Baswahili and *Bato ya Mangala:* Regionalism and Congolese diasporic identity in Cape Town, 1997-2017

A dissertation submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of the Western Cape.

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Submitted: June 2022

Plagiarism Declaration

I, Rosette Sifa Vuninga, certify that "*Baswahili* and *Bato ya Mangala*: Regionalism and Congolese diasporic identity in Cape Town, 1997-2017" is my own work. I understand what plagiarism is and I have used quotations and references to fully acknowledge the words and ideas of others.

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Abstract

My research is on regionalism among Congolese migrants of South Africa with the focus on the tensions between *Baswahili* (Kivu inhabitants) and *Bato ya mangala* (Kinshasa inhabitants) in the city of Cape Town. The two groups incarnate the geopolitical East and West of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), respectively. I locate the tensions between these two regional groups in Cape Town in the DRC's politics as well as that of the host country, South Africa. In the DRC, the tensions between *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* are rooted in the identity politics and discourse of the post-Mobutu era, mainly that which emerged from the major events that have shaped the dynamics of the DRC's crisis since the late 1990s. In South Africa, I link these tensions to Cape Town as a unique host city for Congolese, and the post-apartheid migration politics, more specifically the ones which regulate refugees and asylum seekers in general and Congolese in particular. My main argument centres on the impact of the regionalisation of the DRC crisis in how different Congolese ethno-regional groups are handled in their application for migrant status in South Africa. Such practice, which favours eastern Congolese as "real" refugees while rejecting western Congolese as "economic migrants", plays a role in regional tensions among Congolese in Cape Town. This process, I contend, divides Congolese migrants into two socioeconomic classes shaped largely by their home regional identities and has provided fertile ground for the politicisation of Congolese diaspora and a transnationalism shaped by regionalism. The research contributes to the field of migration and diasporic identity politics, by focusing on regionalism. Methodologically, this research is inspired by social historians and oral historians and their use of ethnographical tools such as interviews and participant observation.

Acknowledgments

> *"I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life"* (Abraham Lincoln).

The first for me to thank is the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, in collaboration with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa for granting me the first scholarship at the beginning of my Doctorate studies. I am also grateful to the University of the Western Cape (UWC)'s Centre for Humanities (CHR)'s Andrew W. Mellon CHR Flagship Doctoral Fellow. Finally, I thank the Social Science Research Council's APN for granting me the Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa: Doctoral Dissertation Completion Fellowship. I also thank the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation's African Fellows Programme for the 2017 Young African Scholars Fellowship award and the many workshops which contributed to my academic learning.

My gratitude goes to my thesis advisors, Prof Paolo Israel and Prof Katrien Pype. I thank you for your patience with which you handled myself and my work and appreciate the free spirit with which you raised me academically. I have always been captivated by what both of you have academically accomplished while young and collected. Prof Israel has supervised me from Honours to PhD. This relationship is not about to end! I am indebted to Prof Pype for facilitating the two months (November and December 2019) visiting fellowship at the KU Leuven's Anthropology Department. The Department provided me with space and comfort to concentrate on writing up my dissertation while also learning through the weekly academic seminars. I am also grateful to my childhood friend, Father Abraham Nyange Nshangalume and the Palotin Fathers' House of Brussels for being my host family during my two months in Belgium. I am particularly indebted to Father Théodore Bahisha, the Superior of the House, for adopting me for those two months, caring for me physically, but mostly spiritually.

I am thankful to my research participants whom, despite their multiple occupations, availed themselves to discuss my research topic, answer my research questions and, occasionally, advise on academic research. I am also grateful to the Congolese associations, churches and business owners who allowed me research visits and observation. I am particularly indebted to the Amis BK Cape Town association and its leading committee for encouraging their members to participate in my research through interviews and attending my focus group discussions, and for facilitating my meetings with leading members of ethnic associations of people from the Kivu region. Special thanks to Amani Namufakage, President of Amis BK Cape Town, for his unconditional availability to answer my research questions at any time.

I am indebted to the Congolese pastors of Cape Town who participated in this research. In particular, I thank Pasteur Joel Misigaro of Pentecostal Repentance Church, Pastor John Mulungu of Revival Pentecostal Church and Pastor Olivier Tshalo of Gospel Ramah Church. I am also thankful to the Word of Life Church, in particular its leading Pastor, papa Bernard Nsumbu. I first visited the Church as part of identifying my research fieldwork in 2015. However, I must confess that in Word of Life Church, I did not find what I came to look for: ethno-regional divides in Congolese churches of Cape Town. I ended up making it my spiritual home and it has indeed kept me spiritually and psychologically sane throughout this PhD journey, especially from late 2018 to 2020 when I needed it the most. I thank my good friend Jose Kongolo for introducing me to the Church in 2015. To Bony Beya, Tresor Kikalulu, Boluka "Bolls" Bokabela, Heri, Isambecho, Jean Berchmans Musole and Mark "Malako" Kalulu: I particularly learned a lot from your participation in this research!

I am indebted to all the UWC's History Department staff. I am first and foremost grateful to my history lecturers since my first year of undergraduate at UWC: Prof Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, Prof Andrew Bank, Prof Leslie Witz, Prof Ciraj Rassol, Prof Patricia Hayes, Dr David Scher, Prof Susan Newton-King, Dr Nicky Rousseau, Prof Premesh Lalu, as well as my supervisor (from Honours to PhD) Prof Paolo Israel. Others who never taught me, but inspire me academically, include Dr Koni Benson, Dr Bianca Van Laun and Dr Riedwaan Moosage. One woman in particular inspired me to be a great human being, woman, and academic: Prof Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie. Thank you for believing in me and availing yourself whenever I needed you. As a mother figure and the one person I could not afford to disappoint with poor academic performance, you kept me going. From 2010 when I first met Prof Uma (as we simply call her) in History 332 class, I knew she was the one I wanted to be like when I grow up. Prof Andrew Bank has also patiently and with passion taught me how to understand History and succeed as a student. He was the first to believe I could do it when I enrolled in first year at UWC in 2008. And to the History Department's administration staff, Miss Jane Smidt and Miss Janine Brandt: you have been so kind to me and I thank you for all you do for us! I am particularly grateful to Janine Brandt, my good friend and advisor on all matters of life, for her psychological and spiritual support throughout my studies, especially during this PhD programme.

I also thank the staff of the UWC's Centre for Humanities Research, in particular Prof Suren Pillay, Dr Aidan Erasmus, Prof Heidi Grunebaum, Dr Maurits Van Bever Donker and Mrs Lameez Lalkhen, and Miceala Felix, for educating us through those seminars, workshops reading groups, and winter schools.

I am also grateful to the academics who are both mentors and role models: Prof Susan Thomson, Rev. Dr. Seyram Amenyedzi (my mother's honorary daughter), Dr Joel Wallman, Dr Joel Tembe, Dr Geraldine Frislaar, Dr Aubrey Graham, Prof Pamela Scully, Dr James William, Dr Lynn Osome, Dr Justin Mabiala, Dr Godfrey Maringira, Prof Justin Munyakazi, Prof Diana Gibson, Dr Valentine Sanou, Dr Wilfrid Ndebeka, Ceryl Obi, Dr James Welsh, Dr Jacob Cloete, Dr Blanche Assam, Dr Lovisa Nampala and Dr Tchilabalo Kpanzou, to name but a few. I am particularly indebted to Prof Jacques Depelchin and Prof Colin Darch for giving me preliminary thoughts on how to approach my research topic and for providing me with core readings for proposal writing. I am very grateful to Dr Aubrey Graham for it took her to know Prof Susan Thomson whose academic mentorship and training through working together with her Colgate University's students and providing constructive comments on my work, and now research partnership – have made me grow academically and professionally. I have no words to thank Prof Thomson!

To my South African *maman* Willene Van der Merwe: "mothers know best" and that is how you knew I could, since 2006 when we first met at the Hoffman's house where I worked for two years before registering as an undergraduate student at UWC. Thank you for standing by me until now! To Linda Hoffman and Johan Hoffman: I say thank you again!

I am thankful to my friends, women and men who have positively impacted on my life so far, who believe in me and who never stopped encouraging me for all I do. They include those who have done it, those who are doing it, and those who are yet to do it. I am grateful for the laughter they bring to my life, especially the after mid-night whatsapp chats to keep me awake to study. In particular I thank Marie Furaha Muzerwa, Naomie Burhama, Tammy Wilks, Leslé Arendse, Mary Mbewe, Christine Mulungu, Dr Yannick Ilunga (MD), Anthony Ambe, Douglas Luhasa, Eerlin Botha, Anu Joseph, Pascal Cuma Katange, Douglas Luhasa, Joella Kokele, Jespere, Ange Ndebeka, Mariam Ntumba Ntite, Arden Bissila, "*mon étudiant*"

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Axel Rigobert, Tristan Reece Du Plessis, LeFranc Busane, Jespere Ondze, Deborah Baguma and mama Agnes Darch. And to my “other blood”, Gense and Bora: Thank you for the love!

To my God-given family in Cape Town: I could never do it without you. Firstly I thank my big sister Adeline Ntagerwa, her husband “mon beau” Prof Justin Munyakazi and their children, my nieces, Julia Munyakazi, Joelle Munyakazi, Jemima Munyakazi and nephew Jadon Munyakazi: you were there from the start and I am grateful you are still here with me. I will never stop appreciating you! Secondly, I am thankful to the other half of the family in Cape Town: the Lubamba. To my baby brother and best friend Claude Kakoko Lubamba, his wife Mariette, daughter Claurietta “poppie” and baby boy Marclau “pappy”: You changed my perceptions about love and loyalty and taught me the best and indeed unforgettable lessons of my life for which I can never thank you enough. To my sweet baby niece Claurietta “poppie” Lubamba: you brought so much joy to my life through your smile and all the cute things I watch you learn and do since June 2020 when you were born. Our bond and Fridays’ dates were very therapeutic in the last stage of this PhD. You will be a great woman! To my baby sister Shekinah “da mdogo” Lubamba, Thank you! And to Judith “da Judy” Lubamba: your strength and happiness have always inspired me. Thank you for your positive energy! To my mother’s honorary son engineer Chadrack “chad” Lubamba: thanks for imposing the drives, the coffees, the jokes and all the laughter, all in the name of relaxing me so I could study. It worked.

My greatest gratitude goes to my family. First and foremost, to my parents Eugenie Masawa Civava and Césaire Ntambaka Vuninga: this is when I admit that you are the best parents in history! To my *maman*: you said so many things to me since I can remember. The tone was not always gentle, but the words were always profound and powerful. More than once you said to me “tu seras tout ce que je devrais être”. Those words have kept me going and will continue doing so for what follows. I know I might never be half the woman you are in your intellect, wisdom and strength. But being your child, I know it is in my blood. To my *papa* Césaire Ntambaka Vuninga: where will I be without you? Thank you for your unconventional and indeed exceptional ways of inspiring me and educating me to greatness and hard work. And to my seven young brothers and sisters, the Vuningas, who proudly call me their “first”: Eloge Mubalama Vuninga, Liliane Nanjuci Vuninga, Etienne Batumike Vuninga, Victor Mushagalusa Vuninga, Ignace Bahati Vuninga, Therese Maombi Vuninga and Joseph Nzihirwa Vuninga: I am nothing without you! Thanks for your love, support, patience, prayers and everyday positive thoughts, despite the distance between Bukavu and Cape

Town. And to my parents' first grandchild Joseph-Benoit Vuninga born 2nd of May 2022 to Etienne Batumike Vuninga and wife Winny Ngandu. You have made me aunt and indeed a happy one! To my Cape Townian household: Ignace, Therese and Joseph: you made sure I had all the comfort I needed to study and work. Thank you for the clean house, quietness and hot beverages, and healthy cooked meals. Ignace, you have been that "guardian angel" and an amazing baby brother. Yes, I am grateful for your patience especially every time I asked you more than four times in ten minutes, to warm my cup of coffee up while studying. I love you! And Therese, for arriving at the right moment –when completing my last chapter's draft. Your presence brought an extra joy to my life! To Joseph "Jos": for the hot porridge, good music, and for being my late nights/ early mornings studying "buddy" since 2021!

Last (but not least?), to the "non-stranger" I first laid my eyes on on Friday the 27th of December 2019: I thank you because you are and always will be that "no one" who makes my history and my being unusually and interestingly complex. I waited my entire existence just to look you in the eyes. Thank God I got no closure from our first and only meeting which means we must meet again. And we will because you turned the 15 minutes maximum audience you insisted you would give me into a five-hours meeting. We went from just sharing a cup of tea in a tiny coffeeshop to more drinks, and a three-course meal in one of the most prestigious restaurants in Louvain-la-Neuve. It might be too late to be what we could have been, but it is never too late to be whatever else we can be. We have a lot, though perhaps of not much or even of nothing, yet to do together and in this new chapter of my life, I look forward to all of it too.

To Hennes Louw

> You gave me a kickstart for this journey and you remained throughout it all. You have stood next to me in more than one way as my South African father particularly during my graduations, from my BA to BA Honours and MA. This will be my first graduation you will miss because you just moved to heaven this May 2022. I know wherever you are, you are proud of me. Rest in eternal peace!

Psalm 55:22; Psalm 23.

To my future children

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Introduction

It was in 2005 that I first noticed the tensions between Congolese Lingala and Kiswahili speakers in Cape Town. I took a train to Muizenberg, a beach-side neighbourhood in Cape Town. I could not help but overhear conversations in Kiswahili and Lingala from all directions in the wagon. As the train stopped at every station and people got in and out, the voices in Lingala were the loudest. When the train reached the Wynberg stop, one man sitting next to me engaged in a conversation with another Congolese. He asked softly in Lingala: “Oyo train ya Muizenberg?” (Is this the train to Muizenberg?). The other responded in French: “Oui, ça va passer par Muizenberg” (Yes, it will pass through Muizenberg). The man who asked his question in Lingala seemed to be interested as to why the man replied in French. He continued in Lingala: “Oza Congolais?” (Are you a Congolese?) Again, the other replied in French: “Oui mais je ne suis pas *Kinois*” (Yes, but I am not a *Kinois* [meaning someone from Kinshasa]). I thought that the one speaking Lingala would leave it at that or at least switch to French. But he carried on in Lingala: “Oza Lushois to moto ya Est?” (Are you a *Lushois* [meaning from Lubumbashi town] or someone from the East[1]?) Showing some irritation, the other once more answered in French: “Je suis *Katangais*” (I am *Katangais* [meaning from Katanga]). The Lingala speaker got out at Retreat station. My mobile phone rang, I picked up and spoke to a man from Bukavu in South Kivu, whom I was visiting in Muizenberg. As I spoke in Kiswahili, I noticed that my *Katangais* neighbour looked at me with surprise. After the call, he spoke to me in Kiswahili, sharing his surprise that I spoke Kiswahili given that I did not look Congolese to him. He complimented me for my “Swahili bora”[2] and immediately asked where I planned to alight. When he learned my plan to stop at Muizenberg, he warned me: “The place is full of *Kinois* and they call us [people who speak Kiswahili] ‘*Ba Allemands*’ [the Germans].”

