt of the N’Sele Manifesto, with the President’s stance on the matter:

The monuments of Zaire’s past, national folklore will be protected or restored. The importance of African arts will be highlighted and expressed in the world’s cultural life. The MPR firmly encourages all the arts: painting, sculpture, music, dance, theatre, literature (Zaire. Département de la culture et des arts, 1977)<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *Moseka* (1971), *N’Gambo* (1984), *La Vie Et Belle* (1987), *Le Damier* (1996)

<sup>96</sup> My translation. Original text: “Les monuments du passé du Zaïre, le folklore national seront protégés ou restaurés. L’importance des arts africains sera mise en évidence et particulièrement explicitée dans la vie culturelle mondiale. Le MPR encourage effectivement tous les arts: peinture, sculpture, musique, danse, théâtre, littérature”



Although one of the festival's locations listed in the programme is the MPR's Cinema theatre, film is not mentioned amongst the arts, but what should be noted is the desire for the Zairian arts to reach an international cultural platform, and to be present in the world. Investing in the construction of *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, as well as investing in the training of the personnel for its broadcasting, is a convincing argument for a Zairian government ready to show the world that the arts and communication were taken seriously by a country which was in the process of equipping itself.<sup>97</sup>

Mobutu's desire for the celebration of culture, music and visual arts was omnipresent. During an interview in 2014, Photo Pao, his official photographer, explained that he had been on every Presidential foreign visit and at each state event because, even though there were other photographers, Mobutu wanted to have his own album journaling the important visits and meetings. Furthermore, the album had to be delivered to him the next morning, meaning that on many nights Photo Pao had to look through foreign cities for studios where he could develop the films (Zoppelletto, 2015).<sup>98</sup> We may suspect that these demands were made with the aim of celebrating himself, but also, as the President always preached, to see the Zairian presence abroad. As Mobutu led the country, he commissioned popular music for entertainment fashioned to his aspirations; slogans that were enhanced by popular Zairian music would capture the people's imagination and promote the government's politics. This music was then performed with dances that were known as *animation*<sup>99</sup> during all political and public gatherings, and was co-ordinated by selected people, who were called *animateurs* and *animatrices*, performers who stirred the crowds to sing and dance to the easy to follow routines. Some of the country's provinces had a dedicated *group choc*, which was the popular name for a particularly engaging crowd, pre-selected by a star *animateur*, also known as an *animateur principale*, with similar duties to those of a cheer leader, who was entrusted with vivacious cheering, singing and dancing. For the promoters of the MPR this type of performance was a way to groom future militants but, on the other hand, it constituted a representation of national cohesion (White, 2006), as will be shown in Chapter 5 with the various examples of *animation* that are seen in the film *Salongo*. As this political intervention was based exclusively on

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<sup>97</sup> In his 1973 speech at the United Nations, Mobutu Sese Seko debated against the idea that Zaire was underdeveloped, a term that would indicate a population of not developed people, instead he suggested the country was 'in the process of equipping itself' (Mobutu Sese Seko, 1973, p.13)

<sup>98</sup> This segment of the interview was not used in the final edit of the film *La Belle at the Movies*, but can be provided upon request.

<sup>99</sup> The tradition of *animation* and *group choc* will be discussed and analysed in detail in Chapter 5

entertainment, which filmmaking contributed to promoting, it can be argued that the filmmaker was not considered in any way different from the other *animateurs*, always present, through the means of an artform, while cheering for the government, like Photo Pao, developing images during the night to praise the Chief in the morning.

This possible interpretation of the function of cinema in the country is legitimate in view of the film content, which seems always to be singing the praise of the government and never being antagonistic. At the same time Mobutu's government idea of art for the people was one of mass entertainment, albeit with a political message. Furthermore, the pervasive atmosphere of achievement and success popularised by the government, resulted in a commitment from the filmmakers and the press to disseminate ideas of national development that were in line with those of the MPR. The period defined as the 'electric years' of the government in Van Reybrouck's *Congo – The epic history of a people*, saw Mobutu as a highly popular but feared leader, who invested in the betterment of his people, combating prejudice from the rest of the world who referred to his beloved Zaire as a 'Third World country', a nation that, after years of colonisation, was affected by very low self-esteem. The celebration and affirmation of the self-styled Zairian people was at its zenith and Mobutu wanted everyone to see Kinshasa as its expression, with mass entertainment coming from America, which was not only popular, but also in tune with Zaire's principles of black people's affirmative action. In a spending spree that lasted a decade Mobutu also promoted ideas of black pride that came from overseas, by entertaining his people with shows from America's finest black talent: The Pointer Sisters, Sister Sledge, James Brown and, from Latin America, Celia Cruz and Johnny Pacheco (Reybrouck, 2014). Live events and cinema screenings were devoted to supporting *Black is Beautiful*, a slogan that found a fan in Mobutu. This wave from America introduced stars such as Lola Falana and Paul Harris to Zaire, and the country quickly became enamoured with the idols of *Shaft* (1971) and *Sweet Sweetback Baadasssss Song* (1971) (Convents, 2006). Although these films showed an American expression of the African heritage and the experience of being black, the self-respect of the black actors was an attractive narrative for a people that were told for so many decades that black was neither beautiful nor significant. Aiming always higher, and during an economically wealthy period, Mobutu outdid himself with the legendary fight, the 'Rumble in the Jungle', when the whole world tuned in to watch the famous Ali versus Foreman 1974 boxing match broadcast live from Kinshasa in the heart

of Africa,<sup>100</sup> The night of the famous match, American television crews were in charge of the international live broadcast, but the national television was also present. Zizi Kabongo, a student at INA<sup>101</sup> in Paris, who was on a Zairian scholarship, explained to Van Reybrouck that all Zairian students were called back to Kinshasa for a forty-eight-hour journey to do their national duty and work for the broadcasting of the match. The crew was instructed that the national broadcast should capture the event, as well as the Who's Who of Zairian society (Reybrouck, 2014, pp.335, 362). The soaring popularity of Mobutu went hand in hand with the effort put into demonstrating that the African people could exercise artistic or popular influence, such as the case of Ali, and the time had come for him to assert it. As Reybrouck suggested, the invitation for the 'match of the century', as it was known in Zaire, and the concerts that accompanied it were a promotion of Mobutu's politics. The arrival of Mohammed Ali, a legendary figure of a black man who is committed to fight in and out of the ring for racial pride, and the concert with the greatest African American stars of the time was a call to demonstrate that "What the slave trade had driven asunder, Mobutu brought back together" (Reybrouck, 2014, p.349). As Mobutu showed his affinity to the *Black is Beautiful* movement by endorsing its films and music, the country was marching on to the beat of *Authenticity* which, like the rest of Africa, was fixated on concepts of development. The national press, *Elima* and *Salongo*, insisted that *Negritude*, and I would like to add, in the same category *Black is Beautiful* and all of the movements of the time that were striving for equality, were only to be considered as cultural concepts. In these national newspapers, the articles argue that *Authenticity* differs because it is perceived not only as being cultural, but also as a political and philosophical concept (Kakama, 1983, p.53). These publications, entrusted with the duty of supporting the government, understood that by altering the definition with the addition of the term philosophy, they would be praising the MPR in an otherwise too political concept that might have alienated the population. The language of *Authenticity* was composed from ideas that simplified the complex struggle towards decolonisation by putting issues into a binary opposition.

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<sup>100</sup> Viewed by an estimated one billion viewers (Peters, 2014), the 'Rumble in the Jungle' started at four a.m. in Kinshasa to accommodate the US viewership. "The fight was broadcast on closed-circuit television at close to 400 locations across the United States and Canada. Tickets, some 3 million were made available, were \$20 apiece, with the houses having to guarantee \$7 per seat in advance, against 60 percent of the gross. Television and radio rights were sold around the world. A British distributor paid \$600,000 to air it on closed-circuit television. Other European countries paid similar amounts to air it on public TV" (Nash, 2017). The theatre experience is reported by Jamaica Kinkaid, who watched it from the Victoria Theatre in Harlem, New York, in the article 'The Triumph of Bad and Cool' for *Village Magazine* (Kinkaid, 1974)

<sup>101</sup> Institut National de l'Audiovisuel

### 2.3.b African, national and *authentic* film

Having attempted to define the different ambitions of filmmakers at independence, it is useful to address the ways in which *authentic* films can be considered African and national expressions as these ideas are reflected in ‘development films’.

In his text, Traoré indicates the factors that could be used as identifiers of this cinema. Firstly, his analysis proposes that African cinema must be produced by Africans even when this is done with very few means. This can be true of Zairian cinema, which was achieved, in the main, with few means and little capital being invested in production. Traoré adds that “...content alone is not enough, we must appoint an African director so that the nationality of our films is not equivocated”(Traoré, 1984, p.8).<sup>102</sup> To compare this concept to the specific Zairian situation, nationality during the Second Republic meant forgetting the Congolese past which, because of language, names and habits, was interlinked with the colonial past, and embraced a Zairian identity. Since all Zairian citizens, as explained in chapter 1, were participating in the national system and were *nolens volens* members of the MPR, one was synonymous of the other. The MPR found its roots in the principles of *Authenticity*, which leads to the logical conclusion that Zairian citizenship meant endorsing and embedding what might be perceived as a ‘genuine’ and ‘real’ notion cultural expression. In principle, all Zairian films made by the country’s nationals were made by Zairian filmmakers upholding the political idea of Zairian sensibility and identity. Lastly, the *Authenticity* of a film can be achieved when a distinct African film language is observed. Some of the definitions may be more obvious markers of *Authenticity* than others, but we should also consider the possibility that the combinations of all these factors will be able to produce the canons that enable us to read a definite Zairian *Authenticity* on film. The film director and historian, Paul Soumanou Vieyra, in his book *Le Cinéma Africain: Des Origines à 1973* advances a definition of African, and therefore national, film:

The African film, in its relations with the Negro-African civilization, creator of its own values which justify it and make it live, will also become a fertile element of this civilization by its own humanism. Coming from a specific socio-cultural context, which is African, the African film will be nurtured by values that create this very civilization. This means that, like all cinemas, African cinema will evolve by its own dynamism, in the general dynamics of the African societies that carry it. Which brings the intervention

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<sup>102</sup> My translation. Original text: “Certes, le contenu à lui seul ne suffit pas, il faut lui adjoindre le réalisateur africain pour que la nationalité de nos films ne soit pas équivoquée”

of a number of contingencies, including the environment, the physical and moral climates, the traditions, the personality of its men (Vieyra, 1975, p.245)<sup>103</sup>

This definition of ‘national’ resonates with *Authenticity*, which claimed to eradicate all foreign influences and establish a Zaire that is similarly the “creator of its own values”, which would introduce the new citizen who, in time, would have never even been baptised with a foreign name. It is possible to see a similarity in the interpretation of decolonisation, which is to achieve and exalt the population’s “true soul” (Mobutu Sese Seko, in Kabue, 1976, p.259) , in other words, “the personality of its men” (Vieyra, 1975, p.245).

As *Authenticity* was the Congolese/Zairian decolonising movement, the politics of nation building were expressed as filmmaking of change which I propose in this thesis as being ‘development filmmaking’. Although, as many critics of the regime have argued, *Authenticity* did not represent a legitimate philosophy but, rather, a series of historical opportunities for a political agenda, ‘development filmmaking’ can be identified not only as a tool of the regime, but as an expression of the Zairian spirit and African centred thinking and making? Moreover, cinema is a producer of the imagery that becomes the socio-cultural basis of Zaire. The assessment of this imagery is comprised of its specific contingencies, its environment and traditions and, as pointed out by Vieyra, “the personality of its men”. For this reason, the defining elements of ‘development films’ will include visual signifiers, examples of which are the *Abacos* suits and dresses worn by the citizens, and the cane used by Mobutu as the guiding element of Chieftaincy. A real-life Zairian *mise en scène*, filled with props, such as the suits and objects, along with a propagation of music, such as the labour songs of Salongo and the *animation* songs in the feature documentary *Salongo*, created the opportunity for its reproduction on screen. Another notable element of the performance of Zaire is the use of language, which should be observed as identifying Mobutu’s neologisms, which coloured the contemporary popular discourse. As previously shown, paternalism, one of the great semantic and psychological tools used by the regime to impose presence and power, would invariably

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<sup>103</sup> My translation. Original text: “Le film africain, dans ses rapports avec la civilisation négro-africaine, créatrice de ses propres valeurs qui la justifient et la font vivre, va devenir aussi un élément fécondant de cette civilisation par son propre humanisme. Issu d’un contexte socio-culturel spécifique, et qui est africain, le film africain sera nourri par des valeurs que créent cette civilisation même. Ce qui veut dire que, comme tous les cinémas, le cinéma africain évoluera par son propre dynamisme, dans la dynamique générale des sociétés africaines qui le portent. Ce qui amène l’intervention d’un certain nombre de contingences dont l’environnement, les climats physique et moral, les traditions, la personnalité des hommes”

have been an underlying message in film and, as a result, would have produced its terminology in everyday life and on film.

Traoré's book *La Problématique du Cinéma Africain*<sup>104</sup>, is focused in assessing whether there is actually an African cinema, and tries to point to what may be considered the indicators of its existence and the issues of the identification of this cinema. In doing this, the author does not distinguish between film content created by a range of African countries, except for alluding to the production facilities available and the number of productions generated in the different nations. Traoré sees African film as being unified in its nature. It is a cinema radiating an associative quality that is brought by its filmmakers; "The films by our directors, by their content, speak African. They radiate an African AIR" (Traoré, 1984, p.8).<sup>105</sup> The vagueness of this definition is understandable when Traoré attempts to describe an African air in terms of imagery;

When we watch African films, no matter the quality, it is Africa that comes alive in pictures before our eyes. These images show an African decor, African characters in African cities and countryside; they bring out our cultural identity, our personality; they express our difficulties, our joys, our sorrows, our aspirations (ibid.)<sup>106</sup>

The landscape, captured by the imagery, can, in this respect, refer to an ideal of visual decoloniality. Congo of the 1960s, and Zaire of the '70s, gave space to national visual and fine arts, in particular, to sculpture, with the rising success of Zairian artists, such as Alfred Liyolo (1943-2019),<sup>107</sup> whose works replaced colonial statues and served as new city landmarks. Many adorned the homes of the country's elite as symbols of reclaimed space. The aesthetics of the cities changed so as to reflect the realities of *Authenticity*, consequently, the location settings and *mise en scènes* for the films became ever more *authentic*, as the urban landscape was changing, although they may also have included some large colonial structures such as some of the institutional buildings. Nevertheless, there was an ongoing appropriation as colonial statues were removed, people were dressed in Zairian attire and the names of

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<sup>104</sup> *The Problem of African Cinema*, my translation

<sup>105</sup> My translation. Original text: "Les films de nos réalisateurs, par leur contenu, parlent africain. Ils irradient un AIR africain"

<sup>106</sup> My translation. Original text: "Quand on regarde les films africains quelle qu'en soit la qualité, c'est l'Afrique en images qui vit sous nos yeux. Ces images font voir un décor africain, des personnages africains dans les villes et les campagnes africaines ; elles font ressortir notre identité culturelle, notre personnalité ; elles expriment nos difficultés, nos joies, nos peines, nos aspirations"

<sup>107</sup> During the Second Republic, Alfred Liyolo was known by his *authentic* name ,Liyolo Limbe M'Puanga

commercial places would display Zairian names, not colonial ones.<sup>108</sup> However, in Traoré's view, the colonial debris is part of the African air:

African films present us with African images that closely reflect profound African realities, that means our pre-colonial history (...), our colonial history(...), our past or present socio-political situation (...), our culture in its evolution or in relation to foreign cultures, especially the western culture (ibid.)<sup>109</sup>

Although the regime was engaged in a process of decolonisation and was therefore against all reminders of its colonial past, the *authentic* Zairian would inherently possess a sensibility to his past. The fundamentals listed by Traoré, the landscape and the people, express the essence of being African, just as much as the Zairian code of behaviour brought by the N'Sele Manifesto and adopted by its people was expressed in a multitude of visual signifiers; the choice of décor, words and clothing conveyed the essence of being *authentic*. Captured in film, this *Authenticity* would define the Zairian spirit, which was therefore promoted by the 'development film' itself.

For Traoré (1984), the last indicator of an African film is the public. To illustrate the relevance of the audience, Traoré refers to Jean Paul Sartre's famous work *What is Literature?*, in which the author's function is essential in light of its consumption by an audience that makes sense of it:

The operation of writing implies that of reading as its dialectical correlative and these two connected acts necessitate two distinct agents. It is the conjoint effort of author and reader which brings upon the scene that concrete and imaginary object which is the work of the mind. There is no art except for and by others... (Sartre, cited in Traoré, 1984, p.9)<sup>110</sup>

Reflecting on Sartre's assessment of the audience's contribution in bringing to life the meaning of the writings, Traoré claims that African cinema, if made for the specific audience on the African continent, will be able to receive it conclusively. Arguing that this art, compared to literature, reaches its audience more directly, Traoré discusses the shortcomings of African

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<sup>108</sup> For further reading on the process of *Authenticity* on the urban landscape, please see *Building for 'l'Authenticité': Eugène Palumbo and the Architecture of Mobutu's Congo* by Johan Lagae and Kim De Raedt (Lagae and Raedt, 2014, pp.178–189)

<sup>109</sup> My translation. Original text: "Les films africains nous présentent des images africaines reflétant étroitement les profondes réalités africaines c'est-à-dire notre histoire précoloniale, notre histoire coloniale, notre situation socio-politique passée ou présente, notre culture dans son évolution ou en prise avec la culture étrangère, notamment occidentale"

<sup>110</sup> The original text quotes Sartre in French, for the English quoted in this thesis, I have taken the translation in *Conventional and Original Metaphors in French Autobiography*, 2009 (Akli, 2009, p.17)

literature as mainly being aimed at a foreign public. He argues that although this may not have been the wish of the writer, it is a consequence of the utilisation of a foreign language that is used by the minority of the population and that therefore makes the content inaccessible. For this reason, he promotes the idea of cinema as a communicator for all classes in Africa, as cinema, if compared to literature, is capable of reaching a wider audience because its language, is more direct, thanks to the use of images, and it can communicate to an audience with different levels of education. Traoré also observes that African films may only speak to an African audience as, in 1984, when he wrote, the audience for these films was mainly African, present in the context of African film festivals (Traoré, 1984). The correlation between Traoré's observations and those made by Ngangura on the eventual inaccessibility of African narrative when it is able to communicate with a foreign public but not its own, is noticeable. With respect to Zairian film and its relationship with the audience, we can say that it was shown to a population perceptive of *Authenticity*, aware of its origin and the images and iconography it manufactured. The films produced by national television, and subsequently by all production houses incorporated in *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, not only produced Zairian images, but also used language and music that were produced by the Zairian philosophy of *Authenticity*. This assured that, no matter what their level of education was, the audience would have understood, intellectually as well as affectively, the concepts encapsulated in films such as *Salongo*, or *Gecamines - La volonté de réussir*, which are discussed in the chapters that follow.<sup>111</sup>

Traoré raises a few questions and debates that are rooted in pan-Africanism, but that are also exclusivist, as they define African film through the origin of its directors and its consumers. The problem with his definitions of African film arises in terms of genre, when the author creates a list of works produced in Zaire. In the previously mentioned publication, Traoré deals with the problems faced by African film being supported by its governments and private sponsors, as well as by its distribution. Along with this analysis, the book offers an overview of the film production of most African countries, Zaire is included in this selection, but there is no list of productions that goes with the country. Instead, Traoré presents the national production in the following terms:

ZAIRE: This country has not yet produced any feature films, only short films. Even on this plane, the production is not rich. Mambu ZINGA KWAMI produced MOSEKA in 1972, and MWEZE N'GANGURA, KINDIESSE or the bitter sweet joys of Kinshasa the beautiful (1983). In other words, this country, in terms of film production, is far

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<sup>111</sup> *Gecamines – The Will to Succeed*, my translation



from rising to the level of its spatial and demographic dimension (around thirty million inhabitants) (Traoré, 1984, p.22) <sup>112</sup>

There are, in fact, a few other feature films which, as mentioned, I have compiled into a database, and although it is true that the percentage of films produced, if compared to other countries on the continent, is still very low, there is no apparent reason to completely obliterate the country's limited but significant production. What appears to be legitimised by Traoré is the exclusion of all of the documentary filmmaking from Zaire's film history. There is, of course, the possibility that the author was unaware of the features produced, as these were not selected for international festivals, or he may have decided to omit them purposely. Deciding on what could be categorised as an African film, Traoré might have judged documentaries or what I have come to identify as 'development films' as irrelevant, in the same way as they were not taken into consideration by Vieyra or Ngangura. The films I have been able to find and have mentioned thus far, are productions that were commissioned and actively endorsed by the government, or, at least, were supported due to their pro-government agenda. These films may have been omitted by Traoré as a result of their involvement with the government, but this criterion is never mentioned in his study and, furthermore, can contradict the author's definitions of African films. They were made by African filmmakers for the purpose of being consumed by an African audience.

The constant relationship between s/he who creates the art and s/he who will experience it, is of relevance not only to the discourses of *Authenticity* or African cinema, but to all forms of self-identification. The poet, author and politician, Aimé Césaire, exploring the meaning of *Negritude* in relation to art, addressed its place and its future during a lecture in Dakar in 1966. The message was that African art has no prefixed model, nor should it imitate any other art, not even its own past. It can be whatever it may want to be, because it is in its invention that we find Africa's self-invention. "African art of tomorrow will be worth what Africa and the African of tomorrow are worth"(Césaire, cited in Diagne, 2014, p.26). This point of view may be a valuable approach when applied to the examination of the relationship between the politics of *Authenticity* and the institution of an *authentic* art that will embody what the Zairian people

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<sup>112</sup> My translation. Original text: "ZAIRE: Ce pays n'a pas encore produit de longs métrages, mais uniquement de courts métrages. Même sur ce plan la production n'est pas riche. Mambu ZINGA KWAMI produit en 1972 MOSEKA, et MWEZE N'GANGURA, KINDIESSE ou les joies douces amères de Kinshasa la belle (1983). Autant dire que ce pays sur le plan de la production cinématographique, est loin de se hisser au niveau de sa dimension spatiale et démographique (environ trente millions d'habitants)"

imagine themselves to be, and how they were represented during the Second Republic. With the last words of his Dakar lecture, the relationship between art and politics is addressed with a direct plea from Césaire to the continent's politicians:

...people of Africa and first of all you, African politicians, because you have more responsibility, give us good African politics, make us a good Africa, create for us an Africa where there are still reasons for hope, means for fulfilment, reasons to be proud, give back to Africa dignity and health, and African art will be saved (ibid.).

This address highlights the link to, and responsibility of politics in preparing the ground for the artist to create original work, by achieving the righteous dignity denied to them until then by the coloniser. Similarly, the politics and ideology of *Authenticity* aim to set up the field of cultural production for positive self-assertion by engaging the work of arts, journalism and the media. This unique cultural environment, which reflects the principles of the country's cultural revolution, would express itself in 'development films' which take their roots from the conceptualisation of development media in Africa as well as other post-colonial countries as explained in the next section.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The transformation of the country from Congo to Zaire, under Mobutu's regime, brought a dramatic transition in habits, cultural production and teachings on national identity. As the President explained in a 1975 interview, the revolution attempted to deeply change the citizens and it aimed at further shaping future generations through education:

The Zairian citizen born of the Revolution will be a completely different man from the one that came out of the colonial mould. If we take as an example, a child who was born in 1972, we know that he will start primary school in 1978, without ever having been baptized with a foreign name. When he will come out of university, in 1993, he will have nothing in common with the Zairian of yesterday or even today, at times searching for his own personality, his true soul (Mobutu Sese Seko in Kabue, 1976, p.259)<sup>113</sup>

In this statement, Mobutu sees *Authenticity*, and its later iterations, as the solution to the conferring of an identity, for a person who had previously been lost "searching for his

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<sup>113</sup> My translation. Original text: "Le citoyen zaïrois issu de la Révolution sera un homme complètement différent de celui qui est sorti du moule colonial. Si nous prenons en exemple un enfant qui est né en 1972, nous savons qu'il entrera à l'école primaire en 1978, sans avoir été baptisé d'un prénom étranger. Quand il sortira de l'université, en 1993, il n'aura plus rien de commun avec le Zaïrois d'hier, ou même encore d'aujourd'hui, parfois à la recherche de sa personnalité de son âme véritable."

personality” and who would now be able to find and express it. The most compelling years of this metamorphosis were from the birth of the Second Republic, in 1965, to the late eighties, when the Zairian dream faded in popularity. Even if it were not possible to pinpoint an exact end to this era, because Mobutu’s government fell in 1997, its popularity started paling much earlier, with former MPR politicians fleeing abroad for protection.<sup>114</sup>

This is the period under investigation in this thesis to try and trace the metamorphosis and establishment of a national identity on film. This chapter has shown how in Zaire, the idea of the national and therefore national African film became entangled with the notion of *authentic* culture through the production environment of *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, where ‘development films’ became a vehicle with which author this vision. As explained, the uncovering of this media composite *Mediaverbund*, formed partly by the films which will be presented in this thesis, is testament of the transition captured in what I propose as ‘development films’. These film events created by a national body depict, in documentary form, the evolution of Congolese people into Zairian sovereign citizens and, as it was thought of at the time, these films would promote and document the people of Zaire achieving their own social and philosophical development. The following chapter will look at the relationship of ‘development films’ with the environment where they were created as well as their demise in the archive which will be re-constructed to piece together the national filmography.

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<sup>114</sup> A report on *Mobutism* by Laurent Kumba, for Groupe INTAL-Congo, highlights 1986 as the year when the latent popular dissatisfaction is expressed by a decline in the regime’s popularity. The financial crisis of that year had repercussions for the establishment thus causing a political crisis, worsened by the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, which marked the end of external support for Mobutu’s regime (Kumba, 2013, p.5)

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ZAIRIAN ARCHIVE, CONSTRUCTION AND RE-CONSTRUCTION

#### 3.0 Introduction

Zaire, the product of a government led ideology for decolonisation, existed as an allegedly thriving Second Republic based on ideas of *authentic* democracy and modernity. As this research illustrates, the MPR produced concepts of national imagery through political rhetoric, which were then developed through the media to sustain the MPR's ideology. However, since the fall of the regime and the exile of the president of the MPR to Morocco, where he eventually died, the ideas of the republic fabricated by Mobutu not only waned but, since the fall of his regime in 1997, there has been an attempt to destroy Mobutu's memory from official DRC archives as illustrated. A process that took place also in popular culture and referred to as an attempt to 'de-Mobutise' culture (Sichone, 1998). The disavowal of the Zairian period enforced by the two Kabila regimes, as transpires from the information gathered at the archives, drew my attention on the possibility of reconstructing the filmic notion of Mobutu's Zaire, whilst also investigating the collective meaning of Zairian productions. This connotes that I, as an interpreter for the target audience or *Adressat*, had to rediscover and investigate the location of the commissioning body indicated as the *Auftraggeber* and its archive so as to collect the films that are available, which would allow for a reconstruction of the *Anlass*; the occasion or triggering event.

This chapter explores inter-relational methodologies associated with this research project that include data collection and digitisation, analysis, and archival ethnography. Beginning with an understanding of the archive as a site of power, as discussed by Schwartz and Cook (2002, pp.1–19), this chapter will look at the destruction of the archive and its significance for the institution that created it, identified as *Auftraggeber*, as well as the people entrusted with the repository of national memory. The chapter considers film to be a conceptual artistic expression

that constitutes an archive, but it also acknowledges it as a physical component of an archive that, through its materiality, expresses a historicity of power.

This research has identified Mobutu's ideology of *Authenticity* and the conception of *Zairianisation* and *Mobutism* as forming the basis of filmmaking during the Second Republic resulting in the production of 'development films'. The ideas of government films will be analysed in relation to their carrying the notions of the Zairian 'spirit', which is explored in the section of this chapter entitled: 'The Zairian archive'. This section will explain that the archive is a social construct, and the interpretative role taken by this research in understanding the gaps in information and the destruction of the images, as advocated by Paolo Cherchi Usai (Cherchi Usai, 2001). The chapter will then explore the physical constraints of the environment in which the films are kept, and the work executed. These are explicated in the 'Research Procedures and Archival Ethnography' section. The section presents the research process to retrieve contemporary contextual material as conceptualised through media archaeology. This entailed researching the film archives at the Cinematek in Belgium and the archives at the RTNC in Kinshasa. At the RTNC, the process included conducting interviews, identifying and physically examining thirty films for condition and state; restoring some of the films; attempting to screen some of them on the premises, and, finally, gaining agreement to remove these films from the DRC to bring them to the University of Westminster for digitisation. Most importantly at the RTNC, I carried out an archival ethnography. This provides a record of the research carried out *in situ*, as well as explaining the interactions during the process of retrieving the films. The archival ethnography reports the observations and exchanges with the archivists and other staff who participated in helping to identify the films. It also explores procedures, locations and introduces the interviewees involved in the historical and personal recollections of the film production environment of the Second Republic, as participants in the process of reconstruction. This section, which is observational in nature is to serve as a reference point for this and future research, whilst wanting to avoid stereotypes on the situation of national institutions in Sub-Saharan countries and affording a more detailed view of the postcolonial archive, which I have found to be lacking whilst carrying out my own research.

### 3.1 The Zairian archive

The situation of the archives in countries that have experienced colonialism and a turbulent history of post-independence, is known to be in difficulty and presents a common story where

...they have either been destroyed or are in the process of being destroyed by neglect. In addition they are usually inaccessible and frequently contain only haphazardly collected fragments of information (Austin, 2012, cited in Decker, 2013, p.162)

Despite this, to experience the archive first-hand means dealing not only with the physical destruction of information but also with the poignancy created by the impact of this destruction and abandonment. Walking into the archives at the RTNC, known at the time for its splendour, *La Cité de La Voix du Zaïre* offers a demoralising site of chaos, ransack and abandonment.<sup>115</sup> These first impressions evoke an image of the national institution of a country that is indifferent to the value of archival practice because it is consumed with fighting more urgent and vital battles. The DRC is always at war with poverty and disease outbreaks, resulting in a nation that seems to have little option but to use all budgetary efforts to combat these pressing issues, rather than for the upkeep of a film archive. Currently, the DRC is crippled by its dire core infrastructure, so much so that it concentrates all its resources on meeting its primary needs. This scenario of poverty, which is well documented by the international media and the large presence of NGOs in the country,<sup>116</sup> has the capability to disguise the present condition of the archives as a natural consequence of its situation, instead of disclosing the possible calculated efforts made by governments to destroy the evidence of the Zairian past.

In particular, the current condition of the archives makes it almost impossible to treat them with the same principles that are used to approach other archive collections, such as the Cinematek or other well established and preserved ones. To understand how the present circumstances may differ, it suffices to relate this to the categorisations of archives recommended by the *International Council of Archives*, the foremost institution in this field, active since 1948. Even if the council's interest rests in national archives as a whole, and does not address film specifically, this research considers film as part of a country's formal documentation. The *International Council of Archives* defines an archive as being valuable to

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<sup>115</sup> These impressions refer to my field trips: the first recce visit of September 2014 and the investigative field trip carried out during the months of July and August 2016

<sup>116</sup> "In 2012, 77% of the population was living in extreme poverty on less than \$1.90 a day. The most recent World Bank estimates put the extreme poverty rate in the DRC at 73% in 2018, one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, placing it ahead of only Nigeria" (The World Bank, 2019)

society when it can be attested to be a trusted resource, and it recommends it should be checked with the following criteria:

Authenticity - the record is what it claims to be, created at the time documented, and by the person that the document claims to be created by.

Reliability - they are accurately representing the event, although it will be through the view of the person or organisation creating that document.

Integrity - the content is sufficient to give a coherent picture. Sadly, not all archives are complete.

Usability - the archive must be in an accessible location and in a usable condition. Earthquakes, hurricanes and war, for example, can all render archives useless. (ICA, 2016)

In terms of ‘authenticity’, the first criterion posed by the ICA, there was no direct tool, test or chart available to validate the ‘authenticity’ of the material. The only method of verification was to engage in conversations and ask the people working at the RTNC if they recognised or knew anything about the material since its incorporation in the archive. This process is documented later in this chapter, in the archival ethnography section. Logic suggests that there was no reason for the films, in their ruined state, to be forged, but the lack of recognition and identification during the past decades may have caused involuntary changes to the archive due to possible exchanges of unidentifiable content.

‘Reliability’, the second criterion in the above definition, was fundamental in searching for the films. By thinking of the archive in Derridian terms, we can see that the rudimentary condition of the RTNC archives embodies a ghost of the *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, which was the place of consignment. This place can be assessed for its emblematic value of consignment, which is explained by Derrida in these terms: “Consignation aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration”(Derrida, 1996, p.10). This means that, by finding its debris, or the segments of film, we can see glimpses of a large construction which “...gather[ed] the functions of unification, of identification, of classification”(Derrida, 1996, p.10). Proving the existence of the documentary films, would first of all show marks of their destruction and testify to their erasure as a process caused by the passing of time, as well as their deterioration through climate, but especially due to political upheaval. Concomitantly, they are also artefacts which, through their content, would be able to show the output of a prolific state film unit dedicated to documentary filmmaking that represents the new independent nation. These films are therefore the material evidence of an otherwise forgotten, but specific, cultural project of nation building through the filmic image both of and by the Second Republic.

The norm of ‘reliability’ that is presented by the ICA encompasses the knowledge that the archive functions as a representation of the event and, in this case, it is the government’s investment in ‘development films’. At the same time, the council’s definition acknowledges that this may be through a specific political viewpoint. The archive at the RTNC, which is constituted mainly by what was held when the building was called *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, holds audio-visual contents which reflect a specific time in which historical events, as well as daily life and culture, were perceived through the governmental vision of the Second Republic. The ICA proposes that this should be considered against the principle of ‘reliability’, because they were conceived through a special political aspect. In this case, though, we can advance that they are faithful to the Zairian vision and therefore reliable in terms of the material artifacts of this distinct period. In this sense, the archive collection testifies to the historical period through its very existence.

‘Integrity’, the third criterion advised by the ICA, was immediately problematic in the scope of this research, and placed even more importance on the necessity of an ethnographic study at the archive. Just by looking at the archive in its debased state, and without further investigation, it appeared to be almost completely destroyed, leaving very large gaps in knowledge. Finally, the ‘usability’ of the material is directly correlated to its integrity, as the films may be identified but may not be in screening condition, or they may be lacking the technical support for these operations, as is documented in the second part of this chapter. This archive presented the destruction of its content, along with a loss of assets that might permit the consumption of the said content.

### **3.1.a Construction and re-construction**

The destruction presented by the archive at the RTNC demands interpretation. The archive, where the word consignment does not mean only a physical depository of information but also a place for the formation of a singular vision (Derrida, 1996), further expresses this implication when deliberate action has been taken to erase it. “Archives are a social construct” (Schwartz and Cook, 2002, p.3), and the material housed at the RTNC represents, on film, the ideological construction of Zaire. Given the destruction of the environment of the national film archives and therefore the effort to obliterate the construction of the Zairian project, this research looks at different aspects relating to the material present in the archive in order to interpret the



construction of the ideological framing of Zaire under Mobutu. The material gathered was analysed through archival ethnography by exploring the environment in which it was found, and by paying particular attention to the information given, and the commentaries of, those involved through the years in the archival process by collecting, indexing and looking at the collection's items. The testimonies and behaviours towards the collections are captured later in this chapter in the session dedicated to archival ethnography. These serve to testify that the function of the archive is not only for "the retrieval of stored information, but the putting together of a claim about past states of affairs by means of a framework of shared cultural understanding" (Halbwachs, 1941, cited in Schwartz and Cook, 2002, p.3).

The present state of the archive at the RTNC, which lacked a formal up-to date indexing and cataloguing system, enabled an open approach to the material which at first was focused on obtaining as many films and as much paper information as possible, rather than a pre-conceived list of films that might be relevant. In addition, the circumstances offered more opportunity for discussion with the people working at and around the archive, as well as obtaining witness accounts to piece together a historical narrative of both national film production and its archive. Whilst visiting the archives and engaging with the employees of the RTNC who were collaborating in the search for these historical images, as well as the interview process and the observation of the context, the 'spirit' of Zaire became more apparent, as the interviewees recounted their professional stories through a Zairian understanding of their practices. The comments made by Constantin Katende Kabongo, the Director of the *Ciné et Mediatheque*, his staff Odia Oscar Tshifumba and Maman Cécile, as senior archivist, along with other archivists and the interviews with the filmmakers, Simon Kintenda, Tshitenge Madika, Pierre Mieko, Willy Massamba and Claude Mukendi, construct an image that would be hard to decipher were we to look solely at the poor empirical information available now in its current state, where it is mostly inaccessible.<sup>117</sup> Their inputs contribute to external textual material that is able to explain the politics that have instigated the destruction of all traces of Zaire and indicate the sentiments which were fundamental for the re-construction of the Zairian 'spirit' that has been attempted by this thesis. The archivists and filmmakers' memory of their own work facilitated the accessing of the information on the material, and the interpretation of its meaning for re-construction.

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<sup>117</sup> These are the names the filmmakers go by at the RTNC, but their names on the release forms, written and signed before the interviews, are as follows: Simon Kintenda Ki Mata, Tshitenge Madika, Massamba Makinme Willy, Pierre Mieko and Mukendi Kalula Simon-Claude.

Schwartz and Cook, in *Archive, Records and Power* (2002), see the archivists as consequential participants in the formation of the archival social construct, but I expect that the descriptions that follow in the archival ethnography, will reveal how the archivists I met didn't use their agency to keep the memory alive, nor did they use it to destroy it, because of an ideology, instead, their accounts show that, despite claiming a desire to preserve the archive, they were ill-equipped to do so, as well as lacking the training to continue and to ensure the archive's preservation. This state of affairs helped the governments of Laurent Kabila (1997-2001) and Joseph Kabila (2001-2019) that followed to erase the memory of Mobutu institutionally. The issue of the physicality of the material investigated and the lack of equipment for memory preservation, disrupt the founding principles of the archive. The place of consignment is not only a conceptual one of the construction of identity, as mentioned earlier, but it is also a physical place that is defined by the institution in terms that validate its content. “Management”, “administration”, “reliability”, “authenticity”, “control” (Schwartz and Cook, 2002, p.14) are some of the terms used for this space, and through which people, filmmakers and researchers can look for professional objectivity, true sources. If Mobutu's 'development films' were purposely erased, two possible interpretations may be advanced: the first is that the content was not considered relevant or meaningful, and it was therefore neglected due to lack of investment; or, the content was perceived to be politically charged by the new government in power and it was therefore disposed of. Neither statement can be advanced with certainty, although some of the informal comments offered by the people working at the archives and gathered during the course of the research, point towards the second possibility. Nonetheless, the current status of the national archive does not prevent a possible re-construction of the Zairian 'spirit' that is embedded in the content because, as I previously mentioned in relation to the ICA definition, part of the archive can be representative of its whole; meaning that the work to restore and interview respondents, even if not completely exhaustive, will enable recognition and understanding.

As Mobutu used the term 'spirit' to refer to an evanescent quality, able to expose and distinguish the Zairian from other Africans and other world populations, this research aims to find the elements that the regime used to construct such a notion on film, elements which are directly linked and borrowed from the conceptualisation and the construction of *Authenticity*. To address these elements, the first goal was to find the physical footage, which meant the first phase of the research was dedicated to accessing a distant and particular environment, obtaining

the material to analyse; ergo, as many films as possible within the present archives, in an attempt to overcome the 'usability' issues encountered in the environment. The only pre-condition posed at this stage of the investigation was that the films had to be commissioned and produced by the national television and cinema units of the Second Republic and, in particular, the period of Zaire was the most appropriate for study. To guide this research and piece together the little information available, I engaged in a dialogue with all the industry people that I could access who were involved in this construction of the Zairian 'spirit', and therefore in the filmmaking, during the period of the Second Republic. Conscious of being perceived as an outsider, I engaged in conversations by giving the premise that I was seeking the opportunity to know more about works which will probably be unavailable for viewing and therefore in need of first-person recounting of their content and production environments. The conversations were not structured through fixed questions but revolved around the main issues and opportunities of filmmaking conditions in the country during the specific period studied by the research. These were informal, but filmed, interviews. The results of physically collecting the films and recording the interviews offers a piecing together of the Zairian culture of the period, which served as a basis for the following chapters. These offer a re-construction through the digitised films, interpretation of the images and the interviews. The re-construction aims to reveal the country's ideas of the development and nation building of the Second Republic (1965-1997).

During this period Mobutu's government constructed a particular vision of the country by creating the idea of the Zairian, a new national identity for all citizens, regardless of their tribal belonging.<sup>118</sup> In this new nationalist vision of the country, the Zairian people, as a collective force, were meant to achieve great things for themselves and the nation. I argue that the ideological construction of the Zairian was possible because of the complicity of the population and the active commitment of the country's intelligentsia, who stimulated the constant renewal of its purpose. Amongst the intellectuals there were the filmmakers, whose relationship with the then emergent nation of Zaire built a concept of development which permitted the party philosophy captured in the N'Sele Manifesto to be made visible and accepted. This contract between the people and the governing system added to the party's legitimacy through the imagery produced. With this in mind, the interviews presented material which might offer a

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<sup>118</sup> Zaire was coined in 1971 but the ideas of nationalism that formed the ideology were already present in government's discourse since its instalment, and more precisely since the N'Sele Manifesto of 1967.

possibility to resurface this relationship between the filmmakers and the national ideology, and therefore document its existence until the fall of Zaire.

Therefore, the re-construction of the archive means uncovering this relationship as well as creating a mediation between the found material and its perceived meaning. This process finds its source in the writings of Cherchi Usai, in his seminal work on the film archives, *The Death of Cinema* (2001) which not only acknowledges the fragility of the film image, meaning the motion picture film material itself, but the possible meanings when the image is lost. The significance of a filmic image is therefore an element of the motion picture storytelling that not only embeds narrative value, but as a filmic component of a larger story told by the film archive. By approaching the significance of the image through this twofold evaluation, Cherchi Usai explains how the 'model image', that is the perfect image as produced by the filmmaker, is inexistent. The moving image suffers the effects and wear caused by the passing of time and this inevitably leads to its loss. The damage enables the historian to have a fundamental role in the interpretation of the image. According to this principle, and with specific reference to the non-fiction image, Cherchi Usai brings to the fore the notion that the image cannot be used as empirical evidence unless it is explained:

Be it ever so eloquent, the moving image is like a witness who is unable to describe an event without an intermediary. The ability to transform it into evidence true or false, is inherently linked to a decision to preserve, alter or suppress the memory of the circumstances under which the image was produced. The loss of the moving image is the outcome of an ideology expressed by the very object that made it possible (Cherchi Usai, 2001, p.31)

This definition can be used to explain that the status of destruction suffered by the films held at the RTNC archive results from the very purpose of their existence, therefore demanding that the researcher interprets their meaning. I aimed to achieve this by looking at the available information and by attempting to decipher its absence. The poverty suffered by the country and the lack of funds for cultural institutions, disguise in the current appearance of the archive the intentional destruction of the Zairian memory, this is why this research has developed through the interpretation of the information found concurrently with an analysis of the footage available, as much as through the void of information that is created by the physical absence of the films. This method of enquiry has allowed for a new space, where all of the pieces of the story can be read to form meaning.

This research project recognises Mobutu's political project of Zaire as a period of decolonisation brought about by a culture of revolutionary nationalism with the notion of Zairian 'spirit' as an impetus for the momentum of development. Of course, the meaning of the word 'spirit' is elusive, but the consolidation of its use, a trigger for mottos and *animation*, as explained in Chapter 5, had the ambition of becoming an enduring and credible trait of the revolution. Consequently, the Zairian 'spirit' and the cultural forms that may testify to its existence, such as film, had to succumb to destruction through the change of power in 1997, a change which opposed it. The absence of an indexed collection of images at the DRC national archives strongly implies ways in which Kabila's government aimed to eradicate Mobutu's Zairian project from the collective memory, since this was perceived by the new power to be necessary for the country in order that it could move forward without his ideological presence and icons. Cherchi Usai's definition of the relationship between the purpose of the image and its loss, may serve as a good description of the Zairian archival situation, he states: "The loss of the moving image is the outcome of an ideology expressed by the very object that made it possible" (Cherchi Usai, 2001, p.31).

This project gives historiographical value to the Zairian film culture that has been lost due to the fall of the political party that commissioned it. The forgotten, but meaningful, contribution by Zairian filmmakers to creating a narrative of decolonisation and Zairian assertion, is brought to bear with this project. In addition, the research considers the following: the preserved films found in Belgian archives, the digitisation of original films by the researcher at the University of Westminster, films which were brought back from the DRC archives; information disclosed by archivists in the interviews conducted in 2016; and an archival ethnographic analysis of the archives in the DRC. These elements are explored in the next session.

### **3.2 Research procedures, archival ethnography**

An archival ethnography serves as a detailed account of the ways in which the materials were collected for analysis. The reason for utilising this method concurs with the thinking that:

by employing ethnographic methods, researchers can immediately expand the scope of archival investigation to include the sociocultural realm of record creation and management, thus defining the record in direct relationship to the communities of individuals who generate, accumulate, and preserve documentary evidence (Gracy, 2004, p335)

In illustrating this interaction of the current system and the country's media tradition and its archival practice since independence in 1960, what will become more perceptible is the relationship between the practitioners and the employees of the national film and television industry with Zaire, as a historical past and as an ideology. These observations, which unfolded throughout the field work, will inform the analytical chapters on the current conflictual relationship with the national films produced in the past. In other words, the ethnographic approach helps identify especially the *Adressat* and the relationship with the *Auftraggeber* (the RTNC) and the *Anlass* (development/decolonisation). The setting of the inquiry, the RTNC, is described thoroughly, as it is equally significant to the findings because it depicts the difficulties endured by the industry since the country's independence and the *modus operandi* that has fractured the filmic memory of the country. As well as carrying out the research at the RTNC, it was important to investigate also the possibility of a Zairian film presence at the Cinematek in Belgium, in a new post-independence relationship. The subsequent sections will define the context and material findings at the Cinematek in Belgium and in the different audio-visual archives of the RTNC, as well as the observational notes.

### **3.2.a Cinematek - The Royal Belgian Film Archive**

The relationship between Belgium and Zaire was maintained in media practice even during the period advertised as exemplar of an *authentic* and independent film industry free from Western influence, although this exchange may have been solely for technical support. The search for a copy of *L'Esprit de Salongo* or, more precisely, *Salongo*, is visible evidence that the ideas of *authentic* film production did not prevent the national Zairian production collaborating with the West. All literature available on Congolese cinema points to this film as being key in the film production of the Second Republic, and as it gained a reputation for being "one of the great Mobutist documentary films" (Convents, 2006, p.298), although it was never released, its disappearance had left some unresolved questions, and the starting point of this thesis was to find the film.

Although the film was produced in colour, without seemingly sparing any expense, and was ordered to be ready in time to reach the Lagos Film Festival of 1975, the government never approved the final film and *L'Esprit De Salongo* was never released (Zoppelletto, 2016, Clip 01130003). Otten provides an explanation of this decision which, it was claimed, was taken directly by the head of the Department of National Guidance, Sakombi. Allegedly, Sakombi

found the film was too artistic and not straightforwardly ‘political’ enough. Otten further speculates that, after much consideration by the department, the film’s “Copy No1”, as he calls it, was abandoned in a post-production studio in Brussels, with post production fees outstanding, and concludes that whilst the copy may have been stolen or lost, the negative should still exist (Otten, 1984, pp.66-67).

As there was no known trace of the documentary in the DRC, the starting point for the field work was the Brussel’s film archives of the Cinematek. The film, attributed to the years 1972-74, is currently stored in the Cinematek’s climate-controlled archive storage facilities, in its original 16mm negative, and it consists of the following: five sound reels and five separate image reels and a further audio-only track of reel 5. The film amounts to 1224m, 111’ 53”. The labels on the film cans give the client as the Commissariat d’État, the Department of National Guidance, naming the laboratory in Brussels where the film was processed as being “L.J. Dassonville S.A.”.<sup>119</sup>

To form a clearer idea of the filmmakers’ views about the dynamic between the Zairian government and artistic freedom, as well as trying to assess if what was required from the Belgian production house was more than just technical expertise, I attempted to engage in discussion with anyone who might have worked either in production or post- production on this film. Not excluding the possibility that the post-production mandate might have had censorship guidance attached to the reels, I attempted to contact the company, L.J. Dassonville S.A., but found that they had closed in 1989, the same year Cinematek received the film cans. I researched to see if other Zairian films produced by L.J. Dassonville S.A. were at the Cinematek. There were two further films from the film lab, in their original 16mm negatives: *Le Portefeuille du Zaïre (Zaire’s Budget)* and *Zaïre, Terre d’Authenticité (Zaire, Land of Authenticity)*, both directed by Francis Matton.<sup>120</sup> The former film appeared to be commissioned by the ‘Institut de Gestion du Portefeuille’ (Office for the Management of State Budget) with neither film being dated. Francis Matton is on a few government productions available at the Cinematek, ranging from the 1969 film *Les Tam Tam De Kinmalebo (Tam Tams of Kinmalebo)* to *Invités de Mao (Mao’s Guests)* of 1977.<sup>121</sup> Although *Zaïre, Terre d’Authenticité* deals in its title with the return to rural work, a major theme promoted by the

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<sup>119</sup> Film can label: L.J. Dassonville S.A. 135-141 Rue Berthelot 1190 Bruxelles.

<sup>120</sup> My title translations

<sup>121</sup> My title translations

MPR under the scope of *Authenticity*, it could not be taken into consideration for this research. The focus of the research pertains solely to Congolese or Zairian directors whose work was carried out in the country, and that can therefore attest to a national filmmaking wave.

*L'Esprit de Salongo*, was the primary reason for contacting the Belgian archive, and having demonstrated to the Cinematek its importance for African cinema studies, they digitised it with the purpose of supporting this research. By accessing the film, immediately the credits' information revealed that it had been written about under an incorrect title, for it was simply called *Salongo*, as correctly indicated on the film can. Once I had access to the digital copy, the film text was then transcribed and translated. As a fluent French speaker, I transcribed and translated the French dialogue. Apart from French, the main other language spoken is Lingala, which is used in over half of the film, especially by senior party members and Mobutu. For the Lingala transcription and translation, I sought the expertise of Mike Makana Kitiana, a Congolese lawyer and member of the Congolese Chamber of Commerce in the UK.

The involvement of the translator was necessary for the translation of the content, but it mainly provided an opportunity to discuss the material with someone who could be identified as being a member of the potential audience of the films. Makana was able to engage with the material further than providing a literal translation as he remembered, and could still recite by heart, the MPR songs used in the film. Having learnt these when he was a member of the MPR's youth movement *Jeunesse du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution*, JMPR, Makana instinctively sang along to the chants and slogans as he was watching the film for the first time. Watching his ease in this act of enabling once more *animation* to resurface, I was able to directly witness the longevity and power of political messages when embedded in popular culture. The impression was that the Zairian archive stored in Belgium came to life again, providing a rediscovery of the *Anlass*, the occasion presented by the celebration of the policy of Salongo. Additionally, as a representative of the *Adressat*, the audience for whom the film was made, Makana was able to clarify the images in the film that portrayed specific traditions that would be informative for this research. This new relationship with the past uncovered the meanings of the images, as well as the longevity of the political discourse of decolonisation, as Makana instinctively recognised it. Some of the comments given by Makana are in note form, as they happened spontaneously whilst he was working on the translation, but in addition to these I was also able to conduct a formal recorded interview. Both sets of information, the



observational and the formal interview, bridged my inexperience in relation to the country's traditions and allowed me to have a more informed interpretation of the images on the screen.

### **3.2.b The archives of the Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise RTNC**

I found the film *Salongo* in Brussels in February, 2016, and conducted the field work at the RTNC film and television studios during the summer of 2016. As the film has been written about as iconic 'propagandist filmmaking' for the country, I chose to conduct the research in the DRC without divulging that I had found the film, so as not to impede any participation from RTNC employees. Having worked in DRC, I had observed general unease about work which may be perceived as political, not directly by the people to whom I was speaking, but their concern was that other people would see it as political. Mobutu's regime of suspicion and vigilance was followed by two more regimes, those of the presidents Laurent-Désiré Kabila and Joseph Kabila, and their governments further perpetuated the idea that the power in place sees and hears everything.<sup>122</sup> A sentiment rather than a documented notion, it became apparent that the political tension present in the country in 2016, when I conducted the interviews, meant that I had to be conscious of people's concern in approaching political films, of any period and any genre. 2016 was supposed to be an election year, but the elections were never organised, as they had been postponed in Kabila's favour, meaning that the research had to clearly position itself as cultural research, with no affiliations to Mobutu's political party, or to any other opposition party.<sup>123</sup> Although I had researched and found *Salongo* in February, I gained access to the digitised copy of *Salongo* in December, 2016, and therefore I knew of the existence of the film, but had no significant information on the content, and this might have influenced the outcome of the interviews.

The climate of distrust and the awareness of foreign media's interest in the country is pervasive in the system. Upon arrival in the country,<sup>124</sup> I made an official request to carry out this research, and although the main body, the national broadcasting company RTNC, welcomed my project, the departmental directors were not able to grant me access until I had a special permit from the Ministry of Information. A few days after presenting an official request, along

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<sup>122</sup> At the time of writing this research (January 2019), Felix Tshisekedi has just been elected President of the DRC.

<sup>123</sup> Mobutu's MPR still exists under a new name MPR Fait Privé (MPR Private Act)

<sup>124</sup> I arrived in Kinshasa on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016 and stayed to carry out research until August 2016.

with my credentials, to the Ministry, I was granted a permit for research, filming and photography.<sup>125</sup> I was told that it is the country's policy, in place since the Second Republic, that nobody is allowed to film without an authorisation from the Ministry; under no circumstances, and even in a personal or commercial capacity. I was not able to find a law stating this, but I was warned by the police and industry practitioners that this is the case. This very impediment to conducting research is further evidence of the power structure that is in place in the relationship between the media and government. The RTNC is a content provider who appears to want its work endorsed and studied and it is also keen to set up exchanges to solve some of its archival issues, as I was told on various occasions. Because the RTNC is managed by the Ministry of Information, the company's priorities become a government issue, but the government seems to be solely concerned with the movement of information and with guarding the regime from any potential threat, however remote. Finally, in possession of the certified accreditations I began my work at the RTNC, home to the national film and photography archives. This research uncovered a catastrophic loss of information due to poor film preservation and absent cataloguing but, at the same time, it brought to light the existence of some films which epitomise Zairian cinema.

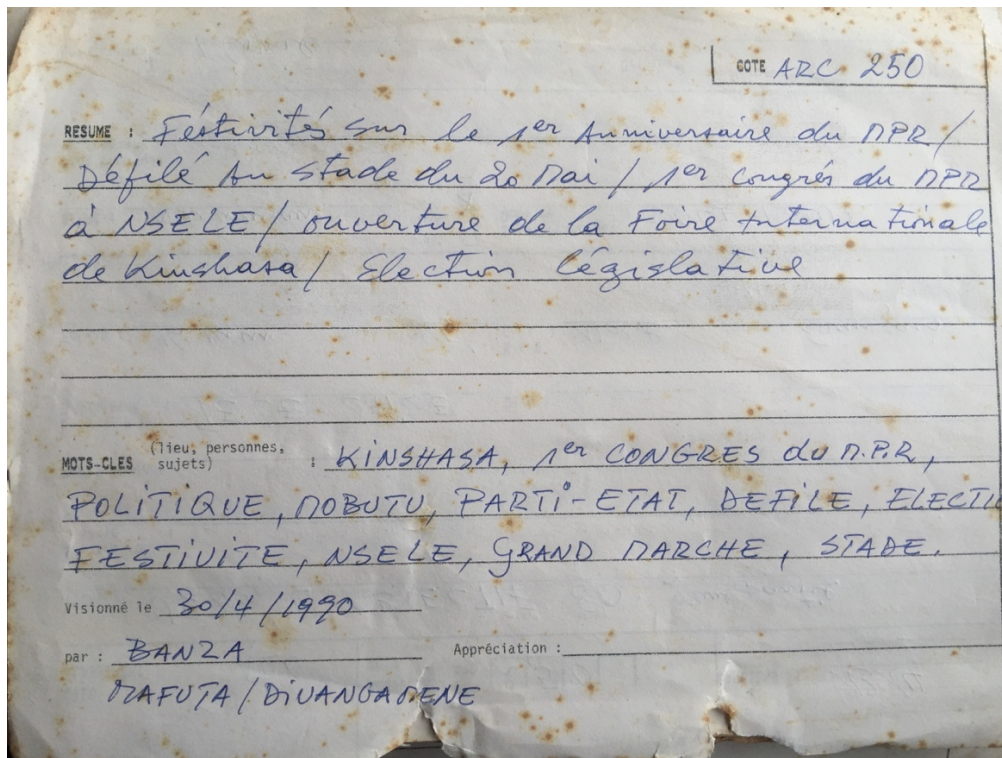
The difference between the film and television studios, once known as the *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, and the renamed RTNC is so striking that the past image of glory is almost irreconcilable with the present decay and destruction. The twenty-two floors vaguely resemble the building inaugurated in November 1976. I regularly climbed the broken steps of the badly lit stairs to the sixth floor, to meet with the Director of Ciné et Mediatheque, Constantin Katende Kabongo. The Ciné -Mediatheque is a department that comprises the 16mm library, also known as the Cinémathèque, the photo library, the VHS and the Umatic library. These archives are not all housed in the same tower but in different buildings within the same compound. Never demoralised by the combination of poor lighting on all floors, the partial electricity supply, the infinite number of stairs that discourage impromptu meetings, and the state of the disrepair of the ceilings in the photo library, Director Kabongo continues operations as much as possible, since he informed me that there is no budget allocated to his department. These descriptions are not given to serve as a morbid fascination about how decay and no

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<sup>125</sup> The permit was granted on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016. My translation of the permit, available in Appendix III: "Motive: reportage and research on the film production archives as part of the drafting of a Ph.D. thesis in the Democratic Republic of Congo". Original text : "Motif: réalisation de reportage et recherche sur les archives de la production cinématographique dans le cadre de la rédaction d'une Thèse de Doctorat en République Démocratique du Congo".

maintenance have dilapidated a building, but to illustrate how the setting may have facilitated an utter neglect of film preservation, as well as allowing for the decline of the image of modernity that is characterised by the high rise and modernist compound of the national institution. Setting the scene and appreciating the means available for the functioning of the national industry further elucidates on the past and on the current status of relations between the state and the media.

The office of Director Kabongo, like most offices in the building, has not been maintained, it is not air conditioned and hot humid air makes for difficult working conditions. His office does not have a computer, but his subordinate manager, Odia Oscar Tshifumba, has a computer in a shared office. Tshifumba has priority access to the three computers available in the office. During my frequentation of these offices I noted that the office is used by about ten people, and the PCs are both for the office's daily use and for training two small groups of media students who alternate usage. During the course of the day I noticed senior employees from other departments come to the office to ask for letters to be typed, or to send emails. The lack of equipment makes this office an easy place for other day-to-day uses of the computers, which appear to be the only facility for a large number of employees. The make-do attitude is helpful in managing the few shared resources and the advancement of employees' work, but the fragility of the situation is not taken into account, as these particular computers hold all the digital information recorded to date about both the films produced and the photographs held in the photo library. This valuable information is not copied anywhere else, as there are no other memory storage facilities, nor are there external hard drives provided for the office. The database is not fully detailed, in fact, only a very small part of the archive information has been digitised, because I have been told there is never time to work on it. The vulnerability of this database is evident and although it only holds partial information, its preservation and development are important for the identification and reconstruction of the archives, especially as the archive registers in paper format are discontinuous and some incongruent. The majority of the information is handwritten and, even more significantly, most of the film information was handwritten between the late eighties and the early nineties by different people in what appears to be discrepant systems. There are two main registers held in the office, and these refer to older catalogues that are no longer available. In the 16mm library, we found a series of discarded ring binders filled with mouldy film cards which, in principle, should match the registers kept in the offices, but they do not.



One of the legible cards, Celebrations of the 1st MPR Anniversary. Copyright Cecilia Zoppelletto, 2016

The circumstances make it very difficult to navigate the archive, to the extent that even to look at the information there is the need for a mediator. This is the reason why I worked alongside the archivists and engaged in conversations with everyone who had experienced working at the RTNC, during its *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre* era also, in an attempt to try to gather all the data and observation through archival ethnography to inform my interpretation of the film footage.

The process of interpreting the *Adressat* through archival ethnography begins with the following section, which is an introduction to the interviewees. This is followed by my personal recounting of the informative experiences at the RTNC. These are divided, not in the temporal succession of how the research was carried out, but in the process of research and digitisation for the different media, and thus the work is divided into: the 16mm library, the Umatic library and the Photo library.

### 3.2.b.i Interviews

In the early stages of the field work, the technical and bureaucratic difficulties of the working environment shaped a relationship of camaraderie with the departments' directors, as well as the employees, with whom I was able to form a line of enquiry. Due to the lack of written

information about the films, I approached anyone who was involved as film crew during the 1970s and 1980s. This wide call to participate was a practical choice, since some of the filmmakers active during those decades, such as Kwami, have since passed away. I intended to gather as much information as possible, even if informally, to piece together the disrupted official one available in the offices and archive. During this process there was a certain ease with which I was able to meet and carry out investigations with the filmmakers who worked for the national broadcasting company at that time. There was a shared eagerness by other RTNC employees to introduce me to the pioneers of television and cinema production. A couple of them, still working full time for the RTNC, were contacted immediately, and others that work on a part time basis as directors of departments were difficult to reach, simply because of logistics.

I filmed the interviews *in-situ* and on location. The set-up time on the premises was helpful in exchanging comments on the equipment and allowed for an ‘interviewer and interviewee connection’, facilitating a more relaxed and open conversation. It was important to build a sense of trust in order to overcome suspicions in discussing films associated with the Zairian period.

The main topic I wanted to discuss, without alienating the interviewees, was the impact of the work they were commissioned to do, as well as the level of artistic freedom they may have had in choosing the topics. The interviews were open-ended discussions, during which I also asked specifically about *Salongo*, so as to determine if there was a clear reason that prevented the government from releasing the film, or if there was a collective understanding of an alternative reason why this might have happened. The following summaries of the interviews provide an overview of the training acquired by the first wave of Zairian filmmakers, as well as indicating how they saw their own practice in the formation of national filmmaking.

#### Simon Claude Mukendi Kalula

Working as a cameraman since 1970, Mukendi started his television career within a UNESCO programme set up the same year to collaborate with the newly born *Ciné -production*, the national television’s in-house film production department, established by the Département de l’Orientation Nationale, to form a new generation of Congolese filmmakers (Convents, 200, p.300). As Mukendi recounts, when the Belgians left the country in 1960, the television and radio institutions were handed over to the new government, but the skilled Belgian employees

had left with their particular knowledge and skills. This is when UNESCO was called upon to help the local situation (Zoppelletto, 2016a, Clip 01130002). Guido Convents, in his comprehensive history of the Congolese audio-visual industry, *Images et Democratie Les Congolais face au Cinéma et à l'Audiovisuel* (2006), points out that the UNESCO training programme was run by the Belgian film director Jules Bechhoff, who personally supervised the group (Convents, 2006). Mukendi was part of this group that later was to train other young aspiring filmmakers, he started from the very beginning to train as a cameraman and Director of Photography, DOP. To complete their course, they were asked to produce a film, and they made a 16mm short drama, Mukendi calls it his 'graduation film', *Ndako Eziki (La Case Enfumée)* (1972), which can be translated to *The Hut Up in Smoke*. The film was shot by a group of fifteen trainees, sharing crew duties; Mukendi took the roles of cameraman as well as soundman. The film is acknowledged as being one of the first Congolese films ever produced. After the successful debut in production, this group of technicians worked on a large number of films at *Ciné -production*. Mukendi confirmed that the majority of the films were documentaries, especially commissioned by the national companies, amongst which there were the shipping, mining and rail companies, as well as films about the country's natural reserves. *Zamba Zamba* (1974), a black and white feature documentary, was such a film, a tour of the national parks, with their impressive vegetation and wildlife. The film has been lost, but Mukendi conserves stills from the production. The most memorable documentary, in Mukendi's opinion, was *L'Esprit de Salongo*, as he referred to it, on which he worked as cameraman. Although he has never seen the film broadcast, as it was never released, he explained that he was able to watch the rushes and the final edit. With regard to the film and its content, Mukendi did not remember any issues with it and affirmed that the "images were really good and there was no problem in their quality", even though it was their first attempt at colour film production (Zoppelletto, 2016a, Clip 01130003). To validate this statement, Mukendi mentioned that his work was complimented by the film's director, Kwami, who said that some of the shots were comparable to those of the Brazilian film *Orfeu Negro (Black Orpheus)* (1959), directed by Marcel Camus (Zoppelletto, 2016a, Clip 01130004). The interview took place at Mukendi's house, where he also keeps his personal collection of pictures taken during film productions. These pictures helped him to refine his memory on the productions which had been filmed over forty years before and that had never been seen again. The pictures document the filming locations, which include also the industrial facilities, such as the mining company Gecamines, and the natural beauty of the lakes. The most poignant images are those of crowds gathering for the political dances at an MPR rally, which are

captured throughout the documentary *Salongo* but, in one particular image, Mukendi is at the centre of the scene, placing him as a central focus of the cultural revolution that had been envisaged by the MPR.



Claude Mukendi at the camera. Written on the back “Esprit de Salongo”, stamped Organization Zairoise des Cinéaste. Photo courtesy of Claude Mukendi, private collection.

At the time of writing this thesis, Mukendi still worked at the RTNC, as a director of production at the *Ciné -production*. The department still exists, but I was told that it does not produce any films, except for sporadically working on what is still referred to as “filmed theatre”. This practice consists of a theatre group enacting a simple and popular plot, usually centred on family dynamics and traditions, which is then acted at external locations around the city and filmed chronologically in its entirety (Zoppelletto, 2016a).

### Willy Massamba Makinme

At the time of writing this thesis, Massamba is employed at the RTNC as a Director. Formerly in the army, his professional career in television started in 1968, with the production company Congo Vox. At the time, the company was directed by Pierre Davister, a prominent figure in Congolese journalism both before and after independence.<sup>126</sup> Under the direction of Davister,

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<sup>126</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, Davister worked on the Belgian paper *L’Avenir* where he started the weekly insert *Actualités Africaines* and talent spotted Mobutu to become its editor (Monheim, 1967). Through different conversations it became apparent that Davister was able to continue operating after independence without any problems in Congo and then Zaire having helped Mobutu establish his career as a journalist.

a few Congolese were trained in camerawork for television production, and after two years of apprenticeship, Massamba started working as a cameraman. Whilst thinking in retrospect about his apprenticeship, Massamba said that he had started working before independence, and explained that it was “when the country was still colonised by the Belgians” (Zoppelletto, 2016e, Clip 01200001), which is incongruent with his starting date in 1968. The country’s independence was in 1960, but most companies still functioned with majority shares held by the Belgians. It was only when *Zairianisation* was put into place in 1973, and companies were seized, that the entirety of the economy was put into indigenous hands. The misconception in relation to time could be due to Massamba not remembering dates correctly, but it could also suggest that he saw a Belgian dominion until the changes brought about by the policies of the MPR. This association of independence could be one of the effective results of *Zairianisation*, whereby the meaning of independence, as preached by Mobutu, meant economic freedom for the Zairians.

Massamba’s first professional collaboration after training was on the feature documentary, directed by Francis Matton, Paul Finda and Gerard Loisel: *Les Secrets du Nyamulagira* (1968), which is stored at the Cinematek in Brussels. His career grew quickly as he was chosen to accompany President Mobutu on many of his visits. Massamba recalled that during state visits the President would travel with a television crew of cameramen and journalists but no official television or film directors. Their work consisted of the filming and reporting of the President visiting other heads of state and, whilst on location, they were asked to shoot footage of the country they visited, which would be broadcast upon their return. The most memorable film productions Massamba worked on, were linked to the state visits. The first was to the USA, when he travelled to Hollywood and made a 15-minute documentary on the city and the studios, *Hollywood* (1974). The film has been lost. Along with this American visit, which gave him access to the White House, Massamba was also able to film at the Élysée Palace during Valéry Giscard d’Estaing’s presidency (1974-1981), and to meet Emperor Hirohito during Mobutu’s visit to Japan, which is captured in *Visite de Mobutu au Japon*, the 16mm film found at the RTNC archives but it is ruined beyond restoration, and Massamba has not been able to watch it since its broadcast (Zoppelletto, 2016e, Clip 01200001).

### Simon Kintenda Ki Mata

Kintenda, now retired and he started training with the RTNC in 1970 as an assistant director and, after a two-year apprenticeship with the state company, he was employed with the role of



director for television shows. His first major responsibility was the television show *Retour a' La Terre* (1967), which is listed as the first documentary film commissioned by OCICO – Organisation des Cineastes Congolais (Convents, 2006, p.272). The original television documentary, produced in 1967, was very successful and from it the RTNC commissioned a series for television, as an agriculture show in multiple episodes, which he then directed. Kintenda explained that the show was part of Mobutu's political plan to get the population to invest in agriculture in order to become economically independent and develop the country (Zoppelletto, 2016c, Clip 01150002). The series of broadcasts were short documentaries demonstrating the different types of cultivation and which horticultures would be available for development in the country. One of these episodes, *Ce Riz Que J'aime Tant (This Rice I Like so Much)* (1982), was later submitted to a German film festival as a stand-alone short documentary. Kintenda explained that the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Zaire invited the television company to submit a film for the Internationaler Agrarfilm-Wettbewerb, the International Competition for Agrarian Film, which took place in Berlin. The direction of *Cité de La Voix Du Zaire* chose the 26 minutes' episode on the rice cultivation process to represent the country, it was submitted via the German embassy. Kintenda was not invited to attend the festival, but the film won two awards, Gold Prize for Best Film from a Developing Country, and Bronze Prize overall. As a reward, the director was later given a paid trip to the Federal Republic of Germany by the Zairian government (Zoppelletto, 2016c, Clip01150002)



Simon Kitenda Ki-Mata holding the 1982 Internationaler Agrarfilm-Wettbewerb Gold Prize. Copyright Cecilia Zoppelletto, 2016

### Tshitenge Madika Stanislas

Tshitenge, too, was trained by the government, starting in 1966 in Kinshasa, and later going to France to attend a camera training course. After having returned to Congo and worked for a few years with the national television, he went back to France in 1974 for a directing course, and he stayed there until 1978. Returning to Zaire, as it was by then known, Tshitenge joined *Cité de La Voix Du Zaire* as producer and director, where he created and was responsible for a wide range of programs, from documentaries to TV shows. The majority of his work is on films which he calls “commissioned documentaries”. This body of work is a series of films about the newly born state companies that bear the name of the commissioners, such as *ONATRA Office National des Transports*, the National Transport Company, or *Air Zaire*, on the national aviation company (Zoppelletto, 2016d, Clip 01300002). The release date of these films is unconfirmed. When asked if every production had to be state approved, Tshitenge explained that in order to produce a film, one needs funding which, at the time, would only have been available from the state or by being commissioned by a commercial client, such as a state company, implying that although the production did not have to be approved by the government or the Party, it could not go ahead without their support. This explained how the most expensive production Tshitenge was ever to work on was *Mobutu Le Bâtitteur du Zaire (Mobutu, Builder of Zaire)* (1985), a film which is not listed in any of the film books, but that was entirely financed by the state. The production also benefited from the use of a private jet, the pilot was instructed directly from the President’s office to follow all Tshitenge’s requests and to make any airport available to him, so that he could give a comprehensive vision of the country “built by Mobutu” (Zoppelletto, 2016d, Clip 01300002). The film could not be found, and to this day it is considered lost.

### Pierre Mieko

Beginning his career at the national television in 1970, Pierre Mieko was one of the founders of OZACI, the Organisation Zairoise des Cineastes. Mieko explained that the organization was born out of the desire to group all the filmmakers into one association and establish a common platform for the filmmakers of RENAPEC (currently named RTNC2) which, at the time, was run by the Catholic priests, and for the filmmakers of OZRT Organization Zairoise Radio Television. This platform was thought to be useful for the members to network and work together within a framework that was completely led by its members (Zoppelletto, 2016b, Clip 01220001).

Mieko also worked as second assistant camera on *La Vie Est Belle*, which is internationally known as *Life Is Rosy*, for which he is credited with his *authentic* name as Mieko Maduku di Nganga (Lamy and Ngangura, 1988), but most of his work was on documentaries about the state companies, such as the film *ONATRA*. Explaining further the information given by Tshitenge, the company had commissioned a mini-series of four documentaries on its work which incorporated the national railways, river transport and ports, and the ocean port. Kwami directed the films and Mieko worked as cinematographer on these productions, but his collaboration with Kwami was longstanding, as he worked on most of the director's films, including *Salongo* and *N'Gambo*. Mieko is still working at the RTNC, at the television's training school, where he teaches cinematography.

### **3.2.b.ii The 16mm library**

The compound of the RTNC in Kinshasa is a maze of corridors, bridges and empty rooms that make up three main buildings. Most famously, the tower, where the directors' offices are located and where, on the ground floor, all of the film archives are kept, accessible only from an outside staircase which brings one to a recreational area for the soldiers, along with a vegetable garden belonging to the army. The corridor adjacent to the archive room is occupied by a long line of camouflage camping beds. I was not able to take a picture of this set up as the ministerial permit I was given, specifically points out that it does not allow me to photograph any military outpost. It is upon this sight, and the impossibility of recording it, that one realises the structure is partly occupied by the army, and that surveillance over the media structure is just one of the tasks of their job. The military is present physically, because the barracks are in the compound and because the radio and television are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Information, but it also appears that the soldiers are at home throughout the facilities. The army's presence is visible throughout the compound, but this close connection between army, government and media does not disturb the journalists and management of the national broadcasting company, whose only complaint to me was that the soldiers steal the working air conditioners and other semi-valuable things they may find around the premises. Some of the air conditioners, and the miscellaneous parts stolen for repairs, were in the Cinémathèque, the 16mm film library. The heat, dust and humidity have been a constant for decades, and now the resulting destruction is not surprising but is still to be lamented, not in direct terms against the army, but as a feeling of resignation towards the general lack of organization in the country.



The Cinémathèque. Copyright Cecilia Zoppelletto, 2016

I was confronted with a large number of films ruined beyond restoration, and hundreds of films were missing. It is impossible to say at first glance how much of the national memory has been lost, but further research might attempt to quantify the damage. Due to the haphazard and fragmented indexing system over the years, it is difficult to piece together a historiography of the archive and to understand the events that created the interruption in the archive, or the loss of certain periods. To address the gaps in the archive, I sought to obtain first-hand accounts of the missing films, hoping that different testimonies could reveal further insight. The result of gathering this information is to have a first account knowledge of how film and its function were perceived in Zaire, and the establishment of the *Auftraggeber*, a national studio system, with a gamut of production and archival facilities. Most people I worked with were happy to participate by narrating their memories and helping to piece the story together, but they were reluctant to go on record with their stories. Having asked my hosts some information about what might have happened to the films, I was given a few different explanations, but as I took notes of their stories nobody wanted to go on record with their version of events. Years after the military takeover, the relationship with the state is one of fear and caution, although nobody appears to mind the physical presence of the military. In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants, I am reporting below the stories relating to the disruption of the archive that

were repeated to me in confidence by more than one source. The following historiography permits the understanding of how the people at the RTNC experienced the importance and loss of the country's film legacy, informing the sense of powerlessness that is displayed by the filmmakers in respect of their own work. The final input on the story of the archives was provided by Odia Oscar Tshifumba, who agreed with my taking notes and providing his name.

The first version, agreed by a few people, is an account of the summer of 1997 when, after the rebel coup carried out by Laurent Kabila to overthrow Mobutu, confusion reigned in the country and the national institutions were unsure who they should be taking orders from. Although the RTNC tried to carry on working as usual, one day, as a senior staff member of RTNC2 (formerly RENAPEC) recounted in detail, a group of people broke into the premises claiming to be officials of the new government. They were not wearing military uniforms nor were they brandishing weapons, and although they could have been just anyone off the street, my source explained that everyone was afraid of them and did not want to risk being singled out as uncooperative. The new government officials had very precise demands: to erase and destroy all films and television programmes about the Second Republic. In fact, the director recalled, the officials specifically ordered that all images of Mobutu were to be destroyed. To save their archive, the television staff promptly hid as many Umatic and VHS tapes as they could and pretended some were blank, but a large library had been destroyed and images lost for ever.

Another account of 1997, and the change of regime, was of pillage by workers and the population. The confirmation of this story came from a much younger source, who explained to me that at the time he had just started working for RTNC. His narrative of the chaos successive to the fallen government of Mobutu, includes the naiveté of the young employees like himself who were working on the premises. My source told me that he and his colleagues were not aware of the value of the films and when they were instructed to destroy everything, they used the films for all sorts of purposes and played with the film cans. The man explained that whilst the premises were being ransacked, it was a normal occurrence for him and his colleagues to play frisbee with the film cans in the courtyard by the archive. I had also asked about the participation of the population in the pillaging of the establishment, so he further explained that one of the common uses of film reels and Umatic strips was to make string curtains, and that, at the time, these curtains adorned most houses in the neighbourhood around the TV station. During our conversation, the technician told me with regret his acts of

vandalism, and his regret in the knowledge that he took part in the destruction of their archives because, at the time, he did not understand what they were doing. This story highlights the use of the films and their cans which is completely based on their materiality rather than on the content, showing that once the *Anlass* was perceived as being over, because the government that produced it fell, the film's only value was the material one. At the coup d'état of 1997, which marked the end of the life cycle of the *Auftraggeber*, *La Cité de La Voix du Zaïre*, the film object was understood as being meaningless by the *Adressat*, the people who were addressed by, and participated in, the *Authenticity* project, and, finally, as being dangerous by the new power.

These stories remark a clear pattern of the shift in the power given to the films. A further, but less defined, aggressive act of destruction of the archive was carried out by Olivier Kasongo, interim General Director of the RTNC in the late 1990s, who, during his short mandate, irreparably affected the fate of the library. I learnt of the incident as Odia Oscar Tshifumba, who witnessed it, told me the story during one of the days when we were working together at the archive. Tshifumba explained that, without any warning, Kasongo one day came to the RTNC and ordered that a large amount of the contents of the 16mm archives be burnt. Requiring further confirmation of this claim, I asked other employees on the sixth floor about this event, and they confirmed its veracity and retold it to me, still with a certain disbelief that one man, who held an interim position, could order such a definitive action, a destruction without any rationale. Some employees have justified the event by explaining that Kasongo had legitimate concerns. Some archivists had died from what was presumed to be chemical poisoning, and Kasongo thought that by burning the dangerous films he would simply eradicate the problem from the source. Unfortunately, due to the lack of information kept in the personnel archives, I was not able to establish the exact dates of Kasongo's mandate and could not establish if this happened before or after 1997, and therefore the fall of Zaire, possibly indicating a politically motivated action rather than a health concern.

These recounting of stories by various participants during the field work might lead us to believe that, up to 1997, the archives were kept with appropriate care and in a safe place, until the demise of Mobutu. These testimonies imply that as the Kabila government took hold of the country and all its institutions, the archives suffered an imposed regime of a manipulation of history which was combined with negligence, and that the remaining films and information available to us now are a reasonable consequence of these factors. These implications do not

take into consideration two important factors, the pillaging in September, 1991, and natural causes. The first relates to the incidents of 1991, when the Second Republic suffered

an astonishing week-long spree of looting and destruction by underpaid troops of the national army laid waste to major cities across the country. More than 200 people were killed. Much of the modern productive sector of the economy was destroyed. The sidewalks next to major military bases became thriving markets for looted goods (Berkeley, 1993).

The looting may have extended to the *La Cité de La Voix du Zaïre* and had a long-term effect on the archive's reliability. One of the accounts of the pillaging explains how the soldiers might have stolen anything that was perceived to have material value:

... the soldiers coming back from the city, bringing in fabrics, radios and televisions, computers, groceries, kitchen utensils. Those who had vehicles had taken cartons and cartons of goods: motorcycles, freezers, fridges, videos, clocks (Jewsiewicki, 1995, cited in Pongo, 1999, p.551).

Due to the length of time I spent in the RTNC compound and in having informal conversations with the participants, this gave them the opportunity to add further material from personal collections, such as pictures and a film script, constantly. One image in particular, given to me by Claude Mukendi, shows that large amounts of the archives were lost even when the archives were perceived to be fully functioning and modern. The black and white picture shows a group of directors and cameramen, standing in front of the archives and trying to rescue the film cans which they have salvaged from a flooded area. The picture was taken in 1973, and it shows that although some films were rescued, many cans were lost, and it is not known which films may have been amongst them. This example reminds us that, even in the years before what has been recounted as being the intentional destruction of films, many may have been lost to natural causes.



Written on the back “After the flood in the building, the filmmakers shelter the films 1973”. Photo courtesy of Claude Mukendi, private collection.

Presented with the complex state of the 16mm archives I needed to initially ascertain which films were still available on the premises and which films could be restored and digitised. I made a copy of the register, as there was only one paper copy available, and analysed the titles on the register to identify the films made post-independence. Some thirty films could be said to have been produced after 1960. I negotiated the structure and economics of a work plan with the RTNC’s directors. In order to access the material, and potentially to digitise it, it was necessary to second the demands of the RTNC, in terms of how they wanted to become involved in the digitisation process. The RTNC’s directors made it clear in our agreements that they were not to invest in any of the refurbishment of the equipment needed for the films’ cleaning and identification, nor with the payment for any of the manpower needed to carry out these operations. The same terms were set out for digitisation, which was not to be financed by RTNC. I was to deal directly with the RTNC employees assigned to me. I was told that the team of archivists and technicians, who were assigned by Director Kabongo, would be paid directly by me but, at the same time, they remained conscious of their role as employees of the national company. This meant that although they were not to interfere with my decision making, they would always safeguard RTNC’s interests and, in terms of their availability, they



were to work their normal office hours whilst, at the same time, being contracted by me. A verbal contract was established on mutual trust, entailing that I would comply with the requested fees and that the archivists' work would be carried out as fast and efficiently as possible. As a result of this understanding and financial commitment, I would be able to use all the information gathered for research or publishing.

### **3.2.b.ii.1 Identifying, finding and cleaning the films**

With the terms of work agreed, I worked on the process of identification and assessment. From the list of films that might be of interest that I had made from the register, we proceeded in trying to locate them in the archive room and, once some of them were found, we proceeded with an assessment of the films to establish which could be rescued, and if we could attempt to watch them. The second, very delicate stage was to repair the film winder and clean the films identified for screening, an operation which I was warned might result in losing more films. Finally, the third stage of the work plan was to repair the projector, which would culminate in a screening of the rescued films. There is no equipment in Kinshasa for digitising film, and the only solution we could find was to project the films and record the screening with my own equipment, in a makeshift telecine operation, allowing me to have a digital copy to take outside the country.

I was asked to purchase supplies for the operations, some of the items were: tape, scissors, chemicals, protective masks and gloves and powder to make forty litres of milk for the archivists' team to drink. It was explained to me that the archivists had learned the practice many years ago, and that each employee had to consume two glasses of milk per person per session, one before starting and one at the end of the session, in order to protect from the toxic chemicals of the old films, which seemed to be affected by vinegar syndrome.<sup>127</sup>

This type of work in the archives had been suspended for so long that nobody could quantify with certainty how many years had passed since a film had been cleaned. I asked what the archivists did during this time, as they were still full-time employees of the RTNC but, again,

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<sup>127</sup> Having enquired with David Walsh of The International Federation of Film Archives FIAF, and other archivists at the Indiana University Libraries Moving Image Archive IULMIA, I can confirm this is a site-specific practice which is has not been reported in any other world film archives.

there was no answer. Even though there was no direct answer, by observing the system and from some chance comments over the weeks that followed, this explained the inconceivable working environment. The management explains that there is no budget to maintain the Cinémathèque, therefore no work can be carried out. Deterring even further the archivists' goodwill to work there are the unsanitary working conditions, they feel unwell and their eyes hurt every time they visit the unhealthy environment. There are large white areas on the ceiling and on the floor of the archive room, and it is uncertain what this deposit may be, but it smelled as though it might be mould. There is an actual impossibility in carrying out the day-to-day tasks, but the archivists still come to work, despite their only being paid a salary when this is available. I was told salary availability is random.



Finding and eliminating films at the Cinémathèque. Copyright Cecilia Zoppelletto, 2016

The thirty films were identified within a two-week period, thirteen of these were considered to be in good enough condition to attempt to clean them. Due to their state of corrosion, four films did not survive the cleaning process. Three films were eliminated once they were cleaned as I was able to date them as films produced prior to independence. At this stage, we had cleaned and restored six films for projection. These are the titles and my translations of those titles: *La Visite de Mobutu au Japon* (*Mobutu's State Visit to Japan*), *Election de 1970* (*Elections of 1970*), *Cité du Parti à N'Sele* (*The Party's Headquarters in N'Sele*), *Communauté des Pays*

*des Grands Lacs (CPGL) (Association of the Great Lakes Countries (CGPL)), Defrichement à Kerenge (Reclamation of Kerenge), La Poterie Congolaise (Congolese Pottery).*<sup>128</sup>

The choice to further invest work and resources into the films was dictated chiefly by their titles, which alluded to the political and historical connotations of the productions. The two first titles, Mobutu's state visit and the film about the election of 1970, already carry strong connotations of film 'events' in the construction of Zaire. *Election 1970*, in particular, announces through its title a specific vision of the country, since it addresses an extraordinary time change in the history of the country and the introduction of the sole candidate election process. Discovering this film and digitising it allows us firstly to locate it in time, i.e., whether this film was made before or after the election. The archivists did not remember the film, nor its images, and therefore its rescue and release to travel to the UK was fundamental. It was noteworthy to observe that there was no particular interest in this title from the employees with whom I worked, nor were they capable of giving me any further information on the film. There was an evident disconnect between the apparent importance that I attributed to the film, and that demonstrated by the people who worked at the national archive. This film was later digitised at the University of Westminster, it is analysed in Chapter 4.

By contrast, the last two films, *Defrichement à Kerenge (Reclamation of Kerenge)*, *La Poterie Congolaise (Congolese Pottery)*, do not disclose much information just through reading their title. Without a data card or any information on the film can, their ambiguous titles meant that only by screening them we would be able to allocate them to a historical time. The film title that left more space for interpretation was *Congolese Pottery*. Although, after discussion with the archivists, it was agreed that it has the semantic connotations of an outsider's take on traditional crafts, the title might also refer to the independent years when the country was known as Congo, just before it was renamed Zaire in 1971. A similar title to *La Poterie Congolaise* can be found in the short film *La Poterie* (1972), by Benoit Lukunku-Sampu, which is listed in Guido Convents' book of Congolese film (Convents, 2006, p.271). It is with the same difficulty that we analysed the title *Defrichement à Kerenge (Reclamation of Kerenge)*, which presented similar problems in defining its production year. To avoid further speculation, both films had to be screened, and once these two films were digitised in London, I was able to date them to pre-independence.

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<sup>128</sup> My translations

The historiography work to decipher the era of the films through their titles had generated interest in the archivists, since everyone was trying to remember historic events, and filmmakers who worked on specific projects. These challenges to memory recollection while processing films, also involved the technical team who participated in achieving the next stage of work, which consisted of the screenings of the films.

Repairs to the only 16mm projector were made. This projector was not owned or purchased by the RTNC, but it was on loan from the Belgian cultural centre, Centre de Wallonie-Bruxelles, in Kinshasa. The employees could not remember how many years they had had the projector, but they explained that since its lamp had broken, they had not been able to return it. The projector was collected from storage, the lamp changed, but as soon as this was addressed, the technicians realised there was more work to be done. A lamp, a ventilator, and other parts, were changed on the original machine, with the hope of restoring it to full functioning. After a few weeks of unsuccessful attempts and many parts being bought multiple times, due to the lack of specialised retailers, and thus having to make do with similar parts, we had a test that indicated that there could be a projection. The next requirement was to find a place in which to carry out a screening.

### **3.2.b.ii.2 Screening the films**

The administration did not let the films leave the building, and so had to find a solution that provided a quiet room, with a clean surface, close to a reliable source of electricity. After a reconnaissance tour of the premises with Director Kabongo, we found that the quietest place, where the screening and recording would not be interrupted, would be the 5th floor's elevator landing. The fire doors could be closed so that no light came in, and because the elevator was not functioning there was no disturbance from people needing to use it, nor would there be any noise coming from the shaft. A single working neon light would be loosened from its tube, which was attached to the ceiling, in order to obscure the space just before projection, which would be projected onto a white sheet purchased for the project. The fire doors were closed, and the large sheet was nailed to them. On the other side of the landing, a desk was brought in, and we placed the projector on it. Electricity was brought in via a ten-metre extension lead. The projection raised the curiosity of many people who did not participate in the project, and

as we were getting ready to start the projection people gathered for the screening. The first film that was put onto the projector was *Communauté des Pays des Grands Lacs (CPGL)*. The light was loosened, and when the room was darkened, we saw the first images of a monologue from a man who seemed to be a politician or an authority, it is hard to say with precision, because the image was upside down, very faded, and his name was not readable. The images were discoloured and there was no sound. Another film was put on the projector and, again, there was no sound. We discovered then that the projector, which had been worked on for weeks, had issues with the sound.



Setting up for projection. Copyright Cecilia Zoppelletto, 2016

### **3.2.b.ii.3 Permission to transfer the films for digitisation**

As this was the only available projector there were no more possibilities for correcting the situation, and an urgent meeting was held with Director Kabongo and his team. The only solution that was found was to make an official request from the Department of the Ciné Médiathèque to Nicole Dimbangu Kitoko, CEO of RTNC, and to the Ministry of Information, to bring the films to London with the promise that these would be digitised and sent back. Kitoko replied positively, and added a recommendation to the Ministry.

Since presenting the then Minister of Information Lambert Mende Omalanga, with the request in August 2016, there had been a wave of political instability in the country due to the postponed presidential elections and the establishment of a new ministerial cabinet. Although the Minister resigned in November, 2016, a few weeks later he returned to his post. This uncertainty had stopped the effort to ship the films out of the country and, furthermore, whilst Minister Mende did not oppose the proposal in principle, as this involved the movement of national archives, he decided to seek advice on the matter from the Ministry's counsellors. The notion of these films belonging to the nation became paramount, and although Tshifumba had pressed for urgency on this matter, the Ministry was hesitant. The following year, in March, 2017, we received permission to ship the films out of the country, and this resulted in the digitisation of the films at the University of Westminster.

Whilst these developments occurred during research at the 16mm library and, later, the negotiation for the release of the films, research work continued in the other archives on the RTNC compound. One of these is the tape library, which is mainly in Umatic format.

### **3.2.b.iii The Umatic library**

The Umatic archives are not in the main tower building, but are kept in the more practical annexe, it is the building that houses some of the television and radio broadcasting studios. When I visited the building, works were under way to replace the windows that were shattered by the bullets of the failed coup d'état of December, 2013 (Reuters, 2013). Funds had been released during the summer of 2016 to erase the evidence of when, three years prior, the military was put under siege by a rebel group and the RTNC turned into a battle ground for a day. The bullet holes on the corridors' walls were still visible, and they ran along the walls all the way up the stairs to the third floor, where the archives are kept. Tshifumba, who on the day of the attempted coup was in the compound barricaded in his office, commented that progress was being made, but they were still unsure about when they would repair the walls and all the traces of that day would be erased.

The archive is kept in a simple but clean office, tapes have been stored for years in bookcases, and a large number of boxes that were lying against the walls. Not much action has been taken to catalogue the hundreds of tapes, therefore the first activity in this archive was to look through

all of the collection. As a result, we were able to find five tapes that indicated that they were produced during the relevant historical period. Thanks to the format in which the films were, and the technology available to us, the process from finding the tapes to leaving the country with the material entailed a more immediate and straightforward operation than that relating to the 16mm films. The tapes were readily converted from Umatic to VHS, as it was impossible to transfer them to a digital format, and I was given permission to travel with the VHS recordings.

The five tapes did not contain full recordings, but they appeared to have different sequences from various films and television broadcasts, almost as if the tapes were recorded repeatedly at disparate moments of the tape, or perhaps they were purposely recorded over at different stages. The material I could clearly identify, because their recording was continuous, were the following: *La Voix du Zaire et la Compagnie Maritime Zairoise* and *Gecamines*. These were two documentaries, the first on the national shipping company and the other on the national mining company. These films are analysed in Chapter 6. Unfortunately, I was not able to find the content which is labelled on one of the Umatic cases, it reads:

*Abeti (17/12/1983)*

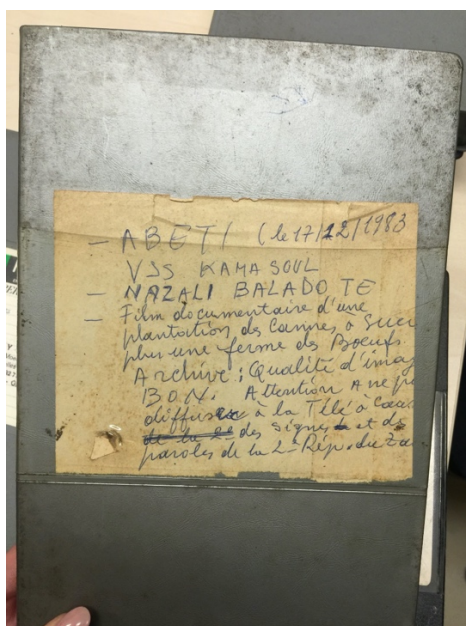
*VSS Kama Soul*

*Nazali Balado Te*

*Documentary film about a sugar cane plantation and a cattle farm*

*Archive: Good image quality*

*Warning, do not broadcast because of the symbols and words of the 2nd Republic Zaire*



The tape with 'unsuitable content for broadcast'. Copyright Cecilia Zoppelletto, 2016

The archivist clarified the significance of the card. Abeti was a filmmaker and TV show host in the '70s and '80s, and VSS Kama Soul was a guest on the Abeti show. *Nazali Balado Te* means “I am not a street child”, and I was told that it must have been the title of a ‘filmed theatre’ show. The recording I have from the transcoding to VHS, shows some images that might be part of an agricultural programme, but they are very difficult to distinguish. The image quality and audio disturbance make it impossible to understand whether this is indeed a documentary film that is not suitable for broadcast, or just a tape that needed an empty container, highlighting how, after the fall of Zaire, the films of that period have come to be only film material rather than images, symbols of the Second Republic, even though the previous archivists, who wrote the labels, were concerned with this aspect. Further to the films *per se*, as in this case, all the paper information that was related to the films was part of the research process, which was one of the reasons that lead me to investigate the material at the photo library.

### 3.2.b.iv The photo library

At the time of the field work in the DRC, this research was focused on tracing the Zairian ‘spirit’, both in documentary film and in the possible imagery of Zaire that might have been produced in drama films, but the material found until then, was made up of documentary films. Although I was told this reflected the drama-documentary production ratio of the time, there was still an attempt to find more data on location. I was informed that all productions from the



1960s to the 1980s had a stills photographer in the crew, which gave me hope that, despite the films having disappeared, the still photographs would be there to tell us the plot, give us some information about who was in the cast and crew, and any available detail on the *mise en scène*. The photo library is housed in the main tower building and it shares the same history as the 16mm library. The library has been ransacked, and empty folders now fill the filing cabinets.

Guided by the library's archivist, François Lisumbu, we located twelve contact sheets on the production of the drama film *Naissances Désirables* (1984) (*Desirable Births*), which was written and directed by Kwami. The hand-written notes on the top of the sheets indicate what might have been the working title, the film, in fact, was later known as *N'Gambo*. The story, which explores the issues of undesired pregnancies and illegal abortions, made for a very timely story and assured its success. The film won the Best Screenplay award at FESPACO in 1985 (Convents, 2006, p.282). The contact sheets, which cover the filming of three scenes on location, were shot by Director Kabongo who, at the time, was one of the official stills photographers on film sets. When I presented Kabongo with the contact sheets, he thought of introducing me to Pierre Mieko, the director of photography on the film, who had kept the original script of the film for over thirty years. There are no copies of the film at the RTNC. The film has been explained to me by Lisumbu and Kabongo as being a docu-fiction, or as an educational film. This research of the photo library was particularly helpful in explaining the kind of investigation I was undertaking and in helping to discover more indications as to who was still available to discuss the films with, therefore addressing the importance of the testimony component that is required by the archive.



Naissances Désirables (N'Gambo), 1984. Photo courtesy of RTNC.

### 3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has delineated the approach taken in researching the archive in order to reconstruct it and retrieve its meaning for the development of the ideology of Zaire and its narrative of decolonisation. It has served as a platform to study the relationship between the archive and its stakeholders (the filmmakers, the archivists and the institution) to further determine the *three As*, here is demonstrated how these began with the commissioning body or *Auftraggeber* of the *La Cité de La Voix du Zaïre*. I have traced the archival ethnography process to highlight how interviewing Mukendi, Kintenda, Massamba, Tshitenge and Miekio, contributed in giving a sense to the meaning the images once had for the *Adressat*, therefore the filmmakers and the audience, as well as to understand the meaning these have now acquired. As Cherchi Usai explained:

moving images produced outside the world of fiction give identity to the viewing experience as fragments of empirical evidence, but they can prove nothing unless there is some explanation of what they are (Usai, 2001, p,31).

The guidance of the interviewees assists in proving the existence of a Zairian *Medienverbund* therefore a network of film events of Zaire which has shaped the culture of the Second Republic. The *Anlass*, or purpose of the films, is exposed by the filmmakers and archivists themselves as well as showing what the current state of the archive means to them. These

notions inform the analyses of the films in the following chapters because they explain how the films might have been described in the past thereby allowing for an understanding of the films as events which created a Zairian 'spirit'.