The origin of the name *Baallemands* lies in the ethno-regional violence that arose in Katanga between 1992 and 1994 during which *Katangais* persecuted and literally “deported” people from the Kasai region accusing them of invading their home region.[3] What happened to *Kasaiens* in Katanga is an extreme example of the ethno-regional tensions that occurred during the Mobutu era in what was then called Zaire. After the downfall of Mobutu, it is rather regionalism and especially the east-west divide that has been most influential in shaping identity discourse and politics in the Congo.

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[1] “East” is usually used by people in Kinshasa and other provinces of the western parts of the DRC to mean the eastern part of Congo. It is used most often to refer to the Kivu region which includes the province of North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema.

[2] People from Katanga usually think that the Kiswahili spoken in Kivu is better than theirs. Hence, “*Swahili bora*” to mean a good Kiswahili, one that is close to the Kiswahili par excellence spoken in Tanzania.

This research focuses on the frictions between *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* (Eastern and Western Congolese respectively) in South Africa, more particularly in Cape Town. It looks at how these two Congolese regional groups negotiate their migrant identity in South Africa through and in their diasporic network's formation. Focusing on the period after Mobutu, the core question that this research endeavours to answer is the following: How do the homeland politics and that of the host country shape regional identity among Congolese migrants of Cape Town?

Two major factors stand as the rationale to this research. The first is the fact that the rift between the east and west of DRC was exacerbated with the conflict that emerged after Mobutu's downfall.[4] However, little or no research exists regarding how that rift was reproduced transnationally among Congolese diasporic communities. The second is that research on immigrants in post-apartheid South Africa has paid close attention to the shortcomings of the post-apartheid South Africa's migration policies, especially those concerned with refugees and asylum seekers – the migrant categories my research is mostly focused on – establishing that South Africa's "migration policies and responses – or rather lack thereof – produce a stigma and encourage xenophobia".[5] However, there has not been significant research about how these policies shape intra-immigrant conflicts. Congolese refugee status applicants in South Africa often undergo differentiations between those who qualify and those who do not qualify on the basis of where they come from in the DRC and how directly the Congo conflict has affected them. In other words, since the Congo wars of the late 1990s, a Congolese refugee applicant's ethno-regional identity plays a crucial role in the outcome of their refugee status application. Such importance given to Congolese home identities in their migrant status determination has contributed to the production and

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[3] *Katangais* were nicknamed *baallemands* (the Germans) for persecuting *Kasaiens* (the Jews) in comparison to what the Nazi Germans did to the Jews in the Second World War. See Roland Pourtier, "Les refoulés du Zaire: identité, autochtonie et enjeux politiques", *Autrepart-Bondy Paris* (1998), 137-154.
[4] See for example Filip Reyntjens, "Briefing: the second Congo War: more than a remake", *African Affairs* 98, no. 391 (1999), 242-248.
[5] Christy McConnell, "Migration and xenophobia in South Africa", *Conflict Trends* 2009, no. 1 (2009), 35.

reproduction of home country political identity discourses and conflicts around exclusion and inclusion to Congolese refugee identity; in other words, to a form of diasporic projection of identity and citizenship discourse which emerged with the Congo Wars since the late 1990s.[6] The research contributes to the scholarship on diaspora, identity, gender and homeland conflicts among migrants.[7] While focusing on the home region as a basis of diasporic identity formation among immigrants, the research aligns with scholars who found that identity conflicts among diasporas and immigrants in general result from "interaction between the attitudes and characteristics of immigrants and the responses of the receiving society".[8]

Ethnicity and regionalism in Africa

Diaz-Andreu et al. simply define ethnicity as "feelings of social belonging based on culturally constructed notions of shared origins".[9] Shared land of origin, language, religion, food and fashion are among factors used to distinguish one ethnic group to another. Scholars, however, warn against such simplistic notions of ethnicity which are generally based on how ethnicity is constructed in our time. [10] Scholars now largely reject the primordialist arguments according to which ethnicity "is passed from generation to generation"; rather, they consider it as "an aspect of social relationships".[11] Ethnicity is therefore fluid and constantly redefined, often as a result of sociopolitical changes.

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[6] Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: a people's history* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2002), 229; Richard Banégas and Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Vivre dans la guerre," *Politique africaine* 4 (2001), 5-15; Alphonse Maindo Monga Ngonga, "Survivre à la guerre des autres," *Politique africaine* 4 (2001), 33-58; Stephen Jackson, "Sons of which soil? The language and politics of autochthony in Eastern DR Congo," *African studies review* 49, no. 2 (2006), 95-123.

[7] Bahar Baser, *Diasporas and homeland conflicts: A comparative perspective* (London: Routledge, 2016); Fiona Adamson, "Constructing the diaspora: Diaspora identity politics and transnational social movements," *Politics from afar: Transnational diasporas and networks* (2012), 25-42; Laurent Gayer, "The volatility of the 'other': Identity formation and social interaction in diasporic environments," *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 1 (2007). Retrieved from: http://samaj.revues.org/36
by. Retrieved from http://samaj.revues.org/document36.html; Feargal Cochrane, *Migration and security in the global age: Diaspora communities and conflict* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[8] Jean Phinney, Gabriel Horenczyk, Karmela Liebkind, and Paul H. Vedder, "Ethnic identity, immigration, and well-being: An interactional perspective," *Journal of social issues* 57, no. 3 (2001), 493-510; Didier Fassin, "Policing borders, producing boundaries. The governmentality of immigration in dark times," *Annual Review of anthropology* 40 (2011), 213-226; Didier Fassin, "Compassion and repression: The moral economy of immigration policies in France," *Cultural anthropology* 20, no. 3 (2005), 362-387.

[9] Margarita Díaz-Andreu García, Sam Lucy, Staša Babić, and David N. Edwards, *The archaeology of identity: approaches to gender, age, status, ethnicity and religion* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 101.

[10] Díaz-Andreu García, Staša Babić, and Edwards, *The archaeology of identity*, 109-110.

[11] Díaz-Andreu García, Staša Babić, and Edwards, *The archaeology of identity*, 110; Michael M. J. Fischer, "Ethnicity and the post-modern arts of memory," in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. *Writing culture:*

Africa has been widely researched with a focus on its precolonial history, its colonial invention and its post-colonial meanings and and (re)appropriation. For scholars such as Mamdani, colonial ethnisation and “tribalisation” in Africa were achieved through “three modern techniques”: “gathering census data (census), writing history (the past) and making laws (the future)”. Through these processes, settlers and natives were identified and separated through their history. Both their identity and history were fixed through written records (census). Mamdani also explains that through these processes, colonisers reshaped the self-consciousness of their subjects by imposing a particular way of thinking about themselves and their self-identifications.[12] For instance, the final British mapping of Sudan's population in the late 1950s led to the identification of 570 “tribes” being classified into 57 “groups of tribes” and further racial classification was within them. Therefore, the census in Sudan consisted in organising people into “races” and “group of tribes” for political and cultural purposes.[13]

Identities production in Africa is, however, more complex than that. Some scholars, without rejecting altogether the agency of colonialism in shaping ethnic politics and conflicts in Africa, argue for the pre-colonial roots of ethnicity and the role of Africans themselves in its invention.[14] According to this interpretation, ethnic identities were not merely imposed by colonisers but rather emerged from older cultures and practices of self-identification and identification by others. For example, warlords who created territories through conquests invented a certain name to identify that territory and themselves before convincing or forcing ordinary people to join them on it. Examples include the Ndau people of the borderland between Mozambique and Zimbabwe whose identity formation dates from the second half of the 19th century and which is linked to the pre-colonial military conquest of the Nguni people from south of the Southern African region. Ndau was the name the Nguni warlords gave to people from different chiefdoms who broke from various pre-colonial states including the Monomotapa Empire and Mbire Kingdom.[15]

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the poetics and politics of ethnography: a School of American Research advanced seminar (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 195.

[12] Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and survivors: Darfur, politics, and the war on terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009), 175.

[13] Mamdani, *Saviors and survivors*, 175-176.

[14] See for example, Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent eds., *Ethnicity in Ghana: The limits of invention* (New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 2000).

[15] Elizabeth MacGonagle, “A mixed pot: History and identity in the Ndau region of Mozambique and Zimbabwe, 1500–1900,” PhD dissertation, Michigan State University, 78-74.

The post-colonial conflicts and wars in Africa led scholars to pay close attention to ethnicity. As Ake argues, ethnicity in Africa interferes with economic development, causes political instability and weakens national identity.[16] Ake sees these problems as caused by the fact that in Africa, colonisers tampered with identity and space order by “dissociat[ing] ethnicity from autonomous polity and territoriality”.[17] This identity and territorial dissociation happened through the balkanisation of the African continent by European colonial powers in the late 19th century, which led to the creation of nation-states. However, as Nagel argues, in modern societies ethnicity, like other identities, are always changing, given new meanings, always being created and recreated.[18]

Ethnic formation and transformation in modern societies are needed for “the creation of collective meaning, the construction of community through mythology and history, and the creation of symbolic bases for ethnic mobilisation”.[19] It is through the three factors that people can achieve a collective ethnic belonging or an ethnic community. However, ethnic identities as observed since the colonial times are as fluid and circumstantial as other forms of identity (such as those constructed around race, class, gender, and home region) because they are shaped by social interactions in and outside ethnic boundaries. It is mostly the interaction with other people or communities that shape “ethnic identification, organisation, and action”.[20] Especially in contemporary societies, ethnicity is usually political. In Africa, it is through ethnic groups that people mobilise their access to political rights in a defined territory, as observed from the struggle for the independence to the violent conflicts and political crises most African countries experienced immediately after their independence.[21]

The “enduring significance of ethnicity” as proven throughout history has negatively affected the post-colonial state aspirations to nation building and national unity.[22] In some newly independent African countries such as South Africa, ethnicity presented a threat to democracy during the transitional government of 1990-1994. This was because the apartheid designated "homelands" were conceived as ethnic territories since 1945 and were therefore niches of ethnic mobilisation.[23] The solutions the government and other parties involved came up with to prevent ethnic conflicts in South Africa was to give more importance to regionalism.[24] A regional awareness was sought to be a positive step away from ethnicity and closer to national identity formation.

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[16] Claude Ake, “What is the Problem of Ethnicity in Africa?,” *Transformation* 22 (1993), 1.
[17] Ake, “What is the problem with ethnicity in Africa?,”1.
[18] Joane Nagel, “Constructing ethnicity: Creating and recreating ethnic identity and culture,” *Social problems* 41, no. 1 (1994), 152.
[19] Nagel, “Constructing ethnicity,” 152.
[20] Nagel, “Constructing ethnicity,” 152.
[21] See for example Nsemba Edward and Johnson Abel, “Ethnicity and Citizenship Crisis in Nigeria: Interrogating Inter Ethnic Relations in Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State,” *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 6, no. 3 (2012), 48-61; Catharine Newbury, “Ethnicity and the Politics of History in Rwanda,” *Africa Today* 45, no. 1 (1998), 7-24; Donald L. Horowitz, “The challenge of ethnic conflict: democracy in divided societies,” *Journal of democracy* 4, no. 4 (1993), 18-38.
[22] Alexander J. Christopher, “Regionalisation and ethnicity in South Africa 1990-1994,” *Area* (1995), 3.

Regionalism as economic and sociopolitical territorialisation emerged on the African continent in the post-colonial era.[25] However, according to some scholars, its origin is in the European nation-state formations and imperialism of the 19th century.[26] Regionalism was also part of post-Cold War global economic development.[27] As noted by Fawcett, however, a "degree of flexibility" is needed in explaining what regionalism means because of the many meanings associated with defined geographical spaces.[28] A simple definition provided by Knight is that regionalism is "the awareness of togetherness among people of a relatively large area".[29] However, a region is not just a larger territory but it is also home to various communities defined not so much on common identities but also by shared social, economic and political interests often beyond national boundaries.[30] This is why scholars use concepts such as "macro-regionalism" and "micro-regionalism" to distinguish regional territories in terms of their size, social, economic and political purposes.[31]

Macro-regionalism is employed in the context of a larger territorial unit or "sub-systems between the 'national 'and the 'global'".[32] Macro-regionalism is appropriate, for example, when engaging trans-border defined territories such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Great Lakes Region. "Micro-regionalism" on the other hand is understood as a space “between the ‘national’ and the ‘local’”, “contained within the boundaries of a particular nation-state”. It is also the most common form of regionalism in Africa.[33] It can be a territory defined by national geographic conventions, such as provinces (for example the Western Cape region in South Africa or South Kivu region in the DRC). Sometimes ethnicity can be used to determine a region (example the Massai region in Kenya) or language (Bakongo region in the DRC, Bangala region, etc.) or religion (Maniema in eastern Congo is also referred to as the Muslim region of the DRC), etc.

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[23] Christopher, "Regionalisation and ethnicity in South Africa 1990-1994," 3.

[24] Christopher, "Regionalisation and ethnicity in South Africa 1990-1994," 3.

[25] Doreen Massey, "Regionalism: some current issues," *Capital & Class* 2, no. 3 (1978), 106-125.

[26] Mark Beeson, "Rethinking regionalism: Europe and East Asia in comparative historical perspective," *Journal of European Public Policy* 12, no. 6 (2005), 969-985; Julie Gilson, *Asia meets Europe: inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (Cheltenham and Camberley: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2002).

[27] Mark Beeson, "Rethinking regionalism: Europe and East Asia in comparative historical perspective," *Journal of European Public Policy* 12, no. 6 (2005), 969-985; Julie Gilson, *Asia meets Europe: inter-regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2002).

[28] Louise Fawcett, "Exploring regional domains: a comparative history of regionalism," *International Affairs* 80, no. 3 (2004), 431.

[29] David B. Knight, "Identity and territory: geographical perspectives on nationalism and regionalism," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 72, no. 4 (1982), 518.