## CHAPTER 4

### *ELECTION 1970*

#### New politics and the traditional Chief

*Film has the capacity to convey what freedom feels like,  
what equality feels like and what democracy sounds like*  
Robert Stam (Stam et al., 2015 p13)

#### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the content of the available footage of the film *Election 1970* and will explore its contribution to creating a recognisable Zairian imagery. The film, as explained in Chapter 3, was found in the 16mm archive of the RTNC in Kinshasa. When I first identified the film, by looking at the film reel and the cardboard box in which it was contained, there was no information available to help us ascertain whether the film was made before or after the election. This was an important factor to understand the film's *Anlass*, in other words if the production were engineered to reassure the population about the historical change as they were preparing to vote for a single candidate, or if the film was made after the election to celebrate the victory of the candidate and commend the population for their correct choice. The archivists did not remember the film, nor its images, and therefore its rescue and its release in order to take it to the UK for digitisation was fundamental. As a result of the digitisation process, carried out at the post-production facilities of the University of Westminster, this documentary film was rescued from further deterioration and is now accessible in a digitised Standard Definition copy. Due to the archive environment at the RTNC, which was explained in Chapter 3, the film has lost its past original black and white sharpness, but it still shows a critical episode in Congolese history through extremely grainy images. The images have turned green and cream,

and the audio is often distorted due to the atmospheric agents of tropical weather that have damaged the reel. The scenes reveal that this film does not document the first election that took place in the country, as the title might lead us to believe. Instead, the film is an educational tool with which to prepare the population for the country's first presidential election.<sup>129</sup> The images show an enactment of voting with visual explanations of the process of voting, which was to be broadcast on national television and screened in the country's cinema theatres. This film's value is not only in its capture of a bygone era, the available images of which had been predominantly recorded by other countries, but in showing the government's projection of the nation's future and the beginning of the country's cultural transformation from being Congolese into becoming Zairian. To explore the film's relevance in producing this cultural shift, in terms of 'film as event' in the *Mediaverbund* of the nation of Zaire, I analyse the filmic text in relation to concern with the ways in which it embeds notions of citizenship, how it promotes the idea of equality in a previously segregated colonial society, and how the philosophies of the post-colony relied on 'new' concepts of tradition as central to the formulation of a Zairian identity. In order to engage with the significance of the imagery produced by the film, I provide an accurate description of the content, as there are no accessible copies of the film nor is there any known literature on this film.

The chapter is structured in the following subsections: 'Film data and synopsis', which gives a full description of the film by defining how it develops its two main functions through a *conceptual section* and a *procedural section*. These two distinct aims of the film provide a contextual frame for the narrative that is carried by the film. Further, the section entitled 'Citizenship on-screen' attempts to identify the leading theme of the film and how, through the definite imagery of the acquisition of citizenship, it promotes the formulation of the viewers' sense of self and nation. These formulations of the audience and of the voters are explored through Achille Mbembe *On the Postcolony* (2001), as decolonising elements that are in opposition to colonial oppression. The following section, 'Equality and inclusivity', investigates how the concept of democracy is portrayed on film by differentiating and separating genders whilst advocating equality. Lastly, this chapter addresses the theme of tradition, which is proposed by the film in the section entitled 'Coining tradition'. It looks at

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<sup>129</sup> The first general elections were carried out in May 1960, before independence when the country was still known as the Belgian Congo. "Voting was compulsory for all 'male citizens of Congolese status'; but in order to be qualified for registration, the voters had to be at least twenty-one years of age, and domiciled in the constituencies for at least six month"(Lemarchand, 1964, p.216).

the early notions of tradition elaborated by the Second Republic in its political discourse and portrayed in this film, which was later used by the MPR to introduce and promote *Authenticity*.

#### 4.1 Film data and synopsis

Film Title: *Election 1970*  
Year of Production: 1970  
Format: 16mm, black and white  
Duration: reel 1, 17'03'' - reel 2, not found  
Producer: RTNC - Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise  
Scriptwriter: S. Tshitenge N'Sana

Commissioned in anticipation of the country's first general election, the film was produced by the RTNC, Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise. Although the director of the film is not listed in the opening credits, it is possible to attribute the work to the scriptwriter S. Tshitenge N'Sana. Already the director of a few documentaries, not all of his roles in the film would have been acknowledged, as working in the RTNC production environment was somewhat flexible, and a person would have carried out multiple roles and would not necessarily have been credited for all of them. This situation was extended to most television camera operators who, at times, were working also as directors and scriptwriters on a single production (Zoppelletto, 2016e).

The documentary, educative in its language and narrative structure, was produced as a visual guide to voting. Once the film was digitised it became apparent that the film is incomplete. At the end of the film reel, the Minister's voice-over graphics finish in mid-sentence, making it apparent that a second part of the film existed and that possibly poor archival practice has resulted in its displacement. The film found fits neatly into the original rusty aluminium reel can that it was found in, leading us to believe that the rest of the documentary was not intentionally cut off but, rather, that a second reel with the continuation must have existed. This supposition in contrast to the physical evidence in Kinshasa. In the handwritten film register found in the archives, only one reel and one copy of *Election 1970* are listed, giving rise to the possibility that part of the film was cut, and the original was transferred onto a smaller reel.

The film available to us reveals a structure that is divided into two primary segments: the first dedicated to the explanation of the concept of an election; and the second to demonstrate the mechanical process of voting. The two distinctive functions of the film, which I will refer to as the *conceptual section* and the *procedural section*, take place in different environments, and they are alternated in the overall narrative. Immediately following the opening credits, we are immersed in the *conceptual section*, with a piece to camera by the Minister of Information, Sakombi, which tries to elucidate the notion of an election and its definition. The opening monologue introduces the viewer to the Latin word *eligere*, its significance and its meaning as a political institutional process. Minimalistic graphics with the Minister's voice-over demonstrate its functions: legislative, administrative and jurisdictional. The segment is filmed at a studio location with a very basic interior set, dressed with a table that the Minister uses to sit either on top of or behind it. The background is a white set with two side panels painted in abstract art. Hanging on top of the left panel there is a poster that reads "31<sup>st</sup> October 1<sup>st</sup> November Election of the President". The right panel has both a poster that reads "Election Political Institution" and a large photograph of President Mobutu.

The filming appears to be shot with one camera on a tripod, with a range of wide shots, medium long shots and medium close ups. The footage incorporates different camera techniques, including zooms followed by panning, which creates movement, but, overall, the film presents a static composition and aesthetic.



Sakombi Inongo, *Election 1970*. Copyright RTNC.

The same framing is used for the second studio set, representing a polling station, where the *procedural section* occurs. This is the demonstrative part of the narrative. The studio appears to be a banqueting hall that has been transformed into a film set, with props that appear in an elegant but unfussy way, similar to how the polling stations would look. It is a large area, with plain curtains around the perimeter, and in which a central focus has been created by a long table where officials carry out their administrative job. The long table, simple like the Minister's, accommodates three persons. In the middle, the President of the polling station (this title is given to him in the voice-over narration) sits, and by his side sit the two officers, called assessesurs (Assessors), and a witness. This last role is announced by the President of the polling station, who addresses him by calling him "citoyen témoin du parti", citizen witness of the party.

Behind the group of officials there are two tall white panels, one reading "Vote Green" and the other "31<sup>st</sup> October 1<sup>st</sup> November Election of the President", but in this studio set there are no images of Mobutu. In front of the table, there are two smaller tables, each has a small ballot box placed on top of it, one marked "Hommes" (men) and the other marked "Femmes" (women). The assessors are called by the President and sworn in by him in order to carry out their duties. This action includes real-time footage of listening to them confirm their honesty and profess that they will keep the secrecy of the votes. The President further calls upon the witness to check that the ballot boxes are empty, at this request, the witness and two officers walk to the ballot boxes, where the two officers pick up each box and tilt them for the citizen to approve them and confirm their lawfulness.





The Assessors, the President of the polling station and the Witness. *Election 1970*. Copyright RTNC.

In its function as an educational film, the narrative is exhaustive; and to explain both the significance of election as well as how the process works, it demonstrates and comments the full voting procedure, without any cuts or supplementary commentaries that might divert the viewer from the mechanical action.

There is a third shooting location of exterior shots, which are supposed to represent the outside of the polling station. There, the footage shows people arriving at the polling station and waiting in orderly queues. This arrival scene is shot with a camera held steady, with people walking towards it. The two queues formed, one by men and one by women, are filmed with a moving camera panning in close-up to show the continuation of the people gathered.

The *procedural section* of the narrative cuts sporadically from interior studio set and the outside location to create a visually interesting sense of dynamic, which is not achieved with the static camera work. The interior space is used to show the voting process, where we see and hear people registering to vote, whereas the exterior location footage serves to show civic order. The sequence explaining the voting procedure is not voiced over and directed at the audience, instead, the voting system is elucidated by the President of the polling station and the Assessors directly to the voters in the film. The protocol is always the same, explained in French to one voter and in Lingala to the next. The President and the Assessors show the voting cards to the

voters in the film and still images, as cutaways of the cards, are provided for the viewers to show their appearance.

The sequence reveals the voting cards as offering two available choices. The envelope contains two cards, a green card with a photograph of the President on the top right-hand corner; the second card, a red one, is without a picture. In other words, a positive (green) elects Mobutu for President, with the second card (red) signifying a non-vote for the current government. With the voter having chosen, the corresponding card is put in an envelope and into the ballot box. The voice-over narration comments on the still image of a green voting card marked with a diagonal line, to introduce the different appearance of the cards allocated to women.

Footage of voters casting their vote, edited linearly, is followed by footage of a woman arriving to vote and guiding a blind man. The President of the station explains to the lady and the blind man that they are both present since the blind man has chosen the lady to be a person of confidence who will carry out the vote on his behalf and will not use the vote to express her own voting choice. This action sequence is explained both in Lingala and in French, unlike the previous voting examples which were explained in a single language. The first voter, a woman, was spoken to in French, and the second, a man, was inducted into voting in Lingala.

The final available sequence returns to the *conceptual segment* and is filmed in the studio mentioned earlier, with Minister Sakombi. The Minister explains what the outcome of voting means and how the result is calculated. There are a few on-screen graphics to help his explanations, one of them reads “absolute majority = Half + 1”, which is then followed by column graphs of majority ‘yes’ votes, and a second one of majority ‘no’ votes.<sup>130</sup> The sequence of graphs is voiced over by the Minister, but the script is completely incomprehensible during this segment as the reel is badly damaged and it is interrupted by the abrupt end of the reel.

## 4.2 Citizenship on-screen

The ideas of decolonisation proposed by the Second Republic, and stipulated in the N’Sele Manifesto, claim to advance a revolution which will be “respectful of all democratic freedoms”

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<sup>130</sup> My translation. Original text: “majorité absolue = Moitié +1 ”

and which will permit “the exaltation of the country’s values in the intellectual and cultural domain” (Mouvement populaire de la Révolution (Zaïre). Comité Central, 1984, p.6).<sup>131</sup> These two assertions are presented in the ideas of the general election of 1970 as being representative of the introduction of national democratic freedom, as well as belonging to the nation’s particular cultural values by bringing the people to express their vote in their capacity of citizens of the independent nation. Representations of citizenship are embedded in the film text to actively respond to the needs of the post-independence period. Pertinent to this are the writings of Achille Mbembe, particularly in the book *On the Postcolony* (2001), as an exploration of the societal atmosphere and political ideologies of the time. I take into consideration the explanation of the colonial past that is proposed by Mbembe in a chapter *Of Commandement* (Mbembe, 2001) as a basis from which to understand the cultural frame inhabited by the people of Congo who, at the time, began the journey towards a recognised citizenship, as its expression is captured by its enactment in this film. *Of Commandement* explains the principles of violence utilised by colonial powers to maintain sovereignty, these can be used to understand how, in the instance of *Election 1970*, the acquisition of one’s own sovereignty through the process of voting is presented as being liberating, although it conceals the new authority of the MPR and Mobutu.

The Congolese were called in 1970, by the head of their own government, to acquire an intellectual and social independence endowed with the vote, in an effort to overcome the emotional and social effects brought by colonial subjugation. Only ten years prior to the national election, Congolese men, women and children were subjects to the foreign nation. The first transition to independence came in June, 1960, after the Belgian government allowed the Belgian Congo (1908-1960), still under their vigilance, to have a general election. It took place in May, 1960, but only men over the age of twenty-one who had lived in the same constituency for more than six months, were allowed to vote, and Patrice Lumumba was elected prime minister (Lemarchand, 1964). The second transition occurred when the government of the Second Republic was established by Joseph-Désiré Mobutu’s coup d’état, and Mobutu claimed to fight for the intellectual and economic freedom of his people. It can be said that the suggestion of an intellectual freedom was reinforced for the population in October, 1970, when

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<sup>131</sup> My translation. Original text: “dans le respect des libertés démocratiques”, “exaltation des valeurs du pays dans le domaine intellectuel et culturel”

the President introduced the political action of voting to all the people of Congo, enabling them to express their independence and sovereignty as well as their right to citizenship.

After the colonial experience, this sense of personal right and maturity in voting was a distinctively meaningful step. To address the people's experience of being the subjects of the Belgian Congo, which followed the customs of the colonial *modus operandi*, and therefore the "intrinsic unconditionality that may be said to have been the distinctive feature of colonial sovereignty" (Mbembe, 2001, p.26 ) we can refer to the explanation of the colonial system by Mbembe. He attributes to colonialism a ruling force acquired with a combination of types of violence, a founding violence, its legitimisation and, finally, a specific imaginary that allowed the violence to be perpetuated. These expressions of violence rested upon the creation of the image of "the native the prototype of the animal" (Mbembe, 2001, p.26).

Mbembe further analyses this colonial oppression as stemming from two traditions. The first, falls within the Hegelian tradition, where the so-called native is a being completely unrelated to the coloniser. This distance produces a relationship which does not evolve, and because it is preordained, it can only result in domination, since there is only one possible dynamic between the two people. The colonised is not a human being but, rather, a commodity item associated with the colony, whose utility is expressed with his or her forced labour, which realises the colonial project.

He/she was a tool subordinated to the one who fashioned, and could use and alter, him/her at will. As such, he/she belonged to the *sphere of objects*. They could be destroyed as one may kill an animal, cut it up, cook it, and, if need be, eat it. It is in this respect that, in the colony, the body of the colonized was in its profanity, assimilated to all other things (Mbembe, 2001, p.27)

Being used as labour does not make the person visible as a human, and therefore s/he is perceived as being dispensable, not precious, as the abundance of population is a constant provider of 'items' for productivity.

The second tradition exposed by Mbembe is Bergsonian, where the close living proximity of colonizer and 'native' gives the opportunity for sympathy to arise, where affection is possible but develops solely in terms that can be likened to an exchange between man, the coloniser and the animal, a 'native' who, in this exchange, is domesticated.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> In this chapter I refer to Mbembe's use of the term 'native', which is explained with the following: "Under

Through the relation of domestication, the master of mistress led the beast to an experience such that, at the end of the day, the animal, while remaining what he/she was – that is, something other than a human being – nevertheless actually entered into the world of his/her master/mistress. This was, however, only possible after a process of grooming. The colonizer might inculcate habits in the colonized...(Mbembe, 2001, p.27)

This second tradition of power sees, therefore, the coloniser who, accustomed to the presence of the ‘native’, develops an affection as if s/he were an animal, existing, but belonging to a less worthy living species. The colonised then grooms him/her and imparts his/her own world of superiority as the righteous one, which is returned with servitude by the ‘native’ (Mbembe, 2001, pp.26-27).

Both ideas of abuse and violence, one in the act of domination and the other in the act of grooming, achieve the same end by dehumanising the subject. Through this definition, we can recognise Belgium’s mechanism for the subjugation of the population, in their own native land, so that they think of themselves simultaneously in terms of the product of the Belgian imperial project and as the producer of the colony’s assets or products. It is clear from Mbembe’s writing that under neither of these two circumstances are the colonised accepted as human beings with a voice, whose existence needs to develop a system for his/her own flourishing. The colonial perspective which oppressed the population bases its legitimacy on the idea that the dehumanised subject has no power of decision and so is incapable of wishing for personal fulfilment. From this viewpoint, which allowed the whole system to function, the colonised was not a human being with a voice. His/her existence was oppressed so that the possibility to develop a personal system for his/her own flourishing and happiness would not be contemplated. The existence and *raison d’être* of the colonised was reduced to a betterment possible solely by domestication, as suggested by Mbembe, and therefore to the annihilation of his/her own personality.

As part of the colonial project, put in place to achieve domestication, there was also language. As a colony, the Belgian Congo, was a French speaking state with French as the official language. With no choice other than adopting the language under the direction of Belgian rule,

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colonization, the object and the subject of *commandement* combined in a single specific category, the native. Strictly speaking, the “native” is one born in the country under discussion. As such, the term is close to another, *indigène* – that is, a “son of daughter of the soil”, not someone who has settled as a result of immigration or conquest” (Mbembe, 2001, p28)

the peculiarities of the formalities of language became further ways to subjugate the Congolese population.<sup>133</sup> Firstly, in terms of using French in schools and therefore projecting the coloniser's language as the superior one for education, and then by using the language to further accentuate a social difference between the coloniser and the colonised. A linguistic device for the objectification of the Congolese was the use of the word 'you', which can be translated in French with both *vous* and *tu*. The formal *vous*, was never used to address the Congolese who, instead, were always called *tu*, the informal alternative (Lumumba, 1960). This form of 'you' is used traditionally by an older person speaking to a younger one, or from a person of higher social standing to one of lower standing. *Tu* can also be used between people of same or different generations that are of similar rank or who share a certain level of intimacy, usually friends. However, as there was no friendship between the colonised and the coloniser, *tu* and *vous* were used to further define the relationship of master and object, or product, of the colony. Lumumba admonished this form of linguistic oppression with his independence speech on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1960: "Who will forget that to a black man one said 'you' [tu], not as a friend, but because the honourable 'You' [vous] was reserved for whites only!" (Mbu-Mputu, 2010, p.265).<sup>134</sup> Language contributed to the enduring power structure inherent to this period. Ten years after independence, *Election 1970*, a state-sponsored information documentary, establishes a new institutional language and a vocabulary of the appropriation of power, capturing the ideas of election and the right to citizenship.

The Congolese population had endured an eighty-year colonial relationship with Belgium, which saw them as replaceable parts of a production system, ordered, groomed and dehumanised by Belgian rule. The elections devised in 1970 by Mobutu addressed a different perspective for the Congolese person and society, who were given a humanised representation. With the general elections, the Congolese population, were given the right and obligation to vote as independent people. With an orchestrated performance of modern governance, Mobutu introduced the population to the electoral system, presenting them with the tangible and visible recognition of their humanity in its foremost expression of citizenship.

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<sup>133</sup> Further reading, Michael Meeuwis *The origins of Belgian colonial language policies in the Congo* (Meeuwis, 2011)

<sup>134</sup> My translation. Original text: "Qui oubliera qu'a un noir on disait 'Tu', non certes comme à un ami, mais parce-que que le 'Vous' honorable était réservé aux seuls blancs!"

As a primary outcome, this film depicts an actualisation of Mobutu's political project, which was at first expressed with the appellations of *Citoyen* and *Citoyenne*, as discussed in Chapter 1, a postcolonial renaming practice expressing an ideological rebellion from the Monsieur and Madame that had been imposed by the Francophone system. Furthermore, it delivers a second outcome, by enabling a more transcendental effect in providing a visible affirmation of the human being as a valued person in society. By introducing the meanings and the practice of the electoral system, *Election 1970* develops this idea throughout its narrative, in the script with the new appellatives, and with the use of both French and Lingala, together with the visual language. The introduction of Lingala into the national discourse in the film opens up the affirmation of a native vernacular in the place of institution and formality. The choice of Lingala as the preferred language, of the four official national languages, was related to both historical and practical reasons.<sup>135</sup> Lingala is Congo's *lingua franca*, and it was developed for commerce on the river. It is a simple language which was principally spoken in the capital, where people of all tribes have converged. Historically used by the military and spoken by soldiers coming from all regions of the country, "Lingala also indexes power and authority, and because it is the language of the capital city it can also stake a claim to urban sophistication"(Coupland, 2016, p.421).

From the opening scenes of the film the conceptual idea of citizenship is demonstrated through the piece to camera by the Minister of Information, Sakombi.<sup>136</sup> With institutional reassurance he addresses the audience to explain the electoral system as an achievement of empowerment through choice, and especially of personal fulfilment: "Election comes from the Latin word *eligere*, which means to choose. The right to choose one's own way of life...Where man is both the starting point and the culmination of his social activities" (N'Sana, 1970, TC 00.28).<sup>137</sup> This definition is spoken with authority by the well-dressed Congolese man, in a dark suit, promising empowerment to the people with their vote, and it breaks at its core the image of the

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<sup>135</sup> "With more than 220 different languages identified within its borders, Congo is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Africa"(Gondola, 2002)

<sup>136</sup> As this film was produced in 1970, the appointment of Minister was still used and will become State Commissioner for National Guidance only in 1972. Therefore this chapter will refer to his role and the department with the term Ministry.

<sup>137</sup> My translation. Original script: "Élection viens du mot latin Eligere, qui signifie choisir. Le droit de choisir sa propre voie de vivre...Où l'homme constitue aussi bien le point de départ que l'aboutissement de ses activités sociales."

*indigène*<sup>138</sup>, who, as a dehumanised subject, did not have any power of decision and so was not expected to wish for personal fulfilment or the culmination of social activities.

Sakombi's image on the screen, representing the establishment and civic accomplishment, is in juxtaposition to the imagery of colonisation, which was present until ten years before the film was produced. During Belgian colonial rule, Congolese citizens were prohibited by the Belgian colonial administration from assuming any civil servant role in the country (Brausch, 1961, p.24). The new image of the national and postcolonial politician that is embodied by Sakombi, and his clear on-camera statement, implicitly invite the population to join in civic duty and acquire membership of the country. The civic duty to vote, and therefore to choose, is proposed in the film as a recognition of the person, who is being encouraged to form a social and individual identity. In 1970, the national identity in formation is that of Congo, but with the resulting elections and Mobutu's free reign, the country was re-defined in 1971 with the advent of *Authenticity*, and it was re-construed as *Zaire*.

Sakombi, the person in a position of authority, is exemplary of change, which he represents, as well as the everyday people depicted by the film who participate in this change, the decolonisation process which the N'Sele Manifesto addresses as revolution. The manifesto lists as an immediate objective of the MPR "the improvement of individual well-being" (Mouvement populaire de la Révolution (Zaïre). Comité Central, 1984, p.5). The discourse of the individual, and therefore the person, is presented by the film as one of the ways in which it assumes the wider vision as a 'development film'. In the more demonstrative sequences of the film, in the *procedural section*, the President of the polling station greets people coming in to vote with the customary expression *Citoyen* and *Citoyenne*, the process follows by registering their names, and then asks them to go to the booth and cast their vote. This routine operation becomes significant when addressing one of the voters, the polling station President reminds him what to do in the booth: "in all consciousness you will choose the card that you will vote" (N'Sana, 1970, TC 00.38).<sup>139</sup> The use of the word 'consciousness' implies that the person is

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<sup>138</sup> Racialised term used by the colony to refer to the indigenous population, *indigène* means *native* (Zoppelletto, 2015). Mbembe explains the term in the *Postcolony*: "Strictly speaking, the 'native' is one born in the country under discussion. As such, the term is close to another indigene- that is, a 'son or daughter of the soil', not someone who has settled as a result of immigration or conquest. In colonial political vocabulary, this description was applied to colonial subjects in general, all natives making up no more than what Albert Sarraut spoke of as that 'unformed clay of primitive multitudes' from which colonisation's task was to shape 'the face of a new humanity'" (Mbembe, 2001, p.28)

<sup>139</sup> My translation. Original script: "Et c'est là dans toute conscience vous allez choisir la carte que vous allez



acknowledged as a human being, a substantial change in the relationship between the country's institutions and the people. These images can be considered a 'film event' which contributed in the construction of a revolutionary imagery of decolonisation, since they represent a change of depiction, where women and men are respected citizens, not objectified possessions of the colonial system that even in 1958 displayed them in the last human zoo (Prendergast and Bafilemba, 2018).<sup>140</sup> The language, specifically in the word *Citoyen*, is then endorsed by the visual language, as we see voters smiling after having cast their vote. From the educational images of learning how to vote the film takes an emotional undertone, as we can see their joy, expressed as being a state in which human beings develop into citizens and testify membership to the nation.

The transformation through the act of voting is emphasised visually, as all of the people come into the polling station as unknowns, they are part of a crowd. Inside the polling station, the voters' backs are to camera and very little about them is visible, all it is possible to gather from this framing of the scene is their gender, as when they are registering there is no reverse shot. The process of voting is formal and is filmed in full, the slow development of the registration starts with the President receiving the voter card from the person, and it continues with a long protocol of checks, finally indicating that the voter should proceed to the booth. Then this instruction is followed by a short sequence of men and women putting their votes inside the ballot box. It is only at this point that the sequence, accompanied by seventies' electronic music and edited with cutaways of hands reaching for the box, reveals also the faces of the voters and their happiness whilst carrying out the action. The sequence creates a musical counterpoint to the institutional images; it is dramatic, with its use of a modern soundtrack and the fast cutting of images of women and men showing their humanity through personal expression. The formerly colonised, passive servant or object of the state is now shown to participate independently with joy. The shift in imagery is very subtle, due to the film's aesthetic conventions, which are appropriate to the educational documentary genre, but it constitutes a linear narrative that shows a mass of people having become registered citizens, participating in the country's future. This film reflects the mode of 'development filmmaking' in its documentary style, but mainly in terms of its contribution to the advancement of the principles of decolonisation and nation building.

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voter"

<sup>140</sup> Further reading on the objectification of the Congolese population Pamela Newkirk *Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga* (Newkirk, 2015)

As a result of the nature of this mode of filmmaking, which helped the government in its mission, the images are edited to solely convey the positivity of the system and to present the modernity of the 'democratic' structure that has been put in place by the MPR. One of the possible preoccupations arising from this election was the legitimacy of the one-party system, but because the film's production is linked to the government and its specific plans for the emancipation of the country, the film's contribution and participating activism would have been used to help to establish the legality of the government's actions, and especially of the election. In this respect, Election 1970 can be said to be a 'film event' also in the manufacturing of the legitimacy of the Second Republic, which happened through the years and by the establishment of different policies. In his first years in power, Mobutu was on a ruthless mission to eliminate any opposition from the members of the First Republic (1960-1965), which began with the first hangings in 1966, which were followed by systematic imprisonments and further threats of public hangings. The forceful control of power meant that people were afraid of the regime (Reybrouck, 2014, p.340). Despite the dictatorial regime being supported by the USA and IMF to help contain Soviet influence in the area (Diamond, 2009, p.113), the country had to demonstrate the validity and fairness of all its actions, amongst these there was, of course, the veracity of its electoral system. The validity of the electoral system did not stand only as part of the acquisition of power by the MPR government but, at the same time it represented a particular concept of citizenship which, if doubted, would have undermined the concept of decolonisation in which people were participating. This is how this film participates both as 'film event' in authoritarianism, and in the discourse of decolonisation.

One of the main issues with an electoral process is the possibility of rigging votes, and this film actively responds to the possible scepticism of an election run by what had been defined as an authoritarian government. The idea of the secrecy of the vote is asserted at every opportunity in the film, serving to reassure the voter that every aspect of this process, which they had never experienced before and were therefore unable to compare with other systems, would be legal. At the same time, it builds a narrative of legality as one of the many founding elements of the new democracy, a democracy created by the government with the voter. The repetitive use of footage of the Assessors and President of the polling station, checking all the registration paperwork, and the Witness checking the empty ballot box, creates a validity for the protocol. More than teaching the future voting public what to expect, it also gives an opportunity to the public to see that they can denounce the possible malfunctioning of a polling station, involving

them in the ritual. The film enhances the idea of the solemnity of citizenship by giving the voter a monitoring power. The citizen is called to participate with the government to this change, which is, in one respect, a procedural function of the vote and, at the same time, a philosophical acceptance of a single candidate election.

The same gravity in the role is shown in relation to the Assessors at the polling stations who, when introduced by the voice-over, are then asked by the President of the station to swear an oath. The film contains the complete process, since both assessors, one after the other, are called to stand and raise their hands for the ceremonial adjuration. The oath is taken by reading out loud a piece of paper on the table, which is then returned and signed by the President, who remits it to the Assessors as a certifying proof. There is no sanctity attached to the oath, as it involves only a script, and there is no Bible.

The construction of this segment is uncomplicated in its form as it is filmed in real time, and the action is not cut in order to speed up the process for the viewer. The first Assessor is followed by the second, who is filmed going through the same unaltered operation. The scene is slow, but it is exact in its repetition and because the editing is not made dynamic by the addition of close ups and cutaways, it gains a quality that can be described as liturgical in its effect. The strength of the segment in delivering the importance of its message is its rhythmic duplication. The images, which are accompanied solely by diegetic sound, acquire an institutional validity reinforcing the idea that it is a public information film. The scrupulous performance of the new Congolese democracy, and the economical sobriety of the scene, are reflected on its actors, who are performing a civic duty on camera.

The association between the people's civic duty and the President, who has put in place the electoral structure by allowing it, is constructed visually by astute framings of the performance of the pledge to the institution and, consequently, to Mobutu. When the first officer stands, his hand raised to take the oath, the film frame has him in shot with the slogan panel behind him, the slogan that reads "Vote Green". The image of Mobutu is absent from this set in the polling station and his portrait hangs only in Sakombi's studio, where the *conceptual section* of the film is shot. This choice proposes Sakombi's duty and loyalty as a representative of the MPR and of Mobutu's government, meanwhile, in the polling-station set, an appearance of freedom given to the voters. They, and the viewers, are not reminded of President Mobutu, as they approach the voting booth where they will be alone with their 'conscience'. However, the

suggestion about whom to vote for is already present in the slogans, they encourage the voters vote green, meaning that they should continue to support the MPR, which was already ruling the country, as opposed to red, which meant not supporting the party. By 1970, Mobutu had become, in the collective understanding, the saviour of the country, for having halted the Congo Crisis, which caused thousands of deaths between 1960 and 1965, as well by bringing political unification to the country in the late 1960s (Bobb, 1989, p.148). This created a special relationship between the party and its leader, as well as the leader and the population. The population may have accepted that Mobutu could be ruthless with the opposition, but with the understanding that, in this way, he was able to assure the wellbeing of all Congolese, in other words, as a tough security measure that might protect the nation (Smith, 2015). The popular belief that the single party system was in place for the good of the country, by avoiding the possibility of falling into widespread chaos and revolt, may have also secured the acceptance of the peculiar single party election of 1970. It can be argued that it functioned on the concept that a country with many tribes and specific regional demands, recovering from bloody secessions in Katanga and South Kasai, should be entrusted to one leader. Mobutu used film as an opportunity to communicate a political persona that could facilitate dialogue and appease differences, but the truth was different, those who dared to protest risked government retaliation. The MPR responded with “imprisonment, physical and psychological torture, assassinations, poisonings, professional dismissals, banishment of students, arbitrary closing of universities, deportations within the country, kidnappings, disappearances and so on” (Nelson, 1995, p.80). These were methods that were understood to secure the peace and unity of a potentially divided country. This notion of an authoritarian peacekeeper was promoted by the regime throughout its existence, by promoting the imagery of Mobutu as the Father of the Nation. His stronghold on the country became ever more rigid, and “Abuse of political power and co-optation became the hallmark of Mobutu’s regime”(Gondola, 2002, p.135). This hard line waned as the country succumbed to another economic crisis and Mobutu had to face internal and external pressure, which resulted in the legitimization of the opposition parties. On the 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1990, Mobutu, in a famous televised speech that saw him in tears, lifted the ban on opposition parties by declaring his historic decision “Alone, before my conscience, I have considered trying again the experience of political pluralism in our country with, at its roots,

the principle of political freedom for each citizen to join the political formation of his choice” (Mobutu, RTNC, 1990).<sup>141</sup>

Mobutu’s government was criticised, especially by insiders who fled in the 1970s<sup>142</sup>, and one of the few opposing accounts of the regime and its strategies is available in the politically accusatorial book *Un avenir pour le Zaïre* (1985), written by an exiled Prime Minister of Zaïre, Nguza Karl I Bond, who gave a different reading of the situation.<sup>143</sup> In explaining the party’s rise to power and the advancement of the single party government, Nguza noted that the MPR’s strategy was based on a false claim. The MPR claimed that the forty-four parties were at the core of social unrest and the civil war, and therefore the single party was the only feasible solution. Nguza responds to this misconception, noting that this multitude of parties only existed at the time of independence, and by the time Mobutu took hold of the country through the coup d’état of 1965, there were only two main parties. REDECO, *Rassemblement Démocratique Congolais*, which was founded by the Binza ‘intellectuals’ and Mobutu, and CONACO, *Confederation Nationale Congolaise*, demonstrating that the country was capable of playing a fair and democratic political game (Nguza, 1985).

The main concerns about political instability and the fear that comes with violent secessions, helped in securing Mobutu’s one party system, and it can be argued that the development media established in the country with pledges from the Press Association, contributed to promoting the concepts of MPR and Mobutu as being a force for unity.<sup>144</sup> Independence, in many African countries, did not result in automatic unity, and all of the governments on the African continent, including Congo’s, as demonstrated by the first five years of unrest and the attempted secession of Katanga, had to find ways to promote the idea of community and to implement it in their discourse. Domatob and Hall’s analysis of development journalism points to this relationship

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<sup>141</sup> My translation. Original speech: “J’ai estimé seul devant ma conscience de tenter de nouveau l’expérience du pluralisme politique dans notre pays avec à la base le principe de la liberté politique pour chaque citoyen d’adhérer à la formation politique de son choix”

<sup>142</sup> “The 1970s saw the publication in Europe of testimonies of Zairians in exile, in particular that of Thomas Kanza *Conflict in the Congo* (Penguin Books, 1972) and that of Cléophas Kamitatu, *The Great Mystification of Congo-Kinshasa*” (Chrétien, 1974, p327) My translation, original text: “Les années 70 auront été celles de la publication en Europe des témoignages de Zaïrois en exil, en particulier celui de Thomas Kanza *Conflict in the Congo* (Penguin Books, 1972) et celui de Cléophas Kamitatu, *La grande mystification du Congo-Kinshasa*.”

<sup>143</sup> Nguza Karl I Bond, nephew of one of Mobutu’s ardent opposers Tshombe, can be demonstrative of the co-optation politics of Mobutu, as he served “intermittently as Mobutu’s foreign minister, ambassador to Washington, and prime minister in the 1970s and 1980s” (Gondola, 2002,p135)

<sup>144</sup> Further reading on the *Communication Policies of Zaïre* (1980) a UNESCO study conducted by Botombele Bokonga Ekanga (Botombele, 1980)

of internal civil or tribal wars as reasons influencing the advocacy of media activism for unification:

This concern for community feeling on a nation-wide basis is related to the prevalence of existing tribal, racial, religious and linguistic loyalties; bringing into focus the elements of disunity, cleavage, stress and strain – in short, the crises of national development. The mass media are seen as a means of promoting national sentiments against destructive regionalism in newly independent African states (Domatob and Hall, 1983, p.11)

It may be regarded as being certain that, in Congo, the creation of a national sentiment for Congo unity became a tool for authoritative discourse, and *Election 1970* participated in creating the basis for the language of a party that was concerned with untroubled nationhood. This educational film on the electoral process reflects and reiterates a language of peace in its narrative. The voice-over, accompanied by footage of people gathering outside the polling station, reassures the viewer by explaining that the government will secure peace and safety: “Everything has been planned so that Congolese citizens will be able to vote in order and discipline and gather in front of the polling stations” (N’Sana, 1970, TC 06.24).<sup>145</sup> Notwithstanding what may be perceived as pertaining to the narrative of a ‘development film’, this is explained differently by the historian Didier Gondola, who writes that the elections of 1970 were heavily policed, not for security reasons, but as part of an “intimidating campaign” which was put in place to “make sure that voters picked the right ballot” (Gondola, 2002, p.140).

The film, instead, calls on all eligible Congolese citizens to participate in an orderly fashion in what promised to be the demonstration of the MPR’s achievements in relation to emancipation and peacekeeping. The film encourages the population to “Vote Green”, in other words, to respect Mobutu’s vision for an African democracy, that did not need to correspond to political models imposed by the West, and that was going to be different. On the basis of this difference, first captured in the N’Sele Manifesto of 1967, it mattered little that there was only one candidate to choose from, because this was the consequence of Mobutu’s leadership. The Party asked for young and old to participate in its vision and, as seen in Chapter 1, there was no other possible condition than belonging to the Party. The extensiveness of the rule, which included the young people of the Jeunesse Mouvement Populaire De La Révolution JMPR, the MPR

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<sup>145</sup> My translation. Original script: “aux bureaux de vote car tout a été prévu ainsi que les citoyens congolais puissent voter dans l’ordre et la discipline les électeurs seront”

Youth Movement, which counted every child in the country. As people were formed to believe in its manifesto and celebrate its leader, nationalism, and later *Authenticity* and *Mobutism*, were abided to like a credo.

Within this context, it is possible to appreciate the communicative strength of a simple display panel propped up at the polling station. The words “Vote Green”, for those who could read, were a powerful reminder of the law of the land, and especially of he who was the creator of such peaceful democracy for the nation. Green, as a popular symbol, replacing the name Mobutu, could communicate the ideas of the MPR. Green, like the little book containing the N’Sele Manifesto, the *Petit livre vert*, like the traffic light colour for ‘go ahead’, and soon afterwards, like the colour of the Zairian flag (1971). In the film, the green colour becomes a symbolic metaphor for a complete ideology, this is why the choice of frame assumes visual meaning. The Assessor standing in front of the “Vote Green” panel display with his right arm raised, swearing to abide by the democratic laws of the secret vote, is captured in the frame to deliver a message about taking a solemn oath in relation to the principles of the N’Sele Manifesto, therefore encouraging Mobutu’s victory. Although the vote is secret, the film’s framing is eloquent in revealing how the people were encouraged to connect with the film’s efforts for development.

The attempt to co-opt the viewer into this vision of citizenship is realised through the people that represent the institution, the Assessors and the President, but especially by the involvement and participation of the crowds. The tension in the film between the ability to cast a vote, along with the gained freedom of choice, as Sakombi claims, and the reality of the oppressive system, is lessened by the images of crowds of people arriving at the polling station. First, a large group of men, raising their arms in the air, and then women smiling, gather in the garden in front of the polling station. The multitude of faces parade the aggregation, the mass, walking towards the camera, showing and promising the viewer that they are about to do something extraordinary. The people walking towards the camera look forward, with their faces expressing joy, their decisive forward march almost touches the camera, and gives a sense of embracing the audience.

The multitude walking in shot envelops the frame just before shifting to a further demonstrative sequence of the inductions for voting emancipation, the MPR way, which is presented as the national way. In the *procedural section*, the person is empowered by the vote, because the

person who registers at the polling station is now made visible by the action of voting as a participant in society. This watchable act is, furthermore, a reiteration of a Congolese decolonisation and a break with the past “imagery of the native” which fuelled the legitimacy of the colony by dehumanising the colonised who, “not knowing how to write, (she/he) registered nothing” (Mbembe, 2001, p.33). This visibility is even more persuasive to the empowered citizen in its message by having the enactment of registration captured on camera, establishing their worth as part of the national imagery.

“A cross on the ballot is an implicit statement of social identity”(Harrop and Miller, cited in Evans, 2009, p.173) and its enactment in the film through the significance of choice, engages the viewers in their projection of social identity. In this respect, it is possible to read this enactment as an interpellation of the viewer in the national project, which translates into the party’s ideology. Although Sakombi, as early as the first scene of the film, promised choice through *eligere*, and claims that the chosen the method of “direct universal suffrage [which] is most in line with democratic principles” (N’Sana, 1970, TC03.40)<sup>146</sup>, the script disguises a different reality, deprived of choice. As the film’s induction of the voting slips shows in the *procedural section*, the choices offered by the slip are either to elect Mobutu as President, or to disagree with it, but it does not specifically allow the possibility to categorically disagree with the system and remove Mobutu from power. This determines that to participate in the election would mean that no matter for which option one might vote, this would mean adhering to the system of social identity created by the MPR and its formulation of this particular style of democracy.

This electoral process that claimed to be democratic in view of its alleged Congolese terms, and that is portrayed in the film as such, is questioned by Nguza, who describes how the system was corrupted at every stage of the vote, and who exposes in his statements how the government set up the process. As Nguza explains, the Presidential Election, as introduced in 1970, was constructed on a system in which the central committee of the MPR would choose the presidential candidate and Congress would vote to confirm the choice. The flawed system relied principally on the fact that it was the President of the MPR who assigned the positions in the central committee and Congress, making it impossible for the committee to support the

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<sup>146</sup> My translation. Original script: “Parce que le suffrage universel direct est le plus conforme aux principes démocratiques”



candidature of any other presidential aspirant (Nguza, 1985, p.23). The vote, in itself, gave voice only to the agenda of the President in perpetual charge, a strategy what has been often described as a “permanent coup d’état” (Nguza, 1985, p.18), thereby removing the government and the voters from any possible choice. The film’s narrative therefore promotes participation in a flawed system, whilst endorsing the conduct of the government, who abided by it. These crucial and personalised interpretations of democracy for the benefit of one party are accomplished also by the endorsement given by the film, which creates an identification of the people with the acquisition of citizenship, and therefore of identification and modernity.

The film’s *mise-en-scène* introduces a portrayal of modernity, from the two contemporary sets, dressed with modern minimalistic furniture and abstract ornamental panels, to the choice of soundtrack. The opening titles have a more traditional sound, but the graphics with the voting dates are accompanied by a modern electronic jingle which transports the Congolese into an atmosphere of change through civic duty (N’Sana, 1970, TC 02.30). This *mise-en-scène* of modernity and urbanity would have permitted viewers across the country, including those in its remote rural areas, to join in the changing of contemporary independent Congo.

The film, produced by the RTNC, was shown on television, but because television sets were not present in many people’s homes the election message was to be disseminated in any way possible. The great majority of the population relied on public television sets, which were made available by the government at street corners and city squares where, since the inception of the Congolese national television service in 1966, had meant that gathering for programmed films and evening news was part of the new order of things (Zoppelletto, 2015). Distribution of this content, especially in distant areas, would also rely on cinema screenings. Finally, these iconic edifices of colonial life across the vast country, would have received the reels and would have had to project them. Projecting the voting emancipation content at these locations, which had a strong segregationist heritage, may have reinforced the film’s value of decolonisation, modernity and national citizenship.

During the Belgian administration, an ordinance of the Governor General stipulated that a censorship commission would have to evaluate all films for Africans. Some films were made by the Belgians for Africans, and they were shown at church gatherings, but they had to follow a protocol that was written with precision by L.Van Bever, the head of the government’s cinema department (Van Schuylenbergh and Etambala, 2010, p.82). Films coming from

Europe that were destined for the cinemas would never reach the African audience, because the distributors would neglect the bureaucracy of submitting the film to the commission when sending films to Congo, which resulted in the Congolese never being admitted to screenings. The situation changed only towards the end of 1959, when there was no more censorship for Africans, and they were finally admitted into the general cinemas (Brausch, 1961 p.26).<sup>147</sup> The colonial administrative practice of racial differentiation determined the permission to enter spaces and access resources, as well as limiting and prescribing content, such as that in films, on the basis of the African population being a commodity and intellectually inferior, such inferiority often being compared to a status of eternal infancy.<sup>148</sup> The idea that cinemas were a constitutive part of the politics of division and a symbol of oppression was still perceived at independence, when Lumumba mentioned them in his speech: “We have known that in the cities there were magnificent houses for the whites and crumbling huts for the blacks, that a Negro was admitted neither to the cinemas, to the restaurants, nor to the shops known as ‘European’” (Lumumba, 1960, p.2).<sup>149</sup>

This film assumes a further significance in terms of the ‘development film’ as a decolonising agent, due to its content, as well as the place in which it is screened, the action of watching the film in the cinema creates a further opportunity for decolonisation. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983) can be applied in relation to this film in order to establish the sort of impact and action of development that this film would have had on the audience watching it at the cinema. Anderson proposes that sacred languages were the vehicles enabling the imagining of great communities and allowing for their actual formations, as has been the case for imagining the Christian peoples through the Latin used in the Mass, and in Islam through Q’uranic Arabic. As printing press capitalism reached all people and Latin was substituted by other popular vernaculars another type of community rose, which was the national one (Anderson, 1983). I would like to look at the early stage of this proposition and

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<sup>147</sup> The book *Belgian Administration In The Congo* does not specify which Congolese population was admitted to the cinemas in 1959. The historian Léon De Saint Moulin in the film *La Belle At The Movies* (Zoppelletto, 2015) explains that by then general cinemas were then accessible only by the *évolués*, in the film Congolese filmmaker Balufu Bakupa explains that there were theatres where ‘their fathers’ were not allowed (Zoppelletto, 2015)

<sup>148</sup> Further reading on Belgian colonial paternalism, The Belgian (De Mestral, 1957), *République Démocratique du Congo, tout est à refaire: À qui la faute?*(Mualaba, 2012)

<sup>149</sup> My translation. Original text: “Nous avons connu qu’il y avait dans les villes des maisons magnifiques pour les blancs et les paillotes croulantes pour les noirs, qu’un Noir ne était admis ni dans les cinémas, ni dans les restaurants, ni dans les magasins dits ‘européens’”

advance the notion that the solemnity of the new language of the vote and its replication in places previously associated with colonialism, made the film *Election 1970* a powerful vehicle for decolonisation and nation building. This proposition rests on the contemporaneous communication of the government, which introduced Mobutu as a sacred icon “God has sent a great prophet, our prestigious Guide Mobutu. This prophet is our liberator, our Messiah. Our church is the MPR” (Crawford Young, 1998, p.113). The gathering of people in the cinemas may be interpreted as the gathering of new citizens in temples for the Congolese image. The action of watching this film in the theatre assumes greater meaning, as the voting act can be likened to a religious act, especially in its formal repetitive display for the camera. Showing the vote as an acquisition of citizenship contributed to the formation of the newly imagined Congolese community, expressed in the regulations of the political party that allowed this access. Citizenship, as brought by the MPR, was introduced in the film, with its new sacred language, by the government, and it was shared by the Congolese with the use of an institutional vocabulary around the electoral system and its functions, which were explained by Sakombi in terms of legislative, administrative and judicial. This language participated in the diffusion of the ideology of the MPR. Anderson explains that the propagation of the core ideas of the religious community happen in the reading or the narration of the scriptures and by singing hymns, rituals in which people can imagine their fellow men worshipping in the same way, sharing the communal experience (Anderson, 1983). By seeing a few sharing such devotion to religion, one could imagine this ritual being replicated by others, or by thousands of other citizens belonging to the same Congolese community. Imagination can be transformed into reality when the person can see others, distant people, sharing the same ritual. In this case, the ritual of the vote, just like the religious ritual, is replicated and enacted by Congolese on the screen, and this helped to legitimise the community of the MPR.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the power of the media to proliferate ideology was not underestimated by governments who pushed for development journalism, to which I add ‘development film’. Development journalists were asked to collaborate for educative purposes, as the media were understood to have a far reaching influence: “mass media should cater for education...in fact, mass media constitutes a multiplier that should not be neglected” (Laurent, cited in Domatob and Hall, 1983, p.15). This beneficial and multiplying value of the medium gave rise to other possibilities, such as the further involvement of the people in adhesion and activism in the process of social emancipation: “...securing the public’s participation in the growth process...development journalism serves as an instrument for spiritual and mental

emancipation from a legacy of thinking bequeathed by colonialism”(Domatob and Hall, 1983, p.16).

The Congolese citizenship becomes ‘real’ as the society, with its rules and membership, is legitimised through the filmic text of *Election 1970*, which becomes a visual confirmation of an imagined unified population. It can be argued that the film’s impact, affording the legitimisation of the community, comes from an audience learning how to vote by watching their fellow people learning how to vote, and becoming citizens. Anderson notes “the imagined community (is) confirmed by the doubleness” (Anderson, 1983, p.32), which, in this case, is provided by the image and the sharing of the new language. The image of men and women voting, is not only a confirmation of identification for the viewer, but also for the person who enacts the vote, as the filming of *Election 1970* is a prelude to the first vote. The image is also accompanied by a new language, which contains Latin words like *eligere*, explained at first, similarly to the way that sermons do in church, in relation to its profound meanings. The imagery proposed in this film therefore can be read as having a parallel significance to that of people in line waiting for communion. The imagery constructed can symbolise all of the other hundreds of thousands of faithful who, after the performance of the ritual are promised that they will belong to a holy order, and now, with the vote, it is promised that they will belong to the new Congolese nation.