[30] Louise Fawcett, "Exploring regional domains: a comparative history of regionalism," *International Affairs* 80, no. 3 (2004), 431.

[31] See for example Frederick Söderbaum and Ian Taylor, "Introduction" in Frederick Söderbaum and Ian Taylor eds. *Afro-regions: The dynamics of cross-border micro-regionalism in Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2008).

[32] Söderbaum and Taylor, "Introduction," 13.

It can be challenging to draw a line between a micro-region and macro-region because they can interfere with each other and even merge in some circumstances. As Söderbaum and Taylor observed in their study on regionalism in Africa, micro-regions are not “necessarily focused on local” because they have potential to influence and dominate macro-regional projects. Examples they give in this regard include micro-regionalism’s potential to interfere with pan-Africanist visions.[34] What this example also reveals is that macro- and micro-regions are but relative concepts. In other words, in some given circumstances, what is accepted as a macro-region can elsewhere be perceived as micro-region. An example includes the Great Lakes Region when compared to the Organisation of the African Union (OAU) region before it became the African Union (AU) in 2001 by including northern African countries.[35] Yet, a small region such as the Great Lakes Region can hegemonically influence the AU at economic and political levels just as one country or ethnic group can be the most influential in the Great Lakes Region.[36]

From the above also streams the main critique of regional politics especially in Africa. Lee points to two main reasons for the development of regionalism in post-independence Africa which also point to its major critiques. The first is independent African countries leaders’ efforts to promote political unity and pan-Africanism. The second objective is more economic, mostly driven by African leaders’ agendas “to foster growth and development” in and outside their national borders.[37] These two objectives were well thought through because

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[33] Söderbaum, and Taylor, *Afro-regions*, 13.

[34] Frederick Söderbaum and Ian Taylor, “Considering Micro-regionalism in Africa in the Twenty-first Century,” in Frederik Söderbaum and Ian Taylor eds., *Afro-regions: The dynamics of cross-border micro-regionalism in Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2008), 29-30.

[35] Babatunde Fagbayibo, “‘I am an African’: A critical examination of the politics of transnational identity within the context of African integration,” *Africa Development* 41, no. 2 (2016), 190.

[36] See for example Morten Boas and Kathleen M. Jennings, “War in the Great Lakes Region and Ugandan Conflict Zones: Micro-regionalisms and Meta-narratives,” in Frederik Söderbaum and Ian Taylor eds., *Afro-regions: The dynamics of cross-border micro-regionalism in Africa* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2008), 153-170.

[37] Lee, “Regionalism in Africa: A part of problem or a part of solution,” 9-14.

in addition to contributing to transnational unity among African states through economic development, they could – and to some extent, they have succeeded – strengthen Africa to protect itself against "external threats". Unfortunately, regionalism largely contributed to the failure of democracy in Africa as greedy politicians used it as a means to suppress internal competition or opposition through recruiting regional allies.[38] Moreover, regionalism has not resolved issues of ethnicism. It rather exacerbated tensions and sometimes, conflicts between minority and majority ethnic groups within a region. A region is often home to a certain ethnic group that tends to dominate or exclude others in terms of political and land rights, and in everyday discourse of identity and belonging.[39]

Regionalism in the Congo context

The idea of regionalism in the Congo was highlighted in the prime of Mobutu's rule, during which he frequently warned Zairians against both "tribalism" and regionalism as threats to nation building. Mobutu took power by a coup in the middle of the post-independence Congo crisis of the early 1960s. This period, among other things, was marked by secession wars in two economically important regions of the Congo, namely Katanga (in the south-east) and Kasai (in central Congo). There was also the Simba Rebellion led by followers and sympathisers of the Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba after his assassination in 1961. This rebellion threatened to overthrow the political power in Kinshasa as part of the struggle for the total independence of the Congo.[40] Even though most of these crises emerged in the context of the Cold War, Mobutu defended that ethnic and regional divisions were great threats to Congo at political and security levels. Thus, in Mobutu's heyday – the 1970s and 1980s – his political rhetoric focussed mostly on promoting a united Zaire free of discriminations, exclusions and other forms of hatred based on one's regional or ethnic

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[38] Söderbaum and Taylor, "Considering Micro-regionalism in Africa in the Twenty-first Century," 30-31.

[39] As noted in research on conflicts and identity in Africa. See for example Kevin C. Dunn, "'Sons of the Soil' and Contemporary State Making: autochthony, uncertainty and political violence in Africa," *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2009), 113-127; Stephen Jackson, "Sons of which soil? The language and politics of autochthony in Eastern DR Congo," *African studies review* (2006), 95-123.

[40] Thomas Turner, *The Congo wars: conflict, myth and reality* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007); Filip Reyntjens, *The great African war: Congo and regional geopolitics, 1996-2006* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

identity. In other words, Mobutu's political rhetoric wanted a Zairian to "feel at home" wherever they found themselves on the Zairian national territory.[41]

The above context refers to micro-regions, defined sociolinguistic geographic territories within the national boundaries of Zaire. In the Congo, geographic space, sociocultural and political factors are used to define a region. It is based on these factors that the regions defined by the four Congolese national languages, namely Lingala, Kiswahili, Kikongo and Tshiluba were determined since the Belgian colonial period. Regions are also sometimes understood as synonymous of provinces. Thus Katanga, Kivu, Bandundu, Kasai, etc. are either called regions or provinces. A region can be geopolitical in the context of a political power struggle among people originating from different geographical territories, for example, the eastern and western regions of the DRC, as it is the case with the regionalism this research focuses on. Regionalism, like ethnicity in contemporary Congo, however, has strong roots in the Belgian colonialism, mainly the native administration.

According to Fabian, "order, hierarchy, and evolution distance" needed for the "civilising missions" were to be achieved through proactive language policies in the Congo.[42] With over 500 languages spoken in the Congo (including Kisongye, Kitelela, Tshiluba, Kinande, Kibembe, Kifuliru, Mimongo, Kirega, etc.), the Belgians faced a great challenge in maintaining order in their colony. Fabian argues that "multiculturalism" as a "threat to order" was among the first problems to be dealt with by Belgian colonialists to ensure the maintenance of their authority in the Congo.[43] He explains that not all Congolese "native" languages were classified, because at the time many of them were considered linguistically inferior based on "laws of linguistic evolution". In this process, the Belgians belittled hundreds of Congo languages referring to them as "idioms", "dialects" or "primitive speeches" unable to convey higher notions especially in education.[44] After the native languages to be used for "civilising mission" were selected and ascribed fixed geographical territories. These four languages selected by Belgians became vehicular means of communication between locals of various ethnic groups and the Europeans within their respective colonial defined regions.[45]At the end of this process, the Belgians had grouped hundreds of ethnic identities on the Congo territory into four linguistically and regionally defined groups namely, the Bangala, Bakasai, Bakongo and Baswahili.[46] As per the revised 2006 Congolese Constitution, the languages spoken by these groups, namely Lingala, Tshiluba (sometimes called Kikasai), Kikongo and Kiswahili remain the national languages of the Congo, in addition to French.[47]

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[41] However, as I discuss in detail in the first chapter, Mobutu manipulated Zairian ethno-regional identities to serve his dictatorial agenda. See for example Christine Deslaurier and Jean-Pierre Chrétien, *Afrique, terre d'histoire. Au coeur de la recherche avec Jean-Pierre Chrétien* (Paris: KARTHALA Editions, 2007), 467.

[42] Johannes Fabian, *Language and colonial power: The appropriation of Swahili in the former Belgian Congo 1880-1938* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1991), 49; Eyamba G. Bokamba, "A Polylectal Grammar of Lingála and Its Theoretical Implications," In *Selected Proceedings of the 42nd Annual Conference on African Linguistics* (2012): 292.

[43] Martin K. Pongo, *Etre Luba au XXe siecle: Identite Chretienne et ethnicite au Congo-Kinshasa* (Paris: KARTHALA, 1998), 205-208; Fabian, *Language and colonial power*, 49.

[44] Fabian, *Language and colonial power*, 49.

The scholarly arguments about the "colonial invention"[48] of identities in Africa alone are not sufficient in foregrounding the dynamics and indeed "ambiguity" of identities in the post-colonial Congo, particularly in the period focused on in this research.[49] As Richard and MacDonald suggest, we need to add the "realities of the past" to the "contemporary sociopolitical context" for a better understanding of how identities evolved from the colonial to the post-colonial time.[50] By arguing so, these scholars foreground the fluidity of these identities while also providing new understanding of their "changing traditions".[51]

Regional identity and politics in the Congo

In analysing the crisis in the Kivu, Mamdani argues that during the colonial time, civic power was racialised while native authority was ethnicised. With independence, he explains that civic power finally became deracialised but native power (which roughly controls 60% of the Congolese population) became even more ethnicised.[52] Mamdani contends that the state plays a crucial role in promoting ethnicised identities in the Congo, especially through the narrative produced about the citizenship crisis of the Rwandan speaking people of eastern DRC.[53] Within the same frame, Vlassenroot, when trying to understand the role played by

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[45] Fabian, *Language and colonial power*, 49.

[46] Pongo, *Etre Luba au XXe siècle*, 205-208.

[47] E. G. Bokamba, "A Polylectal Grammar of Lingála and Its Theoretical Implications," In *Selected Proceedings of the 42nd Annual Conference on African Linguistics* (2012): 292.

[48] Mahmood Mamdani, "Beyond settler and native as political identities: overcoming the political legacy of colonialism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 4 (2001), 651-664; Jean-Loup Amselle and Elikia M'Bokolo, eds. *Au cœur de l'ethnie: ethnies, tribalisme et État en Afrique* (Paris: La découverte, 2017).

[49] François G. Richard, and Kevin MacDonald, "From invention to ambiguity: the persistence of ethnicity in Africa," *Ethnic Ambiguity and the African Past: Materiality, history, and the shaping of cultural identities* (2015).

[50] Richard, and MacDonald, "From invention to ambiguity: the persistence of ethnicity in Africa," 18.

[51] Richard and MacDonald, "From invention to ambiguity: the persistence of ethnicity in Africa," 18.

[52] Mahmood Mamdani, *Understanding the Crisis in Kivu: Report of the CODESRIA Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo, September, 1999* (2001).

[53] Mamdani, *Understanding the Crisis.*

ethnicity in the post-Mobutu conflicts in the east of DRC, argues that “through the manipulation of ethnicity, political actors tried to cover their real political and economic agendas”.[54] From the independence movement in the Congo, the politics of identity, which to a large extent continues to shape Congo, was evident.

In the 1950s a number of political parties were founded including ABAKO (*Alliance de Bakongo*) led by Joseph Kasavubu, CONAKAT (*Confederation des Associations Tribales de Katanga*) of Moise Tshombe, and Lumumba's MNC (*Mouvement National Congolais*). Ideological disagreements among members including some of them “accusing Lumumba of communistic and dictatorial tendencies” led to the MNC splitting between the MNC-L led by Lumumba and the MNC-K led by Kalonji.[55] However, more than ideological difference, ethnicism shaped political awakening, especially the struggle for independence in the Congo. As Nzongola-Ntalaja contends, during the struggle for the independence of the Congo, most of the party leaders' aim was first and foremost to promote their own ethnic groups. For example, *Alliance de Bakongo* (ABAKO) was originally understood as a “cultural association for the promotion of Kikongo”. And if it was not for its “solid political base among the Kongo masses in Kinshasa and the Lower Congo”, ABAKO could never have become the “head of the Congolese independence movement”.[56] There were many other political parties which were formed around that time and all were ethnically or regionally based, except Patrice Lumumba's *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC/L).

After independence the situation did not change substantially. Mobutu became the President of Congo in 1965 and put his own regional group first, the Bangala of Equateur province. He also promoted Lingala as the first national language, making it even more powerful by imposing it as the army's language throughout the entire Zaire in addition to it being the language of the western Congo region and the capital Kinshasa in particular.[57] The most trusted members of Mobutu's security forces and heads of the army were not just of his Bangala regional group but chosen from his Ngbandi “clan”. They were all directly or indirectly related to him.[58] This was despite the fact that Mobutu strongly condemned ethnicism and regionalism as threats to nation building. Mobutu's solution to unite the country and rid it of regional (and ethnic) divides became but another instrument of his dictatorship. In his logic, democracy that promoted multiple political parties could plunge the county back into the kinds of political crises it experienced immediately after its independence in the early 1960s. Mobutu therefore imposed the single party ideology as a way of uniting the country under one leader, ending "divisions, tribalism and regionalism" and generating "national consciousness" in Zaire. This solidified Mobutu's *Movement Populaire de la Revolution* (MPR) and made him one of the 20th century's infamous dictators for three decades until his ousting by Laurent Kabila and his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) in 1996.

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[54] Koen Vlassenroot, “Citizenship, Identity Formation & Conflict in South Kivu: The Case of Banyamulenge,” *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 29, No 93/94 (2002), 501.
[55] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 83.
[56] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 82-85.
[57] Jean-Jacques Wondo Omanyundu, *Les Forces armées de la RD Congo: Une armée irréformable?* (Omanyundu, 2015). Jacques Ebenga, and Thierry N'Landu, “The Congolese National Army: in search of an identity,” *Evolutions & Revolutions: A Contemporary History of Militaries in Southern Africa, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies*, (2005), 63-83.

With Laurent Kabila's arrival to power in 1997, regionalism intensified in the sociocultural and political spheres of the Congo, especially in relation to the eastern and western Congolese identity. L. Kabila's rule was acclaimed by the eastern Congolese as finally ending the political hegemony the western region had enjoyed since independence.[59] L. Kabila replaced Lingala with Kiswahili as the new language of the army, mostly because the majority of his AFDL staff and military men were recruited from the eastern region, the Kivu in particular. However, Kiswahili as the new language of liberation and political power quickly became associated with military violence toward civilians in the mostly Lingala speaking western region of the DRC, particularly Kinshasa.[60] It did not take long for *Kinois* to take actions against their "liberators" who behaved like colonisers. In May 1997, the same month L. Kabila proclaimed himself the President of Congo, students in Kinshasa already began protesting against the "Congolité" imposed on them by people from "other places".[61] However, as Turner argues, when L. Kabila's AFDL allies turned against him by launching the Second Congo war to overthrow him in 1998, he quickly changed his ethno-regional politics by surrounding himself by *Katangais* from his home region.[62]

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[58] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 153-156.

[59] The Bakongo were the first to rule the Congo in 1960 through President Kasavubu, a Mukongo ethnic man, followed by Bangala from 1965 to 1997 though Mobutu.

[60] Richard Banegas and Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Vivre dans la guerre: imaginaires et pratiques populaires de la violence en RDC," 10; Gauthier de Villers, "Identifications et mobilisations politiques au Congo-Kinshasa," *Politique africaine* 72 (1998), 91-92.

[61] Places other than Congo and other than Kinshasa, including Kabila's foreign allies and members of Zairo-Congolese diaspora whom he made the majority members of his government. See De Villers, "Identifications et mobilisations politiques au Congo-Kinshasa," 91-92.

[62] Thomas Turner, *The Congo wars: conflict, myth and reality* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007), 37.

Before the 1998 attacks by L. Kabila's allies-turned-enemies, as Turner argues, Kabila had already realised that his government based on *Baswahili* from Kivu and Katanga "was politically and geographically unrepresentative".[63] Thus L. Kabila distanced himself from Kivu and strongly (re)positioned himself regionally with Kinshasa and Katanga. By doing so, he also contributed to the western Congolese's awareness of the regional spaces of the east and south-east, which the Kivu and Katanga embody respectively– a differentiation which before the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD) was either unimportant or less obvious for the majority of western Congolese in particular. The latter simply saw the new liberators as eastern Congolese or *Baswahili* and L. Kabila and his AFDL regime as a power shift from east to the west, meaning from the Lingala speaking region to the Kiswahili one.[64] It was after the 1998 rebellion, during which L. Kabila's *Baswahili* army failed to defend the county against the new eastern Congolese threat, that ethnicism re-emerged powerfully in every day discourse about identity, citizenship and the Congo War.[65] Many *Kinois* became aware not just of the different *Baswahili* regions but also began to speak of *Baswahili* as if it were a mega ethnic group.

While *Katangais* were less contested as "true" Congolese for being "regional brothers" of L. Kabila, Kivucians were perceived as Congolese of "questionable identity"[66] whose reputation of working with the "enemies"[67] was confirmed in three major ways: their involvement in the RCD war, the *kadogo* not fighting the war in Kinshasa leading to L. Kabila opting for mercenaries (Angolans, Zimbabweans and Namibians), and their region of the eastern Congo falling under the RCD occupation.[68] As Turner remarked, L. Kabila seized this opportunity to correct his ethno-regional politics of relying on eastern Congo and his Katanga home region

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[63] Thomas Turner, "Kabila returns, in a cloud of uncertainty," *African Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1997), 31-32.

[64] Alphonse M. M. Ngonga, "Survivre à la guerre des autres: un défi populaire en RDC," *Politique africaine* 84 (2001), 33-58.

[65] Stephen Jackson, "Of "doubtful nationality": Political manipulation of citizenship in the DR Congo," *Citizenship Studies* 11, no. 5 (2007), 481-500; Mahmood Mamdani, "African states, citizenship and war: a case-study," *International Affairs* 78, no. 3 (2002), 501-506.

[66] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo,* 229.

[67] In the Congo in general and the Kivu in particular, "Rwandophones" (Congolese of Rwandan ancestry) were the enemy number one and most blamed in the Congo war. Other ethnic groups of the Kivu region are Bashi, Barega, Bakusu, Banande, Bavira, Babembe etc. As research by Jackson argues, some of these ethnic groups (such as Bashi) were perceived "less Congolese". Concepts such as "pro-Rwandans" or "quasi-Rwandans" were used to refer to them. See Jackson, "Of "doubtful nationality," 481-500.

[68] See for example de Villers and Tshonda, "La bataille de Kinshasa"; Ngonga, "Survivre à la guerre des autres: Un défi populaire en RDC: RDC, la guerre vue d'en bas."; Thomas Turner, "Kabila returns, in a cloud of uncertainty," *African Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1997); Hubert K. Ngoy-Kangoy, "The Political Role of the Ethnic Factor around Elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," *African journal on conflict resolution* 7, no. 2 (2008); just to name a few.

because he realised it was politically and geographically a very poor representation as a political base.[69]

L. Kabila's assassination in 2001 by his Kivucian bodyguard would further exacerbate the tensions between eastern and western Congolese and ethno-regionalism among Congolese[70] in and outside the DRC.

Regionalism and the diaspora

Diaspora is a concept of Greek origin which means the "dispersal throughout the world of a people with the same origin".[71] The word was originally used to refer to the scattering of Jewish people after the destruction of the second temple by the Romans. More broadly, the concept of diaspora is used to study forcibly dislocated individuals such as black people who were displaced from their homeland as a result of the slave trade.[72] Diaspora is a complex concept to define. However, most scholars agree on a shared past history, displacement, a longing for a certain homeland, and a level of involvement in changing the socioeconomic and political situation of that homeland, as important factors that define a diasporic community.[73] Because diasporic communities can affect politics in their homelands,[74] they automatically constitute mediums through which conflicts migrate, especially those related to race and ethnicity.[75] Diasporas therefore continuously engage in conflicting and dividing notions of belonging, shaped by both the homeland's and host country's ideas of belonging.[76] They form networks for various socioeconomic and cultural reasons and various identities

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[69] Turner, "Kabila returns, in a cloud of uncertainty," 31.

[70] de Villers, "Identifications et mobilisations politiques au Congo-Kinshasa," 26-34; Jacques Ebenga and Thierry N'Landu, "The Congolese National Army: in search of an identity," *Evolutions & Revolutions: A Contemporary History of Militaries in Southern Africa* (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies 2005), 10; Ngonga, "Survivre à la guerre des autres," 44-54.

[71] Eliezer Ben-Rafael, "Diaspora," *Current sociology* 61, no. 5-6 (2013), 842; James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994), 305-308.

[72] St Clair Drake, "The black diaspora in Pan-African perspective," *The Black Scholar* 7, no. 1 (1975), 2; Clifford, "Diasporas,"308.

[73] Lily Cho, "The Turn to Diaspora," *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 17 (2007), 19-20.

[74] Awil Mohamoud and Sarah Osman, "The African diaspora as agents of peace on the continent," *Conflict trends* 2008, no. 4 (2008), 38-44; Rwengabo S. (2014) The Dark Side of 'Diasporas' in Africa's Great Lakes Region," 283.

[75] See for example Karin Scherschel, "Migration, ethnic conflicts, and racism," *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism* (2015), 1-3.

[76] Floya Anthias, "Evaluating 'diaspora': Beyond ethnicity?," *Sociology* 32, no. 3 (1998), 557-560; Scherschel, "Migration, ethnic conflicts, and racism," 1-3.

such as class, race and ethnicity. Regionalism is also one of bases of identity and network formations among diasporas as other transnational communities.

Regionalism that develops among diasporas is not necessarily focused on the local, meaning it is not always the regionalism defined within the border of a nation-state.[77] In pre-colonial history, the transatlantic slave trade is unique in the history of forced migration and network formations based on a larger territorial identity and across ethnicities, defined by African-ness and the experience of slavery. Then there is the colonisation of Africa in the late 19th century, which balkanised the African territories, leading to a forced bordered separation of communities and an attempt to permanently fix their new identities. The latter is one of the causes of the post-colonial borders conflict, trans-border ethnic nationalism, and trans-border socioeconomic region formation on the continent.[78]

In the diasporas, there are reproductions of local and trans-border regions through how people identify and associate. What makes regional associations atypical is that in the "debate on identities", they endeavour to transcend "the master narratives of ethnicity, 'race' or nation".[79] Also, unlike other forms of identification such as ethnicity and race, regional identity is less about primordial notions of boundaries and more about "cosmopolitan" ideas of belonging.[80] However, although regional identification is more rewarding socioeconomically, ethnicity remains one of its characteristics and greatly shapes its course. As demonstrated by research on the Great Lakes Region diaspora, groups of people can share some sociocultural aspects of a region they identify with while rejecting some others that they feel do not concern them or speak to their history.[81] This way, they can embrace the more unifying aspects of their history and cultural beliefs and reject those that divide them on the basis of their various ethnic identifications. Thus a strong regional diaspora from

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[77] Söderbaum and Taylor, "Considering Micro-regionalism in Africa in the Twenty-first Century," 29-30.

[78] Fagbayibo, "'I am an African': A critical examination of the politics of transnational identity within the context of African integration," 190; on cross-border ethnic nationalism, see for example David Gordon, "Owners of the land and Lunda Lords: Colonial chiefs in the borderlands of Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo," *The International journal of African historical studies* 34, no. 2 (2001), 315-338; Christopher C. Fennell, "Group identity, individual creativity, and symbolic generation in a BaKongo diaspora," *International journal of historical archaeology* 7, no. 1 (2003), 1-31.

[79] Anssi Paasi, "Region and place: regional identity in question," *Progress in human geography* 27, no. 4 (2003), 480.

[80] Paasi, "Region and place: regional identity in question," 480.

[81] Morten Bøås and Kathleen M. Jennings, "War in the Great Lakes Region and Ugandan Conflict Zones: Micro-regionalisms and Meta-narratives," in Söderbaum, Fredrik and Ian Taylor eds., *Afro-regions: The dynamics of cross-border micro-regionalism in Africa*. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet (2008), 155-156; Awil Mohamoud and Sarah Osman, "The African diaspora as agents of peace on the continent," *Conflict trends* 2008, no. 4 (2008), 38-44.

countries in conflict may emerge from shared socioeconomic interests and sociocultural aspects such as a common language, fashion and survival strategies. This is evident among "conflict generated"[82] and "victim" diasporas such as those from the Horn of Africa and that of the Great Lakes regions since the 1990s.[83] In these diasporic communities, the political dynamics between the countries involved, including the local identity politics, remain the strongest roots of inter-group conflicts leading to the (re)production of homelands ethnicism.[84]

The history of pre-colonial states and identities, coupled with the home country's and host country's politics, highly shape diasporic regional mobilisation and regional tensions among migrant compatriots. For example, research has shown the ways in which Zimbabwean politics shape the relationships and indeed the tensions between Ndebele and Shona ethno-regional groups in South Africa.[85] There is also the historical Nguni identity in the Southern African region which shapes both how some Zimbabweans feel entitled to a South African identity and how they exclude other Zimbabweans from it.[86] Research on Cameroonian diasporas has also proven the extent to which homeland politics migrate among Cameroonians to explain the tensions between the Anglophone and the Francophone abroad.[87] My research pertains to similar issues of identity among compatriot immigrants in South Africa. It contributes to research on how identity politics and conflicts migrate, focusing on the Congolese migrants of Cape Town.

In the wake of the war to oust Mobutu, Congolese migrants in western countries as well as South Africa have received considerable attention research-wise. In general, this research focuses on Congolese transnationalism, mostly their social networks and ways they help them overcome the socioeconomic hardship they endure in their host countries.[88] More research on Congolese diaspora was conducted in the Joseph Kabila period, especially between 2006 and the current time. Most of this research has focused on issues of the politicisation of Congolese diaspora with the focus on the Congolese diaspora activist groups, often referred to as "pressure groups", and their political activities in the Joseph Kabila era. In this research, issues of identity, class and gender are frequently examined. In particular, ethnicity is often discussed as an important basis of network formation among Congolese in South Africa and even in western countries.[89] Little to no research, however, exists on home region as a basis of network formation and an important aspect of Congolese diasporic identity, despite the growing tensions between the eastern and western Congolese in South Africa and western countries since Congo's 2006 elections, escalating in the aftermath of the 2011 elections.[90] My research therefore contributes to the field of Congolese transnationalism studies by focusing on regional identity and how it shapes Congolese diasporic politics in Cape Town. The research highlights regionalism in African politics and diasporic politics.

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[82] Lyons et al., "The Ethiopian diaspora and homeland conflict," 590

[83] Saara Cuko and Mariam Traoré, "Diaspora networks and identity: Conflict resolution in the Horn of Africa," *The Interdisciplinary Journal of International Studies* 5 (2008), 27-56; Claudine Kuradusenge, "Denied victimhood and contested narratives: The case of Hutu diaspora," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 10, no. 2 (2016), 59-75.

[84] Sabastiano Rwengabo, "The Dark Side of 'Diasporas' in Africa's Great Lakes Region," In Sahoo S., Pattanaik B. (eds), *Global Diasporas and Development* (New Delhi: Springer, 2014), 283-304; Mohamoud and Osman, "The African diaspora as agents of peace on the continent," 38-44.

[85] Gugulethu Siziba, "'Cross-identification': identity games and the performance of South Africanness by Ndebele-speaking migrants in Johannesburg," *African Identities* 13, no. 4 (2015), 262-278.

[86] Siziba, "'Cross-identification': identity games and the performance of South Africanness by Ndebele-speaking migrants in Johannesburg," 262-278; Busi Makoni, "Strategic language crossing as self-styling: the case of black African immigrants in South Africa," *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 14, no. 4 (2019), 301-318.

[87] Ernest A. Pineteh, "Spaces of inclusion and exclusion: the dynamics of Cameroonian associations in Johannesburg, South Africa," *African Identities* 9, no. 4 (2011), 401-416; Ernest A. Pineteh, "Memories of home and exile: Narratives of Cameroonian asylum seekers in Johannesburg," *Journal of intercultural studies* 26, no. 4 (2005), 379-399.

Congolese migrants and regionalism in Cape Town: An overview

With regards to home region and Congolese migration to South Africa, scholars argue that *Katangais* were the first regional group to migrate to South Africa.[91] Though they do not state the exact year when these migrations began, Bazenguissa-Ganga and MacGaffey wrote that the first Congolese who immigrated to South Africa during the apartheid time were some GECAMINE (a mining company in Katanga) workers who diverted tracks of cobalt to sell for "their own account". These authors further state that these truck drivers and workers of GECAMINE were also involved in smuggling Congolese nationals into South Africa; but once again they do not specify whether they were all from Katanga or just smuggled from there.[92] Later, in the 1980s and early 1990s, another wave of Congolese migrants arrived in South Africa as a result of the ties of friendship between Mobutu and P. W. Botha. These were skilled labour migrants, who worked as teachers and doctors in South Africa, as well as first class politicians.[93] Even though it is unclear where these groups came from it is highly possible that they were mixed groups from (or at least travelling from) Katanga and Kinshasa in general. The reason I argue so includes the fact that South Africa's interest in the Congo in general and Katanga region in particular is evident from King Leopold II's era [94] to the post-independence Congo crisis, predominantly during the Katanga secession and the Simba Rebellion.[95] And Kinshasa being the capital, one would anticipate the recruitment of skilled labours for South Africa to occur or at least to be led from there.