In factual terms. citizenship is a concept expressed legally, it does *not per se* mean identity, which is “therefore a concept not so much of uniqueness or distinction as resemblance and repetition”(Isin, 1999, p.19). However, the filmic enactment of *Election 1970* expresses the co-dependency of the two, in prompting an acquisition of identity through the legal procedure. The film presents the MPR as providing a legal protocol to the people, who can then express it because they belong to that nation and they are reassured of it by its filmic repetition. This repetition allowing the legal notion of citizenship to be experienced as identity is built on the idea of state, the independent Congo with a Second Republic. For the reason that state and nationalism are not necessarily one, it is useful to see how *Election 1970* creates a bridge between them. The state reflects a protocol attached to a government structure, whereas the nation is defined by culture, history, a language, but the fusion of these two entities, one material and the other philosophical, comes from creating a personal awareness of the state. In *Nationalism*, Calhoun explores ways in which national identity is not randomly invented but is built upon by the construction of an infrastructure, a bureaucracy, and also with “popular

political participation” (Calhoun, 1997, p.10). In *Election 1970*, we can observe these essential features of nation building. The perceptibility of bureaucracy is achieved in recording every step of the registration, state officials performing a vow of allegiance to the constitution and common people adhering to a voting protocol. All these actions are possible because there is also the construction of infrastructure, shown in this film with a physical testimony of building the nation. This is demonstrated in the images of an adequate polling station in a purpose-built location for carrying out state affairs. The establishing shots of people gathering in front of a modern Congolese government building are repeated in the visual narrative to propose belonging, membership and, moreover, political participation.

### 4.3 Equality and inclusivity

The idea of empowerment by voting, within the narrative scope of *Election 1970*, acknowledges the notion of inclusivity. This pivotal element of decolonisation is presented as part of the film’s narrative, both visually and in the voice over. In the post-independence context, the need to respond directly to the oppression of the past was delivered by membership in the nation, “The struggle for citizenship has been the struggle against exclusion and against the inequalities which exclusion produces” (Barbalet, 1988, p.44). The film responds to the inequalities suffered during colonisation by addressing inclusion with the population that had been deprived for decades of the right to inclusion in the social discourse. Through the film, the Congolese were now being asked to actively participate in the social and national discourse.

As a response to the historical exclusion suffered by the people of Congo, the theme of inclusivity has been woven in the filmic narrative in multiple ways. Under the colonial system, the Belgian Congo was structured on racial segregation, where the divide was between the Congolese, who were Europeans residing in Congo or second generation colonisers who were born in the country, and the so called *indigènes*, who were the original tribes of Congo (Zoppelletto, 2015). Towards the end of the 1940s, when the *indigènes* were trying to put an end to oppression, to appease the controversy the Belgian administration introduced a third division that would create a semblance of affinity between the two. This was not a racial discrimination, but a class distinction between *indigènes* and the newly coined *évolués*, the evolved (Mulumba, 2007).<sup>150</sup> This last social category was a Belgian invention of what the

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<sup>150</sup> From the study *The évolués in the Belgian Congo, the man with identity in pieces (L'évolué au Congo Belge,*

colony considered were those *indigènes* who had adapted to, and been assimilated with, a European way of life, who had been in colonial terms ‘civilised’ and were able to integrate into Western society. A system which mirrors the Bergsonian model of oppression explained by Mbembe (Mbembe, 2001).

In 1948, the colonial government created the *carte du mérite civique*, a card of civic merit, which allowed a person, known as an *évolué*, to receive limited assimilation in “court procedure, movement at night and some other privileges” (Brausch, 1961, p.24). The receiver of the card would have to go through a series of tests and random checks on their home lifestyle and family habits in order to obtain the privileges associated with this class. Obviously, the integration was a relative one, which, due to laws of racial segregation did not permit the *évolué* to fully benefit from the privileges enjoyed by the European citizens in Congo. This new special class was granted small inconsequential allowances, such as living in close proximity to the white population or in the white areas, and from 1955 he or she would be able to frequent the same cafés and bars as the Europeans, as well as cinemas, as mentioned previously. An *évolué* “...was allowed to become subject to the system of Congolese civil law and to be assimilated to Europeans in matters of juridical organization, procedure and competence” (Brausch, 1961, p.24). In reality, this meant they were subjected to the same laws but were not beneficiaries of the legal system, nor, as mentioned in Chapter 1, were they allowed to work in the legal profession. Essentially, they were not able to be an active part of the civil service, since “Africans were not legally regarded as Belgian nationals, but rather as Belgian subjects, they did not qualify for admission for these positions” (Brausch, 1961, p.29).

The leading elite of the country, after independence, mostly came from the *évolué* social class, giving this sector of the population most government positions and power in civic duties. The film *Election 1970* presents a new opportunity, as the message in the film includes the whole population in civic duty and adhesion to the legality of the vote. This is explained in the film

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*l'homme à l'identité en pieces*) by Josephine Mulumba ““The numerical growth of the black elite, proud of its intellectual formation, conscious of its evolution and sensitive to all forms of discrimination’ claims the right to be recognised as a man in its own right. Following these facts, a certain agitation will be born in the Belgian colony. To muzzle these claims, the coloniser invents a social category: the evolved. A fuzzy status which wanted that at the end of the rites of passage the Black is assimilated to the White: ‘for the black colonised, that is to say, the submissive, to escape the denigrating status of native quickly becomes a dream. An elite will seek, especially from the 1940s, to distinguish themselves from the mass, to stand out from his fellow “race” in the hope of flattering the Mundele (white) and thus find the salvation that would open the way to some moral and material advantages brought by civilisation. But humiliation will be at the end of all his initiatives”” (Mulumba, 2007)(my translation)

by Sakombi, in a medium close-up, talking to camera. In the authoritative tone established from the beginning of the film, he goes on to explain the concept of universal suffrage:

Why the universal suffrage? Well, because under the constitution all citizens are equal before the law and therefore it is normal that any member of the Congolese community participates in the management of common affairs, and it is universal suffrage that can allow them to use this right (N'Sana, 1970, TC 03.10)<sup>151</sup>

This universal suffrage is explained as being in accordance with democratic principles, and then, to further emphasise the legality of the process and its inclusivity, Sakombi's piece to camera is continued with the institutional voice over. Citing law number 65 of the constitution, over a sequence of images of men walking towards the camera, the voice-over orders participation in voting for all citizens over eighteen years of age. The men walk raising their arms, some stop in a victorious stance, and this is then followed by close-ups of the faces of men, some smoking, some looking into the camera, other men arrive sharing the same joy. This walk is then reproduced by women, walking towards the camera in what we can assume is the direction of the polling station, their behaviour is more restrained, they are holding a paper and raising their arm, but more cautiously, one incited to do so by a man walking by her side. All these images, and especially the close-ups, give the sense of a sizeable crowd. The flow of people in their victorious poses, raising envelopes towards the sky, are representative of the common men and women confirming their citizenship, regardless of their social status.

The images of the crowd express equality, a togetherness of people who now have rights. The script talks of all citizens and in detail mentions "religious women and men of Congolese nationality who, as citizens of the Second Republic must take part in the next elections" (N'Sana, 1970, TC 04.07).<sup>152</sup> This recommendation explains that citizenship is democratising and that even people of the religious orders are to be considered citizens like everyone else. As the recommendation is reinforced by a specific law of the constitution, it implies that Mobutu's government, defined as the Second Republic, is the creator of this equality. The film suggests that class, social influence, and clerical status are not defining in the new order, and it also furthers the term of inclusivity with a sequence including a blind man, which presents the

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<sup>151</sup> My translation. Original script: "Pourquoi au suffrage universel? Eh bien, parce qu'aux termes de la constitution tous les citoyens sont égaux devant la loi et de ces faite il est donc normal que tout membre de la communauté congolaise participe à la gestion des affaires communes et c'est le suffrage universel qui pourra lui permettre d'utiliser ce droit"

<sup>152</sup> My translation. Original script: "les religieuses et religieux de nationalité congolaise qui doivent au même titre que les citoyens de la deuxième république prendre part aux prochaines élections"

government's treatment of disability. As explored earlier in Mbembe's analysis of the colony and its treatment of the colonised, it is evident that s/he is a dehumanised being whose function is to operate to facilitate the colonial enterprise, and his/her utility is based on productivity value. It can then be argued that, within the context of this exploitative environment, if the colonised were affected by a disabling condition, s/he might have no value in the production system and therefore s/he would have been considered useless.<sup>153</sup> We can therefore imagine that such a situation would have created a complex environment for people with disabilities, whose colonial function was therefore limited. The imagery assumes a decolonising discourse by showing how, in the Second Republic, the person with a disability was going to be of value and legally equal to all fellow citizens. The tone of the film remains educational so as to help future voters find their way and not commit mistakes that would annul their vote, but its message is cardinal in showing that disabled people were to be active participants in civic life. The sequence introduces a blind man accompanied by a woman, as repeated in previous sequences the process of voting is explained to them. Once they both listen to the instructions on how to vote, the film cuts to them coming out of the voting booth and then the blind man is taken by his hand to the ballot box where, guided, he slips the envelope in. This last part of the vote has a French voice-over, but as the sound is distorted, it is impossible to make out the message. The only understandable words are "your voice" (N'Sana, 1970, tc13.38) as the man slips the envelope into the box.<sup>154</sup>

The woman in this sequence is portrayed as confident and important; this is one of the ways that the film shows that women are to be valued, it suggests that their inclusion in civic life is part of the discourse of development. The presence of women in the film is noticeable and watchable in the performance of the vote, and although no women are sitting at the table in the studio set at the polling station, we can see the woman in the roles of helper and as a person who is trusted by members of the community. Arguably, this role is no different in its nature to the traditional one of the carer or the village *maman*<sup>155</sup>, but it shows the woman participating

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<sup>153</sup> Further reading to the treatment of disabled people in Belgian Congo: "One Difference Is Enough": Towards a History of Disability in Belgian Congo (1908-1960 The article illustrates how the general treatment of the colonised did not permit a real evaluation of disabilities as in the colonial view the disabled person would not have benefitted from medical progress because incapable of understanding its value ) (Verhaegen, Verstraete and Depaeppe, 2016)

<sup>154</sup> My translation. Original script: "Votre voix"

<sup>155</sup> At a 2010 conference in Brussels dedicated to the emancipation of Congolese women, the woman's role in society was summarised as a traditional one, her role relegated to caring for the family. In her speech, Liliane Teixeira Bemba notes: "Her direct influence on decisions affecting both her life and that of our country has been reduced to the role of popular animator, at best as an occult adviser to their husbands" (Fita, 2010) The word



in the civic space and being valued as a citizen. As noted by the critics of the system, such as Nguza, a few women Ministers, such as the first woman minister in the Congo, elected in 1966, Sophie Kanza, later known by her *authentic* name, Zala Lusibu N'kanza, do not constitute a real opportunity for the development of women who, in the Second Republic "...have evolved in respect to tradition and local culture which puts them at the centre of the family, unit of our society" (Nguza, 1985, p.26)<sup>156</sup>. In this regard also, the N'Sele Manifesto addresses women's role in the development of the country and their own emancipation in relation to the colonial past:

However, the MPR notes that the Zairian woman, the first victim of colonialism, does not have the right place in today's society. However, she carries within her all the hopes of the nation, since her role in the children's primary education is both predominant and irreplaceable.

The MPR wishes, in respect of family ties, for a policy of emancipation that can allow millions of Zairian women to discover the development of their personality by accessing professional, social and political responsibilities, in a society open to all men and to all women.

Spectacular results have already been achieved with regard to the emancipation of women, through the action of the founder of the MPR. The fact that this emancipation will soon extend to the political field, represents a decisive step since, from now on, by exercising all their rights, Zairian women will be both eligible to vote and to be elected (Mouvement populaire de la Révolution (Zaire). Comité Central, 1984, p.23)<sup>157</sup>

Complying with this vision of the woman as being emancipated in the social field, whilst allocating her a strong traditional role, the film portrays a woman who is valued as having a functional role in social development but as not yet having a leadership role. As the camera is steady on the woman in the frame, we hear the voice of the President of the polling station telling her how to carry out the vote for the blind man, innocently, the woman, suggesting she is not used to having cameras filming her, turns directly to the camera and slightly nods her

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*maman*, used to address all women as a sign of respect, can be read as a title that confines women to a predestined role.

<sup>156</sup> My translation. Original text: "La femme a évolué, chez nous, dans le respect de la tradition et de notre culture qui en fait l'élément essentiel de la famille, cellule de la société"

<sup>157</sup> My translation. Original text: "Cependant le MPR constate que la femme zaïroise, première victime du colonialisme, n'as pas dans la société actuelle la place qui lui revient. Elle porte cependant en elle tous les espoirs de la nation puisque son rôle dans la première éducation des enfants est à la fois prédominant et irremplaçable.

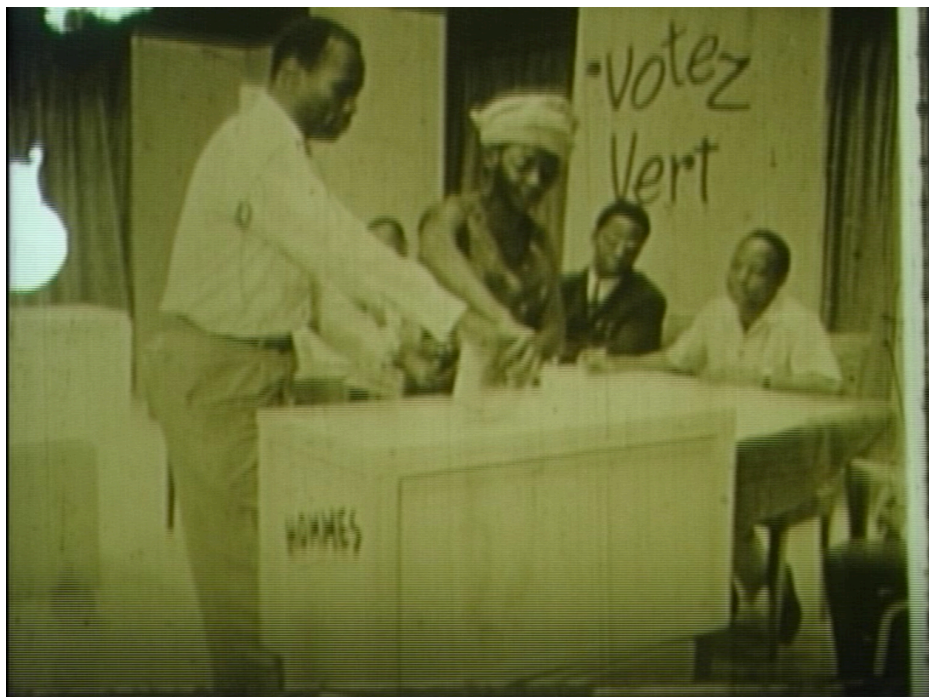
Le MPR souhaite, dans le respect des liens familiaux, une politique d'émancipation qui puisse permettre à des millions des femmes zaïroises de connaître l'épanouissement de leur personnalité par l'accès aux responsabilités professionnelles sociales et politiques, dans une société ouverte à tous et a toutes.

Déjà par l'action su fondateur du MPR, des résultats spectaculaires ont été acquis en ce qui concerne l'émancipation de la femme. Le fait que cette émancipation s'étendra prochainement au domaine politique représentera une étape décisive puisque dorénavant, par l'exercice de tous leurs droits, les femmes zaïroises seront à la fois électrices et éligibles."

head, the direct look breaking the fourth wall. This action displays a condition of obedience in showing that she has understood the instructions given to her. Her performance envisions a tradition of servility towards the men in the film, in addition to confirming her role as a carer for the more vulnerable people in society. On the other hand, the film portrays an image of progressive women, who are, as presented by the N'Sele Manifesto, “eligible to vote” and expected to contribute to society. As women are invited to choose their future, the film reflects both ideas of tradition and modernity, thus reflecting the early incarnations of *Authenticity*.



The woman accompanying the blind man, first listening to instructions, and then looking at the camera. *Election 1970*. Copyright RTNC.



Completing the vote, *Election 1970*, Copyright RTNC

#### 4.4 Coining tradition

As seen in previous chapters, the Minister of Information, Sakombi, was in charge of the audiovisual industry, and had been also entrusted with the title of “leader of the mobilisation and propaganda sector”(Nguza, 1985, p.25).<sup>158</sup> This film, in accordance with the commissioning system of the time, had been produced by the RTNC, and it was assigned to a filmmaker approved for state productions by the government. Sylvain Tshitenge N’Sana (1942-2000) was a writer director known for his institutional work, and like many of his contemporaries was active in the production of documentary films for television. The film that started his successful career was the 21mins short, *Mushenge* (1969), which documents the practices and customs that were associated with King Lukengo of the Kuba Royal Family and was commissioned by the Ministry of Information and the Kuba Royal Family (Convents, 2006, p.273). Although there is no literature on how the filmmaker was assigned this production, it is of relevance to note that N’Sana, who had already started working with representations of traditions and ideas of customary practices, was entrusted with *Election 1970*, a ‘film event’ that starts new traditions and that was commissioned by the leader of the practice, later known as ‘mobilisation’, is a testimony to the beginning of change towards a nationalism that is defined by the ideas of *Authenticity*.<sup>159</sup>

At this crucial historical time of Congolese nation building, when the presidential elections are a necessity and their implementation mean establishing new codes, the film captures a moment of incongruity between the search for a traditional model and the vision of modernity. With the newly independent country projected on the trajectory of its own modernity, Mobutu’s government envisioned that this could be attained by rediscovering traditional values. In practice, this proved a way to borrow habits and identities from the past and to make them relevant to the political desires of the government. These traditions of the past, resurrected, embellished and, at times, partly fabricated by the Second Republic, were used without reconciling them with the colonial past, disregarding it entirely. To define tradition, though, it is important to acknowledge the disruption caused by the colonial intervention on the country. The country’s colonial history impacts on the dissonance of pre- and post-colonial tradition, as the colony brought in different life models that were expressed in their *politique indigène*

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<sup>158</sup> My translation. Original text: “Ministre de l’Information qui est en même temps dirigeant du secteur mobilisation et propagande du parti unique”

<sup>159</sup> The term ‘mobilisation’ was used in terms of MOPAP (Mobilisation Populaire pour l’Action Politique) and the principles of political activism and participation (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2001)

(indigenous policies). The Congolese who experienced independence from the Belgian Congo, came to freedom having also experienced a Belgian perception of life which could not be completely effaced. At first, the colonial project oppressed the colonised by demeaning the people and the worth of their culture, and then it tried to emancipate them in terms of their own Belgian culture and social understanding.<sup>160</sup> We can advance the notions that decades of colonisation and foreign education could not be reversed to again achieve a virgin Congolese outlook. The colonial experience had muted it. As Cheah notes, the common project of decolonization presents the problem that “there is no pre-existing community for the individual to be reconciled to” (Cheah, 2003, p.234). Traditions of the past had been affected by colonisation, and memories find a way to survive and to be recreated in the ideals expressed by the government. In its mission to communicate the possible existence of an original culture, the new government had established a creative operation that was based on a modern vision of the country whilst delivering nostalgia for the precolonial days. This is the bridging point that begins to transpire in *Election 1970*, and that will fully develop in the country’s politics in the year following the presidential election with the institution of *Authenticity*.

Due to an incapacity to reconcile with a pre-existing community, nation building from the postcolonial reality had to be invented. This conception was disseminated in a familiar language which tapped into a memory of tradition and formed a bridge to the novelty of the imagined being. The presence of women becomes symbolic of traditional values, as we identify the female role of the woman carer accompanying the blind. Whilst the voice-over explains that women are treated equally and asked to vote, the images show that this equality also means separation from the men. The film’s script directly acknowledges the separation of the genders with words that instruct rather than explain, as the reason for separation seems to be implied for an audience that is an accomplice in praising the new system:

With the goal to give value to the participation of every social category, at the next elections it is expected that every polling station will have two boxes, one exclusively for women and one for men. Here is the voting card for female electors, it is different from the voting card for male electors (N’Sana, 1970, TC 10.12)<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Further reading on the colonial experience and long term effect on the colonised and the évolué class *Black Skins, White Masks* (Fanon, 2008).

<sup>161</sup> My translation. Original script: “Dans le but de donner valeur ...la participation de chaque catégorie sociale aux prochaines élections il est prévu dans chaque bureau de vote deux urnes différentes dans l’une est exclusivement...aux femmes et l’autre aux hommes.”

This comment, read by the voice-over narrator, is the only mention of the practice, which is enhanced visually by images of men and women outside, queuing separately to enter the polling station. The film indicates the practice, but does not in any way address the reasoning behind the separation. A hypothesis to be considered by way of explanation, is that this system could possibly offer further information to the government in relation to who did not adhere to the government's proposition. Concurrently, the practice may be interpreted as being a more idealistic gesture, identifiable with the first ideas of *Authenticity*, wanting to promote a re-worked traditional image. The film envisages the new society in the making as a system that would give equal rights of expression to men and women, whilst still recognising their traditional places in society.

The visual repetition of men and women divided in a communal space endorses the idea of ancestral customs that belong to all of the tribes of Congo, who function under the leadership of a Chief, better known as the *mwami*, the king (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2014).<sup>162</sup> This denotes a strongly patriarchal society. Customarily the title is hereditary, but although the eldest son has the right to the title, a different heir can assume power if he is considered a better candidate.

It is a whole election that is organized between those who have[s] rights whilst excluding any broad competition within the population in terms of eligibility of candidates as well as the constituent population (Dr, Mambi Tunga-Bau, cited in Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2014).<sup>163</sup>

This convention of assigning power to the Chief, who has absolute jurisdiction over the community, not only further testifies to a system that privileges the male for all decision making, but also identifies a function that cannot be challenged by an opposing or exterior candidate. This faculty which has roots in the country's ancient mode of governance, appears to legitimise the work of Mobutu, as his role, from the beginning of the Second Republic, starts to change from Marshall to Chief. In the symbolic role of Chief, he interprets the role of guiding a new country that, whilst embracing modernity, belongs to a people whose legitimacy depends on accepting that, traditionally, one cannot choose between two Chiefs. This is the state of a nation that suits both expectations of change and tradition. These images portray a prelude to

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<sup>162</sup> The term *Mwami* is used in most tribes but other terms exist, such as *Nyim*, used by the Kuba people (Owusu, 2000, p.227)

<sup>163</sup> My translation. Original text: "C'est toute une élection qui s'organise entre les ayant[s] droit excluant toute compétition large au sein de la population aussi bien en termes d'éligibilité des candidats que de la population éléctrice"

the *Authenticity* movement, but already express a direction to *authentic* imagery, which tries to capture the ideas of Mobutu the Chief.



Women and men waiting to vote. *Election 1970*, Copyright RTNC.



Establishing exterior shot of the polling station. *Election 1970*. Copyright RTNC.

The first person we see voting is a woman in traditional dress, and although western clothes were only banned a year later, in 1971, the choice of this image indicates how the new government wanted to express its identity through a conventional African recognition. A year after this documentary was filmed, the famous *abacos* (for men) was to be invented and imposed as the national suit, and this is reflected in the images of men in *Election 1970*, who are still wearing western jackets, and some even wear a tie, which will then be substituted by the *authentic* cravat. Although the men in the film did not wear distinctive African styles, most women are wearing head wraps and are dressed in *pagne* (a waxed loincloth), or in dresses

made in *pagne*, showing a traditional way of life in unison with the modern woman standing in line waiting for voting emancipation.

The Minister of Information wears an elegant suit and tie, and he is credited in the opening title sequence as D. Sakombi, his full name being Dominique Sakombi. A year later, due to the implementation of *Authenticity* laws, he will change his name to Sakombi Inongo. This period of transition between 1970 and 1971 is more distinctively recognisable through the images of Mobutu that have been chosen for the film. In particular, his attire represents two distinctive aspects of his public persona. The first portrayal is linked to the President's career in the army. In the official portrait hanging beside Sakombi, Mobutu is dressed in full military attire, reflecting the image of Marshall to which the country had been accustomed: an authoritative figure who was associated with the coup of 1965. The second image presented by the film, and used for the electoral system, is the one of Mobutu on the top right-hand corner of the voting slip. The President presents a new public visual image of himself by wearing a shirt, as a precursor to the style that will become mandatory and fashionable with the *abacos*, and the leopard skin hat which becomes part of his signature dress and that is notable in the iconography of *Authenticity*. In a visual discourse of decolonisation which abandons a Western imagery of power, Mobutu loses the military persona and chooses to be recognised by the symbolic animal fur, which was favoured as a sign of wealth and influence by Bantu Chiefs.<sup>164</sup> The voting slip, for both men and women, shows Mobutu in the image of the traditional Chief, continuing a tradition interrupted by the colonial system and now legitimised on film. This change of image from head of the army to head of the Congolese people, can be seen as being instrumental in communicating to the population an idea of development that would later lead to complete single party dominance and a nationalist rhetoric.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

Mobutu's political motivation for the emancipation of the country gave rise to 'development film', a mode of filmmaking that could establish a national film industry evoking the perception of indigenous success and knowledge. At the forefront is the establishment of a media culture

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<sup>164</sup> "As for the leopard skin, widely distributed among the Bantu as chief's adornment, it shows richness by its particular brilliance and the tones of its fur. When the leopard is short of food, he starts a ferocious hunt.." (Kabazélé et al., 2001, p251) My translation. Original text: "Quant à la peau de léopard, répandue parmi les Bantu comme parure du chef, elle manifeste la richesse par son éclat particulier et les tons de sa fortune".

for the nation that would advance the party politics of decolonisation and would therefore promote cultural production as key to growth and progress. The country's investments in the media reflect a continent wide implementation of media infrastructure projects, which became integral in sustaining political rule through ideas of 'development journalism': "The Black African media, it seems, is used for the exercise of political and social control as well as for the legitimization of the system. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but unfortunately the media have been used to legitimize ruthless dictatorship."(Domatob and Hall, 1983, p.18).<sup>165</sup> The analysis of *Election 1970* demonstrates how the filmic narrative is based on the legality of the system, inviting the citizens to vote for the system in order to gain membership of the nation offers a tool of legitimisation for the system. *Election 1970* can be explained as a 'film event' which participated in cultural development, as it performs a service of government legitimisation through three aspects of cultural production. The first is the cinematic production which follows the narrative style of educational documentaries, delivered by a voice over narration and an official piece to camera, formulated to establish an authoritative voice for the state. The second provides the visual testimony that the state exists, with its polling stations, ballots and cards for voting. Thirdly, the film permits the learning of the rules of membership of the nation, and therefore supports education relating to the rules of membership of the nation.

The incisive protocol delivered by the film *Election 1970*, creates the environment for the nationalistic discourse. Nationalism, which is expressed through a radical change the following year, with the creation of Zaire, happened not only through the delivery of authoritarian speeches by the President, and party slogans, as depicted in *Salongo* which is addressed in the next chapter, but, rather, through the enactment of the Zairian subject who emerges through the film language. By elucidating on the enactment of citizenship and a specific Congolese democracy, film is able to create the basis for a deeper discourse of tradition, which will produce a national consciousness that is at the core of the authoritarian system devised by Mobutu through the media.

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<sup>165</sup> Further reading on the media infrastructure in francophone Africa *Histoire de la Télévision en Afrique Noire Francophone, des origines à nos jours* (Dioh, 2009)



## CHAPTER 5

### *SALONGO*

#### The Zairian as defined by labour

##### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter identifies and explores the main themes of the film *Salongo* (also known as *L'Esprit de Salongo*) in order to assess the rationale that was used by the government to promote the ideas of national development and reinforce the credo of the Zairian nation. Due to the significance of finding the film, this introductory section will firstly explain the context of the research, the term 'Salongo', and some of the production information that was acquired during the interviews. The following section, 'Film data and synopsis', will provide the technical information about the film and its visual content by defining and classifying the different film sequences into thematic groups. Further, 'Dance as embodied *Authenticity* and performative reverence', is the section that is dedicated to the practice of dance as a traditional ritual, and its use to confirm Mobutu's divine supremacy. The next section, entitled 'Mobutu Awakens the Labourer, Apotheosis of the Nation', will consider the relationship between the promotion of revolution and dignity through labour, and how these may have been responding to the concepts observed during Mobutu's trip to China in 1973.

The film *L'Esprit de Salongo* (1975), by Mambo N'Zinga Kwami, is mentioned in Congolese film literature as being Zaire's most important documentary film project, and it was commissioned by President Mobutu as the foremost expression of nationalist filmmaking and benefitted from a considerable budget. Mindful of its importance in understanding the imagery

of Zairian ideology, and to identify the development filmmaking mode, I evaluated all of the available information and considerations in order to uncover what had happened to the film. The consensus was that the edited film had never been watched by anyone, with the exception of State Commissioner Sakombi, who did not authorise its release. Amongst the writings about this film, two in particular offer a more detailed background, these are by the film historians, Rik Otten, in his 1984 book *Le Cinema au Zaïre, Au Rwanda et Au Burundi*, and Guido Convents, in *Images et démocratie. Les Congolais face au cinéma et à l'audiovisuel*, 2006. In these texts, they piece together the probable origin and production of the film. At the source of the commissioning of the film is Mobutu who, during a presidential visit to China in 1973, had the opportunity to watch the film *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* (1977). The film's title is inspired by the folktale of Yukong from Mao Tse Tung's writings, and it narrates the story of an old man who, helped by his children, decided to move the mountains. When mocked by other people Yukong promised he would never end, and neither would his children, nor the generations to come, until the mountains in front of his house were gone (Ivens and Loridan, 1976). The documentary, made in collaboration with the People's Republic of China, shows the benefits of collective work and the effects of the Chinese cultural revolution on the workplace. *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* became a Zairian government favourite, screened throughout the country in 1973. As requested by the President, the Department of National Guidance<sup>166</sup> commissioned a similar film to promote the Zairian practice of collective work, which was known as Salongo (Otten, 1984) (Convents, 2006). The discrepancy between the dates of the film and its screening in Zaire is due to the fact that the documentary, directed by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan and filmed by a Chinese crew, was filmed from 1972 to 1974 and was edited into twelve parts (Ivens and Loridan, 1976). What possibly happened is that one or more of the twelve short films were finished prior to the film's official release in France in 1976, thereby giving Mobutu the opportunity to watch it and to return to Zaire with a copy.

Finding the film reel at the Cinematek was decisive for this research, and to assessing how the practice of Salongo was presented to the people, and how the practice and its claimed benefits were introduced through this 'development film', which had to express the spirit of the new revolution and inspire the population through its cinematic portrayal of Zaire. From the opening titles, the documentary immediately reveals the importance of the archive and the way that the

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<sup>166</sup> Ministry of Information

physical copy is a testimony that is able to demystify assumptions. It clarifies its true title, *Salongo*, and the year of production as 1974. Due to the information found, I will refer to this film in terms of its real title. The title comes from the policy of Salongo<sup>167</sup> that was introduced in a speech on the 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1973, which was directly inspired by the President's diplomatic trip to China in 1973 (Callaghy, 1984). As with other policies that had been introduced previously, Mobutu's decisions were embraced or endured on an absolutist scale, as the population knew that the President's command, even if only voiced at a rally, was to be automatically considered as constitutional and as a pronouncement of a law (Makana Kitiaka, 2018). The ideology and practice of Salongo, from that speech onwards, was absorbed on a pervasive scale, it is possible to find it celebrated in songs, such as the famous 'Salongo alinga Mosala' by Franco (Franco & OK Jazz, 1973), and it would further be immortalised by an epic film. From the film, it transpires that there was an effort from the government to incite Zairians to actively participate in Salongo by finding in it the spirit of community and their love for their ancestral land. Concomitantly, through this vehicle, the government has been accused of disguising the opportunity of affording the country a reliable, unpaid and numerous workforce.<sup>168</sup> The government was already using the words "retour à la terre" (back to the land) to enhance the Party rhetoric with promises of abundance in rural work, in fact, this first approach to rural idealism had already been supported by the film series that was directed by Kitenda.<sup>169</sup> These film events constitute the media environment which it was hoped would drive the population towards heartfelt nationalism through the work provided by the rich land in the country. Reflecting ideas of 'development films', policies were embedded in the film's narrative and themes as positive government action.

Mobutu's motto: "retour à la terre", which in part legitimised *Zairianisation*, proposed that the land of Zaire should be rediscovered by its own people, who were to work proudly to achieve greatness as a country (Langellier, 2017). However, at a time when nationalistic words of unity, and mottos, filled the airwaves, television programmes and films, the population was growing tired of the Saturday Salongo. The collective activity performed every Saturday, demanded a wide range of chores, such as cleaning the cities' streets and the banks of the river, constructing new buildings, planting vegetables and tilling the land (Langellier, 2017). In 1974, the hard

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<sup>167</sup> The word Salongo was introduced by Mobutu as an ancient Congolese word meaning "work" but no tribe has identified as belonging to their culture. Refer to *Mobutism* in Chapter 1

<sup>168</sup> Refer to Chapter 1, *Mobutism*

<sup>169</sup> Refer to Chapter 3, Simon Kitenda Ki Mata

work was failing to motivate the population towards the greater good and it was becoming a burden on the country and, as a consequence, it gained ever less participation. Salongo was then reorganised in different attempts to revive the practice but, by the late '70s, it was abandoned as a weekly task throughout the country, but “continued to be used for special tasks and occasions”(Callaghy, 1984, p.303).

The opening title of the film is *SALONGO 1 'awareness'*<sup>170</sup> (Kwami, 1974)<sup>171</sup> and the rolling titles credit “Directed by Kwami Mambu-Zinga ... Salongo 1 1974”,<sup>172</sup> indicating the production of the film that envisaged multiple chapters of this visual essay, similarly to its Chinese counterpart. During the interviews I conducted in Kinshasa in 2016, there was no mention of the potential seriality of this documentary film, and because I had not yet viewed the film myself I could not inquire further whether any other episodes had been contemplated and then cancelled. I interviewed the two cameramen credited on the film<sup>173</sup>: Mieko Maduku di Nganga<sup>174</sup> and Mukendi Kalula wa Kabeya<sup>175</sup>. Mukendi was hired to work as assistant cameraman, but on the first day of filming in Katanga (at the time called Shaba Province), the principal cinematographer, Raphael Bukakala, argued with Kwami and walked out on the production. Shortly afterwards, Mukendi and Mieko were given the responsibility of filming the entire documentary. With much apprehension, Mukendi took over, and once filming was over he was able to only ever see the film's rushes at *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, since, shortly afterwards State Commissioner<sup>176</sup> Sakombi personally forbade the viewing and distribution of the final edit (Zoppelletto, 2016a).

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<sup>170</sup> My translation. Original text : SALONGO 1 'prise de conscience'

<sup>171</sup> In all literature on Zairian cinema, the film data refers to a 1975 production, although credits say otherwise. I will use the official data of the film and contribute with the currently found information.

<sup>172</sup> Original text: “Realisation de Kwami Mambu-Zinga Moseka 1972 Salongo 1 1974”

<sup>173</sup> In keeping with the tradition of the time, people were presented first by surname, followed by their first name

<sup>174</sup> Now Pierre Mieko

<sup>175</sup> Now Claude Mukendi

<sup>176</sup> Zairian title: Commissaire d'Etat à l'Orientalion Nationale

## 5.1 Film data and synopsis

Film Title: <i>Salongo 1</i> Year of Production: 1974 Format: negative 16mm, colour Duration: 108'08" Producer: Département de l'Orientation Nationale Scriptwriter: Ntumba Kabwa ka Ntanda Director: Kwami Mambu-Zinga
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The documentary follows an episodic structure, revealing a narrative that highlights the alleged achievements of the government through travels to all corners of the country. There are four main types of episodes, and these are alternated to create an overall engaging story and to carry the main Party message that is captured in the title. The narrative is carried throughout by a voice-over from the Director, Kwami. The following film synopsis does not offer a chronological recounting of the film but, rather, it explores the key themes that form an interspersed, rather than a linear, narrative. There are four distinctive types of sequences that exhibit the themes.

One category of film sequences focuses on the depiction of the political rallies and the associated cultural practices that characterises political engagement with the Zairian crowds, from speeches to *animation culturelle*, also simply known as *animation*. *Animation culturelle*, which translates as “cultural animation”, was the institutionalised practice of state-sponsored performances of singing and choreographed dancing, which was carried out in groups to motivate MPR fervour (White, 2008). These film sections not only offer footage documenting the *animation*, but also footage of segments of speeches made to very large audiences who, gathered in a large stadium, listen attentively without visibly reacting to the words spoken by the Party representatives. During most speeches, the reverse shot of the crowds shows an alert but silent crowd, showing the masses are at the receiving end rather than being a contributory force; with the exception of one of the speeches, in which the Party representative asks the people to join in by chanting the slogan “Technique Oye, Professionnel Oye” (Kwami, 1975, TC 01.28.08), meaning “Technicians Viva, Professionals Viva”.<sup>177</sup> Mobutu is mentioned throughout the film in every type of thematic sequence, both in the voice-over and in songs, but he is shown only at two different rallies, one of which is the penultimate sequence of the

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<sup>177</sup> Translation by Makana Kitiana

film. This closing part of the film features an impressive rally in a large open area, where the most distinctive looking armed force is the presidential guard, dressed in light blue uniforms with red and gold insignia and white hats. All the armed forces participate, not only in their role as security forces, but also parading, with the army band, wearing uniforms with leopard hats. There, facing his army, paramilitary groups and the *citoyens*, Mobutu delivers a speech, ten minutes of which is captured in the film. In his speech, Mobutu lists a number of government initiatives as proof of Mobutu's success in the social progress of his country. The focus of the speech attacks the internal opposition, which was seen as conspiring against the revolutionary system that had been put in place by Mobutu's party. Mobutu recognizes there is an opposition that plots against the revolution and explains that they are involved in carrying out illegal business practices in favour of foreign powers. The President's final message is a warning that these people, who are now known to the government, are working against Zaire and will be exposed as the "counter-revolutionaries" that they are, and severely punished.



*Animation at the political rally. Salongo (1974) Copyright Cinematek.*

The second type of film sequences are dedicated to communal work, and are intended to visually express the nation's political slogan; "Salongo Alinga Mosala" – "Salongo Love to Work". These sequences feature long takes of men, and sometimes women, at work, assuming the quality of people as a spectacle of Salongo. The images cover a range of manual tasks that are carried out by civilians, at times filmed in worker's clothes, but often filmed wearing *abacos* suits, carrying rocks, or cleaning the riverbanks, demonstrating that everyone from

every social class is involved in this practice. The depiction of Salongo is constructed through popular presence in the film frame, and the ideas are delivered in voice-over and song about the people's duty towards the land of Zaire. The voice-over narration, that throughout the film articulates the beginning of a new sequence, announces that the years of social and economic breakdown, referring to the period between 1960 and 1965, had turned Zaire into "a big sick man", but they were now over thanks to "the formula dear to (our) the ancestors: Salongo Alinga Mosala" (Kwami, 1975, TC 01.08.16).<sup>178</sup> The enactment of the activity of Salongo, advancing the symbolism of healing the country, is demonstrated in many different examples, in which the population is involved in either cleaning or building the nation. The first example is set in the capital, Kinshasa. Women do not seem to be present during all of the tasks, but when they are, they are also shown carrying children whilst they are performing manual work on the land.

Working for the nation continues also to be a central theme of the next type of sequence. The third type functions as a showcase for the industries that were nationalised as part of *Zairianisation* in 1973, this is a particular aspect of filmmaking narrative that will be analysed in more detail in Chapter 6. The film explores the technical capacities and development achieved by the most renowned factories in the country. From rice farming in Bumba, to copper mining at Gecamines, fishing in Vishumbi and rubber production, the film illustrates with images and an informative voice-over narration, the activities of the employees in each location. The voice-over narration also serves to identify and promote the achievements that are not demonstrable on camera or quantifiable by a single image, as the indicated success in the film is never compared with archive imagery that can visually contextualise the benefits of *Zairianisation*. This point of view, promoting the results of nationalisation, is narrated by the voice-over claiming that progress has been possible because the foreigners were ejected from these businesses. This claim is not measurable by the images in the film, but it can be imagined as real because of the use of the voice-over narration which is present in all of the 'development films' that are discussed in this research, suggesting that voice-over narration is one of the defining features of this category of films. An example of this use of voice-over in *Salongo* is the longer and more detailed sequence that is dedicated to the Inga-Shaba<sup>179</sup> line, the Shaba dam and the Kolwezi power generating station. All of these ventures were originally colonial

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<sup>178</sup>My translation. Original script: "Pour guérir le grand malade qui est devenu le Zaïre mettons-nous au travail ...la formule chère à nos ancêtre Salongo Alinga Mosala."

<sup>179</sup> High-voltage direct current, overhead electric power transmission line fully completed in 1982

projects, but the film explains that it was Mobutu who succeeded in building them. The voice-over helps to imagine the colonial ‘before’, that the camera had not captured, and to glorify the present achievement by comparison, noting in this approach a desire to highlight Mobutu’s success. In terms of the three As, the voice-over narration expresses the *Anlass*, the trigger event, as a Zairian victory against Belgian failure in respect of modern projects.

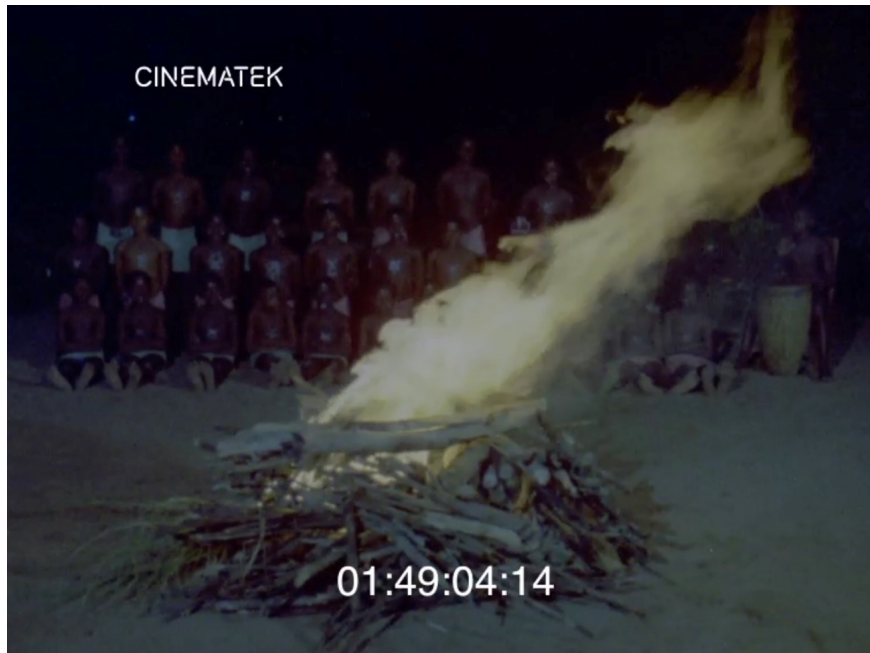
The fourth type of sequence depicts a style of *animation* which differs to that displayed at the rallies, as explained earlier. This particular *animation*, like the other forms, is based on the choreographed dancing and chanting of political slogans, but it is located and costumed within a *mise en scène* which draws on the iconography of traditional folklore. Through these episodes, one of which is performed solely by children, one by young people and one solely by men, we see the different folk traditions of dancing and singing in different local languages. One of them combines both a language from Equateur and Lingala. The dances are set in atmospheric locations that are reminiscent of the performances traditionally carried out in the villages, at times amongst the villagers, others in honour of their Chief or guests. The sequences are not introduced, nor do they carry a voice-over. They can be interpreted as stand-alone films of folklore, with the *Adressat* being the Zairian, who should read them as *authentic* demonstrations of culture.

The first dance, performed by boys, is in three seemingly unrelated acts. The first act of the dance is introduced by a wide establishing shot of a group of about thirty children, in traditional dress, standing behind a fire. Close up shots of the fire are used to cut and introduce the following acts. Their faces and bodies are painted with white markings and they appear to be wearing only skirts made of *pagne*. By their side there is a drummer, who starts the storytelling with a few beats of the drums. As the singing starts, a group of six children dance into the frame, by the fire they act out the dance, which is a form of narrative. They are dressed and painted like the other boys in the choir, but on top of the *pagne* they wear raffia skirts with a *zigita*<sup>180</sup>, a thick band in red fabric at the hips, to emphasise the dance moves. The boys involved in the acting and dancing also carry a wooden sword and shield.

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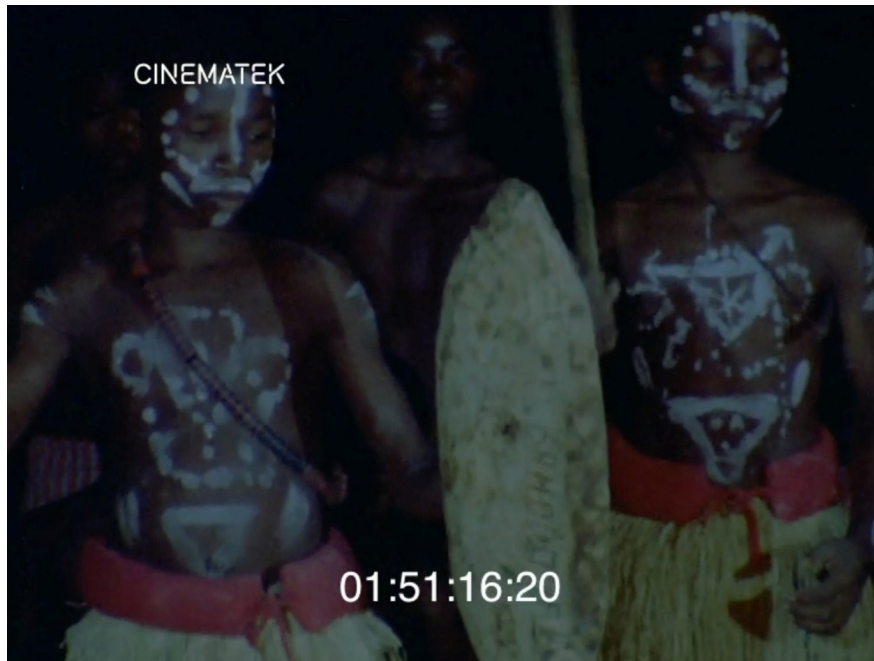
<sup>180</sup> *Zigita*: “Generally, all women wore a band or belt between the waist and pelvis, usually matching the wrapper, made by folding cloth several times until it is approximately two to three inches thick and six to 10 inches wide. Called the *zigita* in Lingala, this band of cloth accentuated the pelvic movements common to several Congolese dance conventions.”(Huckstep, 2004, p129)





Traditional dance, *Salongo* (1974) dir. Kwami. Copyright Cinematek.

I was not able to obtain the full translation of the singing in the sequence, as Makana informed me that the song is partly performed in a language that he identifies as being from the Equateur, I have based the exploration of the performance and lyrics of the songs in the film on the Lingala that is available, as transcribed and translated by Makana. The singing is not synchronised, the children are set very far from the camera and it is not clear if their singing and the drum beat were edited later in post-production. From the words in Lingala, Makana was able to explain that a refrain in the first act tells the story of someone looking for marriage and the child of the Chief misbehaving. It finishes with the chorus commending the building of the country.



Dancers, *Salongo* (1974). Copyright Cinematek.

The following act calls to a man by the name of Lokanga and asks him to come to an agreement. The lyrics, in Lingala, do not explain the reason for the agreement but only say: “Come Lokanga, come. Come let you and I find an agreement” (Kwami, 1975, TC 01.49.04).<sup>181</sup>

The third act is solely in Lingala and brings the sad news of the death of a young person called Wetshi, whose death will sadden the fans of Veia football club. The song is performed with traditional instruments, but it is the *authentic* cover of the famous song *Liwa ya Wetchi* of 1961, by the country’s first pop star, Franco, and his OK Jazz band. The original mourning song was written by Franco for the footballer Wetchi of the Vita Club (Bana Veia), who died suddenly in 1961 (Mbokamosika, 2008). The 1961 version is composed in modern afro-jazz style and in some of the refrains Franco calls Wetchi by his French name François (Franco and O.K. Jazz, 1961). The song in *Salongo* respected the naming laws of *Authenticity*<sup>182</sup> and therefore the only names mentioned are Wetchi and Lutumba, the last possibly referring to Simaro Lutumba, one of the founders of the O.K. Jazz band.

The next dance is performed by a group of children and young people, accompanied by a choir of women and an *animateur principal*.<sup>183</sup> The role of this person is to lead the performing

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<sup>181</sup> Translation by Makana. Original text: “Yaka Lokanga, yaka. Yaka yo na nga yokana yo na nga”

<sup>182</sup> Refer to Chapter 1. Further reading on *Authenticity: Mobutu's Totalitarian Political System* (Ikambana, 2007)

<sup>183</sup> Although Huckstep refers to this role as *Atalaku*, this chapter which is dedicated to the film of 1974 uses the

crowd by singing and shouting mottos.<sup>184</sup> The language used for this sequence was not identified by Makana, who translated the Lingala, but he was able to affirm that it is not one of the four national languages. The sequence is introduced by a close-up image of the river and the sound of an *animation* group singing. Close-ups of the river and water ripples are alternated with wide shots of a village on the river bank, until we are led to the side bank where there is the reveal of the *animation* coming from a group of young people who are singing and dancing. The dancers seem to be as young as probably seven years old, and the older ones are about fourteen years old. As with the other, traditional, dancers, their faces are painted, this time in orange and blue, but the remainder of their bodies are unpainted. They wear raffia skirts over a short green *pagne*, which appears to be in a print with MPR iconography. The children are also wearing necklaces of coral beads and different belts, some of the young girls cover their breast with brassieres made of palm leaves. The singers are wearing just the *pagne* and they are more fully clothed.