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[88] See for example Joy Owen, *Congolese social networks: Living on the margins in Muizenberg, Cape Town* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015); Joy Owen, "The embodied performance of Congolese masculinities in Muizenberg, Cape Town," *Journal of Social Development in Africa* 29, no. 1 (2014), 31-54; Johnny Steinberg, "A mixed reception: Mozambican and Congolese refugees in South Africa." *Institute for Security Studies Monographs* 2005, no. 117 (2005).

[89] David Garbin and Marie Godin, "'Saving the Congo': transnational social fields and politics of home in the Congolese diaspora," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (2013), 117; Sarah Demart, and Leila Bodeux, "Postcolonial stakes of the Congolese political fields (DRC) in Belgium, 50 years after the Independence," *African Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Africa in a Global World* (2013); Saint Jose Inaka, "*Combattants* and anti-*Combattants* (*collabo*s): Congolese transnational politics in Pretoria," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2016), 5-28; Katrien Pype, "Stones Thrown Online. The Politics of Insults, Distance and Impunity in Congolese Polémique," in Philipp Budka, John Postill, and Birgit Bräuchler eds., *Theorising Media and Conflict* (New York: Berghahn Books), 237-254.

[90] In exception perhaps to Saint-Jose Inaka's work which is clearly discusses the eastern and western Congolese feuds in Pretoria, South Africa, arguing for a rising Congolese transnationalism highly shaped by ethno-regionalism. See Saint Jose Inaka, "*Combattants* and anti-*Combattants* (*collabo*s): Congolese transnational politics in Pretoria," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2016), 5-28.

[91] Janet MacGaffey and Rémy Bazenguissa. *Congo-Paris: transnational traders on the margins of the law* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000), 48.

In the research conducted on Congolese in Cape Town in the early 2000s, *Katangais* and *Kinois* are the groups referred to the most frequently.[96] In attempting to establish which group came first, all the *Katangais* and *Kinois* participants confirmed that *Katangais* were first to migrate and settle in Cape Town. They also added that prior to the Congo Wars, most Congolese migrants in Johannesburg were either *Katangais* or *Kinois*. However, with the crisis in the Great Lakes Region in the 1990s, they were joined by migrants from the Kivu. Since then, the number of Kivucians has continued to rise above all the other regional groups in Cape Town. Also, Kivucians entered South Africa through Durban where they are still the dominating group.[97] Cape Town as a destination city for Congolese is therefore more recent

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[92] MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, *Congo-Paris*, 48.

[93] MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, *Congo-Paris*, 48.

[94] The British colonialist Cecil Rhodes once wanted to acquire a mining concession in the Katanga region but its ruler, King Msiri could not allow it. See Klas Rönnbäck and Oskar Broberg, *Capital and Colonialism: The Return on British Investments in Africa 1869–1969* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), 30.

[95] South Africans were highly involved in the post-independence Congo crisis and had interest in the rich mineral Katanga region. See Hans Germani, *White Soldiers in Black Africa: Related from His Own Experiences* (Cape Town: Nasionale Beekhandel Beperk, 1967). On South Africans in Katanga secession, see for example Lazlo Passemiers, "Safeguarding white minority power: The South African government and the secession of Katanga, 1960–1963," *South African Historical Journal* 68, no. 1 (2016), 70-91.

[96] Joy Owen, *Congolese social networks: Living on the margins in Muizenberg, Cape Town* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015), 128-129.

[97] These estimates are confirmed in some scholarly works on Congolese social networks in Johannesbrug and Durban. Associations discussed in these works such as those of ethno-regional nature reflect either the most active regional group or the most dominating in number. For example in their research in Durban and Cape Town, Amisi and Ballard's associations/ social networks discussed are of Eastern Congolese while Mavungu who conducted his research in Johannesburg draw more from western Congolese social networks. See Baruti

compared to Johannesburg and Durban, and it was first inhabited by *Katangais* skilled labourers, students and political refugees. They were then joined by *Kinois*, and from the early 2000s Kivucians started arriving in mass. As I mentioned earlier, regional feuds existed first between *Kinois* and *Katangais* in Cape Town before they switched between *Kinois* and Kivucians from the late 2000s.[98]

At the time I carried out fieldwork, *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* had risen as two hegemonic and rival regional groups not just in Cape Town but also in other South African cities where there is a high number of Congolese, such as Johannesburg, Durban and even Pretoria.[99] This began especially in 2006 when the first elections took place in the Congo, with a strong mobilisation and campaign in the diaspora, including that of Cape Town. Tensions fuelled by ethno-regionalism exploded quickly between these two groups. They often engaged in mild conflicts around the two leading candidates of the elections, Jean Pierre Bemba, a Mungala man from Kinshasa, and Joseph Kabila, a Muswahili believed to have a strong support in the Kivu and Katanga.[100]

The Bakasai and Bakongo, the other two of the four Congolese ethno-regional groups, have since become relatively invisible in terms of diasporic activities in Cape Town. They have attempted to reorganise as ethnic associations but, unlike in Johannesburg, they did not succeed in Cape Town.[101] Bakasai and Bakongo are now part of pro-*Kinois* or *Baswahili* networks, depending on whether they speak Lingala or Kiswahili, or identify with the eastern or western Congo regions. One debate that was not settled in this research, however, was around the question of hegemony of *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* in Cape Town –

Amisi and Richard Ballard, *In the absence of citizenship: Congolese refugee struggle and organisation in South Africa* (Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, 2005), 9; Mazembo Mavungu, "Social capital, economic performance and political engagement: A case study of Congolese Immigrants in Central Johannesburg," PhD diss., (2006), 51.

[98] See also Owen, *Congolese social networks*, 128-129.

[99] Saint Jose Inaka, "Combattants and Anti-Combattants (*Collabos*): Congolese Transnational Politics in Pretoria," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 38, no. 1 (2016), 5-28.

[100] Inaka, "Combattants and Anti-Combattants (*Collabos*)," 5-28; Severine Autesserre, "The trouble with the Congo," *New York, NY: Cambridge University* (2010), 95-98.

[101] On Congolese ethnic associations in Johannesburg see Mavungu, "Social capital, economic performance and political engagement," 51-53. At the time of this research, there were no more associations of Baluba or Bakongo in Cape Town. However, participants from Kasai who were in South Africa from the 1990s explained that Baluba had their ethnic association which was formed by some of the Baluba who arrived from Katanga in the early 1990s fleeing ethnic persecution in Katanga. They were later joined by other Baluba from different regions of the Congo including the Kasai, Kinshasa, Katanga and even Kivu provinces. The association dissolved in 2006 over political beliefs of it leaders during the elections in the Congo. It is the same with Murbaz and Nsalasani (ethnic association of Bakongo) and Alibaba (of Bangala) which emerged in Cape Town in the early 2000s but stopped around the same period. See also Amisi and Ballard, *In the absence of citizenship: Congolese refugee struggle and organisation in South Africa*, 9.

whether it was *Baswahili* versus *Kinois* and everyone else or *Kinois* versus *Baswahili* and everyone else.[102] Such alliances are an important source of power in Congolese transnationalism increasingly shaped by ethno-regionalism and inspired by the politics of alliance characteristic of the Congo conflict era.[103] The Congo conflict is also the main basis on which the Congolese I researched are issued migrant status in South Africa as refugees and asylum seekers. This process has largely shaped regional identity politics among the Congolese of Cape Town and the tensions between the eastern and western Congolese.

Baswahili and *Bato ya mangala* as migrant "labels"

The Congo conflict might not be the major reason why most left the country, as there are those who arrived in South Africa on short stay visas (such as visitor, study, medical, business visas) but decided to stay and changed their migration status to a longer or permanent stay. From the 1990s, most of those who sought permanent stay in South Africa as refugees justified and motivated their migration cases as "violent, forced separation rather than relatively voluntary economic pursuits" citing the Congo Wars and its violence.[104] As Lyons argues in his research on the Ethiopian diaspora and homeland conflicts, "territory" is an important definer of identity and shapes differences and conflicts among diaspora migrants.[105] "Territory" is important in the post-Mobutu Congo crises, especially the Congo Wars and conflicts since the late 1990s. The Congo conflict is regional in the sense that it mostly haunts its eastern region, the home of *Baswahili*. *Bato ya mangala*, on the other hand, identify with the west, the presumably "non-conflict" region.

Defining **Baswahili** *and* **Bato ya mangala**

Baswahili and *Bato ya mangala* are linguistic and regional identifications. They are sometimes referred to in linguistic terms as Swahiliphones and Lingalophones,[106] to respectively mean people from the eastern and western region of the Congo, where Kiswahili and Lingala are the lingua franca. However, these identities are complex and often language and a fixed geographical territory are not the sole factors in defining them because they also stand as two antagonistic political identities pertaining to the post-Mobutu era in the Congo.

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[102] Such a question was important for my research participants especially the Baswahili and Bato ya mangala. Each group claimed it was the minority and the rest of the regional groups teamed or discriminated against it. These alliances however matter in mobilisation of ethno-regional nature among Congolese especially in the two terms of President Joseph Kabila. For home country political- and refugee-related protests in South Africa see for example Inaka, "Combattants and Anti-Combattants (*Collabos*) ". For protests in Belgium, see Sarah Demart, "Riots in Matonge and… the indifference of public authority?," *Brussels Studies* 68 (2013), 1-9.

[103] See Reyntjens, *The Great African War*; Inaka, "Combattants and Anti-Combattants (*Collabos*)."

[104] Terrence Lyons, Harald Svein Ege, Birhanu Teferra Aspen, and Bekele Shiferaw, "The Ethiopian diaspora and homeland conflict," *Power* 44, no. 2 (2007), 590.

[105] Lyons et al., "The Ethiopian diaspora and homeland conflict," 590.

[106] Stephen Jackson, "Sons of which soil? The language and politics of autochthony in Eastern DR Congo," *African studies review* (2006), 114.

As de Villers argued in his 1998 research, the war to oust Mobutu (1996-1997) and that to oust L. Kabila (1998-2003) led to an opposition between the east and the west of the country, specifically between the region around Kinshasa and the region around Kivu. In addition, de Villers remarked that the definition of east in the context of the Congo wars did not include Katanga and Haut-Zaire, the other Swahili-speaking provinces also located in the geographical east of the Congo. He also observed that the West, in Congolese popular discourse, also excluded other provinces of the region such as Bandundu, Bas-Congo and Equateur. Indeed, if Katanga, Kivu and Haut-Zaire constitute the east of the DRC, the west by definition should be the remaining parts of the country. Instead, as de Villers argues, Kinshasa has become the incarnation of the western Congo, while Kivu stands for the eastern Congo.[107]

There are two reasons why I settled on the terms *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* in this dissertation. First and foremost because they are increasingly used among the Congolese migrant community in South Africa itself. Secondly, I wanted to address what I perceive as problematic in recent research which refers to ethno-regional identity politics of Congolese and which usually juxtaposes "Kinois" and "Baswahili" without conceptualising them semantically.[108] Whereas "*Kinois*" refers to a place, Kinshasa, "Baswahili" connotes a language, Kiswahili. Following this logic, in this dissertation I juxtapose the term "*Kinois*" with "*Kivuciens*" or "*Kivucians*" (inhabitants of the Kivu region).

The concept of Kinois is indelibly tied to the stereotype of an urban popular culture and lifestyle, rather than a regional identity. It is indeed problematic to associate the inhabitants of Kinshasa with the identity of *Kinois* because of the stereotypes embedded in "la *Kinois*erie". The latter is generally perceived as the main definer of the *Kinois* identity which is often understood as Kinshasa urban or street culture generally discussed in research

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[107] Gauthier de Villers, "Identifications et mobilisations politiques au Congo-Kinshasa," *Politique africaine* 72 (1998), 92.

[108] This is mostly so in research published on Congolese diasporic politics and other transnationalism in the last term of President Joseph Kabila era. See for example Inaka See for example, Inaka, "Combattants and anti-combattants (*collabo*s): Congolese transnational politics in Pretoria"; Trapido and Mbu-Mputu, "Les Combattants, Ideologies of exile, return and nationalism in the DRC."

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focusing on Congolese popular culture.[109] *Kinoiserie* is defined around *la sape* and *ambiance*. The former indicates culture of dandism while the latter alludes to irresponsible enjoyments through "music, alcohol and easy sexuality".[110] As noted by Trefon, "the construction of *Kinois* identity is based in large part on the cleavage between those who are *Kinois* and those who are not".[111] This "cleavage" shapes the identity discourse among the inhabitants of Kinshasa who are divided between the "real *Kinois*" (authentic *Kinois*) and *mowuta* ("immigrants") or *mbokatier* (villager).[112]

The identity of *Bato ya Mangala* is broader than, and not overlapping with, that of *Kinois*. "Bato" means "people" and "Mangala" is plural for "Lingala", alluding to the varieties of Lingala spoken beyond Kinshasa and the Equateur region which is considered home to the Bangala people.[113] This ethnonym reflected the perceptions of my research participants, even those coming from Kinshasa. Sometimes they rejected the *Kinois* identity altogether or at least some aspects it such as the stereotypes mentioned earlier. Speaking Lingala, however, is an aspect not just of the *Kinois* identity but of western (as opposed to eastern) Congolese identity in the post-Mobutu era. For this reason, both *Kinois* and non-*Kinois* may identify as *Bato ya mangala*.

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Baswahili and Bato ya mangala as migrant "labels" in South Africa

The sociopolitical rift between the eastern and western region of the Congo that wars and conflict generated, migrated among Congolese diasporas and other transnational communities. In the mid-2000s, as Congo prepared for its first ever democratic elections since its independence, the involvement of the diaspora exacerbated ethno-regional feuds among Congolese migrant communities, especially between the eastern and western

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[109] See for example Tshikala K. Biaya, "Jeunes et culture de la rue en Afrique urbaine," *Politique africaine* 4 (2000), 21; Didier Gondola, "La sape des mikilistes: théâtre de l'artifice et représentation onirique (The Mikilists' Sape: A Theater of Ingenuity and Dreams)," *Cahiers d'Études africaines* (1999), 13-47; Bob W. White, *Rumba Rules: The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu's Zaire.* 1 ed., (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

[110] See for example Tshikala K. Biaya, "Jeunes et culture de la rue en Afrique urbaine," *Politique africaine* 4 (2000), 21.

[111] Trefon, Theodore, ed. *Reinventing order in the Congo: how people respond to state failure in Kinshasa* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2004).

[112] Trefon, *Reinventing order in the Congo: how people respond to state failure in Kinshasa*, 6.