The third and last folkloristic dance is in striking contrast to the others, since it is performed on a manicured lawn, by Tutsi male dancers placed in two parallel lines of a dozen dancers each, close to a large group of daffodils. The composition is enriched by the yellow daffodils matching the yellow *pagne* worn by the men. Their short *pagne* is partially covered by a black and white tapestry, and over their naked torsos they wear large braces in red and white tapestry. They also wear a head piece of raffia and carry a spear. At the beat of the drum, the men start jumping and enacting fighting gestures. Their dance is choreographed, and their places change throughout the performance. There is a main leader for the dance who, rather than singing, seems to shout orders to the rhythm of the drums, to which some of the dancers respond vocally. This person could be called an *animateur principal* too, coherently reflecting this role.

The closing sequence of the film is a montage of images of men speaking at MPR rallies that are taking place during the day as well as into the night, and these are cut to modern Congolese music in the style that can be defined as “popular national Zairian music” (Bokelenge, 1990, p.34).

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term *animateur principal* appropriate for this time. In 1984 this role was renamed *Atalaku* by the Zaiko Langa Langa band (Makana Kitiaka, 2018). The expression *Atalaku* in popular music means a singer that praises people, the name comes from the Kikongo “look here”(Hertum, no date)

<sup>184</sup> Further reading on *animation* and MOPAP Mobilisation Populaire pour l’Action Politique “Le théâtre au Katanga : aperçu historique” (Le Lay and Kunda, 2009)

## 5.2 Dance as embodied *Authenticity* and performative reverence

Dance, in this film, carries two functions. One is to provide a connection between the government's narrative of modernity and social progress through the cultural revolution to the rediscovered tradition and *Authenticity*. The second function is to recreate the acts of reverence to the Chief, as practiced in tribal culture, so as to endow him with ancestral power.

The MPR aimed to accomplish a total cultural revolution by implementing cultural policies in all aspects of life, and especially by reinventing the precolonial narratives of the nation which were promoted as being *authentic* culture. To this end, cultural practice was addressed in the N'Sele Manifesto, which stated that "the MPR's aim is that the Revolution should express itself in an exaltation of the country's intellectual and cultural values"(Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (Zaire). Comité Central, cited in Botombele, 1976, p.47)<sup>185</sup>. The revolution, captured in the ideals of *Authenticity*, was supposed to inspire artists with government guidelines and allegedly afford them free creative reign<sup>186</sup>, but this film reveals that *Authenticity* also employed definitive artistic codes that resulted in specific content production. It is possible to see this in the way *Salongo* is formulated, with its basic structure founded on national broadcasting conventions, thus showing the close relationship between the ideas of development journalism and 'development film'. Daily national broadcasts from the RTNC (Radio-Télévision Nationale Congolaise), followed a line-up of speeches from the President with interludes of regional folkloristic dances or *animation* performances, by the Ballet Kaké,<sup>187</sup> to mark passages in the speeches (Botombele, 1976). The same format is used in the film by Kwami. The *animation* is used in the film to cheer at the salient parts of the speeches.

The film narrative is elaborated through displays of national folklore and *animation culturelle*. *Animation* became the pillar of all political and social gatherings in the country from the 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1973, when the MPR inaugurated the first national festival of culture and *animation* (Botombele, 1975). Like other pivotal national celebrations, the date of the festival coincided with the anniversary of Mobutu's rise to power in 1965, so that through every new collective

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<sup>185</sup> The text used *La Politique Culturelle en République du Zaïre* was commissioned and published by UNESCO in 1975 in French, the English translation (Cultural Policy in the Republic of Zaire) was published one year later. For citation I use the English edition of 1976.

<sup>186</sup> Botombele in the same chapter explains "Zairian authenticity is merely the frame of reference for cultural development and the suggested source of inspiration, the creative artist remaining free in the conception of his work." (Botombele, 1976, p47)

<sup>187</sup> Ballet Kaké was the Presidential Dance Company (Huckstep 2004, p82)

tradition the leader could be further glorified. Botombele, the then State Commissioner of Arts and Culture<sup>188</sup>, in the study on political culture that he personally directed for UNESCO, further praises Mobutu for establishing the event and for personally aspiring to:

...make this festival a school of civic education for the MPR. The Zairian people is thus mobilized around its guide by song and dance in order to cultivate civic virtues such as salongo (work), patriotism, vigilance, African brotherhood and international co-operation (Botombele, 1976, p.108).

The event resulted in the gathering of all of the regional dance companies, who were thus representing their people and learning other regions' customs and dance moves. In an effort to consolidate pan-Zairian unity by utilising folkloric performance, dance therefore went beyond its value as entertainment for the populace (Huckstep, 2004), or as a way of self-identification for distinctive groups, instead, it then became a common cultural heritage.

The images in the film appear to be taken at different large rallies, but one of them, in particular, shows a dance force amounting to probably over two thousand *animation* dancers. Standing on one side of a football pitch listening to Mobutu's speech, they are all wearing a green MPR *pagne*, thus ideologically uniting them, when, in fact, they might have belonged to different ethnic groups. These details, and the magnitude of the event, lead me to believe that some of the sequences in the film document the first *animation* festival in 1973. The idea of the large crowd participating in the MPR's displays expresses the will to utilise every cultural event to advance the political vision of the Party, and to establish the *animation culturelle*, also known as *animation politique*, as a paramilitary body.

As Makana explained during our discussion of the content, part of this vision was to unite the nation and bring together the 250 Congolese tribes that, in an extensive territory, would never have the occasion, or perhaps the desire, to meet and share ideas and culture (Makana Kitiaka, 2018). Instead, the *animation* rallies and their depiction in film afford a space in which people could come together under one flag and finally recognise together the common Chief, in an attempt, of course, to forge an over-arching nation-state, but one based on cultural material drawn from a diversity of 'authentic' and separate ethnicities. "On this occasion, the people showed their indestructible loyalty to their chief" (Botombele, 1976, p.108).<sup>189</sup> Dancing for the

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<sup>188</sup> Zairian title : Commissaire d'État à la Culture et Arts

<sup>189</sup>Original text from the 1975 French version "La population a montré à cette occasion son attachement indéfectible a son chef"(Botombele, 1975, p111), my translation: "On this occasion the population showed its

glory of Zaire was thus not restricted to dance companies and public events, dancing became a compulsory daily activity for all (Huckstep, 2004). With the incorporation of moves from different tribes, and input from different languages, it can be argued that their depiction on film created the imaginary that the country was moving together in the same direction, towards the same goal. These utopian ideals of a united country, implying that rebellions and secession movements were a worry of the past, clashed with the reality of a people who are forced to embody praise through dance and singing. In reality, the population could only abstain from showing their devotion and political activism when in a private space. Authoritarian rule submitted the Zairians to finding *Authenticity* in a constant humiliating reverence. White, in his seminal study on Congolese Rumba culture, points to the poignant testimony of a university professor, who remains unnamed: “How could we maintain our dignity...when we were supposed to stand up and start shaking our rears?”(White, 2008, p.78). *Salongo*, which represents a film event solidifying a united Zaire, affirming the decolonisation project of the MPR, also participates in establishing a certain subjection of the people by the new traditions.

*Animation*, in the film, displays a ritual of submission and reinforces the authority of a system in which obedience is rewarded; those with better performances and choreography skills became official *animateurs*, or *animatrices*, in one of the regional companies. This title carried a certain amount of prestige and social power, therefore constituting a landmark for citizens in the value system that was imposed by the MPR. Although visibility in *animation* may have accrued social privileges, the practice, in itself, was experienced by the population as a demeaning reverence to power. Huckstep, through the testimony of a dancer from the Ballet Kaké, elaborated the concept that the forced, embodied, national representation might be considered to be a metaphorical rape, otherwise explainable as the “forced entrance of the Mobutu ideology into the body of every citizen”(Huckstep, 2004, p.168). For many others, it represented participation in an expression of national brotherhood and the discovery of other tribal cultures (Makana Kitiaka, 2018). The film presents, amongst other languages, songs in Lingala and Swahili, narrowing the distance between the main tribes of Zaire, whilst also expressing the multifaceted culture of the nation. The choreographed and spectacular dances of people in *animation*, can be considered a truly “African show”. Kalapanga Gazungil and Peraya suggest that the “African show” is expressed in collective action, and that the

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unwavering attachment to its leader.” The original phrasing offers a more emotional reading of the sentiments linking the population with Mobutu.

community is at the heart of African living. The show does not have to be contained in any predefined genre, it can be ballet, theatre or religious, but the traditional show has the community as its defining element:

representation concerns the entire community. Even the griot whose performance may appear as the culmination of a personal effort is fully reclaimed by the community. It is the community who sanctions it and approves it. The griot and his audience are linked by a specular relationship. As an individual, the griot has no existence of his own: it emanates from the group of which it ultimately embodies the double, but it is also the mirror where the community reflects itself or it recognizes itself, identifies itself and therefore is structured. There is no place for the individual outside the community (Kalapanga Gazungil and Peraya, 1984, p.106)

The large display of *animation* representing community values, even when led by an *animateur principal*, expresses a form of unity of thought and direction. The film becomes a dynamic vehicle through which the government communicates and promotes both a discourse of specificity, acknowledging different tribes, and another of kinship, in an effort to achieve the concepts of *Authenticity* and modernity, as an attempt to overcome this characteristic of common contradiction. The different folklores are highlighted by film in a discourse that reaches people of all tribes, but that wants to create the one *Adressat* by speaking to them as *citoyens*, as Zairians. In the images of the film, one can admire and interpret the traditional regional attire and folkloric exhibitions. An example of this being the Tutsi male dancers from the Lake Kivu region, performing an Intore ballet.<sup>190</sup> Through the common and distinctive regional customs of the traditional attire across the tribes, one can assume there was an open possibility for exchange and communication and the specificities of one tribe to another, thus defeating the times and distance that separate them. This is the case in the style of the “Bana Kenge” from Bandundu, in the 1970s, the Kenge introduced the idea of dressing children and young people in traditional folklore costumes for *animation* dances (Pongo, 2001). This style would later be imported into Congolese modern music which had a national appeal (Makana Kitiaka, 2018).

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<sup>190</sup> Further reading and photographs about the Intore *Democratic Republic of Congo in Pictures* (Davis DiPiazza, 2007) and *Africa 2018-2019* (Wiafe-Amokao, 2018)



Bana Kenge (Kenge children) from Bandundu and Bas-Zaire. *Salongo* (1974) Copyright Cinematek.





Tutsi dancers performing the Intore. *Salongo* (1974) Copyright Cinematek.

The variety and richness of the folkloristic displays are employed and woven into a narrative that always returns to the rallies and speeches of Mobutu so as to show that the person binding the country together is Mobutu, the Chief. The role of the Chief became culturally fundamental to the government in order that it could forge a modern nation state from groups of people whose diversity of traditional cultures might create difficulty in identifying with the common project. Government devised a series of modern rituals, such as *animation* that built on this imagery to implement Mobutu as the nation's Chief and therefore as its father. Although Mobutu was able to be crowned Chief, he was able to achieve a never-before-seen supremacy due to the acquisition of the ancestral *fetish* and the power from the *chefs coutumiers*.<sup>191</sup> The tradition of *fetish* was abolished during colonial times, but was re-established by Mobutu as part of his vision of cultural nationalism and *Authenticity* (Trapido, 2013, pp.205–228).

To explain the impact of *fetish* and its iconic use to acquire power through dance, I will be referring to Huckstep's work on *animation politique*.<sup>192</sup> Huckstep's interviews with former *animation* dancers in the American diaspora, inform the notion of dance as a vehicle with which to bestow omnipotence. The explanation of the performers that "dance itself held or possessed the ability to transmit power" (Huckstep, 2004, p.125) echoes the portrayal given by Makana. The divine power of ancestral origins bestowed on the Chief was transmitted to Mobutu in the collective imaginary through song and dance, and this film testifies and promotes this empowerment through the imagery of *animation*. In traditional Congolese society, the Chief is the tribe's God, and his power is maintained by his divine *fetish*. The *fetish* is acquired, activated and held in symbolic objects, for example, in Mobutu's iconography, the *fetish* was believed to be held in his carved cane (Trapido, 2013, pp.205–228). The acquisition of the *fetish* happens at a secret sovereignty ceremony of ancient rituals. The endowment of absolute power is celebrated by the people, who rejoice when they see their Chief, and their joy is manifested by offering all they have to him. They offer song and dance. As Mobutu apparently acquired the *fetish* from all of the nation's Chiefs<sup>193</sup>, he became the Chief of Chiefs, and to testify to this, the traditional songs of the tribal Chiefs were donated to Mobutu (Makana

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<sup>191</sup> Tribal Chiefs

<sup>192</sup> "Embodied Nationalism 'animation politique' (political dance) in Zaire: a Case Study of the dimensionality and agency of dance as the spirit of individual, community, and national identity" A dissertation submitted to The Temple University Graduate Board in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education, By Joan Elayne Huckstep May 2005

<sup>193</sup> One of such coronations was upon Mobutu's fiftieth birthday, celebrated in Lisala, when he was installed as the customary chief of all the Bangala and was named Mobutu Moyi (Mobutu the Sun) (Schatzberg, 1991)

Kitiaka, 2018). It may be said that by exchanging, in the ancestral tribal songs, the names of the local Chiefs with that of Mobutu, and by customising the dances to him, this produced a verbal and visual legitimisation of the leader which is captured as an influential portrayal in the documentary. The display of empowerment is present in *Salongo* in the iconic song *Djalelo*, from the Katanga region (Shaba Province), which has been modified as a chant for Mobutu Sese Seko, and which is present at different moments in the film (Makana Kitiaka, 2018). The activism in both the dance and song, combined with its filming, captures the idea of *fetish* as an enactment, but derives from it the agency which ‘development films’ provide. The ‘development film’ aims to support the social emancipation of the country by highlighting and promoting its uniqueness in culture, in this case, the social specificity of traditional practices. The film, therefore, with the displays of *fetish* through *animation*, provides an acquisition of leadership that is specifically expressed as a divine right, rather than as a politically acquired status.

The chief was the ultimate voice in any judicial matter, and presided over the Chief’s Court, equivalent to the final court of appeal in stateless societies...As the religious leader, the chief represented the direct link between the group and ancestral guardian spirits believed to guard the tribe against enemies, natural dangers, and any destructive spirits (Ikambana, 2007, p.16)

By watching others perform the practice of reverence, the film is an event that contributes to promoting Mobutu as Chief, whose status was reinforced daily through the compulsory dances. This is an idea captured in one of the party’s mottos: “In the MPR, one surrenders both the body and soul” (Covington-Ward, 2016, p.137). Power is therefore transmitted by the people dancing, and by the population joining in the celebration through *animation*, the specific *authentic* physical language being understood by all of the population.

Additionally, the choice of the filming location of the dances furthers the idea of *Authenticity* that is tied into Godly power. The three dances are created within a *mise en scène* of nature and traditional costumes, which try to emulate the roots of village life and capture the words *ba koko*, the ancestors, often used in Party rhetoric, as well as in the film *Salongo*. The images of people dancing tirelessly in choreographed circles and lines, could be read as being a promotion of the “retour à la terre”, returning to the land or village of one’s ancestry. The nation’s land was appropriated, economically by *Zairianisation*, as well as symbolically by the MPR, as the symbol of the provenance of “le Grand Zaïre”.<sup>194</sup> This was also shown in the film *Sanctuaires*

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<sup>194</sup> Common expression of the Second Republic, meaning the great nation of Zaire (Carpentier, 2015)

*Naturels du Zaire* - Natural Sanctuaries of Zaire (year unknown).<sup>195</sup> The film, available only at the Cinematek, is dedicated to Zaire's national parks. The film's opening titles are in English, indicating that the filmic portrayal of a rich land at the heart of a mighty population was not only a vehicle for nationalism, but also a desire to be seen and to participate in, modernity with the international community. This is the opening dedication, in graphics on panoramic images of the country:

Our streams, our river, our forests, our insects, our animals, our lakes, our volcanoes, our mountains and our plains those are our monuments and our cathedrals, they are the heritage handed down to us by our ancestors, that is to say essentially nature. This is our wish that, when the scientists have transformed the world of living things into an all artificial environment, there will still remain in Zaire one of the last refuges of humanity, nature undefiled. Mobutu Sese Seko (Matton, n/d)

To promote nationalism, this introduction endorses the relationship between nature and ancestral identity, and in doing so formulates an idea in which all the facets of the power that is promoted and held by the MPR, such as ancestry, *fetish* and nature, were ultimately held by one person.

Mobutu's government has often been compared to the colonial system, known as *Bula Matari* (USA International Business Publications, 2007), due to the strong hold he had on the country and because "he attempted to replicate the attributes of the *Bula Matari* state."<sup>196</sup> He ran the government single-handedly as a personal fiefdom, using the national treasury as his check book. He promoted cronyism, nepotism, and corruption in all sectors of society" (Gondola, 2002, p.5). This internal colonisation, though, was very different to the Belgian colonial rule in the ways in which it achieved and expressed its power, which was reframed as a personality cult. Whereas the Belgian system operated by relying on institutionalised and impersonal force, Mobutu's government, although very administrative and bureaucratic, involved the population in a personal relationship with the ruler (Covington-Ward, 2016). This dynamic is in accord with Shatzberg's analysis in a study of the regime's communication, in his book *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire*, which underlines the media involvement in portraying Mobutu as "father-chief of the national family" (Schatzberg, 1991, p.76). The film *Salongo* follows the same line of communication by using the images of people chanting his name, as well as all

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<sup>195</sup> My translation

<sup>196</sup> *Bula Matari*: "The colonial state in Zaïre, whose informal creation dates from 1876, and whose formal anointment by the European powers followed in 1885, acquired from its earliest days the profoundly revealing metaphorical representation as Bula Matari, or 'crusher of rocks'" (Young, 1994, p250)

his other names, and associating them with unity; providing therefore a depiction of a population that idolises its father. This documentary was produced during the year of change, when the politics of *Zairianisation* were renamed *Mobutism*, and therefore captures how the danced and chanted reverence were ostentatious in reiterating and adding superlatives to Mobutu's persona. "To 'Founder-President', in time, were added ever more extravagant praise-names: 'Guide of the Revolution', 'Helmsman' (borrowed from Mao Zedong), 'Mulopwe' (emperor, or even godking), and finally 'Messiah'" (Meditz and Merrill, 1994, p.xliii). Although the imagery of *Mobutism* assigns him this role of supremacy, the superlative appellations of Guide, Father or Chief, there is also the one of Citizen, a symbolic gesture to show empathy with the people. There is an attempt also by the narrative of this film to show that the role of power does allow the President to be reachable, in touch with all of the people of the MPR. The last speech captured by the film, in front of a very large crowd, is presented by the voice-over script as being an opportunity for dialogue between the people and Mobutu. As Kwami's voice-over says: "Regularly the Head of State assembles his people in order to take vital decisions together and to give directives for new activities" (Kwami, 1975, TC 02.38.31).<sup>197</sup> However, in fact, the community, did not participate in the decision-making. Mobutu, his Party and his personal expressions, or *Mobutisms*,<sup>198</sup> were responsible for all measures, from the economic to the personal.<sup>199</sup>

Through this strategic communication, the government worked towards creating an indissoluble link with the President by portraying him at once as father and as a guide of the country, whilst asking the people to enter into a marriage with him. The President explained it as an action "of marriage, of the partnership of the people with their leader in revolutionary action" (Mobutu Sese Seko, in Botombele, 1976, p.108)<sup>200</sup>. Like most *Mobutisms*, this political vision was captured in a song. The following text, of a song that was customary at the time,

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<sup>197</sup> My translation. Original script : "Régulièrement le Chef de l'Etat rassemble son peuple afin de prendre avec lui les décisions vitales et de donner les directives pour les activités nouvelles."

<sup>198</sup> Refer to Chapter 1. *Mobutism* was an emergence of policies but also of sayings or expressions of the president which were called *Mobutisms*.

<sup>199</sup> The State rewarded people also in their private sphere, for example women were awarded a Zairian medal of motherhood and couples were awarded the family medal of *merite conjugal* (conjugal merit) on important anniversaries (Des Decorations Du Congo Démocratique, no date)

<sup>200</sup> Mobutu's original words in the 1975 English version of the UNESCO publication reveal the emotional nature of his approach to the relationship with this citizens: "du mariage, de la complicité du peuple avec son chef dans l'action révolutionnaire"(Botombele, 1975, p111). My translation: "a marriage, a complicity of the people with their chief in revolutionary action". The choice of the word complicity rather than relationship offers a better understanding of Mobutu's choice of image of Chief who has a proximity with the people.

shows the tone and the lyrics that people had to learn by heart. It belongs to a composition from the region of the Equator, the title is *Ibala* (marriage), from the musician Mambe Imolinga:

Marriage between the Zairians and Mobutu,  
Presiding spirit, spouse of Nsongo, the goddess,  
Mobutu, son of Mama Yemo,  
All of Africa united.  
Marriage of Kuku Ngbendu, the Powerful,  
With the Equator, with Kivu, with Lower Zaire,  
The economy in Zairians' hands,  
Mobutu a hundred years in power ( Mambe Imolinga, in Botombele, 1976, p.108)

*Salongo* contributes, in terms of being a film event, to this vision, with a narrative form of matrimony and unification as they are presented throughout the film, in lyrics and in the use of different ethnic languages within the same song, so as to identify at every opportunity a matrimony between the people and the Chief, and a unification of tribes with each other. Distancing himself from the image of the Marshall, the film conveys the President as abandoning the uniform to take on the fatherly figure of the Chief, who brings conciliation rather than conflict. Schatzberg describes the fatherly figure as being ambiguous, since it assumes the value of Chief whilst, simultaneously, the “notion of the chief...also has paternal overtones in some Zairian cultures” (Schatzberg, 1991, p.78).

The narrative of paternalism that is embodied in metaphors of both the marriage and fatherhood between the government and the people is strongly embedded in the concluding segments of the film and during the last speech. Mobutu arrives at the rally in a helicopter, hovering for a few moments over a large crowd and a display of national flags. This spectacular arrival is followed by a parade in the stadium, and it is edited to a song in one of the languages from the Equator, with a refrain in Lingala: “Linga MPR, MPR esangisi biso nyonso - Love the MPR because it is the MPR that has united us” (Kwami, 1974).<sup>201</sup> When the refrain is sung off camera, by what sounds like hundreds of people, Kwami replies with a voice-over that offers affirmative notions of the Party, such as the aforementioned “open dialogue” between the Chief and the people. In a call and answer structure that is thus similar to that of *animation*, the film’s director builds on already familiar rhetorical patterns that are embedded in the national artistic expression of Party celebrations. The call and answer mode, which had become the canon of *authentic* musical expression, with the leading performance of the *animateur principal*, is visible also in the filmic text, in which Kwami takes a figurative role as *animateur principal*

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<sup>201</sup> Translation by Makana Kitana

and recreates the dynamic. The call and answer are expressed in audio, but also visually, as Kwami edits the chorus chanting to Mobutu, who takes centre stage and fulfils the paternal role of speaking to his children.

The final expression of this structure is in the final sequence, concluding Mobutu's speech. The montage of different rallies, spread throughout the country, is accompanied by a song which includes everyone, through the lyrics:

*Parti na nga nalingaka MPR*  
The party that I love is the MPR.  
*Bana ya Zaire, boyaka oye*  
Children of Zaire, come let's gather.  
*Tosangana banso, liboke oye*  
Let's come together as one people.  
*Bana ya Mobutu o liboke oye*  
Children of Mobutu, all as one people,  
*Bana ya Sese Seko o liboke oye*  
Children of Sese Seko, all as one people,  
*Bana ya Zaire o liboke oye*  
Children of Zaire, all as one people,  
(Kwami, 1975, 02.44.32)<sup>202</sup>

It can be argued that by specifically merging images of rallies that perform the militancy of the mass with the absolutist party slogans, the director embodies a cinematic expression of state-patriarchal dominance. In terms of 'development films', this film responds to a very specific requirement of the process of the unification of the country and, rather than being assessed as a displaced political act, the filmmaker, who was not only the enabler but also the *Adressat* of the production, was purposefully participating in the country's emancipation. To further explore the *three As*, the *Auftraggeber* was not only the government, but more specifically Mobutu, who required a film that could make Zairians proud, in the same way that the Chinese were proud of *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* (Zoppelletto, 2016a). The affirmation of an *authentic Zaire* through the reiteration of one Chief is one of the themes creating the *Anlass* of the film, the function that the film was meant to perform.

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<sup>202</sup> Translation by Makana Kitiaka

### 5.3 Mobutu awakens the labourer, the apotheosis of the nation

The labourer, the militant of Zaire is the protagonist of *Salongo*, but even in this productive and constructive function for the nation, the role is presented as a gift that is bestowed by Mobutu. The filmic text portrays Mobutu as the source of a conscious awakening of the people and a re-appropriation of the land. The idea is woven into the film throughout the sequences about the labour and productivity of Zaire, in fact, the first sequence plays on juxtaposition to reinforce the message. To set the tone, the first images of a river, representing the soul of Zaire, are followed by ones of an unkempt township with people sitting around and not working. The voice-over commentary explains that the years after Independence were a dark period of instability and rebellions. The images change to wide shots of an open-air bar, otherwise called a “terrasse”, followed by a sequence of mid-shots of men, and a few women, drinking beer. The voice-over commentary adds that people, overwhelmed by the chaos that enveloped the country, threw themselves into an easy life that was beneficial only to the prosperity of the local breweries. The overall edit of the segment is reproachful in tone, and it is set-up for Kwami’s voice-over which was to appear to be a revelation and a response to the state of chaos: “It is only then, that a voice was heard to put an end to this general abandonment” (Kwami, 1975, TC 01.04.53).<sup>203</sup> This introduction effectively prepares the viewer to be reminded of the voice of ‘the saviour’, and the edit continues with Mobutu’s voice. Mobutu’s speech is a forceful but paternal speech, sounding almost as if he were scolding the crowd for not taking *Salongo* and *Authenticity* seriously. The set-up of which enhances ideas of an unruly past and a solution in the future, due to Mobutu’s wisdom in the ideology of Authenticity, and this enhances the discourse of the Father of the country and Guide saving the country. Similarly to the colony’s treatment of the Congolese population as children, Mobutu’s effort to denounce the infantilization of the colonised<sup>204</sup> is in vain, since he is depicted as repeating the pattern, but through a shared language of belonging.

The film thus opens with a discourse of disapproval about the years before Mobutu’s coup d’état. To do so, it visually creates a subtle atmosphere of misery by utilising newly filmed images which are re-appropriated to build a visual memory of an unacceptable country that

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<sup>203</sup> My translation. Original text: “C’est alors qu’une voix retentit pour mettre fin à cet abandon général.”

<sup>204</sup> Refer to Chapter 1, Mobutu: “Thanks to the Revolution, the image of the ‘Negro, eternal child’, imposed on the world by the coloniser, has revealed itself to be so immense, so ridiculous, that it has been definitely buried.” (Mobutu cited in Kabue, 1976, p.257)



was left to its own devices. Once the new memory of an inadequate past is formed, it is then juxtaposed with the constructed image of a man, Mobutu, awakening the people and stirring them into being a proactive population, masters of their future. Although it may be likened to a strategy of political propaganda, the images are not intrinsically deceptive, as the places filmed are real and the voice-over narration does correspond to one version of history that depicts the chaos of the early post-independence years. The function that can be attributed to this film and, in turn, can classify it as ‘development film’ is the bid to unite the population in creating wealth through working the land. It can be argued that the filmmaker would not have created a false representation, but would have felt that this was part of the development discourse constructed by *Authenticity*. Kwami’s participation in the ideology would have been a demonstration of the power of the ideology in reaffirming notions of decolonisation and development through an *authentic* vision.

Expressed in songs, one particular image of Mobutu saving the nation by inciting the people to work for the collective is contrived to deliver the Party rhetoric. After a four-minute sequence of people working the land, which is accompanied by traditional instrumental music, the tune is embedded into a chant, and the image changes to a wide shot of a field. Over a hundred men, and a few women, in traditional dress, march forward chanting and carrying tools, mattocks and shovels. Their singing is in praise of Mobutu, and they are not guided by an *animateur principal*. They are accompanying their march to a session of Salongo with the following lyrics:

*Ae Mobutu, mobikisi ya Zaire*  
 Ae Mobutu, saviour of Zaire,  
*Ae Sese Seko, mobikisi ya Zaire*  
 Ae Sese Seko, saviour of Zaire,  
*Ae Kuku Gbendu, mobikisi ya Zaire*  
 Ae Kuku Gbendu, saviour of Zaire,  
*Ae Wa Za Banga, mobikisi ya Zaire*  
 Ae Wa Za Banga, saviour of Zaire (Kwami, 1974, TC 02.19.33).<sup>205</sup>

The refrain, one by one, mentions all the names that Mobutu gave himself after *Authenticity*: Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Gbendu Wa Za Banga. At each reprise he is called the saviour, but the word has a further visual meaning of “the awakener”. The march of the people, walking from the left to the right, but filling the frame, presents an image in which the mass, the Zairians, is the focus. The musical counterpoint created by the imposing offscreen presence of

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<sup>205</sup> Translation by Makana Kitiaka

the saviour, the protagonist of the song, reduces the Zairian to a minor, dominated entity. The image of the people moving forward on the road to progress, which the MPR believed was tangible in the “retour à la terre”, are constructed to demonstrate the importance of the worker. Instead, the overall effect is different, as the imagery of men enthusiastically walking towards the fields whilst singing in praise of the President, creates a *mise en scène* which mirrors a plight in which the saviour is omnipresent, in a condition which can be read as the enslavement of the population. The image captures the way that, at every step, the saviour guides the people, who dedicate their songs, bodies and material possessions to him, although he is not physically present in the frame. It should be noted that the Saturday activity of Salongo was in no way subsidised by the government, and people brought which ever tools they had as a contribution to the nation (Makana Kitiaka, 2018).



People marching towards their weekly Salongo, *Salongo* (1974) Copyright Cinematek.

The practice of Salongo, as the film confirms, was exalted through slogans and chants relating to social progress through labour. The slogans repeated and produced the collective belief of the affinity between the good of the people and the land of the ancestors. As Mobutu explains in an interview, his vision was for the politics of the Second Republic to reconnect the population to their heritage: “Since Zairianisation, and thanks to radicalisation, everything is in our hands. In other words, we have command of our economy. We are masters of the soil and subsoil of our ancestors” (Mobutu Sese Seko, in Zoppelletto, 2015, TC 24.34).<sup>206</sup> The statement reveals that there is a very fine connection between nature, the heritage of Zairians, and the MPR pushing for its exploitation, and what is claimed to be emancipation through an *authentic* modernity. The long takes of men working at the rubber factory, or men in blue overalls getting into an elevator to go into the dark depths of the mines, visually embody the Party’s slogans and laud the labourer. In a communication with the labourer as its focus, there are clear echoes and similarities of the socialist realism of the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China, and it is valuable to briefly look at how these have an impact on the Zairian film.



Labourers at the rubber factory, *Salongo* (1974) Copyright Cinematek.

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<sup>206</sup> Translation by SUB-ti. Original interview text: “Depuis la zaïrianisation d’abord en suite au mesures de la radicalisation, tout est entre nos mains. C’est-à-dire en claire, nous maîtrisons notre économie. Nous sommes les maîtres du sol et du sous-sol de nos ancêtres”

There is no empirical evidence of Mobutu viewing different Chinese documentary productions, the only knowledge, both in literature and the interviews carried out in Kinshasa, is that *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* was the film used as an outline for *Salongo*. As the film was directed by the Dutch director, Joris Ivens, and his wife, the French director, Marceline Loridan, it may not be possible to make a direct comparison with notions of Chinese national film and the Zairian counterpart, which aimed to be a national production. As the French film was made with a Chinese crew, and was sponsored by the People's Republic of China, what may be of interest are the parallel concepts that can be drawn between the two centralised states and economies regarding their views of the role and purpose of cinema as an expression of nationalism and as a vehicle for the ideals (or over ideologies) of the governing parties. The Chinese and Zairian productions are different in their aesthetics and narrative style, but they present very close notions about the function of content. When Mobutu went to China in 1973, ideas of development journalism were already in play as part of a Pan-African vision of progress, and the cultural policies of Zaire were already indicating the necessity for active participation by the media in the national project, nevertheless, it can be said that the trip to China was undoubtedly significant for 'development film'. This trip appears to have been crucial in terms of the application of cinema culture, because it further exposed Mobutu and his government to the ways other countries understood the function of film, so much so, that the film was personally brought to Zaire by the President.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, China developed a film industry that followed a cultural code of production which was modified through time, and was further explored with the advent of the People's Republic of China in 1949, but that followed principles and classical notions of culture that were embedded in Chinese ideas of morality, education, and then politics (Chu, 2007). The connection between morality and education is to be found in classical Chinese aesthetics "the *Huaxia meixue*, according to which art should serve the educational purpose of teaching *lunli* (Confucian ethics)" (Li, 2001, p.64 cited in Chu, 2007, p.40). The relationship between art and morality that is aspired to in the Chinese ethics is similarly explored by the system that was put in place by the MPR, and that would see films as opportunities to seek out and reinforce *Authenticity*, an ideological construction that was meant to decolonise, and "that aimed to reclaim the dignity of the African people of Zaire by proclaiming them responsible for their own destiny" (Ikambana, 2007, p.24). Although China had a functioning protocol for film production, Zaire did not impose a strict, written production code or a censorship guide

for film.<sup>207</sup> Instead, national Zairian filmmaking had put in place a working environment that was not overtly restrictive but that, in practice, presented limitations by connecting funding availability directly to filmmaking that participated in the promotion of the government's work, therefore informing production by utilising the understood implications, rather than the apparent instructions. Through the interviews with the filmmakers, especially those with Kintenda and Tshitenge, it is possible to acknowledge that, although there were restrictions in their view, this did not affect their practice, as they were not in ethical disagreement with the work that they were doing, because they state that they were portraying the best of the country and all its potential. When asked if the filmmaking practice was imposed, Kintenda replied:

No, on the contrary. The work of journalist or director cannot be done if you don't like the job. Personally, I liked what I did. I was very committed to providing this service to our people. Teaching people to improve their industrial production, I found it a very noble objective. Very noble, and I gave myself very heartily, and I hope that the people who loved agriculture at that time still benefitted from what I presented on television at that time (Zoppelletto, 2016c).<sup>208</sup>

In response to the commissioning of films by the government and state companies, Tshitenge replied similarly:

It was really good, because it coincided with a great time for the country, where there was a lot of creativity. Where creators of all artistic disciplines had a voice, they created. I mean, for example, sculptors who had participated in the creation of monuments, sculptures that exist in the city, to embellish the country. It coincides with that. And with the birth of television, which is a very, very, important mode of expression (Zoppelletto, 2016d, clip 01300002).<sup>209</sup>

What is apparent from these interviews is that there is no blatant dissatisfaction, on the contrary, but by interpreting the further responses given during the interviews, it is possible to gather

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<sup>207</sup> The publication *Communication Policies in Zaire* (1980) by UNESCO, a study directed by Botombele, does not show any specific resolution with regards to film. Instead the section dedicated to cinema and television, from p19 to p24, lists some of the colonial productions made by Zairians and names some of the films produced in post-independence and their directors. It continues by mentioning the films produced for broadcast by RENAPEC Regie Nationale des Productions Educatives et Culturelles. It does not address what is the national code of production.

<sup>208</sup> My translation. Original: "Non au contraire. Le travail de journaliste comme réalisateur, si vous n'aimez pas ce métier vous ne pouvez pas y rester. Moi personnellement, j'aimez bien ce que je faisais. J'étais tout à fait engagé de rendre ce service là à notre population. Apprendre aux gens à améliorer leur production industrielle, je trouvais c'était une objective très noble. Très noble et je me suis donné de très bon cœur et j'espère que les gens qui aime' l'agriculture à cette époque-là avait quand même tiré profit de ce que je présentais à la télévision à cette époque-là"

<sup>209</sup> My translation. Original: "C'était vraiment quelque chose de bien, parce que ça coïncidait avec une période faste du pays où il y avait beaucoup de créativité. Où les créateurs de toutes les disciplines artistiques s'exprimaient, créaient. Je veux parler par exemple des sculpteurs qui avaient participé à la création de monuments, des sculptures qui existent dans la ville, pour embellir le pays. Ça coïncidait avec ce là. Et avec la naissance de la télévision, qui est un mode d'expression très très important..."

that they would have liked to be able to make more films, rather than different films. Massamba stated:

Television was at the service of the President. Here there was the editorial request to talk about the good of the President, of everything he did. On the social level and in terms of his power. It was necessary (Zoppelletto, 2016d, clip 01200001).<sup>210</sup>

When speaking about creative roles in terms of both creativity and expression, however, Massamba, while explaining how a documentary was produced, recounted his experience while filming in Brazil for RTNC, and he indicated that there was no strict censorship guide or code, explaining that:

Sincerely, at the time I constituted my own unit, that is to say, I was cameraman and director - because there were no directors. There was no written script. Everything was imagined and realised spontaneously (Zoppelletto, 2016d, clip 01200001).<sup>211</sup>

The kinship between Zairian and Chinese cinema can be noted as both countries nationalised the film industry, as well as both regarded film as being purposeful for the political regime. Whereas Zaire did not become involved in the actual film text, in China, during the Mao era, and especially during the Cultural Revolution, policy and explicit ideological control did not confine itself to the scope of curating content by financing projects that were in line with Party politics. Instead, the government addressed filmmaking through defined protocols. China's filmmakers adopted Lenin's guidelines for cinema, which are captured in his speech *The Party's View on Film*, teaching that "making news and documentary films should be like publishing the Party's newspaper" (Chu, 2007, p.55). This core idea resonated with Mao Tze Tung who, while similarly less involved in aspects of film form, but more in political content, proposed in 1942 the concept of *geming wenyi*, revolutionary art (Chu, 2007, p.56). In this regard, it can be argued that there is a substantial affinity between the idea of revolutionary art and 'development film', as proposed by the films recovered during the course of this thesis, due to their function of actively participating in the decolonising attempt of Congo, which is expressed as being 'the revolution'.

In terms of Mao Tze Tung's vision of a cultural revolution and Mobutu's revolutionary *Authenticity*, filmmaking is viewed as a tool that can be used to communicate with the masses,

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<sup>210</sup> My translation. Original: "La télévision était au service du Président. Ici il y avait comme éditoriale parler beaucoup du bien du Président de tout ce qu'il faisait. Sur le plan social et sur le plan de son pouvoir. Il fallait."

<sup>211</sup> My translation. Original: "Je vous dit que sincèrement dans ce moment-là je constitué un tout, c'est à dire j'étais cameraman et réalisateur. Parce qu'il n'y avait pas des réalisateurs. Il n'y avait pas un texte écrit. Tout était imaginé et réalisé spontanément"

not the elites. As both notions of revolution and development can be effective only when carried by the wider population, the workers become the protagonist and the *Adressat* of these films that would, in turn, support the government's ideals. Chinese documentary film was not about the bourgeoisie but, by portraying the worker and peasant as a protagonist, documentaries could be used to influence or re-educate the bourgeoisie by teaching them about the "massive participation of workers, peasants and soldiers in the revolution under the leadership of Communists" (Chu, 2007, p.56), a feature that is present also in *How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, a film that enthusiastically embraced the supposed ideals of the Cultural Revolution. Similarly, *Salongo*'s focus is on the people, the *citoyens*, who are shown working for the revolution, but the Zairian depiction of labour is created with images that show workers and farmers working side by side with the elites because, under the policy of Salongo, everyone without exception was to contribute to the upkeep and development of the country. The film appears to want to reconcile the classes, and not to show one as being morally superior to the other, but both as being engaged in constructing an indigenous economy and culture. The use of a realistic medium, such as the documentary film, can therefore convey a compelling narrative and theme by combining the imagery of the worker with the strength of the documentary form, which is supposed to be perceived by the audience as being simultaneously truthful and aspirational.

Weaving together the ideals of *Authenticity*, Mobutu's policy of Salongo, as portrayed by the film, aims to reflect a truly African, and particularly Zairian, ethical code of conduct, which puts the community before the individual, in a manner like that of the aforementioned 'African show' (Kalapanga Gazungil and Peraya, 1984, pp.103–107). The worker in *Salongo*, and all the people gathered to clean up the country, as well as the dancers in *animation*, who belong to the workers' union of the MPR, form the visual representation of the nation. A nation in development through the spirit of *Authenticity* and in the action of Salongo, which not only unites the classes, but also all the tribes, as examined earlier. To read these expressions in their context it is useful to look at how they fit into an African understanding of society. Kasoma explains that the traditional values of social cohesion are at the core of African ethics (Kasoma, 1996, pp.93–116). By proposing a "society-centred media morality", Kasoma discusses the value of communication media that are founded on the principles of "Afriethics" (Kasoma, 1996, p.93). Kasoma warns against the dominion of a regime over its country's media, which may fit the case of Zaire, with its authoritarian rule, but it exposes the African origin of a community centred morality. Kasoma encourages journalists to behave according to African

principles of morality which benefit the wider community, rather than the single person or institution; his work was to define a way that would enable African journalism not to follow the journalistic examples from the North, but to find its rationale in African ethics. I look at this work in order to understand the African traditional meanings and ethical paradigms that are explored within this Zairian film. I argue that aspects of African morality which are identified by Kasoma are captured and utilised by *Salongo* to galvanise Party alliance.

By reading *Salongo* through the lens of Afriethics, it is possible to see how ‘development film’ is a Zairian filmic expression, and although it may share some ideas with socialist-centrist film, or with Chinese socialist realism, the film’s strategy can be considered *authentic*, as pertaining to the specific ideas of *Authenticity*, which claim to connect the people of Zaire to the land of their ancestors through their original way of life and morality. Kasoma indicates, as the foundation of African ethics, an indissoluble bond between the people of Africa and their heritage. “The basis of morality in African society is the fulfilment of obligations to kinspeople, both living and dead” (Kasoma, 1996, p.107). Understanding the sense of community in an African context, means taking into account its spiritual aspects, which include the wishes of the dead in the decision making of the present. As discussed earlier in this chapter, there is the spirituality of the *fetish*, passed on to the Chief, as the guardian of his people, and the spiritual world that is shared by all people and the dead. “The living and the dead all share one world – the world of the living-dead or dead-living – in which they also share one life and one vital force” (Kasoma, 1996, p.102). As a result of this spiritual aspect, the community transcends the visible world and incorporates an invisible dimension, like the *fetish*, which is deeply felt and is passed on as a cultural trait and belief system which has an impact on the visible world that we inhabit.

What the dead do or not do can have a telling effect on the living. The evil spirits (bad dead people), for example, have the power and influence to haunt those among the living against whom they have a grudge by generally making life difficult for them. The good spirits, on the other hand, have the ability and the power to protect the living from problems which come with life’s vicissitudes or are deliberately planted on them by evil living people or spirits (Kasoma, 1996, p.102).

The moral obligation towards the dead, and a continuum of their existence into the sphere of the living, is put forward in *Salongo* as part of the discourse for development. Whilst *Salongo* was embedded with the political notions of the MPR, at the same time, it promotes the revaluation and importance of pre-colonial ethics, as part of the discourse of dignity for the Zairian heritage. In different sequences of the film, both in the speeches and the songs of



*animation*, there is a reminder of the value of the development work that is carried out by the people, especially in the relation that this work has with the dead, the ancestors. The following two examples expose this fabric of African ethics as being central to the understanding of morality, and promote this relationship as central to the reasons why the people should work and engage in free communal labour in order to develop the nation. The first comes from a speech in which the speaker addresses the firm spiritual connection between the Chief, Mobutu, and the dead: “My fellow citizens, my/our speeches to you in all our rallies are not our own speeches, they purely are Mobutu’s; they are the words of our ancestors” (Kwami, 1974, TC 01.18.16).<sup>212</sup> These words of the Party’s representative set out to state that Mobutu speaks on behalf of the ancestors, cautioning the population that their behaviour should not be in opposition to the words of the dead.

The second example is expressed by an *animation* song that is used as the soundtrack for a long sequence showing people planting seeds in what seems to be an orchard, which then continues with generic views of people working in line on a field. During this sequence. the voice-over narration explains that development and growth are only possible through the communal work of Salongo, and not through the ways of the past when the country was exploited by the foreigners (Kwami, 1974). The song, the name of which remains unknown, is at times more prominent during the sequence, and in others only the instrumentation is perceptible, but it gives the idea that all the workers in the sequence are working to its rhythm and lyrics:

*Ba Zairoises, ba Zairois, ye ye Salongo,*  
 Zairian women, Zairian men, Salongo,  
*Ye ye tolanda, Tata Mobutu akati elanga e*  
 Let’s follow the example of our father Mobutu, who engaged in the agriculture.  
*Na Zaire, Sese, Mokonzi, abongisela mboka ya ba nkoko ye ye*  
 In Zaire, it is Sese the leader; the builder of the country of our ancestors.  
*Abimisa libota ya MPR, ye ye Mokonzi e*  
 He created the family of MPR, ye ye Chief.

*Na Zaire ye ye, Salongo*  
 In Zaire, Salongo.  
*Mosala ba nkoko batika bilanga*  
 That is our heritage, agriculture.  
*Tozongela Nzela bankoko batika ye ye*  
 Let us go back to our ancestors’ heritage  
*Bilanga e*

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<sup>212</sup> Translation by Makana Kitiana. Original speech: “Bandeke na nga, maloba nalobaka, maloba nazali koloba, maloba tolobaka na ba meetings ezali na biso te, ezali maloba ya Mobutu ye moko, ezali maloba ya ba nkoko”

Agriculture.

*Mosala ya Salongo, Equateur bazali liboso*

In the work of Salongo, Equateur you are ahead.

*Baloni pondu na loso, masangu na nguba, biteku-teku, kuanga na makemba, boyoki e*  
They produced cassava leaves and rice, maize and peanuts, biteku-teku (greens),  
chikuangue and plantains, did you hear that?

*Cotton ya kosala bilamba, café, Salongo, nyonso tout Equateur asali, keba!*

Cotton to make clothes, coffee, and basically everything, Salongo, Equateur has done  
it. Just be warned!

*Tata Mobutu ye ye, avancez, kolemba te*

Father Mobutu, go forward, do not get tired

*Kolemba te kobingisa mboka ba nkoko batika , avancez*

Do not give up building the country our ancestors have left to us, go forward”

(Kwami, 1974, TC 02.15.17).<sup>213</sup>

These lyrics perpetuate an iconography of Mobutu who, respectful of the ancestors, is capable of awakening the nation and guiding the labourer towards the wishes of the dead. This song of *animation* interprets the image of workers engaged in Salongo for the nation as a coronation of tradition, *Authenticity* and ultimate spirituality, because it fulfils the harmonious cohabitation of the living and the dead in this world and, more precisely, in Zaire.



Mobutu waving the carved cane, the *fetish*. *Salongo* (1974) Copyright Cinematek.

<sup>213</sup> Translation by Makana Kitiana

## 5.4 Conclusion

This film represents a 'film event', in which the policy of Salongo had been announced in the previous year and it had to be demonstrated that it was effective, and its importance for the unity of the Zairian nation and the path of *Authenticity* had to be affirmed. The *Anlass* of the film, whose *Adressat* were all the tribes of Zaire, were called to participate in this by the different languages in which songs are sung in the film, and this was participation in communal work. Salongo defines the features of 'development filmmaking' by presenting, in its narrative and form, the important themes that contributed to an attempt at decolonisation through the ideology of *Authenticity*. Within these themes there is the relationship between the people of Zaire and the land of the ancestors, the multi-tribal country perceived as being the one people of Zaire, and the acceptance and adhesion to traditional governance by the Chief. 'Development film', as a mode of filmmaking, presents, in the example of *Salongo*, a documentary structure that is embedded in the context of 'African show' displayed in the community scenes of *Salongo* and *animation*. Dance, and the practice of *animation*, stimulate participation in ancient rituals that have been re-appropriated in celebration of the Second Republic and Mobutu, in order to confer on him the role of Chief and to entitle him to continue in this role. This is a role that not only becomes personal and familiar to the citizens through the father figure waving the cane, but also that which awakens the labourer who is shown as being the finest expression of Zaire.

## CHAPTER 6

*LA COMPAGNIE MARITIME ZAÏROISE*<sup>214</sup>  
and *GECAMINES - LA VOLONTÉ DE REUSSIR*<sup>215</sup>  
Zairian industrial modernity

*...the Gecamines company has become the biggest family business in the world; it's the property of the great Zairese family, the jewel of our revolution...*

(Mobutu Sese Seko and Remilleux, 1989, p.134)

### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses the films *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* and *Gecamines - La Volonté De Réussir*, which were originally found at the Umatic library of RTNC. They were then copied from Umatic onto two VHS tapes, which were then digitised at the University of Westminster.

The films will be explored to trace their production, in terms of being considered to be 'development films', and to assert their function in the construction of Zaire. Conceptually, the notion of 'development', in the Zairian context, is closely linked to the re-appropriation of one's costume, as conceived in the ideology of *Authenticity* and its practices. The framing of *Authenticity*, and its legitimacy through film, are then twofold, in their re-invention of tradition as cultural development and its expression through modernity and economic development, which are captured by both films. In explanation of the importance of creating the image of the Zairian that is projected in the industrial future, it will firstly be valuable to further explore how the reinvention of the past is intrinsically connected to it.