[113] Although who the Bangala are and their history is disputed among Congo linguists, the history of Lingala, especially in precolonial and colonial Congo, as I explain in details later in this dissertation, is very much tied to them as one of those multi-ethnic riverine people along the River Congo in the western region of the Congo who were among the first recruits of the colonial labour force since the establishment of the Congo Free State labour forces and throughout the Belgian Congo period. See for example William J. Samarin, "Protestant missions and the history of Lingala," *Journal of religion in Africa* 16, no. 2 (1986), 138-163; William J. Samarin, "The origins of Kituba and Lingala," *Journal of African languages and linguistics* 12, no. 1 (1990), 47-77.

Congolese.[114] As in all important historical moments in the politics of Congo since the struggle for its independence in the 1950s, ethnicity played a crucial role in political mobilisation and maintaining power.[115] In Cape Town, the 2006 elections in the Congo altered identity politics among Congolese migrants leading to many home-based associations dissolving because of different political allegiances of their members. Similarly, others materialised and quickly turned into niches of ethno-regional political mobilisation from abroad to home regions in the Congo. *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* emerged as the two regional groups that stood for the ruling party and the opposition, respectively. These tensions would turn violent in 2011 for the very same reasons, when a Lingala speaking Congolese radical group known as the *combattants*, identifying as western Congolese and *Kinois* in particular, took charge of denouncing and often punishing whoever sided with the unwanted government of President Joseph Kabila. The major criterion for identifying those who supported the Kabila regime in 2011 was their regional identity. The eastern Congolese were generally the ones accused of keeping Kabila in power and thus were targeted and often subjected to emotional and physical violence.[116] While these tensions shaped by the home country's politics reshaped identity politics and relations among the Congolese diaspora, there were also factors related to the host country, South Africa, that exacerbated them.

South Africa, particularly its migration politics, has in many ways impacted regionalism among the Congolese. Cape Town as a unique host city and the site of this research also shapes the ways in which eastern and western Congolese differently experience the challenges associated with migrants' everyday life in post-apartheid South Africa.[117] As research shows, discriminatory migration policies, in particular, are known to fuel intra-national conflicts.[118] Fassin argues that specific historical circumstances influence how

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[114] Joe Trapido and Norbert Mbu-Mputu, "Les Combattants, Ideologies of exile, return and nationalism in the DRC," *Journal of Refugee Studies* (2020); David Garbin and Marie Godin, "'Saving the Congo': transnational social fields and politics of home in the Congolese diaspora," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (2013), 113-130.

[115] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*.

[116] See for example, Inaka, "Combattants and anti-combattants (*collabos*): Congolese transnational politics in Pretoria"; Trapido and Mbu-Mputu, "Les Combattants, Ideologies of exile, return and nationalism in the DRC."

[117] Belinda Dodson, "Locating xenophobia: Debate, discourse, and everyday experience in Cape Town, South Africa," *Africa Today* 56, no. 3 (2010), 2-22; Michael Neocosmos, *From Foreign Natives to Native Foreigners. Explaining Xenophobia in Post-apartheid South Africa: Explaining Xenophobia in Post-apartheid South Africa: Citizenship and Nationalism, Identity and Politics* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2010).

[118] See for example Roger Zetter, "Labelling refugees: Forming and transforming a bureaucratic identity," *Journal of refugee studies* 4, no. 1 (1991), 39-62; Roger Zetter, "More labels, fewer refugees: Remaking the refugee label in an era of globalization," *Journal of refugee studies* 20, no. 2 (2007), 172-192; Owen, *Congolese Social Networks;* Vuninga, Rosette Sifa, "Congolese Social Networks: Living on the Margins in Muizenberg, Cape Town, by Joy Owen," *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 33, no. 2 (2017), 104-106; Fiona B.

boundaries manifest themselves among migrants. For example, adding aggressiveness to the policing of immigrants on aspects of their identities, such as ethnicity, can increase tensions between immigrants and the host community as well as immigrant on immigrant conflicts.[119] Zetter's research on refugees in Cyprus shows, among other things, that "latent and manifest processes of institutional action and programme delivery, reinforce a disaggregated model of identity" which, in the case of his research, involves distinguishing between "refugee and non-refugee" in Cyprus. Zetter also discusses how, in turn, these "labels" "assume, often conflicting, politicised meanings, for both labelled and labellers".[120] As observed for the case of eastern and western Congolese immigrants in South Africa, the different migration labels they assigned based on their home regions contribute largely to the diasporic politicisation of regional identities and antagonism between the two groups.

South African migration policies engage in labelling migrants, such as Congolese, especially those applying for refugee status. In her research on the Congolese in Cape Town in the early 2000s, Owen noted the preoccupation both researchers of migrants and Home Affairs officials have with distinguishing between "refugees" and "economic migrants" among those applying for refugee status in South Africa.[121] For most Congolese, the two groups respectively represent the eastern Congolese and the rest who supposedly hail from non-conflict region of the DRC. The two categories also stand for two migrant classes that are distinguished by their desirability in terms of economic contribution to South Africa. As Owen explains, economic migrants are often perceived by host countries such as South Africa, as "responsive and agentive", thus a preferred category to refugees, who are often associated with "disempowerment". [122] My research argues the opposite with regards to Congolese migrants. I side with Zetter who argues that "being a refugee is no longer a basic convention right but a privileged prize which few only deserve and others claim illegally".[123]

Adamson, "Crossing borders: International migration and national security," *International security* 31, no. 1 (2006), 165-199 ; Manuel Castells, "Immigrant workers and class struggles in advanced capitalism: The Western European experience," *Politics & Society* 5, no. 1 (1975), 33-66.

[119] Didier Fassin, "Policing borders, producing boundaries. The governmentality of immigration in dark times," *Annual Review of anthropology* 40 (2011), 215-216.

[120] Zetter, "Labelling refugees," 39.

[121] Owen, *Congolese Social Networks*, 40.

[122] Owen, *Congolese Social Networks*, 40.

[123] Zetter, "More labels, fewer refugees," 184.

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In South Africa, the privileges enjoyed by refugees[124] include the possibility to work; free or affordable medical treatment in public healthcare; paying school and university fees as locals (including being exempted of international fees when they apply and compulsory medical aid); accessing some social grants only available to South Africans; exemption from taxes, and more.[125] For the Congolese, the refugee status is not only the most aimed migration status but also the most empowering, especially since the 1990s when South Africa tightened its migration policies toward the Congolese.

In the early 1990s, South Africa attempted to limit the number of Congolese nationals entering the country by revising the "treaties" it signed with Zaire during the Botha period. As a result, "the Permanent Residence was no longer issued, the two-weeks visiting visa was no longer renewable in South Africa, and Zairians travelling to South Africa had to give a security amount (repatriation fee) of U$ 1000 to the South African representatives in Kinshasa".[126] Whether this policy achieved its aim to decrease the number of unwanted Zairian immigrants in South Africa is debatable. Researchers agree, at least, that this policy largely contributed to the booming of illegal/clandestine migration into South Africa.[127] In addition, it exacerbated the refugee and asylum seeker situation as that was the only means through which many could assure their legal stay in South Africa, regardless of whether they were genuine in their motive of fear of persecution in the home country. However, as research argues, being denied refugee status in South Africa has more to do with issues related to structural xenophobia and corruption within the South African Department of Home Affairs than with the applicant failing to prove their fear of persecution in their home country.[128]

Once an immigrant was denied the applied refugee-related document, they were declared economic migrants by the Department of Home Affairs. In the most extreme case, being labelled an economic migrant means one is denied residence in South Africa. Although this no longer automatically leads to *refoulement* (deportation), it often does not allow the person to explore other forms of legal stay in the country, such as under a certain visa. This situation limits a person in accessing formal economic opportunities, such as employment, and even pursuing education in South Africa. Such a fate is mostly endured by *Bato ya mangala* who do not hail from the war- and conflict-torn eastern Congo.

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[124] Although refugees and asylum seekers struggle to access their rights because of uninformed South African gatekeepers in health, education, immigration sector, etc. and xenophobia-related injustices which are propagated in campaigns such as "Put South African First". See for example https://www.dw.com/en/south-africa-hatred-of-migrants-reaches-new-heights/a-55093941, accessed on 05/05/ 2022.

[125] For more on refugee rights in South Africa, see https://help.unhcr.org/southafrica/get-help/documentation/refugee/, accessed on 05/05/2022.

[126] Bazenguissa-Ganga and MacGaffey, "Congo-Paris,"48.

[127] Pugh, "Human mobility in South Africa."

[128] See for example Michael Neocosmos, "The politics of fear and the fear of politics: Reflections on xenophobic violence in South Africa," *Journal of Asian and African studies* 43, no. 6 (2008), 586-594; Alan Morris, "'Our fellow Africans make our lives hell': the lives of Congolese and Nigerians living in Johannesburg," *Ethnic and Racial studies* 21, no. 6 (1998), 1116-1136.

Regional tensions, which increasingly characterise Congolese immigrants in Cape Town, especially between *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala*, are therefore largely shaped by the crucial place Congolese home regional identity occupies in the different ways they are treated by the South African migration policies, especially in the outcome of their refugee papers' applications. *Baswahili* are generally the most sympathised with as the legitimate Congolese refugees for being from the war zone of the DRC. *Bato ya mangala* on the other hand are often denied refugee status, cast out as economic migrants. This system exacerbates antagonism between the two regional groups by adding a twist of class struggle to the regional identity conflict rooted in the geopolitics of the Congo conflict era. This research therefore argues that the tensions between *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* in Cape Town are also a struggle between the "winners" and "losers", in Adamson's words, of the South African migration politics.[129]

Researching among my people: On research methods and ethics

This research builds on seven years of fieldwork among Congolese migrants of all "labels" [130] in Cape Town.[131] I relied on an ethnographic method because it was the best suited for this research topic, which involves "richly writing up the encounter, respecting, recording, representing at least partly in its own terms the irreducibility of human experience".[132] It is also the research method that helped me make a better sense of the identity-related tensions among the Congolese of Cape Town through an "intensive" investigation over a relatively long period of time involving observation and interviewing participants. This in turn enabled me to gather enough research material through note-taking and voice recording (when the participant allowed it) to help construct the narratives and back up my arguments.[133]

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[129] Adamson, "Crossing borders: International migration and national security," 197.
[130] Zetter, "More labels, fewer refugees."
[131] From the year 2011 when I started my Honours programme to 2017 when I completed the fieldwork for this dissertation.
[132] Paul Willis and Mats Trondman, "Manifesto for ethnography," *Ethnography* 1, no. 1 (2000), 394.

Research material for this dissertation was gathered between December 2015 and December 2017. During this time, I interacted with 48 people by way of formal and informal interviews. Interviewees included Congolese community leaders (church pastors, leaders of Congolese associations, and educators) as well as "ordinary" members of the Congolese migrant community of Cape Town. I also relied heavily on participant observation. Even though I was familiar with most of the spaces that constituted the "field" for this research, revisiting them for research purposes was guided by the fact that, regardless of the researcher's insider status, doing field research is always "a double experience": that of the "others" (the research "subjects") and the researcher's.[134] With this in mind, I (re)visited predominantly Congolese market places, night clubs, *nganda*, attended music concerts, and other social gatherings such as weddings, and funerals. I visited the most frequented places by immigrants, in particular, refugees such as the Scalabrini Centre, Law Clinic at the University of Cape Town, and the Cape Town Refugee Centre to observe and interact with people on various topics related to my research. More particularly, I visited the Refugee section of the Home Affairs where I observed and interacted with Congolese and other immigrants queuing for documentations. I also attempted to speak to the Home Affairs staff inside the office, but they rejected my request with a good deal of hostility, in spite of showing them my ethical clearance issued by my institution and my insistence about keeping my research informants anonymous for their protection.

My first moral obligation was to protect the identity of my research informants. Thus, most of the research participants' names throughout this dissertation are not their real ones, except for the few who insisted I disclosed them. Of those who chose to be anonymous, we often decided together on the nickname to use. This is because some of them expressed the need to be able to recognise their voice easily when reading my thesis once it is published.

Although the labels I focus on in this research are refugees and asylum seekers, others include permanent residents, naturalised South African citizens, temporary residents (such as those on a work visa, study visa, medical visa, relative visa, etc.), and even undocumented

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[133] Michael J. Zickar and Nathan T. Carter, "Reconnecting with the spirit of workplace ethnography: A historical review," *Organizational Research Methods* 13, no. 2 (2010), 305-319; Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, "Participant observation and fieldnotes," *Handbook of ethnography* (2001), 352-368.
[134] Copans, *L'enquête ethnologique de terrain*, 13.

(often called “illegal”) immigrants. As I noted, since 2011 when I started researching among Congolese migrants, their history in South Africa is hard to construct for reasons including difficulties to acquire statistical evidence about them.[135] Needless to say, I anticipated and indeed encountered even more challenges in researching the topic of Congolese and regionalism in Cape Town because of a scarcity of written sources.

This research occurs in the era of digital media, about which scholars have paid extensive attention.[136] Scholars like Coleman acknowledge how both the “diversity and pervasiveness” of digital media do not only make them challenging to study but also compelling in understanding them as ethnographic sources.[137] Researchers such as those in the field of migration and transnationalism, often rely on social media (including blogs, You Tube, Facebook, and Whatsapp) to inform their research. Like in traditional fieldwork, there are benefits and challenges associated with the use of social media for research purposes. They are however particularly helpful in “interrogat[ing] the knowledge shared by others, highlighting the value of learning from different ways of knowing and understanding”.[138] In researching on Congolese of Cape Town, I recurred to social media because of the role they played in transnational politics, especially in connecting “home” to “abroad”, in the era of President Joseph Kabila.[139] In researching on Congolese of Cape Town, I recurred to social media because of the role they played in transnational politics, especially in connecting “home” to “abroad”, in the era of President Joseph Kabila.[140]

Even though, during the two presidential terms of Joseph Kabila, Congolese transnational activities involving protests against the sociopolitical conditions in their country caught the media’s and scholars’ attention in western countries as well as in South Africa more than before, official documentation about these migrants is scant and it does not shed much light on important aspects of their everyday lives.[141] In general, most of the media reports, as well as the scholarly research published on those events, missed out on other aspects of these protests such as the Congolese on Congolese violence of an ethno-regional nature. However, although to a large extent I valued Congolese social media as important "primary sources" to reconstruct the history of Congolese transnationalism in the post-Mobutu era, I was also mindful of their ethical limitations, particularly their one-sidedness.[142] The recourse to oral history methods was therefore inevitable.