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<sup>214</sup> The Zairian Shipping Company

<sup>215</sup> Gecamines - The Will to Succeed

As has been seen in the previous chapters, the reinvention, which also constructed the idea of national identity, is formed either by attempting to bypass or by eradicating the colonial experience. Evidence for this can be found in the imposition of ‘returning’ to the use of *authentic* names. We can observe the cultural shift in the obligation to change one’s names from Christian, and therefore European colonial names, to traditional Bantu names. With this policy, we can interpret the return to the Bantu name as being an element in looking back to one’s traditions before the colonial experience. By disclaiming colonial names, history is annulled, resulting in the impression of *authentic* development that is projected to the future, which the government simulated with the term *postnom*, an *authentic* Zairian invention. With a declaration of the repudiation of the past, Mobutu announced that “the names and monuments of the colonial period were to disappear before the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1972” (Ndaywel è Nziem, 1998, p.102).<sup>216</sup> After being criticised by the Belgian press for this decision, Mobutu responded by extending the renaming to the personal names of the *citoyens*, and he did this by imposing a formal mandate on the 15<sup>th</sup> February of that same year: “Every Zairian woman and Zairian man (from that day) had to have Zairian names, and was obliged to add to the names he had always borne, one or more of his ancestors’ names” (Ibid, p.103).<sup>217</sup> A law introduced on the 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1972, recommended<sup>218</sup> criminal sanctions for priests or pastors who would baptise members of their congregation with foreign, non-Zairian names. The addition of ancestors’ names called for a new *authentic* category to reflect the addition of one’s heritage and, to this end, the Second Republic introduced the Zairian term *postnom* (Ndaywel è Nziem, 1998, pp.102-103). In effect, the *postnom* functions as a reinterpretation of the middle name, expressed with an invented French word and, in so doing, it further demonstrates the contradictions and reinventions of a unique identity that was constructed to express a pure *authenticity*, but faced the challenges brought by language that can span an entire ‘nation’, which is still defined by its colonial history. Despite the fall of Mobutu’s regime, the Zairian peculiarity of the *postnom* is still in place, and is a formal category in Congolese passports.

This self-professed cultural revolution, which aimed to obliterate any trace of the colonial experience, was clearly unattainable, but we can read the imposition of an institutional Zairian

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<sup>216</sup> My translation. Original text: “les noms et les monuments de la période coloniale devaient disparaître avant le 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1972”

<sup>217</sup> My translation. Original text: “ Toute Zaïroise et tout Zaïrois (à dater de ce jour-là), devait porter des noms typiquement zaïrois, et était tenu d’ajouter aux noms qu’il avait toujours portés, un ou plusieurs autres de ses ancêtres”

<sup>218</sup> The original summary reported by Ndaywel è Nziem explains the law suggested criminal sanctions but did not specify that they were made mandatory

identity as an attempt by the government to indoctrinate the country into thinking, not in terms of a postcolonial condition, but to perceive everything in Zairian terms, from the name, which is the most personal trait of one's identity, to the communal vision of a national Zairian identity. The formation of the ideology is, then, pervasive, as it filters from the government buildings into the person's private sphere, the person is then interpellated to think in ideological terms.

The cultural development that was promoted by the Second Republic was intrinsically linked to the economic development of the country, and its film production expressed in 'development film' is a reflection of this. The primary focus of such filmmaking was the economy and, secondly, the healthcare system, as illustrated in films like *N'Gambo*, and the documentary *Gbadolite, Un Exemple, Comme Toujours (Gbadolite, an Example As Always)*,<sup>219</sup> the only known existing copy of the latter is held at the Cinematek in Brussels. Within the economic domain, the country's primary resources were the chief interest of the government, along with the opportunity to showcase them favourably. This focus is a continuation of the discourse of Zaire's true heritage, which is expressed in terms of the richness of its nature, and it positions Zairians as the guardians of its wealth, of the soil and in its subsoil, as articulated in films like *Sanctuaires Naturels du Zaïre*, and further developed in *Salongo*. It can also be argued that the discourse that combines economic development with heritage was one of the strategies Mobutu deployed to continue to hold power. These were articulated through promoting communal work and by cementing the special relationship that the population were encouraged to believe he had with the ancestors, who were invested in his status as Chief of all Chiefs in an organisation that can be advanced as being common to African customs:

The organizational structure of traditional societies was based on kinship and ancestry. The primary mission of political power was the survival of the group as an economic, spiritual, political, and military unit (Ikambana, 2007, p.14)

The reinterpretation of the structure by Mobutu gave rise to what has been referred to as 'patrimonialism' and as a centralisation of power.<sup>220</sup> By nationalising private companies through *Zairianisation* in 1973, power was centralised and entrusted to the political elite. As explained by Tshitenge, after *Zairianisation*, the majority of films made were those commissioned by singular state companies and produced by the RTNC, later called *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre* (Zoppelletto, 2016d). Amongst these productions, which are referred to as

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<sup>219</sup> My title translation

<sup>220</sup> Further reading on 'patrimonialism': *Rethinking Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism in Africa* (Pitcher, Moran and Johnson, 2009)

“commissioned documentaries”<sup>221</sup> by Tshitenge, I was able to find: *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* produced in 1975, and *Gecamines - La volonté de réussir* in the RTNC Umatic library. The latter film did not have any information on its production date but, after examination, I estimate that it was made between 1986 and 1988 (Mabolia, 2018). As discussed in Chapter 3, the Umatic library does not have an official archive register that is available for consultation, and the film itself does not mention any date. As with the 16mm films, viewing the material would enable identification and classification. In the footage I recognised Mr Yenga Mabolia, who appears in the generic interior views of the Gecamines London office at the London Metal Exchange. Mabolia could not remember the exact year of filming, but he confirmed that he held his position as Gecamines’ UK Branch Manager in London for two years, starting in 1986.

The two productions, although they are cinematic expressions of the political ideology of the MPR, do not implement the narrative structure and canons that are present in the television productions of the time or in the celebratory film *Salongo*, which rely heavily on slogans and *animation*.<sup>222</sup> The two documentaries are also different to each other, not the least because a decade had passed between the productions but, primarily, because of their specific narrative choices and aesthetics. To examine these films and understand how they contribute to the overall idea of being ‘development films’, the chapter is divided in two main parts: the first is dedicated to *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise*. with a section ‘Film Data and Synopsis’ to provide sufficient technical information and to have a contextual basis on which to position the arguments that are proposed by the analysis. This is followed by ‘The militant company’ a section within which the ways in which *Zairianisation* had engaged public companies in order to represent modern Zaire and had utilised modernity as a spectacle with which to promote development through the MPR. The second section is focused on *Gecamines - La Volonté de Réussir*, beginning again with ‘Film Data and Synopsis’ and this is then followed by the analytical section ‘Inserting the omitted protagonist of modern History’. This section looks at the ways in which the film draws on a narrative of world history to establish Gecamines on the global scene, and to re-appropriate a Zairian element through its signification of geological wealth and the consequences of Zairian’s labour.

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<sup>221</sup> Refer to Chapter 3

<sup>222</sup> The films do not use *animation* as a storytelling device but there is in each film one example of *animation*. In *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* a group of ladies dance in the style of *animation* on the ship in a sequence that shows different evening activities. In *Gecamines* there is one short scene of a gathering with animation from a group in traditional wear, but it is part of a sequence where many different leisure activities are displayed.

## 6.1 Film data and synopsis *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise*

Film Title: <i>La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise</i>
Year of Production: 1975
Format: Umatic
Duration: 31'41"
Producer: La Voix du Zaire, Tele-Zaire-C.M.Z.
Scriptwriter: not known
Director: Hemedi Mwanamboyo

The opening sequence begins with a man standing on a cliff overlooking the harbour at Matadi. The voice-over narration is spoken over a Congolese Rumba soundtrack, which accompanies most of the film, and introduces the viewer to the port. The voice-over narration begins by presenting essential information, such as the geographic location of the harbour and the significance to a nation of having a national commercial and mercantile fleet. Images of the port and a montage clearly drawn from archival shots introduce the landmarks of the national shipping company, Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise or CMZ. The various acquisitions of ships for the fleet are listed by the year they were commissioned, along with details of which country and shipyard had built them. The last ship introduced in detail is MS Lumumba, the sequence includes images of its launch, in which it is possible to see that Mobutu presided. This short introduction is followed by the opening titles, which are of images of the sea with large graphics for the credits.<sup>223</sup>

After the introduction and credits, it is possible to divide the film into three main parts which follow the visual and temporal narrative of the trip of both the mixed cargo and the passenger ship, the MS Kananga, from its base in the port of Matadi, Zaire, to its final destination in Antwerp. The first part gives an overall explanation of the headquarters and the formation of the legislation that permits the company's vessels to travel internationally. During this section, the voice-over narration explains the state's ownership of the company, the professional and political role of the company's managing director, and also shows an assembly of the youth workers' union.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> The beginning introduction followed by the opening credits is a style conforming to a television documentary format of the time.

<sup>224</sup> My Translation. Original text: "jeunesse ouvrière"





Members of the workers' union on the Kananga. *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* (1975) Copyright RTNC.

From this set up in its homeland, the ship starts its navigation, thus marking the second part of the narrative. With the graphic contribution of a map, the voice-over narration explains the various shipping routes of the CMZ; from Zaire to the Americas via the Gulf of Mexico, Zaire to the Far East, including Hong Kong and Japan, to Northern Europe via Antwerp and, finally, the route from Zaire to the Mediterranean via Marseille and the Italian harbours. Once at sea, the onboard footage and voice-over narration attempt to evoke the experience of the trip. Although the point of view is not given through a first-person narration and has connotations of a polished commercial film, the viewer sees life on-board. Footage from the bridge towards the sea and footage of the ship's amenities, as well as its engine and control rooms, show the viewer the greatness of the ship and what passengers and crew do during the voyage. This second part of the film also includes the welcoming of passengers on-board and the comfort in which they travel.

The portrayal and description of life on-board is exhaustive in explaining the work and duties of the important crew categories on the ship. The viewer is shown various work situations, amongst which feature: the constant polishing and painting of the maintenance team, the work of the radio operator, which the narration notes is subject to an irregular schedule, the infirmary and the tasks of doctors and nurses who sometimes have to deal with passengers who have been affected by illness caused by the open sea. The Captain is first shown in his office in his

cabin and, later, with elegantly dressed guests and officers at the captain's cocktail party, a gala evening that takes place four times during the eleven-day cruise. Captain Lelo's synced interview is used twice, at first as a more personal record of impressions of his work tasks, and then to chronicle his career, in which he gives a detailed account of his experience.

The third part is dedicated to the maritime industry, the professional training, the opportunities offered by the CMZ and the presence of the company abroad. As the ship completes its journey and arrives at the Port of Antwerp, the narration discusses the costs of visiting ports and explains the importance of having a representative office in such a location, to carry out not only administrative duties but also to provide family and professional assistance to its employees and those on a training scholarship. These explanations are edited with images of Antwerp's port making it appear that they have very grand and modern looking offices where a secretary is attending to Zairian employees at a meeting. As the voice-over narrates the role of CMZ abroad, the segment finishes abruptly indicating the end of the VHS. The second VHS made by RTNC seems to carry the rest of the film, but there are only a couple of general views from the ship at sea followed by the closing titles. The continuation of the film on a different VHS tape does not permit us to know whether there is a segment missing, and this is a significant possibility as the person carrying out the transcoding could have lost part of the film when exchanging the recorded VHS for a new one.

## 6.2 The militant company

The call for militancy that is present in the MPR's rhetoric meant that companies had to actively engage in the political and ideological life of the country.<sup>225</sup> The film *La Compagnie Maritime Zairoise* actively responds to this call by showing the company's engagement with the national ideology and, in this sense, it represents a 'film event' for Zairian filmography, in which, as in the Elsaesser classification:

the event has its own temporal and spatial coherence, but as a process and usually tied to a site; an event is linked to a time structure not as a continuum like narrative, but as a pulse, intermittent and shaped by intervals (Elsaesser, 2014, p.32).

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<sup>225</sup> The call for militancy was present especially in the TV show "la demi heure du militant" which can be translated into "the militant's half hour" (Langellier, 2017, p.226)

It can be argued that this ‘film event’ represents a specific response that is conditioned by the temporal and spatial coherence afforded by Zaire. In this context it is possible to see how the film introduces its protagonist, the Zairian vessel, as an icon of emancipation for the country, with this presentation in the voice-over: “The MS Kananga, a CMZ mixed cargo ship, is a giant of the sea” (Hemedi, 1975, TC 20.21).<sup>226</sup> It further articulates this knowledge of the vessel’s impact and as a model of emancipation, thanks to its twofold contribution to the country.

Firstly, this contribution is seen through its role in the industrial and economic development of the country and, then, the second input, its purpose as the forerunner of social progress due to its symbolic value, as the film itself seeks to demonstrate. The script, delivered mainly through a voice-over narration with the addition of interviews and soundbites, is very direct in pointing out these roles. Additionally, the script is sustained by the imagery, which serves as visual proof of the ship’s role as a signifier of modernity by situating it in enthralling settings and as part of a process of modern industry, by showing equipment such as cranes, containers, and its arrival at a massive commercial port. The film is edited with a soundtrack of modern Congolese Rumba, with the exception of a few scenes that deliver a more experiential view of the ship, in which the images of the working environments and technical operations are edited solely with the accompaniment of ambient sound. These passages, which attempt to evoke an unfiltered reality, without commentary, let the viewer appreciate the soundscape of industrial modernity, such as radio frequencies, the noises of machinery being activated, and the voices of the officers in charge giving commands to their crew.

The script implies from the beginning that the “sea giant”, this leviathan ship, is firstly an economic giant, and it therefore continues to reiterate the idea that the CMZ represents economic development and national independence. The film starts this immediately by appraising the role of the port of Matadi, not only as benefitting the country and representing an accomplishment for Zaire, but as a Zairian establishment of global significance:

Most of the production, equipment and consumption that contribute to the development of Zaire arrives by sea. This double vocation makes Matadi one of the most important harbours of the world, especially when considering the number and diversity of ships that throw their anchor there. Among all these vessels there are those of the CMZ, the Zairian Maritime Company (Hemedi, 1975, TC01.02).<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> My translation. Original text: “MS Kananga cargo mix de la CMZ est un géant de mer”

<sup>227</sup> My translation. Original script: “La majeure partie de bien de production et équipement et consommation qui participent au développement du Zaïre arrivent par voix de mer. Cette double vocation fait de Matadi un port de plus importants du monde surtout si on le considère le nombre et la diversité de navires qui jettent

This declaration aims to shift perceptions. Instead of presenting a pre-independence image of the country, and aspiring to have the facilities that are available to other economies, the script acknowledges the value of the country's assets, such as Matadi, and gives it a prominent role as a desirable partner, a gateway for other countries' commerce. With this portrayal, Zaire represents itself as being on a par with the rest of the world, and so the film establishes it as a competitive economy. Putting forward a discourse of decolonisation, the film then further interprets freedom of trade and economic expansion under a Zairian flag as signifiers of its independence and, furthermore, of its sovereignty. The voice-over narration continues to explain:

The reasons for a country to have a national fleet are usually grounded in economic independence. An economically independent country must know how to safeguard its prestige and sovereignty. For this purpose, a national merchant fleet is also an attribute of absolute sovereignty (Hemedi, 1975, TC 01.02.)<sup>228</sup>

The merchant fleet, and therefore the role of CMZ, a state-owned company, is represented as being to the fore in establishing sovereignty for Zaire, meaning that the film advances not only an industrial role but also a political one for the company. As such, the company's filmic discourse, made in association with Tele-Zaire, constructs its activist, militant role. The script can be read as an indication of the synergy between the television company and the filmmaker who are engaging in a 'development film', a film enabled by the company; CMZ appears to want to be portrayed as being in full cooperation with the government's ideals by highlighting the political contribution that is made by the people on-board. The voice-over narration tells the audience that the managing director has a political role in the company and, on-board, the Captain of the ship is the President of the Party chapter. The youth workers' union is shown during what seems to be an assembly; there is no use of ambient sound, nor of sound bites from the meeting, and the sequence is explained through the film's voice-over commentary:

Here we see the workers' youth committee of the MPR. As they are all members of the Popular Movement of the Revolution, it is normal for the employees of the CMZ to have access to loyal activists at the heart of the company. This political party cell is a working tool put at the disposal of the Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise, in order to

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l'ancre. Parmi ces navires ceux de la CMZ la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise."

<sup>228</sup> My translation. Original script: "Les raisons pour un pays d'avoir une flotte nationale sont généralement fondées par l'Indépendance économique. Un pays économiquement indépendant doit savoir sauvegarder son prestige et sa souveraineté. A cet effet une flotte marchande nationale est aussi un attribut de la souveraineté absolue"

contribute to the conscientisation<sup>229</sup> of the working masses to re-enact the spirit of Mobutism (Hemedi, 1975, TC04.55 -05.20).<sup>230</sup>

Drawing on the same ideas, the ship's Captain reiterates this role later in the film in one of his statements about political involvement. Sitting in his office on a stylish leather, upholstered chair and in his white uniform, and beside the portrait of Mobutu, the Captain is relaxed and he comfortably declares:

I know that I contribute to the economy and the emancipation of this country. As Chairman of the MPR chapter of this vessel, I am very happy and very satisfied with my career (Hemedi, 1975, TC19.25)<sup>231</sup>

The pose and the words spoken by the Captain depict an ascent to success and personal satisfaction that are intrinsically linked to the choice of adhesion to the MPR and *Mobutism*.<sup>232</sup> The *mise en scène* communicates an aesthetic of accomplishment, befitting a man who claims to be actively involved in building the nation. The position of prestige and command are defined by the uniform and the Captain's pose against the background of a modern and elegant office offering all comforts. Whilst showcasing the Captain's personal achievements, the film uses his speech to show that the Captain is aware of the origin of this emancipation is the MPR especially as he is sitting by the portrait of President Mobutu.

The spectacle of modernity and comfort used by the film to evoke development is present in different filming locations of the ship, not only within the Captain's office, these are highlighted also in the display of the luxury cabins and the ship's dining room and salon where the gala evening takes place. These are the most emphatic manifestations of a commercial approach in showing an established wealth on board the MS Kananga, encapsulating Zaire via a metonymy. Zaire representing the ideology of *Authenticity* and decolonisation, is contextualised to show that political activism results in decolonisation. The script alludes to its sovereignty at sea as a showcase of political action:

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<sup>229</sup> Conscientisation: "Originally in Latin America: the action or process of making others aware of political and social conditions, especially as a precursor to challenging inequalities of treatment or opportunity; the fact of being aware of these conditions. Origin 1960s. From conscient + -ization, after Portuguese conscientização" (Conscientization, no date) Word used in French in the original script.

<sup>230</sup> My translation. Original script: "Cette cellule du parti est un instrument de travail mise à la disposition de la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise afin de contribuer à la conscientisation des masses ouvrières à réédifier sans cesse l'esprit du Mobutisme. Cette cellule du parti est un instrument de travail mise à la disposition de la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise afin de contribuer à la conscientisation des masses ouvrières à réédifier sans cesse l'esprit du Mobutisme."

<sup>231</sup> My translation. Original text: "Je sais que je contribue à l'économie et à l'émancipation de ce pays. Comme Président sectionnaire du MPR de ce navire, je suis très content et très satisfait de ma carrière"

<sup>232</sup> *Mobutism* begins in 1974 and the film dates 1975

At the head of the crew is the long course Captain, the commander of the ship who also ensures the functioning of the political discipline aboard this ship which remains a part of the Republic of Zaire in perpetual move (Hemedi, 1975, TC18.52)<sup>233</sup>

This representation of the new country, claiming to be ideologically far from the Congo that gained independence and suffered a period of chaos for five years, aims to demonstrate that it is a Zaire of civil order, as depicted in *Election 1970* and of work and prosperity as shown in *Salongo*. This ‘development film’ carries on the theme of labour by showing the lower paid workers on the ship rewarded for their work with exceptional comfort. In a panelled and modern dining hall, a few seamen in uniform are sitting having a coffee. Another man, an officer, is sitting amongst them. They are all served at the table by a man in uniform, and the voice-over explains that because their workload is heavy, they receive a very energetic diet of three full meals a day and an obligatory coffee break. These details are not only interesting because they may be interpreted as ostentations of abundance available to the lower level employees, and therefore exciting for the mass, moreover these details serve as a message of inclusion. The meals and breaks serve to demonstrate that everyone can be part of the expansion and can participate in the creation of better living conditions created by a modernist state. The imagery shows a cohesion of intent, and the production of the image corresponds to the role of the filmmakers in using the medium of cinema and television itself to produce a ‘development film’.

When discussing the role of companies commissioning films, Tshitenge during the 2016 interview previously mentioned, explains that the exciting and prolific period of the economic boom of the 1970s and the growth of the 1980s, meant that the birth of many national companies and the development of the nation advanced together, at the same pace, and was intrinsically linked to the development of television and the arts. Newly born, or nationalised, companies were keen to show how they were contributing for the cultural revolution and betterment of the country, and to that end would commission films, but this practice was not enforced, rather, in his opinion, it was a voluntary initiative (Zoppelletto, 2016d). Reflecting on this version of the production environment it can be said that the national companies and those that changed ownership through *Zairianisation* are the *Auftraggeber* of ‘development films’, as they saw their existence intrinsically linked to the nation. Further, the *Anlass* to

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<sup>233</sup> My translation. Original text: “A la tête de l'équipage le Capitaine au long cours est commandant du navire veille également fonctionnement de la discipline politique à bord de ce navire qui reste une partie de la République du Zaïre en perpétuel déplacement”

present their latest achievements for emancipation can be defined in a desire to show what decolonisation looks like to the people who are stimulated with the imagery. The *Adressat* are the people who, in turn, are expected to contribute to the decolonisation of *Authenticity/Zairianisation/Mobutism* by continuing the ideology. The films commissioned by state companies were an opportunity to show the country's development through its industries and "it was, therefore, necessary to produce a number of documentaries on these different companies on their evolution, their operation and their future projects" (Zoppelletto, 2016b, clip 01300002).<sup>234</sup> The statement resonates with adherence to the national and specific project of decolonisation and the desire for its continuation.

The film *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* follows the structure explained by Tshitenge, as it narrates the change from the structure of the Congolese shipping company to a Zairian shipping company, which is now presented as a legitimate enterprise welcomed in harbours around the world, and finally continues its narrative by looking at what the different operative cells of the company do. To complete this structure the film's ending should offer a review of the company's ambitions and its future projects, but it is not possible to confirm this as the film available to this research finishes abruptly, possibly because of incorrect transcoding as explained previously.



The Kananga arriving in Antwerp. *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* (1975) Copyright RTNC.

This documentary film of the CMZ, is not only of value to the regime because it carries the discourse of party militancy and displays the material results of development that are achieved

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<sup>234</sup> My translation. Original text: "Il a fallu donc réaliser un certain nombre de documentaires sur ces différentes sociétés sur leur évolution, sur leur fonctionnement et sur leurs projets d'avenir."

through nationalistic Zairian politics and *Mobutism*, but its contribution is also in recording the actions and results of this development. The film medium provides the national company with a visual testimony of its technical and commercial progress. The world map, with arrows leading from Zaire to all continents, and with a voice-over narration noting the fashionable and exotic destinations of the CMZ fleet, is an iconic signifier of Zaire's valuable international relationships as well as signifying what has been achieved by 1975. In evaluating the industrial significance of record and rhetoric, Vonderau and Hediger in their chapter *Record, Rhetoric, Rationalization – Industrial Organization and Film*, explore the principle functions of industrial films:

‘Record’ means that media provide industrial organizations with an institutional memory, i.e., an archive of their operations on all levels of activity. ‘Rhetoric’ means that media are used to induce workers and employees to share the company's stated goals and collaborate toward attaining those goals (Vonderau and Hediger, 2009, p.40)

Although this particular film and its record of industrial memory was lost and has resurfaced during the process of this research, it would have served as reference to the company's past functioning during its periods of transformation and change. The rhetoric of the film has multiple functions: one to stimulate employees' collaboration as they are presented with a successful and enticing portrayal of the company, and the second that confirms the national ideology of decolonisation whereby the company is the representation and output of a wider vision, which has the MPR at its centre as a generator of progress and development. The rhetoric therefore aims to engage with the *Adressat*, the worker, but also the *Adressat*, the *citoyen*, whereby the former is also the latter. The company uses rhetoric to motivate workers and employees to attain the company's goals but these, in the case of Zaire, were not a private matter but, rather, a matter of the Second Republic. The company speaks to the *citoyens* to show what the state company can provide in terms of technical advancement and logistics, in other words, progress, but also speaks to the *Adressat* as fellow comrades of the MPR, assuring them that the CMZ is run with the same shared ethics, and that the future of their naval sovereignty is assured. Due to the double nature of the *Adressat* in Zaire, as both citizen and party member, the rhetoric transforms industrial filmmaking into political activism.



### 6.3 Film data and synopsis *Gecamines - La volonté de reussir*

Film Title: <i>Gecamines - La volonté de reussir</i>
Year of Production: circa1986-1988
Format: Umatic
Duration: 29'
Producer: GMC Exploitation
Scriptwriter: Muteke Wa Mulamba
Director: Tshilonda Tsha Mulamba and Kwembe Kimpele

The film opens with an atmospheric sequence that idealises the labourer in the mine. The opening image is of a group of miners, in overalls and helmets, standing in an outdoor lift which is about to descend. As soon as the lift starts moving downwards, the image goes to black, speckled by the lights of the miners' torches, accompanied by sing-song music whistled by what we may suppose is a large team of workers who are about to start their shift. The lift descends, the camera frames the rock walls of the mine, and a citation in white graphics appears: "If we have to cut our way in the rock, we will cut it in the rock. Mobutu Sese Seko"<sup>235</sup> (Tshilonda and Kwebe, circa1986, TC01.35). Once reaching a dark area, where it is still possible to see the movement of the torch lights, the rest of the opening titles appear. As some silhouettes of miners start to become visible, we are aware that we have descended into the depths of the Gecamines' deposits, accompanied by the narrating voice-over, which is read by Gerard Herold, and which begins; "History confronts some men with unpredictable encounters" (Tshilonda and Kwebe, circa1986, TC02.42).<sup>236</sup> From this first sentence the film goes to an opening wide shot of the outside of the Gecamines.

The documentary film is structured around a narration of the history of the company from the years of the Belgian colony, when it was called Union Minière du Haut Katanga, UMHK, to its Zairian nationalisation in 1967, when it was named Générale Congolaise de Minerais, and was referred to by its famous acronym, Gecamines. In tracing its history, the film provides a chronicle of colonial management and a praising account of all the innovations and modernisations achieved by the Second Republic.

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<sup>235</sup> My translation. Original text: "S'il faut tailler notre chemin dans le roc, nous le taillerons dans le roc"

<sup>236</sup> My Translation. Original text: "L'histoire comble certains hommes des rencontres imprévisibles"

The narrative is divided into two parts, the first, edited with archive images and employing a voice-over narration, explores the colonial system with emphasis on the critical role played by the UMHK for the enriching of Belgium. Voice-over and images shape a narrative of historical facts that permitted Belgium to generate vast wealth through exploration at the UMHK. Some of the historical examples recounted include UMHK's involvement in the two world wars. The film narrates how, during the First World War, the UMHK supplied 820,000 tons of copper to the European weapon factories and, subsequently, the company's role during the Second World War, when it supplied the Allied Forces with 800,000 tons of copper, cobalt and uranium. These facts are given in a narrative that shows the UMHK, and therefore the Congolese miners, as being active participants in world affairs. As the narration comes to the Second World War, it stresses that, beyond the international tragedy of the war, the country was experiencing its own tragedy with the massacre of 1941, which took place in Lubumbashi, when a group of miners who were striking in demand of a small pay raise, were shot by the colonial management.<sup>237</sup> The story unfolds in voice-over narration over still images of pen drawings of the strike, and it continues with the video contribution of a testimony of the last surviving witness of the event, Papa Mpoy. The interview is filmed in a classic medium shot, with the subject sitting in an exterior location, surrounded by greenery.



Miners on strike, pen drawings *Gecamines - La volonté de reussir* (c1986) Copyright RTNC.

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<sup>237</sup> Further reading on the treatment of Congolese miners during the Second World War *Les Ouvriers Du Haut-Katanga pendant la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* (Banjikila, 1983, pp. 91–108)

The overall narrative follows a historical, chronological order, which moves from this event of 1941 to 1945. The voice-over narration resumes the theme of men meeting their destiny through unpredictable encounters, which was launched at the beginning of the film, and introduces the important ‘meeting’ of Albert Einstein with the mining company at the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The voice-over announces: “Albert Einstein’s famous theory announces the era of nuclear apocalypse. The victims were Japanese, the bombs American, the uranium suppliers were Belgian, and the minerals Zairian” (Tshilonda and Kwebe, circa 1986, TC 08.32).<sup>238</sup> The film then shows in succession an image and commentary montage of archive images of the Yalta conference, the birth of the UN, and the liberation struggles of Africa, Latin America and Asia. From these global events, the focus returns to Congo, the formidable economic success of UMHK and the alleged support of the company for the rebels of the Katangan secession (1960-1965), strongly implying that this support was a Belgian effort to destabilise the newly found independence of Congo. The segment leads to an explanation of the role played by Mobutu in requiring the UMHK to move their registered office from Brussels to Kinshasa. The voice-over explains that the refusal by the directors of UMHK forced Mobutu to nationalise the company in 1966. In summary, the visual narrative of the film is constructed through a montage of repertoire images of the mining company, archive images, sketches, still photographs, and photographs of the front pages of Belgian newspapers. The first section of the film finishes with the image of the closing of a book entitled UMHK.

The second section of the film looks directly at the company, which is now called Gecamines, with a timeline spanning from the beginning of the Second Republic to the ‘present day’, circa 1986. The section is edited using images of the company, the mine, the processing plant, as well as the facilities built for the workers from houses to recreation centres. This half of the narrative is made up of small sequences relating to different aspects of Gecamines, including technicians at work, miners in recreation, miners’ children at school, and a lady being examined at the modern health clinic which is provided by the company. Amongst these, there is also a short scene of a miner at home, sitting at the table eating with his family. The narration follows him as he changes into his work overalls and helmet, then leaving the house on his own bicycle

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<sup>238</sup> My translation. Original text: “La fameuse théorie de Albert Einstein annonce l’ère de l’apocalypse nucléaire. Les victimes étaient japonaises, les bombes américaines, fournisseurs d’uranium belges, minerais zaïrois.”

and cheerfully going to the mine. From this familiar imagery of the workers and the expansion carried out in Zaire both by and for the miners, the second section of the film addresses the international ventures started by the company. This is constructed through general views of London, followed by images of the Gecamines' management in meetings at the Metdist Ltd offices at the London Metal Exchange. From a trajectory highlighting the working life of the simple miner to the international ambitions of expansion, the film finishes with a speech by Mulenda Mbo, the company's Délégué Générale, or General Director.



Mulenda Mbo, *Gecamines - La volonté de reussir* (c1986) Copyright RTNC.

The film appears to be structured to demarcate and comment on the two phases of history, the colonial and the independent, and therefore the second part of the film, which begins with the new Congolese ownership, is distinctively different to the first. Its narration focuses on an intensive display of the difficulties and challenges that are faced by the company when it is freed from foreign ownership, which is then resolved by the new management, who heroically regenerate the company after nationalisation. The film praises the management by reinforcing the importance of the Zairian Board of Directors, and with the narration it introduces each 'Délégué Générale' (General Director) since the nationalisation of the company. The presentation of the managing directors also pays homage to the Belgian former director, who helped to establish a Zairian Board of Directors. The last images return to the General Director who, sitting behind his desk, is framed in a news-reader style shot in which a portrait of President Mobutu is prominently positioned behind him on a wall, and to his left. As is

conventional in ‘commissioned films’, co-produced by a state company and the national television station, the film ends with the company’s future projects and strategies. These are delivered in the piece to camera by Mbo. The film ends with a voice-over noting the importance of Gecamines for the people of Zaire, but also for humanity.

#### **6.4 Inserting the omitted protagonist of modern history**

During the mid-1980s the first signs of disapproval of the government started showing, with politicians abandoning their positions and seeking refuge abroad, and a general sense that the Second Republic was not creating the wealth it claimed for itself, but only for its Chief. From the images and narrative techniques employed by the films discovered through this research, there is further evidence and an understanding that the government needed the support of ‘development films’ and other media productions to maintain an ideological momentum that was defined by the desire for decolonisation. This is attempted by projecting images of what they promoted as remarkable achievements for the benefit and emancipation of the entire population. In this ‘development film’, in particular, the images aimed to promote the MPR’s vision of the nation, which establishes Zaire as a world player, not as a producer of wealth for other international powers, but as an equal participant in international economics. At the centre of this discourse are the mines, the country’s most coveted resource.

This discourse is articulated through a montage of archive images and a scripted narration about the relevance of the Gecamines company in world affairs, and then by attributing the re-appropriation of its value to the heroism of the country’s President, who guided the country to victory in a corporate battle for economic independence against the Belgians. As becomes apparent through the imagery produced by the film, the promotion of the leader through a set form of communication can only be possible with the full support of the institutions, which is part of the ambition of ‘development film’. This ‘development film’ can be taken as an example of the pervasive consequence of the ideology, since it becomes a unifying bond between what the government wants to accomplish, and the support given by all of the participants in the national system, from the companies to the filmmakers. The fact that this film is co-produced by national television and Gecamines, under the name GCM Exploitation, testifies once again that state companies had a vested interest in being active promoters of the production of this imagery. There is a very subtle difference, in the eyes of Tshitenge, about what the television

documentary film practice of the time tried to achieve, when he explains that the companies' financing of films created an atmosphere of creative possibilities rather than of obligations:

there were a lot of directors who produced a lot of films, not because it was imposed on them, but because they participated in the development of the country. They presented a snapshot of the country in each domain. These movies were not imposed (Zoppelletto, 2016b, Clip 01300002).<sup>239</sup>

These films that captured snapshots of the country, as defined by Tshisenge, were, however, produced in an ideological context, and while their form and subject matter were relatively free, they were still produced with the specific intent of supporting decolonisation, as envisaged by the MPR. At the same time, Tshitenge differentiates these documentaries from the films that, in his view, were imposed, such as the documentary *Mobutu Bâtitseur du Pays (Mobutu Builder of the Country)* that was commissioned with "... a precise intent to sing the praises of a prince" (Zoppelletto, 2016b, Clip 01300002).<sup>240</sup>

It can be argued that although the imposition on the filmmakers was not overtly expressed in the film produced by and with Gecamines, the message provided by the film did not allow any space to construct an alternative narrative through which the Party and its leader were not the creators of all the positive changes in the country. However, from interviewing Tshitenge, what is evident is his emphasis on a collective participation in what appeared to be a utopic project, in other words, a true Zairian spirit transpires, in which the key element is the filmmakers' sense of participation in the development of the country, which is at the heart of the idea of 'development film'. A similar distinction is offered by Kintenda, of whom I asked if films about development were a good thing, and whether filmmakers were denied a creative space because of these films. Kintenda's answer on the worthiness of films on development<sup>241</sup> was both firm and direct, and did not leave space for any interpretation: "Absolutely, absolutely". Nonetheless, when I further asked if some filmmakers had complained about the lack of creative space in the film and television system of the time, Kintenda's answer gave an insightful distinction regarding the modes of creation:

I do not know who says that. I do not share this point of view. We had a panoply of programmes on television. There were political broadcasts, of course, where the Marshall was praised, but that was within a purely political context...A

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<sup>239</sup> My translation. Original text: "...il y a eu beaucoup de réalisateurs qui ont produit beaucoup de films non pas parce que ça leur était imposé mais parce qu'il participé ainsi au développement du pays. Ils présentaient les instantanés du pays dans chaque domaine. Ce n'était pas des films d'imposition.

<sup>240</sup> My translation. Original text: "Ça c'était sur un bout précis de chanter la louange d'un prince."

<sup>241</sup> At the time of the interview in 2016 I had not yet used the concept of 'development films' but with the interviewees there was already an understanding of the films we were referring to.

television channel has a programme schedule, and in a programme schedule there are educational programmes, cultural programmes, entertainment programmes, political programmes, it's a shame, if I had known that you were going to ask me this kind of question, I would have looked for a schedule of the time and given you the percentage of different broadcasts. Education and culture took as much as 80% and politics barely reached 10%, the rest was advertising. Politics did not occupy a prominent place in the schedule of Congolese television programmes (Zoppelletto, 2016a, Clip 01150003).<sup>242</sup>

Although *Gecamines* embeds, in its narrative, the effects of the politics of the nationalisation of the country's companies, *Zairianisation*, there appears to be a distinction between what is perceived by the filmmakers to be propaganda film, which sings the praises of Mobutu, and the films that, instead, were understood to be active participations in development and snapshots of Zaire, the modern nation. The difference appears to be one of embracing the ideology as a strong direction in relation to decolonisation and the acquisition of dignity for Zaire, and the other, which is understood to be propaganda, was imposed because it was focused on Mobutu rather than on the country's ambitions. As it is possible to see through *Gecamines*'s text, all communication on encouragement and the promise of national development are strictly linked to the political party. As the MPR had, since 1970, become the only vehicle of political expression in the country, national communication did not allow any other interpretation than a tautology in which the political party creates social and economic expansion and, in turn, these are only possible by sustaining the party's vision. This logic of constant promotion turns the labour force, such as that in *Gecamines*, or that previously observed in *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise*, into the militants of the Party. The Party proudly affirmed this concept in the film's script, which is read in voice-over:

At *Gecamines*, production is a political act and a proof of militancy, because it offers the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution, and the leader of the Party, the means to reach the objectives of economic development and social welfare faster (Tshilonda and Kwebe, circa 1986, TC17.20).<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> My translation. Original text: "Je ne sais pas ceux qui disent cela. Moi je ne partage pas ce point de vue-là. A la télévision nous avons une panoplie d'émission. Il y avait des émissions politiques, bien entendu ou' on faisait l'éloge du Marechal mais là c'était dans le cadre purement politique...Mais une chaine de télévision a une grille de programmes et dans une grille des programmes on trouve des programmes éducatifs, des programmes culturels, des programmes de divertissement, des programmes politiques.

Donc c'est dommage, si j'avais su que vous me posé ce genre de question j'aurais carrément cherché une grille de l'époque et vous donner le pourcentage de différentes émissions.

L'éducation et la culture prenait pratiquement plus que 80% et la politique arrivait à peine à 10%, le reste par les émissions publicitaires. La politique n'occupait pas une place de choix dans la grille des programmes de la télévision congolaise"

<sup>243</sup> My translation. Original script : "A la *Gecamines* la production est un acte politique et une preuve de militantisme, parce qu'elle offre au Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution et au chef du parti, les moyens d'atteindre plus vite les objectives de développement économiques et de bien être sociale."

Here, again, there is the intention to promote the continuation of public engagement and to glorify the MPR as it is implied that its ideas are those at the source of the economic and social revolution.



Primary school at the *Gecamines* mines - *La volonté de reussir* (c1986) Copyright RTNC.



Medical centre at the mines *Gecamines* - *La volonté de reussir* (c1986) Copyright RTNC.



By acknowledging the contribution of the working man, the narrative empowers the miner whilst, at the same time, it is producing more civic militancy. The script delivers the concept that the Zairian soil and the miner's labour are no longer at the service of a foreign power, but they are there for the wellbeing of all Zairians, who are now in control of an asset which the entire world desires and needs. They are now the masters of their own economy and the guardians of a superior and coveted value. This is how the voice over comments on the images of the miner leaving the table, where he is eating with his family, and then going to work:

For too long, Gecamines and its workers have served foreign causes, participated in war efforts, they ignored everything. Now, integrated into the basic cells of the Party, the GECAMINES worker knows the reasons for his ploughing and the justification of his efforts. He knows he works for his Party and for his country. He also knows that he works to earn his daily bread, his bukari<sup>244</sup>, for him and for his children (Tshilonda and Kwebe, circa1986, TC 19.47)<sup>245</sup>

The importance of the individual's work is then projected as being substantial and meaningful, not only for Zaire but also for humanity. The last sentence of the film's voice over, is charged with dramatic effect so as to link Zaire with a destiny that puts the country at the centre of human development in the way that *Authenticity* claimed to aspire from its inception:

As long as there is mankind, as long as it is animated by the passion to live, the will to survive, as long as somewhere in the world smoke will come out of the chimney of a factory, the Gecamines will always have a reason to exist (Tshilonda and Kwebe, circa1986, TC29.36).<sup>246</sup>

The script leads to this final dramatic message with many direct connotations of Gecamines' importance throughout the storyline, by revisiting history, starting from the expansion of Belgium, thanks to the mineral exploitation of the Congo, resulting in the poverty and oppression of the Congolese population. To further express the humiliation that results from being the objects, and not the subjects, of history, the film recalls the facts of colonial occupation and exploitation by narrating the infamous Lubumbashi massacre: "On November 9, 1941, the colonial police fired on a crowd of black miners on strike, demanding a salary increase of just a few pennies. War funds for all, yes. Salary compensation for blacks, no."

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<sup>244</sup> Bukari or fu-fu: flour, corn or semolina mixture

<sup>245</sup> My translation. Original script: "Pendant de trop long de temps la GECAMINES et ses travailleurs ont servi des causes étrangères, participée a des efforts de guerres dont ils ignorées tout. Désormais intégré aux cellules de base du parti l'ouvrier de GECAMINES connait les raisons de son labour et la justification de ses efforts. Il sait qu'il travaille pour son parti et pour son pays. Il sait aussi qu'il travaille pour gagner son pain quotidien, son bukari pour lui et ses enfants."

<sup>246</sup> My translation. Original script: "Ainsi tant que il y aura des hommes, tant qu'ils seront animés par la passion de vivre, la volonté de survivre, tant que quelque part dans le monde une fumée s'échappera de la cheminé d'une usine la GECAMINES gardera toujours sa raison d'exister"

(Tshilonda and Kwebe, circa1986, TC07.07).<sup>247</sup> For historicity, and therefore legitimacy, the story is then verified by the testimony of Papa Mpoy, who narrates the aftermath of the tragedy and the number of colleagues who were shot. The Belgian colonial system of abuse, in the second part of the film, is then juxtaposed with the change brought about through Zairian ownership, which is depicted as being the result of Mobutu’s decision to confront the Belgian owners on the 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1966, and to move the headquarters to Kinshasa with “an uncertain and dangerous challenge, but a heroic act with incalculable consequences” (Tshilonda and Kwebe, circa1986, TC10.20).<sup>248</sup> The institutional tone of the voice over confers on the President a quality of heroism.



Papa Mpoy *Gecamines - La volonté de reussir*. (c1986) Copyright RTNC.

As the narration develops through a classic documentary structure that culminates with a victorious ending that claims Zaire’s consequence for the world, and it serves to affirm the

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<sup>247</sup> My translation. Original text: “ Le 9 Novembre 1941 la police coloniale tire sur une foule des mineurs noirs en grève pour réclamer une augmentation de quelque centime. Les fonds de guerre pour tous, oui. Compensation salaire pour les noirs, non...”

<sup>248</sup> My translation. Original text : “Un défis incertain et dangereux, mais un acte héroïque au conséquences incalculables”

positive impact of Mobutu's leadership as reflected in a Zaire that is capable of conquering all challenges. In part, this narrative is created by constructing a historical narrative that puts the MPR government in a favourable light. Such is the function of one of the stories narrated in the film, dated 1978, it directly addresses the subjugation of Congolese miners during the colonial period, and it finds a positive outcome by explaining the newly found empowerment and assertiveness that is derived from the policies of the Second Republic. The story is narrated by the following voice-over:

A new challenge is launched; it is technical and political at the same time. Deserted by almost all of its expatriate executives in the aftermath of the Second Shaba War, severely damaged by the fighting, Gécamines was virtually paralysed. Then, out of love for their homeland, a group of young Zairian engineers and technicians, confident in their know-how, have achieved a real accomplishment. They will restart the Kolwezi mining complex in two weeks. Despite the most serious studies providing for a minimum of six months' concordat for expatriate engineers and technicians (Tshilonda and Kwebe, circa 1986, TC12.30).<sup>249</sup>

The images used for this sequence are of the exterior complex of the Kolwezi mine, and the interior subterranean work of the mine in which Zairian labourers symbolise the *authentic* productivity for the country, they are the masters of their own subsoil. The subtext created by the voice-over and images build on *Authenticity* through the display of the mineral sources as a national heritage received from the ancestors, the labour, and the engineering brilliance of the Zairians.

The film's discourse is based on a formula which asserts that the Zairian people and their government are joint producers of the wealth that will resonate internationally and bring dignity, jobs and healthcare for all. However, this passage also deploys a language of national pride, of a national willpower to succeed independently and, most of all, succeeding in modernisation, communicating an opposing image to the colonial stereotypes of the Congolese subject, where it was always used to show a worker, but never as the thinking agent of production. The key sentiment used to bring attention to this change is willpower, which is characterised by the *Mobutism* used in the opening titles of the film "If we have to cut our way

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<sup>249</sup> My translation. Original text: "Un nouveau défi est lancé, il est technique et politique à la fois. Déserté par quasi-totalité de ses cadres expatriés au lendemain de la deuxième guerre au Shaba, gravement endommagé par les combats la Gécamines était pratiquement paralysée. C'est alors que par amour pour leur patrie, un groupe de jeunes ingénieurs et techniciens Zaïrois, confiants dans leur savoir-faire, signent un véritable exploit. Ils vont remettre en marche en deux semaines le complexe minier de Kolwezi. Alors que les études les plus sérieuses prévoyant un minimum de six mois avec un concordat d'ingénieurs et techniciens expatriés".

into the rock, we will cut it into the rock” (Tshilonda and Kwebe, circa 1986, TC01.35),<sup>250</sup> which was already a well-known phrase, and which is used also in the closing titles of *Salongo*. The theme of willpower appears in the film at different moments, but it is indicated immediately by the film’s tagline: *La volonté de reussir* (the will to succeed) and, as mentioned in the opening titles. The significance of this reiteration of *volonté* is the formation of a discourse.

The issue with nonfiction film is in its representation of ‘truth’, or ‘the real’, and in how it is able to use images and reconstruct a verisimilitude by using referents, meaning real places, people and interactions, but in almost inevitably constructing some kind of discourse or narrative that organises such referents causally, logically, semantically. *Gecamines* takes real people and an existing company to represent the history of the country and from them it constructs a discourse of self-assertion, through the will power of the Zairian. Carl Platinga, in discussing the role of the referent and the connotation of truth attached to visibility, draws upon Colin MacCabe’s claims in *Theory and Film Principles of Realism and Pleasure*, which argue that the construction of discourse gives meaning to a reality which does not signify that that said reality is invented. On the other hand, the reality forms part of a culture in which “film discourse is productive work, in its transformation of reality” (Platinga, 1997, p.45). Zaire’s claims to have participated in the shaping of the world, even during the most inauspicious chapters of history; such as the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, to which it contributed with its cobalt, and the World Wars and the war in Vietnam, with its copper, are not untrue. By offering a different perspective, it switches the reading from a Eurocentric narration to a Zairian one and, in the process, constitutes a discourse of decolonisation . The film therefore aims at transformative action in which power, the images, and the referents are designed to affect a change in the intended audience. The miners, and all Zairians, can feel as though they belong to a wider history, in which Zaire is the source of all development, in which the Gecamine chimney will be active as long as there is human life in this world. With this reading, it is possible to discern the difference, that is expressed by both Tshitenge and Kintenda, between films of political praise and those that are defined by this thesis as ‘development film’, which are made to form a national sentiment of belonging and of the nation of Zaire, under the MPR’s policies.

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<sup>250</sup> My translation. Original text: “S’il faut tailler notre chemin dans le roc, nous le taillerons dans le roc”

This Zairian-centric way of reading history is not problematic *per se*, with its claims of crucial global importance, but the hegemony of the MPR disturbs the nature of the development media, which should be focused instead on national emancipation, rather than political serfdom. In reading the film with a traditional view of the Second Republic, which condemns Mobutu as the oppressor of the freedom of all of the media in Zaire, the film changes meaning. Watching the film through this perspective would signify that this imagery served only as further rhetoric of a Zaire that had been awoken by Mobutu, one where all of the media were utilised to repress the population, rather than to create socio-economic development for the country. Development journalism, as an expression that is used to refer to a period from the 1960s to the 1980s in African countries, has most scholars agreeing that this specific type of journalism did not mean or involve anything other than governments co-opting the media for empty party rhetoric:

Both as paymasters and as gatekeepers of public interest, African governments have, almost without exception, kept the press in check...States sought to make the press partners in nation-building and development, by harnessing its magic multiplier capacity to inform and educate citizens in government policy and action (Nyamnjoh, 2005, p.43)

Although it may be true that the Department of National Guidance was the gatekeeper of information by placing itself as the main commissioning body, at *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre*, it is possible to see how the government needed “to make the press partner in nation-building”(Nyamnjoh, 2005, p.43) in order to overcome the colonial legacy afflicting the country. *Gecamines* presents images of ‘development filmmaking’, as they push for notions of decolonisation in response to the years when the Belgian Congo was subjugated to a one-sided reading of history. It can be argued that this very experience of colonial oppression led the director and the editor to work towards expressing a liberated interpretation of history, in which Zaire is the protagonist. The montage of archive images of Albert Einstein, Zaire’s mines, and the voice-over narration over orchestral music, are meant to bring to the spectator a feeling of legitimacy and of belonging on equal terms to a system of nations that engage in politics and economic exchange. The clarity of the discourse around the legitimacy of Zaire in the world, should not be obscured by the failings of the system that produced it, but should, instead, be read as a film event of liberation against the belittling and oppression suffered at the hands of the Belgian Colonial Empire.

The film is a production that can be situated within the ideological context of *Authenticity*, a call to one’s roots, and it therefore reiterates and reproduces the guiding principles of the Zaire

that is constructed by the government. Within the spectrum of the themes of tradition and *Authenticity*, there is also, in this film, the iconography of the Chief, or the guide, in the figure of Mobutu. The Zairian ‘spirit’ that is evoked by the film through a particular narrative discourse and dramatization, articulates notions of heritage and a re-appropriation and further development of resources along the ‘correct’ path of progress. Akin to the first sentences of a fable, the film opens with an emotional evocation, a prologue about the great meetings in history of men who changed the destiny of a country. At first, in the film, this is explained through the crossing of the paths of Einstein and the Congo and, then, the film epically narrates the story of a barefoot child, who was born between the World Wars and without knowing what the future had in reserve for him, the film hints at the two: the mining giant and the African child’s, parallel lives. Later, the film explains how the child grew up in order to save it from the foreign hands that had exploited it during the wars. This child is, of course, Mobutu, and a family picture shows him barefoot beside his mother and siblings, whilst the voice-over explains:

The history of the mining giant with copper feet will result in a fight to the death, three years into the life of this barefoot black child. But we are still in 1940. The Second World War has just broken out (Tshilonda and Kwebe, circa 1986, TC06.17).<sup>251</sup>

Later, the film explains how Mobutu fought to shift Gecamines’ managing power from Brussels to Kinshasa. The film traces, again, an indissoluble link between the Chief and the destiny of the country, giving rise to a Zairian spirit, as the image of the barefoot child is understood collectively to herald a social redemption for all of the citizens that are presented as a pre-determined prophesy, uniting not only a mythological presence in Mobutu, but also the forthcoming rebellion of the people of Congo, who will become *citoyens* of Zaire.

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<sup>251</sup> My translation. Original script: “L’histoire du colosse minier aux pieds de cuivre, trois ans de chemin de cet enfant noir au pieds nu, Il y aura une lutte à mort. Mais nous sommes encore en 1940. La Seconde Guerre Mondiale vient d’éclater”



Mobutu standing on the left, next to his mother, Mama Yemo, and his siblings. *Gecamines - La volonté de réussir*. (c1986) Copyright RTNC.

## 6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to highlight how these films express, and have contributed to the formation of *Mobutism*; *La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise*, by portraying an environment in which personal and political life were perceived as being for the benefit of the country's emancipation, and *Gecamines*, for acknowledging Zaire as a crucial participant in world history, something that was omitted by the colonial narrative. They are film events, for they participated in the Zairian cultural revolution, not only in their use of *Mobutisms* and the testimony of the ideology which explains the deterministic vision of the very concept, but the films' very production actively engages with the principles of the Zairian world in which the *citoyens* were living. They served to construct the ideological world, which presented a shift in perspective from the world as seen through a colonialist ideological lens to a Zaire-centric viewpoint. They are films that testify to, and promote, growth, and their narrative use of industrial modernity as the tangible proof of this success. At the same time, they are 'development films', because they utilise the national discourse of emancipation to stimulate militancy and production. From the filmmakers and the companies involved in the production

of these documentaries, to the people then watching them, their purpose is to perpetuate and incentivise adhesion to the nation. Although interpreted as an expression of activism, 'development films' also testify to the change in the perception of the country's achievements, which could instil and develop national confidence in the capacity of the nation to be relevant in the world economy and its affairs.



## CONCLUSION

This research aimed to recover lost and disregarded film productions from the Democratic Republic of Congo, ones which were associated with the period of the Second Republic (1965-1997), to deepen an understanding of approaches to film production taken by the government in power, that sustained a decolonised perspective. In doing so, this thesis has highlighted the situation of the archives in the DRC in order to document the current crisis for the national memory as well as to serve as information that may be useful in designing an archive policy. A prospective policy has the opportunity to establish an optimal working environment for archivists as well as promoting access and interest of researchers and filmmakers. This research has addressed the DRC's difficult past by drawing attention to the intrinsic cultural value of the film output of the country. I advocate for the rescuing and conservation of the films and film practice and offering further insights in the question of decoloniality which were unresolved in the struggle for decolonisation.

The research carried out in the process of archival ethnography has pointed to the relevance of the archive and its essential role in examining the past. Gaining access to the archive and navigating it was important in order to establish the existence of a documentary filmmaking practice that was engaged in the nation building effort as part of a Zairian postcolonial film practice. The film output analysed within the scope of this research has been defined as 'development filmmaking', or as 'development films'. This form of filmmaking has been evaluated in terms of its contribution to promoting notions of decolonisation and its relationship with the political campaign of *Authenticity* and its later transformations through *Zairianisation* and *Mobutism*. The thesis explores how the political reforms of the national party affected the range of films made as Mobutu Sese Seko's vision became a pervasive ideology that coerced the Zairian population and the country's filmmakers. In this sense, it is possible to identify 'development films' as a Zairian national 'product'. This mode of

filmmaking can be distinguished as films produced by the state-run broadcasting service *La Cité de la Voix du Zaïre* (currently the RTNC), which, in documentary form present a narrative of national unity and Zairian sovereignty through ideas of modernity, socio-economic empowerment and cultural heritage.

These findings contribute to the understanding of Mobutu's attempts at decolonisation which resulted in an oppressive authoritarian government that failed to create real economic and social sovereignty. Across Africa other ideological revolutions of African socialism took place in the name of decolonisation, two such examples are Ujamaa in Tanzania and Nkrumaism in Ghana.<sup>252</sup> But as Ndlovu-Gatsheni highlights: “[d]ecolonisation did not succeed in removing coloniality” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p.11). Realisations of its failure also come from the present status of sub-Saharan countries which are rich in natural resources and remain at the mercy of the Global North. As current debates on decolonisation call for resolution, (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015) it is important to be informed of the past attempts and their failures.

Decolonising approaches have been revived by a new generation, such as the ‘fallist movements’ including the *Rhodes Must Fall* movement (Oxford Rhodes Must Fall Movement, 2018). These activist movements which began at the University of Cape Town in 2015 and then expanded to University of Oxford want to look at the enablers of imperialism, knowledge and education, to decolonise universities (ibid.) and bring attention to what Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains as the “coloniality of knowledge...how knowledge has been used to assist imperialism and colonialism and into how knowledge has remained Euro-American centric. Endogenous and indigenous knowledge have been pushed to the margins of society” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p.11). Supporting Afrocentric knowledge of the continent's history, through historical documents and resources, provides a significant contribution to understanding the nation and its history through an African gaze, in this instance through a Congolese gaze. The rise of Mobutu and the transformation of the country into a pervasive dictatorship that manipulated information and education through the media, should be object of analysis from a Congolese perspective. This can be done critically through access of the material produced at the time, ‘development films’ being part of this material, as to better discern the decolonisation project and how it changed into an oppressive system.

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<sup>252</sup> Further reading on Kwame Nkrumah's ideology and reforms: *Consciencism: philosophy and ideology for de-colonization* (Nkrumah, 1970) and *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah* (Biney, 2011)

The research brought to light the transformation and decolonising agenda of the Second Republic, moving the country from being Congo to being Zaire through the construction of a filmic image. The new citizen who, as illustrated throughout the research, would understand his/her identity in terms of being a worker, a nationalist and a modernist, whilst remaining true to the principles of his/her African ancestors. By approaching the different themes of emancipation, from social to economic, the research has attempted to demonstrate how this project of identification was also accomplished by the representation of the new habits, language and citizenship shown on film. Through film analysis, it has been possible to explain how the documentary films, digitised and restored under the scope of this research, contributed to portraying a new people who were united and working towards a prosperous future that was conceived in Zairian terms. Each analytical chapter has aimed to explain these moments of change which are relevant in thinking of the films as ‘film events’ belonging to a national media composite, *Medienverbund* which brought change for the nation; forming and reflecting the ideology of the Second Republic in its decolonising mission. These ‘film events’ contributed to changing the perception and collaboration of the citizens who were called to participate in the Zairian project, and which therefore reconciled the spectator with their own reality as *citoyens*. These ‘film events’ are agents of change and are contributors to the Zairian ‘spirit’ of the people. Each ‘film event’ signals and invites the Zairian, who has been recognised as the *Adressat* of all these film productions, as the interlocutor in transforming their status from formerly being a passive person who was oppressed by the colony, to being an active shareholder in the new postcolonial nation’s government, its politics and economy, all of which were to be fashioned on traditional African customs.

To reflect upon their key interpretations of the new nation it is necessary to summarise the films’ thematic approaches to the decolonisation effort. Starting with the film about the presidential election, *Election 1970*, which is a ‘film event’ introducing the people of Congo, women and men of all social classes, to the notions of voting emancipation. The film confirms to the people of Congo the existence of a Congolese government, which abides by a system that has been created for the new nation. The film calls for Latin vocabulary expressing the democratic process of suffrage but, at the same time, introduces a voting practice that is relevant and unique to the country, introducing therefore a context-specific notion of development. The single candidate election represents the adoption of a new custom that has been introduced based on the notions and discourse of ancient traditions, but that aspires to

represent a trajectory of modern emancipation. *Election 1970* is relevant in the historiography of Congo and Zaire since it points to the acceptance of new traditions in the name of the decolonising voice of the MPR, and of its advocacy for membership of the nation. *Election 1970* narrates a bright future to come for those who take membership in the new nation and entrust their future to the MPR. The *Anlass*, or motivation, for this ‘development film’ can be read as the invitation to become citizens of a traditional and self-defining Congo.

From rethinking what democracy means in a newly independent country, *Salongo*, the next film taken into consideration, captures the ideas of what the new nation means for a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic society by conferring power on one man. The film, which recreates the terms of Chieftaincy by employing *animation* in its narrative, presents a new reading of the nation, one that is based on notions of *Mobutism* – that is, a collection of Africanist/development agendas advanced by President Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga. This third iteration of *Authenticity* wanted to present material and cultural wealth through the teachings of Mobutu and the MPR, amongst which was the policy of *Salongo*. This documentary feature, as a ‘film event’, clearly attempted to cement the new government into the position of being a reflection of what the country would have been, were it not for the colonial disruption brought by the Belgian colonial empire. By doing so, the film calls on the people of Zaire to connect with the ancestral mores and to rethink their value as producers of their own national wealth which, in turn, is entrusted to the Guide, President Mobutu. The *Adressat* is the people of Zaire, as one collective, who are interpellated to see themselves represented in their tribal characteristics, but in unity, advancing previous famous *Mobutisms* that were consolidated into the national discourse, e.g., “Nation... Moko! Chef... Moko! Gouvernement... Moko! Congo... Moko!” (White, 2006, p.56) meaning “One nation! One Chief! One government! One Congo!”.

The last two films recovered during the field work at the RTNC were *La Compagnie Maritime Zairoise* and *Gecamines*, both produced in the context of the state and national broadcasting company partnership as “commissioned documentaries”. These films create and assert the connection between the Zairian private citizen and the state which, in terms of national activism, was supposed to be mirrored. The film’s rhetoric presents national advancement at a personal level. It portrays the people of Zaire as historical agents, not only capable but assertive workers who were empowered by the government to achieve goals that are inherent to worldly progress. Within this spectrum, the term ‘development films’ brings to the fore the possible

disconnection between supporting the national ideology, which is focused on the political ideas of the single-party system and promoting a sense of emancipation and dignity that drive the country forward. Born of the need to communicate *Authenticity*, these films have captured a moment in time when the country was led by a leader who centralised power, and filmmakers who were in the system of cultural production that subscribed to a national project by participating in the promotion and creation of Zaire. It seemed, at this point, that the mobilisation was most effective.

These ‘development films’ are not defined as such because they widened party membership, or because they developed the party agenda, but because their focus was to assist the government in creating a national image which served to bring national cohesion, which is a facet of development media. This has been explained in terms that were advanced for development journalism, whose purpose was to:

awaken journalists to the new cultural imagery of nationhood... to create a new identity which would be spiritually and culturally reconciled with new forms of economic behaviour, new loyalties, new self-identities and citizenship (Domatob and Hall, 1983, p.10)

The intention of the films, as clarified by the interviews with the filmmakers and the observations made with the translator, were to participate in progress. As it is recognisable in the listed canons of ‘development films’, such as imagery and themes of national unity, social advancement and economic progress through industrialisation. Specifically, in *Election 1970*, the process of citizenship is rendered possible by its enunciation on film. In *Salongo*, the demonstrations of a rich cultural heritage are envisaged as a model for unity and progress. On the economic and social expansions of the nation, *La Compagnie Maritime Zairoise* and *Gecamines* introduce a state-run economic model which asks for loyalty and commitment from the *citoyens* in order that it can function. What also became evident was the growing disharmony between national filmic intentions in depicting progress in terms of the Zairian ‘spirit’, and the elites’ self-serving political strategy. This disharmony manifested itself in the subsequent oppression of the people of Zaire by the MPR government. It reduced the importance of the national ‘development film’ culture and, ultimately, it led to the loss and destruction of many of the documentary films which could be identified as being Zairian ‘development films’. Accessing more films identifiable in this category, through the feature of having been commissioned by the same *Auftraggeber*, the national studio and national companies, would have assisted in relating a further defined list of canons of the ‘development film’ genre. It is arguable that the films’ generic features were mainly expressed in

documentary form and were entirely based on images of crowds of the people of Zaire as part of the “African show”, as discussed in Chapter 5. Depictions of traditional dances and *animation* displays, juxtaposed to images of technical and industrial modernity, were also common. These elements were presented by an authoritative voice-over, whose narration at times epitomizes the reflections and hopes of the new nation. Further material, displaying the distinctive practices of *animation* within the documentary aesthetic, might establish the link between staging performance and ideological reproduction in ‘development films’ as ‘film events’ that demonstrated a conformity between heritage and modernity.

This research thesis, in its bid to salvage as many films as possible from the dwindling national film archive of the DRC at the RTNC, attempted to highlight the urgent need to locate and restore historic material. Poor resources have undermined the viability of film archives across sub-Saharan Africa. A recent report on the archival landscape in Africa (conducted by the Goethe Institute and the International Federation Film Archives FIAF), points to the issue “that political, official support for the preservation of the national audio-visual heritage does not exist in many countries in Africa” (Orbanz, 2015, p.2). This is demonstrated with this research project in the DRC. During the course of this research more film and video material in the DRC has probably deteriorated beyond salvaging, highlighting the concerns of a disappearing national heritage. The *UNESCO Recommendation for the safeguarding and preservation of moving images* (1980) proposes a national duty towards the preservation of film in the following statement:

[I]t is necessary for each State to take the appropriate complementary measures to ensure the safeguarding and preservation for posterity of this particularly fragile part of its cultural heritage, just as other forms of cultural property are safeguarded and preserved as a source of enrichment for present and future generations (UNESCO, Recommendation for the safeguarding and preservation of moving images, 1980)

Safeguarding the national audio-visual output and providing access to more film material, whether in film or tape format, would present the possibility of re-addressing and restoring the productions from the post-independence phase as valuable testimonies of the trajectory taken by African postcolonial leaders in the context of decolonisation. In its attempt to re-frame the significance of factual films produced during the Second Republic, this research wants to show how these film, products of an ideology, can be used to undertake a critical evaluation of the

works that may be still found and recovered in sub-Saharan Africa so as to give film scholars a larger framework for the study of development media. On a research platform, this can be significant in determining how film in newly independent countries in Africa was implicated in bringing social change and national identification whilst responding to the cultural negotiations brought by a foreign national language, such as French, for the former colonies, and the lack of the countries' own long-standing film traditions.<sup>253</sup> The term 'development film' formulates the filmmakers as being active participants in the country's movement towards decolonisation. The films reflect not only a cultural past, but also embody futuristic ambitions. In this respect, the documentary and industrial nature of 'development film' can be a contribution to the field of research into industrial film, in order to understand this particular film mode in developing African through their government produced films. As recent studies have focused on the relationship between industrial films, often classified as orphan films, and social agency, the national identity issues that are embedded in 'development film' may add a further understanding of factual film and agency for progress, especially in the African context.<sup>254</sup>

My attempt to characterise the films as 'development films' is strategic, since they can be reclassified as documentaries. It provides more scope to retrieve the films and distribute them more widely in the contemporary era. Prior to my work, the content and format of some these films had hitherto been unknown, decades after they were produced. My research has recovered both their political connotations and their artistic, aesthetic and narrative values. As addressed in Chapter 2, documentary film productions from Congo/Zaire have not been taken into consideration as national film productions because of their political commissioners, noting that the films' *Auftraggeber* has prevented them from being recognised for their artistic value. There is, therefore, the possibility of adding and reanalysing these and other documentary films under the scope of 'development films' and within the history of African film.

The African continent has a rich legacy of films and of television footage from the early years of independence. This work has provided ways of accessing and salvaging such 'development films', which may be currently disintegrating in national film archives across Africa, or

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<sup>253</sup> Cultural production and language have been re-evaluated by prominent African thinkers and artists such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (refer to Chapter 1) who refused to English and adopted Gikuyu in his post-independence writings and Ousame Sembene's work which included African languages (Thomas, 2002)

<sup>254</sup> Further reading *Films that Work Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media* (Hediger and Vonderau, 2014)

orphaned in European archives. There is a crucial need for the promotion of access for the filmmakers from the African continent, whose historic storytelling is currently invariably attached to having resources to secure archival footage by collaborating with foreign archives and collections. This situation inevitably means that archives in certain countries of sub-Saharan Africa, are not able to provide their documentary filmmakers with filmic testimonies of their own independent past. The DRC in this regard will have to access its filmic memory available at the Cinematek in Belgium where some national films have been deposited and whose copyright is still uncertain. Otherwise, footage of the nation can be found at the INA library in France, where the historic images of Congo, archived and accessible at a fee, are the ones filmed principally by international filmmakers and journalists and therefore they mediate the country's image for a foreign reading.

The challenging research environment at the RTNC, where the archive has been disrupted by voluntary human action as well as natural causes, has contributed a new historical research methodology. As it was not possible to go through a selection process of films relevant to the thesis' argument but, instead, all of the accessible material was taken into consideration, the absence of a large body of work provided a research environment which testified to the actual impact that the lost or destroyed films had in creating nation building within the scope of the Second Republic. The absence of a usable collection showed its value in developing Zaire which was immediately replaced by the current name, the Democratic Republic of Congo, which was adopted by Laurent-Désiré Kabila's self-proclamation of presidency (17<sup>th</sup> May, 1997)<sup>255</sup> and successively by Joseph Kabila (2001-2019). The current archive, with its gaps and disruptions, meant paying greater attention to the testimonies of the filmmakers involved in Zairian filmmaking, and meant being able to interpret their views uncritically.

The limitations of this study did not restrain the restoration task or the unique narrative of the dimensions of early postcolonial film, in terms of the production circumstances and ambitions of Zairian filmmaking. It shows limitations that were encountered, in terms of the politics of memory. 'Development film' may, in the future, be a useful and complementary term for documentary films in order to access the politics of memory and identity which have shaped

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<sup>255</sup> "Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1997, Kinshasans witness military troops of the Alliance arriving in the capital whilst from Lubumbashi, Kabila proclaims himself 'president of the Democratic Republic of Congo'"(Ndaywel è Nziem, 2009, p604). My translation, original text : "C'est donc le samedi 17 mai que les Kinois assistèrent a l'entrée des troupes de l'Alliance dans la capitale, pendant que, de Lubumbashi, Kabila se proclamait 'président de la République démocratique du Congo'"



and destroyed certain African archives, and to assist in archival reconstruction. Further, the term ‘development film’ may be useful in understanding the impact and importance of industrial and government film in formulating ideological discourse with the audience, as well as in introducing a distinct genre that addresses and participates in decolonisation through country-specific notions of politic, economic and social empowerment.

A better engagement with film archives would be to adopt a national archive policy that conserves and protects past films as well as those made in the future. Fundamental to address and engage with national memory is the establishment and advancement of an archive policy for countries that are managing their media archives in challenging environments. The archive is a source of significant study but also a living entity which needs to be accessible and preserved for future generations without political prejudice. This requires gaining knowledge of the current state of the archives and material available and exploit its appeal by promoting its richness and securing its longevity through professional archival work. This research has contributed to clarifying the nature of the material currently available about the DRC as well as reinforcing the case for protecting the national film archives at the RTNC. The knowledge from the research project will help promote the national film archive as a substantial source of learning and advocate for the consideration of a preservation policy for the archives.

A national policy that preserves the archives would acknowledge the significance of the archive as a working resource for the country, establishing it as part of a public asset and service. Of foremost importance for a national policy for the archive will be documenting and disseminating the policy, as a joint effort from the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Information which is currently responsible for the RTNC archives. As noted in Ray Edmondson’s book *Audiovisual archiving - Philosophy and principles*, published by UNESCO - Memories of the world “[a]ll archives have policies, but they are not always articulated and documented to the same degree of detail, if they are documented at all” (Edmondson, 2016, p.63). This issue is currently present in the DRC, the RTNC’s archives do not function in respect to a defined and documented policy and that is why that firstly this should be made known to the concerned authorities and institutions. Bringing to the fore a national policy which unifies the principles of the national archives (film, video, photographic, digital, audio etc) by disseminating its principles with appropriate documentation, would allow the national institutions to come onboard, rectify it to comply with current technological challenges and use it as a tool to protect and invest in archive preservation. UNESCO, along with the other

institutions for audio-visual archives, recommends that countries develop an archival policy through adopting these three key areas: collection development, preservation, access and collection management (ibid.).

Policies directing ‘collection development’ of audio-visual archives remain problematic in the DRC. The upkeep of collections characteristically consists of selecting, acquiring, deselecting and disposing of archive items. For a public service engaged in the physical and digital life of the country’s archives, this means selecting and preserving memories separated from the political nature of the party in power. The loss of knowledge about Mobutu’s Zaire and the destruction of valuable footage during the change of regime in 1997 has affected what constitutes the nation’s history. In this regard a national policy can articulate the parameters by which the collection process is executed and protected.

The collection process would also be entrusted to trained archivists who can assure an ethical process as:

audiovisual archivists have to apply individual qualitative judgments... They will be influenced by their own artistic, technical and historical knowledge of the audiovisual media and of their subject specialties, their personal perspective, and their practical limitations (Edmondson, 2016, p.64)

Whilst this inevitably creates discrepancies and changes to the collection process, such an archivist could ensure and determine the conservation of national films made by national filmmakers.

‘[P]reservation, access and collection management’ are intrinsically linked where “[p]ermanent access is the goal of preservation: without this, preservation has no purpose except as an end in itself”(ibid.). In endorsing and embedding a national policy of preservation for the audio-visual material, guidelines for access to the archive would also assure filmmakers. This relationship between filmmakers and the archive can evolve in many trajectories, for example in research for constructing new fiction material as well as for incorporating in factual content, or for working on mixed media arts. Accessibility to the archives by the public is also key to the strengthening and protection of the archives.

The Fédération Internationale des Archives de Télévision / The International Federation of Television Archives FIAT/IFTA proposes a ten-step emergency plan for endangered archives.

The following can serve as a protocol guideline for the RTNC in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Communication to address the imminent issues:

1. Upgrade storage conditions
    - environmental conditions : film (12°, 30% humidity, air circulation), video (18°, 35% humidity)
    - separate storage for film and video material
    - for film affected by the vinegar syndrome : separate storage from the rest of the collection, separate conditioning for film and sound tapes in plastic bags
  2. Create an inventory of the collections
    - considering the physical condition of the material and the value of contents
    - identify the most valuable parts to be preserved in priority
  3. Assess the importance of the collection
  4. Involve your top management in the crusade for archive preservation
  5. Create a culture within the organisation that values the archive
  6. Assess the most urgent training needs, and train archive managers. Provide them with the relevant tools
  7. Draw up rules/guidelines for intake/collecting the archives and access/use of the archives
  8. Make a preservation programme
  9. Market the archive / lobby within the organisation and influential political officials
  10. Acquire the minimum equipment that will give you technical independence
    - viewing and copying equipment
    - documentation software
    - ensure expertise in the use of the equipment and long term maintenance
- (CCAAA, no date)

These measures give a practical approach to the rescue and management of the archives but can only be successfully implemented with the support of the government of the day. Although all the points in this plan are worthy of discussion, two are most urgent for the DRC audio-visual archives the “upgrade of storage conditions” and addressing “training needs” are vital to the work that needs doing. As explored in this research and thesis, films are currently stored in decade old mouldy cardboard boxes, but could easily be rectified with moderate funds. Many international archives stipulate in their working protocols the upgrade of storage holders. During the upgrade stage, the cans in acceptable condition could be donated to the archive and repurposed by the RTNC. These cans would already present a considerable improvement from the present storage of the films and would allow the infrastructure sufficient time to provide the funds for more and new equipment.

Addressing training needs, underlines the ways in which preservation is linked to professionals that in future will mentor new generations of archivists. This is especially relevant for the

RTNC archives which are currently run by a small team of professionals who have been in that position since the late 1970s. They have not been given any recent training without which they are less able to devise new strategies for the archive. This in-house team has only one younger person who has been carrying out some of the work, but is not in charge and is not officially part of the archive team. This means that as they retire, lack of continuity will be an issue. The Co-ordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations CCAAA<sup>256</sup> promotes a range of professional training opportunities for archivists and collectors, such as FIAF international “summer schools”, staff exchanges and ‘volunteers abroad’ schemes (CCAAA, 2006). Accessibility to this training expertise may be attained especially should there be a dialogue between the national stakeholders (Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Communication) and the professional international bodies such as the already mentioned UNESCO, CCAAA, FIAF and FIAT/IFTA. Such collaborations will also be fruitful to pursuing the repatriation of films to the DRC as this requires legal expertise and logistic assistance.

The development of national conservation policies for the DRC audio-visual archive, not only secures what remains of the visual documentary as national memory of the country, but allows for the archives to actively be expanded. It gives contemporary filmmakers reassurances that their work will be preserved and that their future contributions will be publicly accessed and acknowledged by future generations. In this way, the DRC’s national audio-visual archive has the real potential to reach many and become fully established as a location and institute that is able to safeguard the historical knowledge of the nation.

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<sup>256</sup> The Coordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations (CCAAA) was established in 1981 by the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF), International Federation of Television Archives (FIAT/IFTA), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), International Association of Sound Archives (IASA) and the International Council on Archives (ICA). Its mandate is to respond to UNESCO’s call of “cooperation and coordination between organizations tasked with preserving the world’s audiovisual heritage...CCAAA is an ‘association of associations’”(CCAAA, no date)

# APPENDIX I

## TRANSCRIPT

### Interview with Simon Kintenda Ki Mata, Kinshasa 20th July 2016

#### Clip 01150002

CZ : Pourriez-vous me dire votre nom et quel métier vous avez fait ici à la RTNC ?

SKM : Je m'appelle Kintenda ki Mata Simon. Agent retraité de la RTNC. J'avais été engagé le premier Mars 1970, en qualité d'assistant réalisateur. Après une formation par l'État j'étais confirmé réalisateur deux années plus tard. Depuis lors à cette époque-là on m'avait confiée la production de quelque émission de télévision, particulièrement une émission agricole qui s'intitulé *Retour à la Terre*.

CZ : *Retour à la Terre*, c'était une émission qui parlait de quoi ?

SKM : De l'agriculture, des problèmes agricoles.

En fait le but principal c'était d'inviter la population à se donner aux travaux de la terre. À cette époque-là sur le plan politique le Président de la République, le Marechal Mobutu Sese Seko avait lancé l'opération que on avait qualifié de "retour à la terre". Il invitait toute la population congolaise de se donner aux travaux de champs de ne pas négliger l'agriculture.

Alors nous, à la télévision dans le cadre de la mobilisation de la population, il était tout à fait normal que nous puissions initier des émissions qui allaient dans ce domaine-là.

Et moi j'avais en charge notamment une émission agricole, comme je l'ai dit, qui s'intitulé *Retour à la Terre*.

CZ : *Retour à la Terre*, c'était un film ou seulement des émissions ?

SKM : Nous faisons des émissions. À cette époque-là nous travaillons avec de la pellicule 16mm, alors on allait filmer, moi personnellement comme j'avais en charge une émission agricole, j'allais dans des fermes, dans des champs, partout où il y avait une activité agricole, j'allais solliciter de ...et lorsque on m'autorisait je filmé. Comme je l'ai dit, je faisais des émissions pour aider la population à comprendre comment on peut pratiquer telle ou telle culture. Je faisais des émissions par exemple sur la culture du maïs pour montrer aux gens comment on peut faire une bonne culture de maïs et obtenir un bon rendement et c'est notamment dans ce cadre-là que je suis arrivé à réaliser une émission sur la riziculture. J'avais donc fait un film, une émission au départ, pour apprendre aux gens comment faire un bon champ de riz.

CZ : Donc c'était une émission qui est devenu un film ?

SKM : Comme je l'ai dit nous tournions sur 16mm, des films de 16mm, et ces films le soir selon la programmation de la chaîne diffusés à la télévision.

Alors à un moment donné nous avons reçu une invitation de l'Ambassade de la République Fédérale de l'Allemagne, parce que à l'époque il y avait deux Allemagne, l'Allemagne de l'Est et l'Allemagne de l'Ouest.

La République Fédérale de l'Allemagne nous avait adressé une invitation où nous informé que à Berlin il y avait un Festival de Films Agricoles et comme nous avions une émission qui faisait notamment des émissions dans ce cadre agricole, ont nous avez demandé si on pouvait participer à ce concours-là. Alors au niveau de notre service nous avons, en accord avec la

direction, nous avons choisi ce film *Ce Riz Que J'Aime Tant*. Que nous avons envoyé à ce festival à Berlin.

CZ : Vous avez eu quelle réponse de la part de la RTNC et du ministre de l'Information après la projection en Allemagne ?

SKM : Après la projection, à notre grande surprise, je dois d'abord préciser que je n'étais pas parti en Allemagne. Nous avons simplement envoyée le film par le soin de l'Ambassade de la République Fédérale d'Allemagne, alors que normalement il aurait fallu que le réalisateur accompagne son film pour le présenter lors du festival. Ici chez nous le gouvernement n'avait pas trouvée les fonds nécessaires pour payer les frais de voyage donc on a simplement envoyée le film et moi-même le producteur, réalisateur je n'étais pas là. Et c'est bien après que, toujours par le canal de l'Ambassade de la République Fédérale d'Allemagne, que nous apprendrons que le film que nous avons envoyée au festival de Berlin avait obtenu deux prix.

Le prix d'or pour les pays en voie de développement et le prix de bronze pour l'ensemble des pays du monde entier.

Donc on était vraiment très content et lorsque notre PDG, le Ministre avait appris cette bonne nouvelle, à ce moment-là on m'avait payée un billet pour aller visiter la République Fédérale d'Allemagne. Comme récompense.

#### Clip 01150003

CZ: *Ce Riz Que J'Aime Tant* est un film de quelle année?

SKM : *Ce Riz Que J'Aime Tant* c'est le titre exact. Au moins que ma mémoire me trahisse, je pense que je l'avais réalisé en 1982.

CZ : Un long métrage ?

SKM : Ça faisait à peine 26 minutes.

CZ : Que pensez-vous de ce documentaire, pensez-vous qu'il avait un agenda politique? Pensez-vous-qu'en tant que réalisateur, vous avez été engagé pour montrer le nouveau Congo ou qu'il s'agissait d'un documentaire imposé?

SKM : Non au contraire. Le travail de journaliste comme réalisateur, si vous n'aimez pas ce métier vous ne pouvez pas y rester. Moi personnellement, j'aimez bien ce que je faisais. J'étais tout à fait engagé de rendre ce service là à notre population. Apprendre aux gens à améliorer leur production industrielle, je trouvais c'était une objective très noble. Très noble et je me suis donne' de très bon cœur et j'espère que les gens qui aimé l'agriculture à cette époque-là avait quand même tiré profit de ce que je présentai à la télévision à cette époque-là.

CZ : Alors vous pensez que le désir de Mobutu Sese Seko de faire des films sur le développement du pays était une bonne cause ?

SKM : Absolument, absolument madame.

CZ : Des réalisateurs disent qu'il n'y avait pas de l'espace créatif, à cause des films politique, il fallait faire seulement des films politique. Il n'y avait pas d'espace à la créativité. C'était comme ça pour vous aussi ?

SKM : Je ne sais pas ceux qui disent cela. Moi je ne partage pas ce point de vue-là. À la télévision nous avons une panoplie d'émission. Il y avait des émissions politiques, bien entendu où on faisait l'éloge du Marechal mais là c'était dans le cadre purement politique. Mais à part cela, comme j'ai dit, nous avions. Mais une chaine de télévision a une grille de programmes et dans une grille des programmes on trouve des programmes éducatifs, des programmes culturels, des programmes de divertissement, des programmes politiques.

Donc c'est dommage, si j'avais su que vous me posé ce genre de question j'aurais carrément cherché une grille de l'époque et vous donner le pourcentage de différentes émissions.

L'éducation et la culture prenait pratiquement plus que 80% et la politique arrivait à peine à 10%, le reste par les émissions publicitaires.

La politique n'occupait pas une place de choix dans la grille des programmes de la télévision congolaise.

CZ : Vous étiez réalisateur de combien de films à l'époque ?

SKM : J'avais des émissions en charge, notamment celle qui nous concerne maintenant *Le Retours À La Terre*. Mais à part cela, j'avais aussi une émission qui s'intitulait *Le Code De La Route*. L'objectif de cette émission était d'apprendre aux citoyens le code de la route. À tous les usage de la route, à savoir circuler normalement. Les automobilistes, les piétons comme les cyclistes. Je ne me suis pas limité seulement à ces deux émissions, j'avais aussi en charge une émission qui s'appelle *Nous Les Jeunes*. C'était pour l'éducation et la mobilisation de notre jeunesse. J'avais aussi parmi les émissions que j'avais animé pendant ma carrière professionnelle, une émission qui s'intitule *Science et Vie*. Des émissions que j'avais démarré mais qui finalement était confié à des autres réalisateurs pour que je ne sois pas trop surchargé. En tout cas, sans me vanter, j'étais à la base de la création de plusieurs émissions à notre chaîne.

CZ : Vous avez une copie de *Ce Riz Que J'Aime Tant*?

SKM : Malheureusement, personnellement je n'ai pas gardé les copies. Ce que nous produisons c'était propriété de l'entreprise et je n'avais pas le droit d'importer ça chez moi à la maison. Et je n'ai pas gardé des copies pour moi même malheureusement.

Vous m'avez posé une question à laquelle j'ai répondu seulement partiellement.

À part *Ce Riz Que J'Aime Tant* qui était en fait une émission agricole, mais produit sous forme de documentaire, j'ai eu à produire trois autres documentaires, qui ont connus en certain succès. Et là c'était avec la collaboration de l'Institut de la Recherche Scientifique de notre pays, qui avait voulu qu'on puisse mettre la médecine traditionnelle congolaise à l'honneur. Et pour ce là nous avons produits un documentaire sur les guérisseurs traditionnels.

Et le film s'appelait, il y avait trois films en fait.

Il y avait un film qui d'intitulait *Zebola*, qui montrait le rite Zebola. C'est un rite qui est pratiqué dans notre pays, particulièrement dans la province de l'Équateur. Il y a des guérisseurs qui soignent les gens selon ce rite qui s'appelle Zebola, et qui arrive à guérir des gens. Avec des plantes médicinales, et bien sûr tout cela accompagné par les rites que je pourrais qualifier mystiques.

Là il n'y a qu'eux peuvent expliquer exactement ce qu'il faisait. Mais nous avons donc produit ce documentaire *Zebola* qui montré le processus de ce rite Zebola.

Clip 01150004

CZ : Il y a du bruit de fond, je ne sais pas si on a entendu ce que vous avez dit. Vous pouvez s'il vous plaît me raconter encore sur ce film ?

SKM : À part cette émission sur la riziculture j'avais tourné quelque documentaire qui avait cette fois ci demandé par l'Institut de la Recherche Scientifique.

Un des documentaires s'intitulait *Zebola*, dans ce documentaire là il était question de montrer ce rite qui était pratiqué particulièrement dans la province de l'Équateur, ici à Kinshasa aussi mais beaucoup plus dans la province de l'Équateur. C'était un rite pratiqué par la population Mongo, qui arrivé à guérir certains malades à teint de certaines pathologies. Notamment la folie, et ces gens par des pratiques qui leurs était propre que nous pourrions peut-être qualifié

un peu magique, ils arrivaient à soigner les gens. Et ces gens retrouvaient vraiment leur plénitude, ils guérissaient complètement.

Alors à part le documentaire *Zebola*, toujours dans le cadre de cette collaboration avec l'Institut de la Recherche Scientifique nous avons été à l'Équateur tourner un autre documentaire, qui s'intitulait *Mbindolala*. En fait Mbindolala c'est le nom d'un village, qui se trouve à l'Équateur. Mais ce village avait comme particularité n'... Que le guérisseur et ses malades. Donc les gens qui venait à ce village, ils y venaient pour consulter le guérisseur a' fin de chercher la guérison. Et ce monsieur recevait tout sort de malades. Des gens qui souffraient de folie, de tuberculose. Toute sorte de malades. Du moment nous sommes passé par là nous avons trouvé une trentaine de malades, qui était hébergé là-bas dans ce village et chaque matin le guérisseur avec son équipe, parce qu'il avait des aides. Ils les rassemblait, il faisait ses rites. Et lorsqu'il estimait que le malade est guéri, il y avait une dernière cérémonie de séparation et il libérait le malade qui pouvez regagner son village d'origine. Donc là c'était le fameux documentaire *Mbindolala*.

Et à part ça, nous avons aussi tourné au Bas Congo cette fois, notre documentaire sur quelqu'un qui se disait prophète.

## TRANSCRIPT

### Interview with Pierre Mieko, Kinshasa 4<sup>th</sup> August 2016

#### Clip 01220001

CZ : Pourriez-vous me dire votre nom et quel métier vous avez fait ici à la RTNC ?

PM : Je m'appelle Pierre Mieko, je suis cinéaste, cameraman et à la fois formateur à l'Institut Congolais de l'Audiovisuel. J'ai commencé ma carrière depuis le 14 Septembre 1970 ici à la RTNC. C'est une date importante parce que je fais partie d'un groupe à partir du quelle le cinéma congolais était sur le chantier. Donc on avait démarré la formation un certain 14 Septembre 1970, avec un formateur belge Jill Bischoff, qui est déjà décédé paix à son âme. À ce moment-là nous étions à Kalina, actuellement la commune de la Gombe. Donc ça fait déjà plus d'une quarantaine d'années que je suis dans ce métier.

CZ : Ils m'ont dit que vous faisait part de l'OZACI ?

PM : OZACI – Organisation Zaïroise des Cinéastes, j'en faisait partie. Jusqu' à aujourd'hui j'en fait partie. Cette organisation date après que Kwami soit engagé ici, il avait terminé ses études à Bruxelles. Il était rentré ici au Congo, Zaïre à l'époque, je pense c'était en 1972. On s'.... Déjà s'organiser dans une autre organisation. L'idée de créer justement le groupe est arrivée. D'une idée le résultat est là, l'organisation a été créé, nous faisons partie de ce groupe.

CZ : Quel était le but de l'organisation ?

PM : L'Organisation...l'idée est venue du fait que on a travaillé éparpillé et il y avait que deux chaînes de télévision ici. C'était pratiquement la même chaîne mais à l'époque c'était deux chaînes. La RTNC2 à l'époque c'était la RENAPEC avec les pères catholiques et la



Radiotélévision Nationale c'était le même nom qu'aujourd'hui. Et après c'est devenu OZRT Office Zaïrois Radiotélévision.

On était deux groupes, un à RTNC2 ex RENAPEC il y avait des cinéastes aussi et OZRT ex RTNC à l'époque il y avait aussi des cinéastes. Donc d'où l'idée de faire un seul groupe c'est venu, c'est pour quoi on a créé le OZACI.

CZ : Est-ce que le groupe était indépendant de ce que le gouvernement voulait en tant que films ou devait suivre la ligne éditoriale de l'état ?

PM :À l'époque il n'y avait pas une autre station de télévision, il y avait que la RENAPEC et la RTNC à l'époque. En formant nos ...nous étions tous membres de deux chaînes de la télévision donc nous étions contrôlés par l'état.

CZ : J'ai lu que l'OZACI avait reçu de l'argent de l'état pour commencer ?

PM :Oui. De temps à autres quand il y avait un dossier à parfaire on devait introduire le document à qui de droit au ministère et l'État nous aide. Pas 100% mais il y a eu des périodes où il y avait des subventions de l'État pour faire un travail.

CZ : Quels films avez-vous souhaité faire à l'époque? Quel était le désir des réalisateurs congolais ?

PM :Pour nous, surtout pour notre direction à nous, parce que la ciné-production existait depuis l'époque coloniale, les Belges avait lancé la ciné-production mais à une certaine époque, à l'Indépendance il y a eu un relâchement. Mais à partir de notre production l'idée de faire partir la ciné-production est arrivé c'est pour quoi on avait procédé à une formation. On a demandé à l'UNESCO d'organiser une formation de cinéastes et nous en faisons partie. Donc notre idée c'était de faire des films de fiction. Et c'était en fur et mesure que on trouvait des moyens à tout moment on s'est lancé dans les documentaires aussi. Mais le but principal était de faire des films de séries et des films fiction.

#### Clip 01220002

CZ : Pouvez-vous m'en dire un peu plus sur les films sur lesquels vous avez travaillé à l'époque ?

PM :Moi à l'époque je me suis abandonné à la prise de vue. Je ne suis pas faire le méli-mélo je me suis lancé uniquement dans la prise de vue et j'ai épaulé les amis qui était dans la réalisation pour faire leur truc mais ce n'ai que, ça fait deux ans que je me lance moi-même à réaliser des trucs personnels. J'étais à la prise de vue de beaucoup de films, j'étais à la prise de vue du film *Ngambo* qui a été primé au festival de Ouagadougou. J'étais là comme cameraman et mon ami collègue Mukendi était directeur photo mais de temps à autre on s'échangée des idées sur la direction de la photographie. En dehors de *Ngambo* j'ai fait beaucoup de films, le film qui a fait que papa Wendo avant de mourir retrouve un peu de gloire. Tango à Ba Wendo avec les belges et Kwami aussi, J'étais dans l'équipe.

J'ai fait quatre documentaires sur l'ONATRA. À cette époque-là l'ONATRA était dirigé par un Belge, monsieur Palins et c'était des films commandés par l'entreprise. Kwami était le réalisateur et moi cameraman. Donc quatre séries documentaires sur l'ONATRA.

CZ : Qui est l'ONATRA?

PM :Office National de Transport ferroviaire et fluviale aussi. Mais notre quatre documentaires était basé rien que sur le rail.

J'étais directeur photo et cameraman dans le film *Bakanja* et j'étais aussi l'un des cameraman dans le film *La Vie Est Belle* de Benoit Lamy et Dieudonné Ngangura

#### Clip 01220003

CZ : Vous pouvez me raconter le film *Bakanja* ?

PM :*Bakanja* on l'avait tournée en 1986, en trois mois de tournage à Bandaka et c'est un film religieux. C'est quelqu'un qui s'est fait tuer, le mondele le blanc, ne voulait pas des chrétiens au tours d'eux.

Donc Bakanja était plus un chrétien religieux et donc ça n'avait pas trouvé le consentement des blancs et il s'est fait tabasser jusqu'as trouver la mort. C'était une vraie histoire, il a même été béatifié par le Pape, je crois par Jean Paul II. C'était une histoire vraie mais dans le film on a essayé un peu d'étoffer quoi, il n'y avait pas assez de vie comme dans les archives Bakanja n'avait pas de sœur mais pour réaliser ce document on devait étoffer, pour lui donner une sœur, pour lui donner un peu de vie. Mais c'était une histoire vraie et le Cardinal Etshau avait dirigé pour que ça soit un film réel.

#### Clip 01220004

CZ : Vous pensez que dans les années 70 il y avait un style Zaïrois de films ?

PM :Non, je ne trouve pas qu'il y avait un style Zaïrois, parce que ce que on faisait à l'époque la différence c'est que les belges faisait des films avec des caméras à viser par ....

Tandis que nous à l'époque c'était des films avec des camera à viser reflex.

Mais dans le fond il n'y avait pas un style vraiment typiquement congolais zaïrois, non.

On faisait que suivre ce que on visionnée à l'époque.

Peut-être la différence c'était dans l'histoire qu'on racontai, mais le fond techniquement c'était pratiquement la même chose.

Jusque à aujourd'hui je dirais que nos films était comme si on écrivait un roman, donc il n'y a pas vraiment le mouvement très suivi. Tandis que les autres films européen et américains c'est vraiment le mouvement. Il y a le mouvement. Nous c'est comme si on racontait un poème. Là l'acteur est là en douceur, il fait sa partition. Mais comme pour le moment je suis là je suis assis, je reste jusque à la fin de l'interview assis. Tandis que c'est ça toutes les films congolais mais les films européens il y a du mouvement. Je peux me lever, faire le tour dans la salle, dans le salon, la camera suive. C'est ça la seule différence.

CZ : La tradition du raconte ou aussi dans le contenu ? Mais les histoires que ont raconté dans les années 70 était seulement des documentaires politiques ou aussi des histoires que racontais les congolais ?

PM :Les documentaires à l'époque-là était des documentaires dans la plus part des cas commandité ou c'est une entreprise qui demande qu'on lui fasse un documentaire sur son usine. Pas les documentaires dans le sens feuillé, comme le documentaire que je suis en train de préparer dans ce moment-là, dont le titre est controversé. Donc l'histoire le colonisateur arrive,

tous les guérisseurs fuit dans la brousse, jusque à la création des églises de réveil aujourd'hui. Là c'est le mouvement.

Mais à l'époque les documentaires étaient plus commandités par des entreprises.

Par exemple OZACAV. On vous appelle pour venir montrer comment fonctionne l'usine de la fabrication de café, ou j'avais fait à cette époque sur une usine de textile les pièces wax.

Donc ce n'était pas vraiment des documentaires feuillés, c'était statique quoi.

CZ : Mais il y a un documentaire que je voudrais parler de XVC, il a été réalisé par Kwami, il n'a jamais été visionné, que savez-vous de ce film?

PM : Ce film là j'étais moi-même cameraman aussi. Mais c'est un long film qui nous a fait, j'étais jeune et beau, aujourd'hui je perds déjà ma jeunesse. On a fait le tour du Zaïre à l'époque. On a ...toutes les provinces pour faire ce film-là. L'idée était venue quand le Président Mobutu était parti en Chine. Arrivée en Chine il avait visionné un film intitulé 'Esprit de Yu Kong. Yu Kong c'est une cité en Chine là-bas, c'est une ville en Chine. Et dans le film on montre comment les Chinois ont transformé cette cité Yukong vraiment en une ville habitable.

C'était une cité montagneuse, on a détruit la montagne pour en faire une ville.

Donc on a montré l'effort dès l'individu par le travail

Quand le Président Mobutu est rentré au pays, il a demandé au Ministre Sakombi, qui était le ministre de l'information à l'époque de diriger un film dans ce sens-là. Et la demande a été adressée à Kwami de constituer une équipe d'aller faire ce travail-là. Et on était parti, on avait fait pratiquement plus de trois mois en province. Mais le résultat était quand on est venu après le montage de ce film-là, le ministre et son cabinet est venu visionner le film. À la sortie on avait conclu que ce film ne montrait pas vraiment l'effort du congolais dans le travail, c'était plutôt un film touristique, artistique. Parce que on ne voit pas les congolais en plein travail. C'est les congolais dans toutes ses activités, dans la bière, dans la ville.

Donc le film n'avait pas rencontré l'approbation du ministre et depuis le film on l'a plus vues, c'est cette copie-là.

CZ : Pensez-vous que ce film pourrait être un exemple de la créativité cinématographique zaïroise? Donc, un style de film typiquement zaïrois?

PM : Effectivement on avait mélangé un peu de tout, il y avait des choses comme même des congolais au travail, dans un chantier où on déplacé des grosses pierres et on avait aussi mélangé dans le plan politique, le gouverneur de la province mobilisé toute la population pour faire une marche pour soutenir Mobutu. Mais du point de vue de la créativité il y avait comme même de la matière. Mais ce n'était pas du goût du ministre Sakombi.

CZ : Alors qu'est-ce qui est réellement arrivé au film?

PM : Depuis que ce film a été visionné par les ministres à la sortie de la salle on a plus vu ce film. On n'a pas parlé jusque à aujourd'hui.