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[135] In addition to the Home Affairs immigrants’ information (especially on refugees and asylum seekers) being difficult to access, it is also highly misleading. That is why some scholars such as Vigouroux choose to relay on their own estimates and that of their research informants. For example, for on Home Affairs registration forms, some nationals use false nationalities, ethnic groups, region of origin, names, and even reasons for migrating to South Africa, all to maximize their chances for positive outcome for their migration document application. See Cécile B. Vigouroux, “’The Smuggling of La Francophonie’: Francophone Africans in Anglophone Cape Town (South Africa),” *Language in Society* (2008), 432.

[136] Gabriella E. Coleman, “Ethnographic approaches to digital media,” *Annual review of anthropology* 39 (2010), 488.

[137] Coleman, “Ethnographic approaches to digital media,” 488.

[138] Coleman, “Ethnographic approaches to digital media,” 488.

[139] See for example Marie Godin and Giorgia Doná, ““Refugee voices,” new social media and politics of representation: young Congolese in the diaspora and beyond,” *Refuge: Canada’s Journal on Refugees* 32, no. 1 (2016), 60-71; Katrien Pype, “(Not) in sync–digital time and forms of (dis-) connecting: ethnographic notes from Kinshasa (DR Congo),” *Media, Culture & Society* 43, no. 7 (2021), 1197-1212.

[140] See for example Godin and Doná, ““Refugee voices,” new social media and politics of representation: young Congolese in the diaspora and beyond,” 60-71; Pype, “(Not) in sync–digital time and forms of (dis-) connecting.” 1197-1212.

The works of social historians and their research methods, which often largely rely on oral history and ethnography, were inspiring for this research.[143] Social historians have relied on oral sources for their capacity to "counterbalance the evidence of the official documents with the political judgment of popular oral tradition".[144] In migration studies in particular, oral history has not only helped with constructing immigrants' life histories but also in understanding the politics of memory with which they construct and reconstruct their narratives.[145] With a research such as mine on intra-Congolese relations in South Africa, oral history was needed because it could help grasp the various challenges the Congolese encounter "when [re]learning to live together"[146] in a foreign land. In particular, the oral method was useful for my research as it was concerned with "the political, historical, and cultural dynamics"[147] of the everyday life of the Congolese in Cape Town.

Research on the daily lives of immigrants in relatively developed countries has been inspiring in gathering information for this research while also considering the ethical dilemmas involved. In particular, MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga's work on the Congolese in Paris, both from the DRC and the Republic of Congo, has guided me on how to conduct research on "activities that are outside, or marginal to, the law" that immigrants are often associated with.[148] Thus I relied significantly on life history because of its "usefulness as a methodological tool" in ethnographic research as well as its "potential to reveal dissonant voices, changing views, or the varying perspectives of persons of different classes or religions".[149] In addition, in-depth interviews and participant observation were carried out among the Congolese communities of Cape Town. Such ethnographic tools have proven useful in research on "transnational mobility" as well as "conflicts between migrants".[150] However, in the fieldwork, I did not only benefit from the many ethical opportunities my researcher positionality presented me. I was also humbled by the challenges I had to surmount as an "insider" researcher.

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[141] Inaka's works is an exception as it highlights the Baswahili and *Kinois* tensions including physical attacks of *Kinois* on Baswahili during the protests in Pretoria between 2012 and 2015. See Inaka, "*Combattants* and anti-*Combattants* (*collabos*)." On other scholarly works on Congolese transnationalism elsewhere, see David Garbin and Marie Godin, "'Saving the Congo': transnational social fields and politics of home in the Congolese diaspora," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (2013), 113-130.

[142] See also Di Wang and Sida Liu, "Doing Ethnography on Social Media: A Methodological Reflection on the Study of Online Groups in China," *Qualitative Inquiry* (2021), 8.

[143] See for example Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, "Tales of Urban Restitution, Black River, Rondebosch," *Kronos: Journal of Cape History* 32, no. 1 (2006): 216-243; Belinda Bozzoli, "Women of Phokeng: Consciousness," *Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa* 1983 (1900); Andrew Bank and Leslie J. Bank, eds. *Inside African anthropology: Monica Wilson and her interpreters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[144] Paul Thompson, *The voice of the past: Oral history*. London: Oxford university press, 2017, 23.

[145] Rosemary Baird, "Constructing lives: a new approach to understanding migrants' oral history narratives," *Oral History* 40, no.1 (2012), 57-66; Alistair Thomson, "Moving stories: oral history and migration studies," *Oral history* 27, no. 1 (1999), 24-37.

[146] Cynthia Brown, "Moving on: Reflections on Oral History and Migrant Communities in Britain," *Oral History,* 34, no. 1(2006), 69.

[147] Erin Jessee, "The limits of oral history: Ethics and methodology amid highly politicized research settings," *The Oral History Review* 38, no.2 (2019), 299.

Fieldwork research among my own people and fellow immigrants in South Africa had its benefits but also ethical dilemmas.[151] These were mostly related to my identities, research methods and research topics. Part of my many identities include that I am a Congolese immigrant who has lived in South Africa for a decade and a half. When I first conducted ethnographic research among the Congolese in 2011 as part of my Honours Programme mini-thesis, being a woman researching among fellow women had its many ethical opportunities. Like other women fieldwork researchers researching on women-related topics, my gender (in addition to my nationality) identity contributed to the "richer and more textured accounts" I collected from Congolese women and what they understood by xenophobia in their everyday life in South Africa.[152] During this research, I faced more ethical challenges on the basis of my many identities, with the most puzzling stemming from the fact that I am a *Muswahili* woman studying for a Doctorate degree in a South African university. My research participants often interpreted my education as a sign of an upper social class status, which led to ambivalent perceptions and attitudes from old and new participants. My being able to "afford" university at a PhD level sometimes created a cold attitude towards me by many of

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[148] MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, *Congo-Paris,* 19.

[149] MacGaffey & Bazenguissa-Ganga, *Congo-Paris,* 20.

[150] Harri Englund, "Ethnography after globalism: Migration and emplacement in Malawi," *American Ethnologist* 29, no. 2 (2002), 261-286; Biao Xiang and Mika Toyota, "Ethnographic experiments in transnational mobility studies," *Ethnography,* 14, No. 3, (2013), 277-281.

[151] My most detailed experience in the fieldwork can be read in Rosette Sifa Vuninga, "Establishing Kinship in the Diaspora: Conducting Research among Fellow Congolese Immigrants of Cape Town," In *Field Research in Africa: The Ethics of Researcher Vulnerabilities,* edited by Ansoms An, Bisoka Aymar Nyenyezi, and Thomson Susan, 63-84. (Woodbridge, Suffolk, (GB); Rochester, NY, (US): Boydell & Brewer, 2021), 63-84.

[152] Bank, *Pioneers of the field: South Africa's women anthropologistsI,* 6.

the participants I have worked with since my Honours research in 2011 and throughout my MA research in the form of a class barrier between us. On the other hand, many new participants with whom I made contact during this research held an esteem towards my level of education but often participated for the wrong reasons, such as mistaking me for some refugee NGO representative or someone with some agency to influence policies on migrants in South Africa.[153]

My regional, ethnic and gender identities affected the ways in which both *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* interacted with me in research meetings. These identities often caused "reticences" from my research participants. According to Layman, reticences are "conversational shifts by the narrator which limit dialogue on particular matters".[154] Mostly reticences occurred during research interviews and focus group discussions. Paying attention to when these reticences occurred helped me establish moments when power relationships manifested themselves between my participants, and their possible roots in the formulation of my research questions or their responses.

Regardless of the regional group of the people I interacted with for this research, my "insider" status was challenged in various ways. *Baswahili* from my region – the Kivu – often brought up the question of ethnicity as well as "the objectives" of my research. They frequently wanted to know how my research would address the hatred *Kinois* have against "us" or if at least the outcome of my research would "expose" the *Kinois* and how they treat "us". I often was prompted to act as a "messenger" by participants from both regions. I detected this by the manner in which some participants began answering my research questions.[155] Those from Kinshasa and other western provinces of the Congo predicted that I might side with my regional brothers and sisters when writing up my study. And because I am from the *Baswahili* region, some anticipated that not only did I want to write against the *Kinois*, but that I could be one of those *Baswahili* from NGOs who write reports on refugee rights. I could be "investigating" the many attacks *Baswahili* have suffered from members of the *combattants* between 2012 and 2015. Some also wondered if I was not sent by the

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[153] It is common for a fieldwork researcher to experience "mistaken identity" from their research participants. See for example Ke Cronin-Furman and Milli Lake, "Ethics abroad: Fieldwork in fragile and violent contexts," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51, no. 3 (2018), 610.

[154] Lenore Layman, "Reticence in oral history interviews," *The Oral History Review* 36, no.2 (2019), 207.

[155] For example, self-identified *Kinois* often would begin to answer by phrases such as "but you know your people…"; or "tell your people us…", or "why don't you ask your people the answer to that…", etc. On other occasions, it is "my" people who would want me to write a thesis that focuses on how *Kinois* always think they are the only "true" Congolese.

Department of Home Affairs to gather information that would further complicate the cases of *Kinois* in refugee paper applications. Worst of all, I was occasionally suspected of being a spy working for the Congolese political authorities or “enemies” of the Congo. For most western Congolese, I fit the stereotype of a spy for being a woman from the Kivu region – the region of “Rwandophones” and “pro-Rwandan” ethnic groups.[156] To overcome this barrier, I often allowed “trust and emotional engagement to be the foundation of the research process and the relationships that I developed with each of the individuals who participated”, a technique used by other researchers who conducted ethnographic research in politically tense spaces.[157] Another strategy I used to establish a mutual trust with participants, regardless of their ethno-regional identity, was letting them guide the conversation during our first research meeting. This is because I noted participants often had their own questions to ask me regarding my own history in South Africa, the choice of my research topic and its purpose. These questions were obviously their way to establish whether I was genuinely trustworthy. In general, how the first meeting went determined whether I would follow up with that participant or not.

I generally felt like an “insider” researcher during the participant observation among Congolese social networks. My Congolese immigrant identity worked to my advantage as it gave me access to useful and often intimate information from Congolese social networks, mostly those for which I held past or present membership. Most inside-ness came from a “shared investment in culture, mutual identification and, most importantly, a personal history that predates the research engagement”.[158] In this situation, I was, however, often confronted with two dilemmas. The first involved “unlearning the familiar” when attending meetings of these associations as a researcher.[159] This process sometimes meant getting out of my usual membership framework. The second dilemma came from handling the overwhelming research information I collected from these association as well as constantly evaluating it in terms of their ethical implications.

My research participants often wondered about the utility of my research in changing the situation in the Congo and how Congolese immigrants are treated in South Africa. Two factors lead to such concerns. The first refers to the research being conducted in the Congo conflict era and the politicisation of the Congolese diaspora.[160] The second is the fact that in South Africa the period covered in this research corresponded with a number of amendments on refugee and asylum seeker policies, with the most alarming ones being the closing down of a number of Refugees Reception Offices (RROs), including that of Cape Town and Johannesburg, and the increasing denial of refugee status to Congolese citizens. Participants wondered how my research about Congolese-on-Congolese issues would improve their well-being in South Africa (in reference to the daily discrimination faced by immigrants in general) and how it would assist the DRC (in relation to the ongoing socioeconomic and political crises). It was therefore not the kind of research many of my participants might have conducted if they were in my position. For some participants, I was as good as those Congolese criticised for not using the power and privilege they have, not necessarily to bring about change, but to speak up against the unjust system Congolese endure in and outside the Congo.[161]

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[156] Lars-Christopher Huening, “Making use of the past: the Rwandophone question and the ‘Balkanisation of the Congo’,” *Review of African Political Economy* 40, no. 135 (2013), 13-31.
[157] Susan Thomson, “Getting close to Rwandans since the genocide: studying everyday life in highly politicized research settings,” *African Studies Review* 53, no. 3 (2010), 25.
[158] Jodie Taylor, “The intimate insider: negotiating the ethics of friendship when doing insider research,” *Qualitative research* 11, no. 1 (2011), 6.
[159] Taylor, “The intimate insider,” 11.

Finally, I learned a lot from the comments of fellow Congolese intellectuals who participated in this research. Though many of them have been working in informal sectors in South Africa despite their university degrees, they never hesitated to share their own knowledge on how to conduct "fieldwork" research in the social sciences. They provided critical but academically enriching thoughts on my research methods in relation to my discipline. Some openly expressed their views that they barely found anything historical in my topic as "it is not in the past", and also because "historians go around interviewing old people or looking in the archive". I was often told that "ethnography is for anthropologists", not historians. These remarks were constant reminders that I was not dealing with passive research "subjects", even less with intellectually ignorant people, upon whom I could unquestionably impose my research topics and techniques. This made me acknowledge that the power relations between my research participants (and "subjects", in general) and I would always be unbalanced, with more weight on their side. In the end my identity as a Congolese woman immigrant of Cape

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[160] Sarah Demart and Leila Bodeux, "Postcolonial stakes of the Congolese political fields (DRC) in Belgium, 50 years after the Independence," *African Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Africa in a Global World* (2013), http://hdl.handle.net/2268/162168, accessed on 09/06/2021; Garbin and Godin, "'Saving the Congo': transnational social fields and politics of home in the Congolese diaspora," 113-130.

[161] *Combattants*' activism in western countries as well as in South Africa denounced such people who included Congolese pastors, musicians and actors, as well as intellectuals/ academics accusing them of an accomplice silence about the many human rights committed on Congolese since the war crisis started in the late 1990s, the abuse of power and greed of Congolese leadership especially in the last term of President Joseph Kabila. See Garbin and Godin, "'Saving the Congo': transnational social fields and politics of home in the Congolese diaspora," 113-130.

Town prevailed and indeed the hypocritical mask I wore as a “researcher”, asking questions as if I lived in a different world, occasionally came off. I was left envying my research “subjects” for at least having me to listen to whatever part of their everyday life in South Africa they wanted to let out. I am yet to be researched on.

Thesis outline

This thesis is composed of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter provides a background to *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* identities through the history of language, identity and politics in the Congo. The chapter looks at how *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* evolved as political identities from the penetration of the Afro-Arabs from East Africa and the Belgians to the struggle for Congo’s independence and the post-independence crises. It focuses on the eras of Mobutu and the Kabilas to explain the *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* as political regional identities of the geopolitical east and west of the Congo respectively.