CZ : Pourquoi vous pensez ?

PM : Je ne sais pas, j'étais un de bras droit de Kwami et en tout cas, jusqu'à ce jour on n'a aucune nouvelle de ce film. Tout ce que je sais, les rushes et la valise de rush, parce que on avait fait plus d'une centaine de boîtes de 120 mètres de pellicule que on avait envoyée à

Dassonville pour le développement et après j'apprendrais que Dassonville c'est toujours, une cinéaste italienne Marina. J'étais en contact avec elle à tout moment m'avait dit que Dassonville était tombe' en faillite. On avait envoyée toutes ces rushes là à metteur titra pour conservation. Jusque à aujourd'hui personne s'en occupé, cette valise-là est toujours là-bas chez metteur titre.

CZ : Un de vos collègues m'a dit que même si les films étaient politiques, il était heureux de participer car ils concernaient le développement du pays. Vous pensez ça aussi ? Ou pensez-vous que les films politiques étaient restrictifs ?

PM :Personnellement je ne sais pas.

Je n'ai pas un élément probable pour répondre à ça. Mais moi je vois qu'actuellement que on essaye de faire mieux. On essaye de mélanger le tout, ambiance et créativité' et coloration filmique. Le tout mélanger. Je ne sais pas. Je n'ai pas une ligne de conduite. Dans le temps il fallait aussi suivre la ligne de conduite du pays, la ligne politique du pays mais aujourd'hui on est dans le même rythme. Mais un peu libre. Mais une liberté' bien soigne'. Il ne faut pas aller au-delà. On est toujours sur le qui-vive.

## APPENDIX II

### TRANSCRIPT

#### *LA COMPAGNIE MARITIME ZAIROISE*

(nc) = audio not comprehensible

TC 00.10

V/O Matadi cela veut dire pierre mais c'est devenu surtout synonyme d'un port d'où part la plus grande quantité de ressources produites au Zaïre vers l'étranger. La nature est (nc) le majestueuse fleuve Zaïre de sucrière (nc) n'a pas rendu navigable la partie du fleuve qui serve de Matadi à Kinshasa

Pour palier a cet inconvénient naturel les hommes avait tailler dans le roc à la force de leur bras, à la sueur de leur front traçant une ligne de chemin de fer. Ainsi marchandise et voyageurs peuvent (nc) le seul débouché qui dispose la République du Zaïre vers l'océan Atlantique

TC 01.02

V/O La majeure partie de bien de production et équipement et consommation qui participent au développement du Zaïre arrivent par voix de mer. Cette double vocation fait de Matadi un port de plus importants du monde surtout si on le considère le nombre et la diversité de navires qui jettent l'ancre. Parmi ces navires ceux de la CMZ la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise.

TC 01.38

V/O Les raisons pour un pays d'avoir une flotte nationale sont généralement fonde par l'Independence économique. Un pays économiquement indépendant doit savoir sauvegarder son prestige et sa souveraineté. A cet effet une flotte marchande nationale est aussi un attribut de la souveraineté absolue. Beaucoup des pays dont l'économie nationale est lourdement tributaire de services maritimes réguliers ont développé leur marine de commerce afin de dépendre moins des services de transport étrangers

TC 02.14

V/O La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise remédie progressivement à ses mal que constitue le manque de divises dont souffrent les pays sous-équipés

TC 02.23

V/O Elle y parvient grâce à l'accroissement au nombre d'unités qui en dix ans est passe de trois à dix. La République du Zaïre a doté la CMZ d'un cargo de onze mille tonnes la MS Kasavubu construit au Japon et d'un cargo mixte le Kananga soixante-onze passager et quinze mille trois ceinte cinquante tonnes construit aux chantiers de (nc) en Belgique en dix-neuf cent soixante-onze. Un an plus tard en dix-neuf cent soixante-douze (nc) était commende aux chantiers de Brenner Vulkan en République Fédérale Allemande. Novembre soixante-quatorze le Président Fondateur du MPR, le citoyen Mobutu Sese Seko inaugurée le MS Lumumba le premier des six navires dont le dernier en date a été livre en Novembre soixante-quinze.

TC 03.19

V/O Le MS Lumumba comme les autres unités qui ont pour nom Mbandaka, Bandundu, Kisangani, Mbuji Mayi et Bukavu viens renforce le port a lourd de la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise

TC 03.33

Opening titles

LA VOIX DU ZAIRE

Présente

LA COMPAGNIE MARITIME ZAIROISE

(Novembre 1975)

Une coproduction

TELE-ZAIRE -C.M.Z.

Réalisation

HEMEDI MWANAMBOYO

TC 04.02

V/O Mais une flotte marchande comme toutes organisations sociales doivent être bien administre A la tête de la CMZ comme toutes les grandes unités de production et de distribution le Délégué General l'équivalent du Directeur Général et nomme par ordonnance présidentielle. Responsable politique et administratives de la compagnie il rencontre des activités de celle-ci au gouvernement et au Président de la République.

TC 04.35

V/O Conformément à la volonté du Guide Mobutu Sese Seko entériné par le bureau politique qui institutionnalisés la suprématie du parti le Délégué General est président sectionnaire du MPR dans sa société.

TC 04.55

V/O Ici nous voyons installé le comité de la jeunesse ouvrière du MPR. Les ouvriers employés de la CMZ entaient tous membres du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution il est normal qu'ils puissent disposer aux seins de la société des loyaux animateurs.

TC 05.20

V/O Cette cellule du parti est un instrument de travail mise à la disposition de la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise afin de contribuer à la conscientisation des masses ouvrières à réédifier sans cesse l'esprit du Mobutisme.

TC 05.40

V/O Il en va de la vie de la CMZ comme de toute la grande famille du MPR telle qu'on ne peut obtenir de grands résultats en travaillants en ordre dispersée mais en conjuguant les efforts dans une communion du même pensée celle du Guide

TC 06.05

V/O Les structures administratives à la CMZ sont de type classique, une direction générale, divers services administratives, commerciale et technique. Le service social dont la responsabilité encombre à une citoyenne est une preuve de plus de la politique nationale qui est orientée vers l'émancipation de la femme. Quant au service d'armement il a sa base au port d'attache de Matadi.

#### TC 06.55

Man : Le service d'armement est très important pour une société maritime parce que c'est celui qui coordonne les activités de navire, je dois dire, avec la maison mère, avec la société. L'armée le mot le dit bien, c'est mettre le navire dans toutes les conditions exigées pour l'exploitation. C'est-à-dire mettre le certificat de navigabilité en ordre contrevérifier mettre les équipages en ordre et le matérielle le navire à contrôler, les machines, le tout. Comme ça il y a un service technique, il y a un service personnel.

#### TC 07.53

V/O L'existence de la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise date de 1946 lorsque à l'époque coloniale fut créé une société maritime sous l'appellation Compagnie Maritime Congolaise.

#### TC 08.12

V/O En l'absence de toutes législations maritimes nationales les navires de la défunte CMC continuée de battre pavillon Belge. D'une façon pratique les activités de cette société se faisait sous tutelle de la compagnie maritime Africaine de navigation de droit Belge qui prenait en affrètement ses navires. En (nc) 1966 sous la Deuxième République fut créé la nouvelle Compagnie Maritime Congolaise dans laquelle l'état détenait la majorité de participation au capital. Mais c'est l'ordonnance loi 66/98 en création d'un code de navigation maritime qui acheva l'édification juridiques de la compagnie dont les navires pouvaient alors battre pavillon nationale. Aux termes de cette loi le Zaïre pouvait souscrire à toutes les conventions maritimes internationales.

#### TC 09.13

V/O Le MS Lumumba première acquisition issue de 10% de participation que détenait la CMC ancienne formule au sein de la CMAN fut le premier navire à battre au pavillon national.

#### TC 09.34

V/O Construit en 1948 le MS Lumumba avait été déclassé pour avoir attend la limite règlementaire de navigabilité. Il est cependant remplacé par le MS Kananga de conception moderne et d'un tonnage supérieur

#### TC 10.02

V/O Concrétisant les décisions économiques du 30 Novembre 1973 l'ordonnance loi du 2 Décembre 1974 permit à la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise société à 100% Zaïroise de s'imposer sur les mers et dans les ports du monde entier, et déjà au port de Matadi la participation de la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise à l'exportation ne cesse d'augmenter

#### TC 10.35

V/O En 1971 la participation de la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise est de 6,09% à l'exportation et de 3,26% à l'importation, en 1972 ces chiffres sont de l'ordre de 9,29% et 2,27% et en 1973 la CMZ participe pour 12,04% à l'exportation 4,34% à l'importation.

#### TC 11.11

V/O A côté du transport des ressources minière et ainsi d'autres produits de consommation la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise est également équipé pour le transport des voyageurs qui quittent ou rentre au Zaïre. Elle met à leur disposition un personnel d'accueil qualifie et spécialisé.

#### TC 11.30

V/O Ici le client est roi, (nc) bénéficié d'une attention afin de goûter au maximum aux joies et au plaisirs que procurent une randonnée touristique.

A bord du MS Kananga par exemple le commissaire de bord et ses adjoints sont conscients de ses problèmes aussi mettent-ils tout à l'heure pour faciliter et rendre agréable le séjour de 71 passagers. Au bureau de réception le commissaire de bord tient à jour les états civils des marins, des passagers, planifie le loisir et organise les jours.

#### TC 12.10

V/O La prise en charge se fait toujours dans un débordement d'attention et de serviabilité qui comble les voyageurs. Le Kananga possède quatre cabines de luxe dont le confort n'a rien à envier au luxueuse chambre d'hôtel six étoiles. Et une trentaine de cabines de classe économique. Les consommations peuvent être prise dans les cabines, comme au bar ou au fumoir. Le passager au bord su MS Kananga est un client privilège, qui est lodge nourri blanchi pendant toute la durée de la traversée pour le prix du billet qui ne dépasse pas celui d'avion à trajet égale.

#### TC 13.08

V/O Cette image tous les passagers des navires Zaïrois et équipages, matelots et touristes l'ont gardé en mémoire car elle commence et recommence chaque fois que les navires quittent le port et les eaux calmes du fleuve Zaïre pour atteindre mer et océan les lointaine terres étrangères

#### TC 13.32

V/O A partir d'ici il faudra un minimum de six heures pour atteindre Banana où l'état Zaïrois conte construire un port en eau profonde. A partir d'ici également commence pour le marin des journées, des nuits fort chargées des travaux de nettoyage et d'entretiens afin que le navire amène à bon port hommes et marchandise. Pour affronter une telle perspective rien (nc) d'un bon repas. Les marins doivent récupérer des forces sont soumis à un régime alimentaire intense et toujours amélioré. En plus de leurs trois repas quotidiens trois collations leur sont servi à 5, 9 et 16 heures autour desquelles le café est de rigueur.

#### TC 14.19

V/O Avec ses propres navires la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise exploite actuellement un réseau de services réguliers au départ du Zaïre qui couvrent les cinq continents. Elle serve notamment la Zaïre Amérique par la rangé du Golfe du Mexique jusqu'au lac Canadien la ligne Zaïre Extrême Orient, par la rangé Hong Kong Singapour et le Japon, la ligne Zaïre Europe du Nord par la rangé Anvers Hambourg, et la ligne Zaïre Méditerranée par la rangé Marseille et les ports Italiens.

#### TC 15.40

V/O Les navires comme le MS Kananga sont capables de relier les différents ports de leurs lignes respectives dans les (nc) qu'aujourd'hui paraissent de moins en moins long cela principalement grâce à la puissance de leurs moteurs. Celui du MS Kananga développé une puissance de 15 milles chevaux, une vitesse de croisière de 120 au minute qui permet d'atteindre un maximum de 19 nœuds, ce qui représente à peu près 40 kilomètres à l'heure. Il faut en moyenne 50 tonnes de (nc) pour obtenir cette performance.

#### TC 16.16

V/O Onze personnes, chef engeigner et trois nettoyeurs arrivent à pourvoir cette bonne marche et à balustrer le navire. Le système consiste à doser le niveau d'eau de (nc) et d'huile de palme



dans les différents tanks situés au front du navire afin de donner à celui-ci un équilibre constant sur l'océan.

TC 16.54

V/O Le radio opérateur relie ce grand village flottant qu'est le bateau au reste du monde et surtout un monde continental. Travaillant aux heures par fois irrégulières de la journée et de la nuit il capte tous les messages radiophoniques radionavigation télégrammes télex aussi autres intéressant chaque catégorie de personne prise à bord.

TC 17.45

V/O Pour des nombreux touristes la traversé est d'abord un voyage d'agrément (nc) n'y d'avoir mal soi-même ni les personnes qui vous accompagnent. A bord de ces navires de la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise médecin généraliste infirmière mettent en soigne en particulier à la consultation et au traitement d'éventuels patients. Les cas graves il est vrai sont plutôt rares et vaudrait-il pas mieux prévenir que guérir.

TC 18.22

V/O A côté de la salle de consultation qui reçoit par jour plus d'une vingtaine de cas soins de première nécessité il existe également une salle d'hospitalisation et une pharmacie. Les meilleurs produits pharmaceutiques sont une garantie contre les intempéries quelque fois provoquée par les nombreux changements de vent et de climat auquel sont soumis les personnes navigantes ainsi que tous qui participent à la sauvegarde de vie et de marchandise à bord.

TC 18.52

V/O Il est important en effet que le navire soit bien entretenu, ce travail est régulièrement effectué par des (nc) fermetures des calles doivent être constamment lubrifiées, les parties unies doivent être peintes pour éviter à la rouille d'attaquer le fer. A la tête de l'équipage le Capitaine au long cours est commandant du navire veille également au fonctionnement de la discipline politique à bord de ce navire qui reste une partie de la République du Zaïre en perpétuel déplacement

TC 19.25

Captain : Je sais que je contribue à l'économie et à l'émancipation de ce pays. Comme Président sectionnaire du MPR de ce navire, je suis très content et très satisfait de ma carrière. Tous les jours en haute mer par exemple vers neuf heures j'ai un petit briefing avec l'état-major, les officiers qui forment mon état-major : discussion, état du navire suite l'état d'esprit à bord, la navigation, la vitesse. Dans la zone à fort trafic, selon la loi je suis obligé d'être à côté de l'officier à la passerelle pour superviser les opérations et la navigation.

TC 20.21

V/O Avec ses 15.350 tonnes de marchandise et ses 12.200 tonnes de passagers et bagages MS Kananga cargo mix de la CMZ est un géant de mer. Il faut donc toute la dextérité du capitaine au long cours pour le conduire dans ce décor étranger dans laquelle flotte au vent le flambeau de la révolution Zaïroise

TC 21.17

V/O Penser que tous les navires dont dispose le Zaïre répètent les mêmes manœuvres sur toutes les mers sur tous les océans des cinq continents au service (nc) maritime Zaïroise autant que

(nc) mondiale au service de l'économie Zaïroise et de l'amitié entre le Zaïre et les nations du monde.

TC 21.53

V/O La vocation Zaïroise d'ouverture vers le monde aura permis au moins aux navires de la marine marchande d'offrir aux passagers d'apprécier des paysages quelle celui de Santa Cruz de Tenerife aux îles Canaries

TC 22.15

V/O Ce jour-là à bord tout le monde s'agitait, vite les enfants au lit. Un (nc) toilette chez son coiffeur car le commandant offre aux passagers un cocktail. Et les voilà tous réunis dans le salon bar du MS Kananga, tous, membres de l'équipage et passagers

TC 23.15

V/O L'ambiance est à la gayet les conversations vont bon (nc), elles se poursuivront jusqu'à table. Pendant les onze jours que dure la traversée de Matadi à Anvers les passagers seront invités quatre fois à ces cérémoniales, seul le menu varié.

TC 23.57

V/O Les hommes de toutes les races réunis dans ce navire mangeant trois fois par jour à la même table jouant au même jeu, occupant des cabines voisines voilà une occasion de mieux se connaître, de lier des nouvelles amitiés et surtout d'apprécier un service à bord qui fait de la CMZ une grande compagnie de transport maritime.

TC 24.33

V/O Le commandant Lelo, 33 ans, (nc) pour arriver à telle résultat besoin d'afficher le visage de ces homme avance en âge dont on a souvent habitude une certaine époque, aujourd'hui révolu

TC 24.38

Captain : J'ai commencé ma carrière maritime en 61, c'était après un examen de sélection au Zaïre en 1961, navire école belge 61-62, école supérieure de la navigation maritime d'Anvers 1962-1964 après c'était la navigation qui commençait. Après quelques années il fallait de nouveau aller présenter des examens. Ainsi j'étais présenter mon examen (nc), en 1968. Mon examen maintenant (nc) 1970 et l'examen pour l'obtention d'brevet de capitaine au long cours en 1971

TC 25.40

V/O Le dynamisme de toutes entreprises se mesure aussi bien par sa capacité de production que par la valeur de ses cadres. La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise consciente de l'une et de l'autre est très soucieuse de la formation et de la qualification professionnelle de ses cadres navigants et des équipages. Il est important en effet que la vie humaine, le matériel naval aussi que la cargaison soit confiée dans les mains des hommes capables d'apprendre les responsabilités que sont les leurs. A l'école supérieure de navigation des jeunes zaïrois sorti des écoles secondaires techniques et scientifiques (nc) avec application à la tâche de faire ces longues études permettrons d'assumer plus tard le lourd de responsabilité à bord des navires. Dans l'ensemble plus de 50% des état majeurs à bord du navire de la CMZ sont zaïrois. De telle équipage navigue déjà régulièrement sur toutes les lignes de service exploité par la CMZ suivant les conférences maritimes dont elle fait partie.

TC 27.00

V/O Au port d'Anvers ce navire de la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise fait partie de cinquante navire d'haute mer qui entre par jour. Accostera au long d'un quai trajet aménagé dans le bassin artificiel qui donnent au port d'Anvers la forme d'un interminable labyrinthe.

TC 27.26

V/O Le système économique est organisé de façon que ce sont des groupes privés qui loue des placements pour une période de 99 ans avant que le port ne revienne entièrement à l'état belge. Les frais de port peuvent variée entre 1500 et 2000 Zaires par jours. On comprend alors la nécessité qu'il y a pour le Zaïre d'avoir sur place dans chaque pays de la conférence maritime un bureau de représentation

TC 28.10

V/O Le bureau de représentation qui assure le prolongement de la direction générale à l'étranger a une triple fonction. Fonction commerciale par laquelle elle participe aux conférences maritimes à la négociation des frets avec divers armateurs. Fonction administrative par laquelle elle centralise les nouvelles maritimes, destinées à la direction générale. Fonction sociale par laquelle elle traite les dossiers sur la situation financière, matérielle, familiale et même professionnelle des boursiers ou des membres d'équipage de la CMZ.

TC 28.55

V/O C'est pourquoi assez régulièrement les autorités de la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise visitent le bureau de représentation.

TC 29.24

V/O Dix ans après la révolution Mobutiste la Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise a presque découpé ses potentialités avec ses nouvelles acquisition le port en lourd de la CMZ représente aujourd'hui quelque 140000 tonnes. Le Zaïre en pleine expansion exporte principalement le coton, le caoutchouc, le cuivre, l'huile de palme et beaucoup d'autre matières premières

TC 30.07

V/O Le pavillon Zaïrois flottant au vent de climat Européen Asiatique Américain c'est assurément un témoignage du dynamisme de la politique zaïrois adopté par les autorités de la Deuxième République, une politique penchée sur la croissance économique dans le respect de l'homme et la nature.

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### ***GECAMINES - LA VOLONTÉ DE REUSSIR***

(nc) = audio not comprehensible

Opening Titles:

« Même s'il nous faut tailler notre chemin dans le roc nous le taillerons dans le roc »

Mobutu Sese Seko

GECAMINES

La volonté de réussir

Prises de Vue

OSY FISCHLER

Assistant

JOHAN DENEVE

Prise de Son

JOOS SUETENS

PHILIPPE VOTQUENNE

Script

MATEKE WA MULAMBA

Montage

OSY FISCHLER

Production

GCM Exploitation

Producteurs Délégués

KITENGE LUBIKA

LOSHI KASEMWANA

Commentaire

KWEBE KIMPELE

TSHILONDA TSHA MULAMBA

Dit par

GERARD HEROLD

Conseiller à la réalisation

KASONGO MWEMA

Réalisateurs

TSHILONDA TSHA MULAMBA

KWEBE KIMPELE

TC 02.42

V/O

L'histoire comble certains hommes des rencontres imprévisibles. Il arrive pourtant que ce rendez-vous devient réalité.

Le rencontre de la GECAMINES et le destin du peuple Zaïrois conduit par le Marechal Mobutu Sese Seko.

Il existe peu d'Enterprise minière au monde comparable à la GECAMINES née dans l'ensemble minière du Haut Katanga, la GECAMINE a hérité du meilleur comme du pire

La place que l'histoire du XX siècle lui a réservée est unique. Comme sont uniques les évènements aux quelle elle a pris part, les tragédies que sa seule distance a provoquées et les passions qu'elle a suscitées.

Du haut de cette cheminé près d'un siècle de tourmente et de drame.

TC 03.39

V/O

Pourtant l'Union Minière du Haut Katanga aurait pu rester une simple et paisible entreprise de production de cuivre, mais parvenue au sommet de sa puissance la société devin le champ clos et de rivalité politique et financière et d'un jeu stratégique ont fini par se comporter comme un état dans un état. L'ordre ainsi crée aurait pu continuer pour l'éternité, il n'en fut rien.

TC 04.06

V/O

Fleurent du system domanial Léopoldien dans l'état indépendant du Congo, dotée d'un capital initial de dix millions de Franc-Or, érigée en société Congolaise à responsabilité limitée mise en valeur de la richesse du sol et du sursol, l'Union Minière du Haut Katanga voit le jour le dimanche 28 Octobre 1906 aux termes d'un décret Royale.

L'année d'avant, en 1905, un obscur professeur de physique Albert Einstein avait publié à Vienne les résultats de ses travaux de recherche sur la relativité  
Quarante ans plus tard l'histoire organisera à Hiroshima et à Nagasaki un rendez-vous involontaire entre le savant et la société minière

TC 04.56

V/O

L'exploitation industrielle du cuivre commence dans la mine de l'Etoile en 1909. En fait l'Union Minière du Haut Katanga apporte les nouvelles techniques à l'aventure minières déjà séculaires dans la région. Après main de difficulté technique et financière, la première coulée de cuivre était finalement obtenue en 1911. Trois ans après éclate la Première Guerre Mondiale. Pendant les quatre années de la guerre l'Union Minière du Haut Katanga livrera 420000 tonnes de cuivre aux usines d'armement des nations Européenne, coalisée contre l'empire allemand de Guillaume II.

TC 05.42

V/O

Après les railleries et les réticences du début l'affaire pour les actionnaires devient en fin rentable et c'est ainsi à la fin du conflit la société distribuait les premiers dividendes.  
De 1925 l'expérience s'ajoutant aux moyens techniques la production annuelles du cuivre est rapidement portée à plus de 40000 tonnes. La mise en exploitations de la mine de Prince Léopold a Kiputshi a puissamment contribué.

TC 06.17

V/O

Mais l'Union Minière du Haut Katanga veut aussi faire œuvre de civilisation.  
Elle bâti des villes : Lubumbashi, Kipushi en suite Likasi, et en fin Kolwezi en 1930  
Cette même année à Lisala naiss Mobutu Sese Seko futur Marechal du Zaïre. A la fin des années trente, il est âgé de dix ans et vit dans un autre univers, loin de l'entreprise et péril nucléaire qui menace le monde. Pourtant vingt-six ans plus tard produira l'impossible rencontre. L'histoire du colosse minier aux pieds de cuivre, trois ans de chemin de cet enfant noir au pieds nu, Il y aura une lutte à mort. Mais nous sommes encore en 1940. La Seconde Guerre Mondiale vient d'éclater.

TC 07.07

V/O

A l'immense tragédie qui déchire le monde l'Union Minière du Haut Katanga ajoute la sienne propre. C'est l'affaire du massacre des ouvriers à Lubumbashi. Le 9 Novembre 1941 la police coloniale tire sur une foule des mineurs noirs en grève pour réclamer une augmentation de quelque centime. Les fonds de guerre pour tous, oui. Compensation salarie pour les noirs, non. Un des rescapés du massacre, Papa Mpyo dernier témoin encore vivant s'en souviens.

TC 07.32

MPOY

Il y avait vingt et un qui étaient morts sur place, au totale quarante-huit. On m'a appelé au parquet, j'ai dit la vérité quoi ça était tombé. C'est parce que le gouverneur était venu brusquement sans même avertir le commissaire de district.

TC 07.52

V/O

A sa façon l'Union Minière du Haut Katanga se bat au premières lignes. Pendant les cinq années de guerre elle livre aux pays alliés 800000 tonnes de cuivre en plus du cobalt, de l'étain et uranium en quantités gardées secrètes. Durant cette période la vente de produits miniers rapporte à la Belgique environs soixante-cinq millions des dollars par an. Un puissant soutien au gouvernement Belge en exil et à la Belgique. Ce pays va non seulement se trouver à la libération sans la moins de dettes vis-à-vis de ses alliées mais aussi se relever de ruines avec une monnaie forte lui assurant du coup un redressement économique plus rapide que celui de la plupart de ses voisins.

TC 08.32

V/O

8 Mai 1945, le Troisième Reich s'effondre et signe sa capitulation, mais la guerre n'est pas finie pour tout le monde.

Le 6 puis le 8 Aout 1945 l'heure sonne pour les bombardements atomiques de les villes japonaises d'Hiroshima et de Nagasaki. La fameuse théorie de Albert Einstein annonce l'ère de l'apocalypse nucléaire. Les victimes étaient japonaises, les bombes américaines, fournisseurs d'uranium belges, minerais zaïrois.

TC 09.07

V/O

Le destin de la planète connaît alors une fantastique accélération. Réunis à Yalta les puissances victorieuses partagent le monde. Tandis que à San Francisco l'Organisation des Nations Unies voit le jour au milieu d'un immense espoir.

TC 09.22

V/O

Mais voici que décennie les années cinquante allument déjà les brasiers des guerres de libération en Afrique, en Amérique Latine et en Asie. Pourvoyeuse des usines d'armements l'Union Minière du Haut Katanga avec un capitale porté à cinq milliards de Francs atteint alors le sommet de sa puissance, tandis qu'elle fête le cinquantenaire de sa création. Désormais la société peut assurer ses investissements à concurrence de prêt de 80% en autofinancement. Cette prospérité ne sera pas démentie, même au plus fort de la crise qui surviendra la Belgique et de son ancienne colonie, indépendante depuis le 30 Juin 1960 et aussi tôt confrontée à la sécession du Katanga. De toute évidence le mouvement sécessionniste bénéficie du soutien morale et financier du milieu proche de l'Union Minière du Haut Katanga. La société croyez s'ouvrir avant elle un avenir que rien ne serait perturbé mais l'histoire vas bien lui porter un sanglèrent démentir.

TC 10.20

V/O

Le 30 Juin 1966 le président Mobutu Sese Seko adressait un ultimatum au responsable de l'Union Minière du Haut Katanga, ils leur accordent un délai de six mois pour opérer le transfert du siège social de Bruxelles à Kinshasa. Un défi incertain (nc) dangereux, mais un acte héroïque aux conséquences incalculables. Devant le refus de la Belgique l'affrontement

dévente inévitable. A travers ce conflit deux auteurs Hubert Galles et Yannis Thanassekos ont admirablement situé l'ampleur des tâches et la nature des exigences auxquelles le peuple Zaïrois et son chef ont dû faire face

Il s'agissait en vérité et au-delà des apparences d'affronter la puissance la plus moderne, la plus perfectionnée, plus implacable que jusqu'à ici qu'avait connu l'histoire

Cette puissance qui peut tout à la fois construire et détruire, procurer le bien-être et engendrer la misère, cette puissance qui peut faire la guerre et se payer la paix.

TC 11.17

V/O

Le premier Janvier 1967 le président Mobutu Sese Seko décrète la nationalisation de tous les avoirs de l'Union Minière du Haut Katanga au Zaïre.

Le deux Janvier la Générale Congolaise de Minerais naissait XXX défunte Union Minière du Haut Katanga sous le regard hostile de la haute finance internationale.

TC 11.45

V/O

Les (nc) au tour de l'entreprise s'active davantage. Ils reviendront à deux reprises semer la mort et la désolation aux pieds de la grande cheminait, chaque fois ils réservent leurs coups plus durs aux installations de la GECAMINES et visent la destruction (nc) pour contraindre le pays pour recourir à l'aide extérieur

Déjà lourdement handicapé par la détérioration (nc)des métaux et la fermeture du chemin de fer de Bengwela, le deuxième plan quinquennal d'expansion appelé P2 est interrompu avec la seconde guerre du Shaba

Ce plan aurait permis à la GECAMINES à partir de 1980 de raffiner sur place 100000 tonnes de cuivre supplémentaires et d'augmenter sa capacité de production. Jamais le cuivre n'a mérité au tant qu'ici le nom de métal rouge.

TC 12.30

V/O

Un nouveau défi est lancé, il est technique et politique à la fois. Déserté par quasi-totalité de ses cadres expatrié au lendemain de la deuxième guerre au Shaba, gravement endommagé par les combats la Gecamines était pratiquement paralysée. C'est alors que par amour pour leur patrie, un groupe de jeune ingénieurs et techniciens Zaïrois, confiants dans leur savoir-faire, signent un véritable exploit. Ils vont remettre en marche en deux semaines le complexe minier de Kolwezi. Alors que les études les plus sérieuses prévoyant un minimum de six mois avec un concordat d'ingénieurs et techniciens expatriés.

TC 13.07

V/O

Forts de cette expérience le président Mobutu Sese Seko, va ouvrir largement aux cadres Zaïrois les portes d'accès aux responsabilités techniques de plus en plus élevées au centre de l'entreprise. Ils seront d'abord nommés de la fin du conflit directeurs des mines et usines fonction jusque à l'heure exercée uniquement par des cadres expatriés. Par la suite, ils accéderont au poste d'adjoint au directeur expatriés des trois groupes de la GECAMINES.

Faisant preuve d'un haut degré de compétences techniques et d'un sens élevée itérée nationaux, les cadres Zaïrois accéderont enfin aux fonctions de directeurs de groupe.

#### TC 13.40

Management : Nous avons réalisé un chiffre record de 476200 tonnes de cuivre  
V/O

De 80% à la création de l'entreprise, le têt d'africanisations des cadres dépasse aujourd'hui le 88% Ce processus est accompagné d'une profonde restructuration de l'entreprise. Avec notamment (nc) d'une appréciable autonomie aux trois groupes de la société.

#### TC 14.02

V/O

Tout au long de l'itinéraire suivi par la politique d'africanisation des cadres, l'histoire retenue quelque nom reste gravés sur la façade de la GECAMINES.

Umba Kiamitala nommé à la tête de la société en Octobre 1973, le premier vent de l'authenticité soufflé au Zaïre. La promotion de cet ingénieur zaïrois fut le morse du mouvement d'africanisation des cadres.

Robert Krem il a accéléré le processus dans les années 80s alors qu'il assumait les fonctions de Délégué Générale de la GECAMINES.

Mulenda Mbo dont l'exploit technique fait désormais parti de la légende dans la GECAMINES. Il a conduit le cadre technique et le personnelle zaïrois qui ont assuré la reprise des activités de production de la GECAMINES à Kolwezi en 1978. Six années plus tard, le président Mobutu Sese Seko le placera à la tête de l'entreprise.

#### TC 14.57

V/O

Mais ils restaient encore à la politique d'africanisation de cadres les preuves de la production. Premier test de vérité pour les cadres nationaux, le maintiens plus l'amélioration de la cour de production celle si mobilisera toutes les énergies durant des nombreuses campagnes d'exploitation minière.

#### TC 15.15

V/O

Aujourd'hui concentrée autour de trois puissances industrielles et minier, avec un effective globale avec 36000 agents la GECAMINES dispose d'une concession de 34000 mètres carre, alignée sur an axe routier Lubumbashi, Likasi, Kolwezi.

#### TC 15.39

V/O

Le sous-sol riche en gisement de cuivre contient du cobalt, de zinc, ainsi que des réserves d'uranium et étain actuellement inexploitées.

#### TC 15.53

V/O

Les activités d'extraction, de concentration de minerais et métallurgiques sont dans trois groupes décentralises. Le groupe ouest, il y a son siège à Kolwezi, intervient pour 80% dans l'extraction des minerais de la société. Ils comprennent des mines à ciel ouvert, une mine sous terraine, deux concentrateurs et deux usines hydro métallurgiques. Le groupe centre au tour de Likasi, et le groupe sud au tour de Lubumbashi possèdent chacun a ses mines et ses usines métallurgiques. Pour les nécessités de maintenance et économie de devise et en fin de raccourcir le temps de livraison des pièces de rechange la GECAMINES a installé des ateliers spécialisés dans l'ensemble des groupes.



TC 16.40

V/O

Depuis les mines sous terraines a plus de mille mètres de profondeur (nc) 24 heures sur 24 les fonds d'abatage ne connaissent aucune trêve où les hommes et les machines sont mise a' rue des preuves pour arracher les précieux minéraux aux entrailles de la terre et en assurer en suite le transport vers les usines jusqu'aux carrières où des (nc)et des excavatrices déplacent des tonnes de minerais, le cadre Zaïrois en parfaite intelligence avec le travailleur a définitivement détruit les mythes et préjugés du passé.

Mais ces résultats flatteurs sont aussi la conséquence d'une mobilisation politique efficace depuis la base jusqu'au sommet de la société.

TC 17.20

V/O

A la GECAMINES la production est un acte politique et une preuve de militantisme, parce qu'elle offre au Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution et au chef du parti, les moyens d'atteindre plus vite les objectives de développement économiques et de bien être sociale.

A quelque niveau qu'il soit le cadre se fait le devoir de canaliser les énergies d'expliquer le sens des orientations parti pour la hausse de la production et pour poursuivre le dialogue direct avec les masses laboureuse, les rassemblement populaire mensuelles à travers les trois groupes de la GECAMINES sont l'occasion Délégué Générale de s'adresser directement aux travailleurs.

TC 18.10

V/O

A la GECAMINES la production est un acte de joie, c'est ainsi que se rencontres sont toujours accompagne par des séances d'animation politique et culturelle

TC 18.20

Animation

TC 18.53

V/O

Mais toute joie et tout succès mérite, la GECAMINES taille aussi son chemin dans le roc.

TC 18.58

Speaker :

Mesdames et Messieurs, Citoyennes, Citoyens

(nc)du développement vous avez permis à la GECAMINES l'exploitation de (nc) dynamique et capable de performer des hautes performances.

TC 19.20

V/O

A la GECAMINES la production est un acte d'engagement totale

TC 19.31

Spectacular dancing in traditional attire and dancers in costume.

TC 19.47

V/O

La plantation de cellule de base du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution aux seins des équipes de travail dans les mines et les usines, la propagande, la diffusion des messages du parti, l'application par tous les personnels des consignes, touchant à la vigilance révolutionnaire à la sécurité des biens et des personnes, ont ainsi grandement contribué aux excellents résultats de la production

Pendant de trop long de temps la GECAMINES et ses travailleurs ont servi des causes étrangères, participé a des efforts de guerres dont ils ignorées tout. Désormais intégré aux cellules de base du parti l'ouvrier de GECAMINES connait les raisons de son labour et la justification de ses efforts.

Il sait qu'il travaille pour son parti et pour son pays. Il sait aussi qu'il travaille pour gagner son pain quotidien, son bukari pour lui et ses enfants.

TC 20.34

V/O

Il peut chaque jour se rendre à son travail rassuré quant ou présent et confient dans l'avenir. Par une politique sociale courageuse la GECAMINES met son travailleur à l'abris de tout aléas.

TC 20.53

V/O

Dans le domaine de la santé plusieurs unités de soin spécialisée fonctionnent dans chaque groupe. Des appareils d'investigation et d'analyse médicale produits de technologie de pointe, équipes, hôpitaux et cliniques.

TC 21.13

V/O

Il existe même à Likasi un centre spécialisé dans la médecine du travail. L'action sanitaire de la GECAMINES s' (nc) également au population des localités avoisinantes

TC 21.26

Doctor: Inspirez, expirez. Inspirez, expirez.

TC 21.33

V/O

Les activités sportives et de loisir nombreuses et variées témoignent également de la volonté de recherche de bien être sociale qui animaient les responsables nationaux de la société.

Pour les cadres, les ouvriers ou leurs enfants des infrastructures et des complexes sportifs moderne offrent diverses possibilités d'apprentissage ou de perfectionnement et préparent aux sports de haute compétition. En plus du sport il y a mille occasions d'exercer à divers métiers domestique et la couture.

TC 22.00

V/O

La GECAMINES d'aujourd'hui est également tournée vers demain, et l'avenir ce sont ses enfants. Pour leur éducation et leur instruction la société instillée dans chaque groupe et même au niveau des différentes siège d'exploitation des complexes éducatives qui vont des unités de formation près scolaire aux établissements d'enseignement secondaire professionnelle et technique.

TC 22.00

Teacher : KaKwata

Student : L'exemple que je peux donner est cinq et six

Teacher : C'était ça

TC 22.42

V/O

L'apprentissage de la discipline indispensable au fonds des mines commence très tôt. Quant aux cadres un centre spécialisée organise régulièrement de sessions de perfectionnement et de recyclage à leur (nc)

TC 23.17

V/O

Dans la GECAMINES d'aujourd'hui, l'homme, le citoyen, l'ouvrier ou le mineur, le militant du parti est la première richesse. Il est plus précieux que tous les minerais qui dorment dans le sous-sol du pays.

TC 23.27

Worker : Kolwezi prière annoncé à (nc)ouest arrivée dans une demi-heure d'un groupe de géologues. A vous

Radio : Ok

TC 23.40

V/O

De nos jours il ne suffit plus de battre des records de production à n'importe à quel prix. D'heure en avant les exigences de rentabilité donnerons le seul baromètre capable de renseigner sur la viabilité d'une entreprise. Les impératives de productivité ne peuvent être satisfait que grâce à la compression de cout de production, et par la maitrise de tous les éléments intervenants dans le calcul de prix de reviens des produits.

TC 24.00

V/O

Désormais la rationalisation de la production impose des contraintes et méthodes de gestion qui conditionnent la survie même des entreprises. Aux termes d'une application rigoureuse directives du président Mobutu Sese Seko en matière d'augmentation de la production les responsables nationaux de la GECAMINES ont fait de la productivité un objectif prioritaire, et il y ont affectée tous les moyens nécessaires.

L'usage généralisée de l'ordinateur, l'utilisation des moyens de transport et de communication les plus rapides permettent à l'entreprise d'être présente et performante sur la scène nationale et mondiale.

Mais loin de se contenter des résultats immédiats, les dirigeants de la GECAMINES content sur des objectives à moyen et long terme et concentrent des gros efforts à faveur de la recherche et dans les laboratoires et sur le terrain.

TC 24.46

V/O

Face au défi du développement socio-économique du Zaïre la GECAMINES assume des responsabilités particulières. En affaire la nouvelle politique d'intégration économique et industrielle du Zaïre a trouvé en elle un de ses (nc) essentielles. Déjà dans l'environnement économique régionale du Shaba l'entreprise a établi des liens étroits avec des nombreuses petites et moyennes industries située en amont ou en aval de ses activités. Depuis l'agro-

industrie, les pêcheries, ou l'agropastoral, jusqu'aux industries chimiques, mécanique et métallurgique, en passant par les fonderies et les constructions métalliques.

D'autre part de toutes les entreprises nationales elle arrive au premier rang pour les employés et les recettes d'exportation et grâce aux impôts (nc) au bénéfice du trésor public elle apporte outre une part remarquable au budget de l'état.

TC 25.51

V/O

Dans un pays comme le Zaïre aux dimensions continentales le transport sur des long distances de tonnage élevée des produits miniers avec des (nc) sur trois ou quatre points de rupture de charge est restée à travers les années un pari difficile à tenir. Aux relations traditionnelles lient la GECAMINES au Société de Transport Ferroviaire et Maritime l'arrivée des dirigeants nationaux a apporté un climat nouveau par l'amélioration et l'intensification des rapports de communication et de compréhension mutuelle.

TC 26.28

V/O

Alsol leader mondial dans la production et l'exportation du cobalt maintenant le Zaïre dans le (nc) de tête, premier producteur africain de Zinc la GECAMINES pèse d'un poids certain aux prêtres de nombreuses industries à travers le monde.

TC 26.45

V/O

Malgré les cours erratiques des marchés des métaux sur les grandes places de la bourse à Londres, à New York et ailleurs des centaines usines sur la planète, et des centaines des milliers d'employés industrielles sont conditionnées par le cuivre, le zinc ou le cobalt produit par la GECAMINES.

TC 27.20

V/O

Les domaines d'utilisation du cuivre sont nombreux et variée à l'état pur ou sous forme d'alliage, le métal rouge intervient entre autres dans la fabrication des câbles électriques et des fils téléphoniques. Il constitue en outre la matière de base pour les robinetteries et les (nc). Mais rien n'est éternel ni le cuivre ni le cobalt, demain l'exploitation intensive des gisement (nc) accélèra le (nc).

Des métaux de substitution pour être en outre entraîner la réduction de la demande mondiale du métal rouge et ses associés. Pourtant quel que soit le défi quel que soit le niveau des réserves minières rien ne serait troubler la confiance de la GECAMINES dans son avenir, ils existent déjà des réponses aujourd'hui pour les interrogations de demain.

TC 28.04

DG : Notre préoccupation principale est la recherche permanente de l'amélioration de (nc) suivant certaines dispositions pratiques et je citerais entre autres l'amélioration de la connaissance de nos gisements actuels, la découverte des gisements nouveaux, la consommations des produits (nc) telle que s'est appliquée ces derniers années et dans le cadre de notre cadre de notre programme quinquennal de la réhabilitation, c'est l'augmentation de la productivité au niveau des concentrateurs, entraînant une certaine augmentation de capacité des traitements.

Toutes ces actions nous permettrons à cours sûr d'augmenter d'avantage nos réserves minières

TC 29.00

DG : Mais parallèlement à ceci, nous devons dès à présent nous préoccuper de la reconversion, nous allons favoriser le développement d'un tissu industriel-économique dans l'environnement régionale et nationale de la GECAMINES exploitation. Et ceci doit se faire dans le cadre de l'intégration industrielle prôné par le président fondateur, président de la République. Ceci pour éviter ce qui arrive souvent, c'est de faire la reconversion à dernière minute dans la précipitation.

TC 29.36

V/O

L'avenir de la GECAMINES et la survie du métal rouge sont également conditionnés par l'apparition de nouvelles technologies qui réservent une large place à l'usage du cuivre et d'autres métaux produits par la GECAMINES

Ainsi tant qu'il y aura des hommes, tant qu'ils seront animés par la passion de vivre, la volonté de survivre, tant que quelque part dans le monde une fumée s'échappera de la cheminai d'une usine la GECAMINES gardera toujours sa raison d'exister.

## APPENDIX III

*République Démocratique du Congo*  
MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION ET MEDIAS



### **AUTORISATION DE REPORTAGE** **N°005 /CAB/M-CM/LMO/juillet/2016**

Noms et Post-noms :

- Madame CECILIA ZOPPELLETO, N°Passeport YA7718499

Organe : WESTMINSTER SCHOOL OF MEDIA, ARTS AND DESIGN

Motif : Réalisation des reportages et recherches sur les archives de la production cinématographique dans le cadre de la rédaction d'une Thèse de Doctorat en République Démocratique du Congo.

Lieu : Kinshasa

Durée : Du 05 juillet au 05 décembre 2016

#### REMARQUES

1. Ces reportages doivent être réalisés dans le strict respect de la dignité humaine, des lois et règlements de la République Démocratique du Congo et selon l'esprit de la déontologie de la Presse. Ils devront se conformer aux dispositions de l'article 87 de la loi 024-2002 du 18 novembre 2002 portant Code pénal militaire sur l'outrage à l'armée entendue comme « toute expression injurieuse dirigée contre les officiers, les sous-officiers et hommes du rang des Forces armées sans indiquer les personnes visées » et s'abstenir de donner lieu à des incitations de membres des forces armées à commettre des actes contraires au devoir et à la discipline militaire ou à la fourniture de fausses informations et de démobilisation de l'armée.
2. Il est, de ce fait, strictement interdit de réaliser ces reportages dans les lieux stratégiques tels que les Camps militaires, les installations de télécommunications, les Ambassades (sauf autorisation).
3. Les producteurs s'engagent à mettre à la disposition du Ministère de la Communication et Médias, une copie du document réalisé.
4. Les autorités tant civiles que militaires sont priées d'accorder à la bénéficiaire de la présente et à ses collaborateurs Etrangers et Congolais, toutes les facilités compatibles avec les exigences de l'ordre public et de la sécurité du territoire de la République du Congo.



Fait à Kinshasa, le 06 JUL 2016

Lambert MENDE OMALANGA

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- Air Zaïre* (n/d) Dir. Tshitenge Madika, Zaire
- La Belle at the Movies* (2015) Dir. Cecilia Zoppelletto, UK - Belgium – DR Congo, 67'
- Ce Riz Que J'aime Tant* (1982), Dir. Simon Kintenda Ki Mata, Zaire, 25'
- Cité du Parti à N'Sele* (1972) Dir. Kalafulu Mulongoy, Zaire
- La Compagnie Maritime Zaïroise* (1975) Dir. Hemedi Mwanamboyo, Zaire, 31'41''
- Communauté des Pays des Grands Lacs (CPGL)* (n/d) Dir. (n/a), Zaire
- Le Damier* (1996) Dir. Balufu Bakupa-Kanyinda, Zaire, 40'
- Defrichement à Kerenge* (n/d) Dir (n/a), Zaire
- Detruire, Disent-ils...Le Plan Manhattan* (1972), Dir. Victor Matondo Kamanka, Zaire
- Election 1970* (1970), Dir. S. Tshitenge N'Sana, DR Congo, reel 1:17'03''
- L'Europe N'Existe Pas* (1972), Dir Victor Matondo Kamanka, Zaire
- Gbadolite An Example pour Toujours* (1979) Dir. Landu Lusala Khasa, Zaire, 105'
- Gecamines - La volonté de reussir* (circa 1986), Dir. Tshilonda Tsha Mulamba, Kwembe Kimpele, Zaire, 29'
- La Guerre De 80 Jours* (1977) Dir. Kabela (Emmanuel) Musoshi, Zaire, 120'
- How Yukong Moved the Mountains* (1977), Dir. Joris Ivens, Marceline Loridan Ivens, France, 736'
- Inga* (1975), Dir. Kayumba Komba, Zaire
- Invités de Mao* (1977), Dir. Francis Matton, Zaire
- L'Ivoirerie* (1972), Dir. Gerard Mulongoy Kalafufu, Zaire
- Kindiesse* (1983) Dir. Mweze Ngangura, Zaire
- La Kinoise* (1967) Dir. André Drossart, DR Congo, 13'

*Liberdade e Terra* (1972), Dir. Victor Matondo Kananka, Zaire

*La Main Au Feu* (1970), Dir. Lukunku Sampu, DR Congo

*Mokili à la Foire* (1972), Dir Bonaventura Bagalama Kayange, Zaire

*Le Mont Amba Ou Lovanium ou La Colline Inspirée* (1970), Dir Jean Baptiste Komba Kayumba, Congo, 60'

*Moseka* (1971), Dir. Mambu Zinga Kwami, Zaire

*Mushenge* (1969), Dir. S. Tshitenge N'Sana, DR Congo, 21'

*N'Gambo or Naissance Désirable* (1984) Dir. Mambu Zinga Kwami, Zaire

*Ndako Eziki (La Case Enfumée)* (1972) Dir Mulamba Mbuyi Yahamu, 18'

*La Nièce Captive* (1969) Dir. Luc Michez, DR Congo

*Orfeu Negro (Black Orpheus)* (1959), Dir. Marcel Camus, Brazil – France - Italy, 100'

*ONATRA Office National des Transports* (n/d) Dir. Tshitenge Madika, Zaire

*Pièces d'Identité* (1998) Dir. Mweze Ngangura, Belgium, 93'

*Pour L'Abondance* (1970) Dir. Tshitenge Nsana, Zaire

*La Poterie Congolaise* (n/d), Dir. (n/a)

*Retour A' La Terre* (1967), Dir. Simon Kitenda Ki Mata, Zaire

*Salongo* (1974) Dir. Mambu Zinga Kwami, Zaire, 108'08"

*Sanctuaires Naturels du Zaire* (n/d) Dir. Francis Matton, Zaire, 42'

*Les Secrets du Nyamulagira* (1968), Dir. Francis Matton, Paul Finda, Gerard Loisel, DR Congo 30'

*Un Séjour, Un Souvenir* (1972), Dir. Gerard Mulongoy Kalafufu, Zaire

*Les Tam Tam De Kinmalebo* (1977), Dir. Francis Matton, Zaire

*La Vie Est Belle (Life is Rosy)* (1987) Dir. Mweze Ngangura, Benoît Lamy, Zaire-Belgium, 87'

*La Visite de Mobutu au Japon* (n/d), Dir. (n/a)

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