The second chapter moves outside the DRC to discuss the *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* in Cape Town and ways these identities play in negotiating an immigrant status, particularly refugee status, in South Africa. In general, the chapter engages issues related to the regionalisation of the Congo conflict in favouring some ethno-regional Congolese groups over others in refugee documentation and how these in turn, coupled with homeland politics, shape tensions between eastern and western Congolese.

The third chapter examines the dynamics of Congolese regional and ethnic social networks of Cape Town through selected case studies. Focusing on eastern and pro-eastern associations, the chapter discusses trends in the politics of identity, class and gender in Congolese associations of Cape Town since the fall of Mobutu, especially in the era of Joseph Kabila.

The fourth (and last) chapter discusses the pro-western Congolese networks, often known simply as “Congolese” or “Congolese diaspora” associations or groups. It pays attention to the “pressure groups” within these networks, especially during the Joseph Kabila era. The chapter focuses more on these networks’ sociopolitical activities and the ways they contribute to or promote the east/west divides among the Congolese of Cape Town.

Chapter One

From slavers and colonisers to Mobutu and Kabila: The historical roots of *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* identities in the Democratic Republic of Congo

This chapter focuses on the historical background of the Lingala and Kiswahili languages and their related ethno-regional identities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I first track the transformations of these two languages and ethno-regional identities in the Congo, from the Arab-Swahili traders' and Leopold's eras in the late 19th century to the Belgian Congo and the struggle for Congo's Independence. I discuss ethno-regional identities in post-independence Congo as bases of political mobilisations. I pause on the Mobutu era (1965-1997) to discuss how these identities were consolidated as social, economic and political tools of rule, by highlighting Lingala's and therefore the western Congo region's hegemony. Finally, I engage with the war to oust Mobutu's and Laurent Kabila's rise to power. I examine the ways in which L. Kabila's self-proclaimed leadership was contested in the western region of the DRC and the extent to which it can be understood as a shift of power from *Bato ya mangala* to *Baswahili*. I end with the two decades of violent conflict in the eastern Congo and the ethno-regional discourse around it. In general, I argue that the feuds between *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* in the post-Mobutu era are part of the post-colonial sequels of the Belgian colonialism's regional imbalance as well as the post-independence politicisation and instrumentalisation of ethno-regional identities. The chapter largely draws from secondary literature on language and identities and the history of political struggles in the DRC.

In his work on "Language and 'authentic nationalism'", Bokamba states that the DRC "represents one of the most multilingual nations in Africa with an estimated 214 living indigenous languages or ethnic groupings".[162] To this, he adds French, Lebanese, Greek, Wolof, Hindi, Portuguese and other languages "spoken by significant communities in urban centres" of the DRC. It was during the creation of the Congo Free State and based on what explorers knew of pre-colonial states in the Congo that Leopold's agents inventoried Congolese national languages. As Bokamba explains, it is "from a variety of kingdoms, empires, and chieftaincies that formed the multilingual state that we know today as DRC where contact in different spheres of activities both within and across ethnic boundaries has facilitated the spread of selected indigenous languages as 'regional' or 'trade languages'".[163] These regional (and trade) languages included Lingala, Kiswahili, Kikongo, Lomongo, Tshiluba and Zande.[164] Of the hundreds of languages spoken in the Congo territory, only four were promoted by the Belgian colonial administrators to the status of regional languages. They include Kikongo, Tshiluba, Lingala and Kiswahili.

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[162] Eyamba G. Bokamba, "DR Congo: Language and 'authentic nationalism'," In A. Simpson (Ed.), *Language and National Identity in Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 214.

Kikongo is spoken in the Bas-Congo and Bandundu provinces in the western region of the DRC.[165] Kikongo is also spoken in neighbouring Congo-Brazzaville as well as Angola, regions that were part of the Kongo Kingdom. According to Bokamba, unlike all the other three national languages, Kikongo became the first Congolese local language to be used in "administration, evangelization, education in missionary schools, and correspondence after the installation of Catholicism by Portuguese missionaries in 1491".[166] Bokamba adds that "the use of Kikongo in these domains led it to become the first Bantu language committed to writing with an interlinear translation of a Portuguese written catechism, *Doutrina Christào*, in 1624".[167] And from the 1920s, Kikongo was already one of the most widespread languages of the Belgian colonial administration in the western region of the Belgian Congo before Lingala and Tshiluba.

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[163] Bokamba, "DR Congo: Language and 'authentic nationalism'," 220.

[164] Bokamba, "DR Congo: Language and 'authentic nationalism'," 220.

[165] Congo has moved from eight provinces/regions in 1966 to 11 in 1988 and to 26 in President Joseph Kabila era. What was Bas-Congo and Bandundu in 1966 has now been divided into four provinces which include Congo Central, Kwilu, Kwango and Mai-Ndombe. The former Kivu province is divided into three regions since 1988 which include Sud-Kivu, Nord-Kivu and Maniema. The 1966 Equateur is also divided into four provinces which include Equateur, Chuapa, Mongala, Nord-Ubangui, and Sud-Ubangui. Former Katanga is now made of Tanganyinga, Haut-Lomami, Haut-Katanga and Lualaba. What was Kasai Oriental is now divided between Lomami, Kasai Oriental and Sankuru. Kasai Occidental is now made of Kasai Central and Kasai. Oriental (Haut-Zaire) is now divided into Bas-Uele, Haut-Uele, Ituri, and Tshopo. Throughout this dissertation, I chose to use the old names (1966) before the provinces split because in general that is how my participants still call them and because I am discussing region in terms of national languages. The later, have not changed despite the current "*provincettes*" (mini-provinces) which were mostly created not to solve any demographical problem, but to satisfy power-hungry politicians, almost in the same colonial-rooted logic of "divide and rule" while consolidating and reproducing problematic ethnic identities. See Jean-Claude Bruneau, "Les nouvelles provinces de la République Démocratique du Congo: construction territoriale et ethnicités," *L'Espace Politique. Revue en ligne de géographie politique et de géopolitique* 7 (2009), https://journals.openedition.org/espacepolitique/1296, accessed on 31/08/2021.

[166] Eyamba G. Bokamba, "Nationalism and the emergence of Lingala as a supranational language in DR Congo," *World Englishes* 38, no. 1-2 (2019), 56; Bokamba, "DR Congo: Language and 'authentic nationalism'," 220-221.

[167] Bokamba, "Nationalism and the emergence of Lingala".

Tshiluba is the “ethnic and the dominant lingua franca” of Kasai, in the central region of the DRC.[168] Those who speak it are called Baluba, or Bakasai as a whole. Tshiluba is also spoken in Katanga, where it competes with Kiswahili, the most used lingua franca in the region. The expansion of Kiswahili in both Kasai and Katanga is often attributed to the colonial migrant labour movement in the mining companies in these regions. The language is used in the Kasai region in schools, national radio and television, and in churches.[169]

Lingala and Kiswahili, which are the focus of this dissertation, are rather unique in comparison to Kikongo and Tshiluba. Neither of these languages is ethnic, unlike Kikongo and Tshiluba/ Kikasai. This means they are not linked to a specific ethnic group but rather to a space, and are spoken by people of varied ethnic identities. And unlike Tshiluba and Kikongo, Lingala and Kiswahili are not linked to a pre-colonial identity linked to a certain state, kingdom or chiefdom (as it is with the Luba Kingdom or Kongo kingdom). Both Lingala and Kiswahili have developed through trade networks between people of different origins, respectively in the eastern Congo (Kiswahili) and western Congo (Lingala). They therefore emerged in “contact zones”.[170] Lingala developed as the language of trade along the Congo River in the western region of the Congo, whereas Kiswahili was brought to Congo through East African merchants of the Swahili coast, trading on the Indian Ocean and Lake Tanganyika.[171]

Kiswahili: From German East Africa to the Belgian Congo

About two decades before the Berlin Conference, Kiswahili reached what would be the eastern region of the Congo Free State territory through networks of traders and merchants from the eastern coast of Africa, the Swahili Coast. These traders were commonly referred to in the Congo as “Arabs” or “Afro-Arabs”.[172] These “Arabs” were not a homogenous group but rather “a diverse group of Omani Arabs, coastal Swahili, inland Africans and others”.[173] This “Arab identity” was more defined by Muslim aristocracy, speaking Kiswahili and inhabiting the coastal region or islands of the Swahili coast, than a claim to an ancestral origin in the Arabia Peninsula.[174] However, the Kiswahili (language) and *Waswahili* (or *Baswahili*) identity have a complex and separate history, even though they are both rooted in the east coast of Africa. The historical Swahili Coast was the region between present Somalia and Mozambique on the Indian Ocean. The region developed as part of the Indian Ocean maritime world where the local inhabitants of coastal east Africa and other nations from its hinterlands traded with merchants from regions such as the Arabian Peninsula (Arabia, Oman, Persia, etc.), India and China from the 8th century.[175] By the 11th century, the Swahili civilisation emerged prosperously as a commercial Muslim cosmopolitan society, with its people identifying with their various cultural origins in and outside Africa. This prosperity would be interrupted by the arrival of Europeans, first the Portuguese in the early late 15th century, and then slavery, which escalated in the 19th century with the rise of Zanzibar as the most prominent slave market in the region, until German and later British colonialists settled there.[176]

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[168] Bokamba, “DR Congo: Language and ‘authentic nationalism’,” 222. See also Mutombo Nkulu-N'Sengha, “Luba,” *African Arts* 42, no. 3 (2009), 90-92.

[169] Bokamba, “DR Congo: Language and ‘authentic nationalism’,” 222.

[170] Contact zones are, according to Pratt, “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the contact zone,” *Profession* (1991), 34; See also Lutz Diegner and Frank Schulze-Engler. *Habari Ya English? What about Kiswahili?: East Africa as a Literary and Linguistic Contact Zone* (Leiden and Boston: Hotei Publishing, 2015), 9.

[171] Ali. A. Mazrui and Alamin. M. Mazrui, *Swahili state and society: The political economy of an African language*. East African Publishers (1995).

[172] See for example Mario Draper, “The Force Publique’s campaigns in the Congo-Arab War, 1892-1894,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 30, no. 4-5 (2019), 1020-1039.

The origins and developments of the Swahili civilisation have been debated among scholars. Among other things, they differ about how to interpret the archival and archaeological evidence available about the coast and its islands in their endeavour to establish the origin of the Swahili civilisation. They have varying views on who were the first inhabitants of the coast, who built the stone houses, when and how, when the Swahili coast became maritime, the origin of the Swahili language, etc.[177] The available evidence on the historical Swahili Coast and its interpretations led to two main scholarly views: the internal and external origins of the Swahili civilisation. These two positions have often been the basis on which scholars

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[173] Northrup, *Beyond the bend*, 23.

[174] Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: racial thought and violence in colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011), 38-39; Northrup, *Beyond the bend*, 23.

[175] Abdul Sheriff, *Dhow cultures of the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism, commerce and Islam* (London: Hurst, 2010); Adria LaViolette, “Swahili cosmopolitanism in Africa and the Indian Ocean world, AD 600–1500,” *Archaeologies* 4, no. 1 (2008), 24-49.

[176] John M. Mugane, *The story of Swahili* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2015), 192-226. See also Glassman

[177] See for example George Abungu, “Pate: a Swahili town revisited,” *Kenya Past and Present* 28, no. 1 (1996), 50-60; Elgidius B. Ichumbaki, “When did the Swahili become maritime? A reply to Jeffrey Fleisher et al. (2015),” In Cham Springer ed. *Sea Ports and Sea Power*, 2017, 1-11; Jeffrey Fleisher, Paul Lane, Adria LaViolette, Mark Horton, Edward Pollard, Eréndira Quintana Morales, Thomas Vernet, Annalisa Christie, and Stephanie Wynne-Jones, “When did the Swahili become maritime?,” *American Anthropologist* 117, no. 1 (2015), 100-115.

of the Swahili coast are classified, either as Africanist of non-Africanist. A third category includes scholars who reject the idea of "origin" by arguing for the cosmopolitanism of the Swahili coast.[178] Africanist scholars critique such a view because they perceive it as wittingly siding with the external origin of the Swahili and therefore reproducing the colonialists' approach to the interpretation of African historical sites, mostly those involving remarkable architectures of stone houses (other examples, apart from the stone houses of the historical Swahili coast, include the ruins of the Great Zimbabwe and the Pyramids of Egypt). They tend to argue for more advanced external civilisations as the only ones capable of such architecture.[179]

Despite the fact that Arab travellers first made mention of the "land of the *Sawāhil*" in the 13th century, Glassman explains that the word "existed only as an epithet of reference, used mainly by foreign visitors"; it did not, by any means refer to ethnic identity.[180] It was only from the 19th century that societies living on the eastern African coast began identifying as Swahili.[181] Scholars, however, recognise that aspects of the identity of the Swahili coast people, which include speaking Kiswahili, commerce, maritimity and Islam, were noted considerably since the 12th century. However, these earlier inhabitants of the east African coast were rather organised "into a set of more diverse communities, each centred on one of the principal towns along the coast".[182] These earlier communities therefore differ from the now *Waswahili* ethnic group of about one million people that emerged in the 19th century. In general, Ray's main argument challenges scholars' tendency to project Swahili identity earlier by placing slavery and imperialism of the 19th century at the centre of the emergence of the Swahili identity as we know it today.

Regarding the origin of Swahili identity in the 19th century, it all started when slave raiders from Pate and Mombasa islands formed a coalition to attack Pemba. For their safety, leaders of Pemba Island invited the Omani back to their island to make them their "protector". They indeed came back to the coast and its islands and helped them against slave raiders. By 1845,

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[178] Mugane, *The story of Swahili*, 1-9.

[179] Chapurukha M. Kusimba, Sibel B. Kusimba, and Laure Dussubieux. "Beyond the coastalscapes: preindustrial social and political networks in East Africa," *African Archaeological Review* 30, no. 4 (2013), 399-426; Ichumbaki, "When did the Swahili become maritime?".

[180] Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: racial thought and violence in colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011), 25.

[181] Daren Ray, "Defining the Swahili," *The Swahili World* (2018), 67; Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones*, 25-26.

[182] Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones*, 25-26; Ray, "Defining the Swahili," 67.

Seyyd Said, an Omani Sultan, had officially claimed the eastern African coast, relocated to Zanzibar and named the eastern African coast “Swahili”.[183] According to Glassman, the first to call themselves *Waswahili* were the “acculturated slaves”. They did so as a mean to inhibit their pagan origin and to distinguish themselves from the rest of the *washenzi* (uncivilised) and *kafiri* (infidels/ non-Muslims) who were the lowest class of the coastal Swahili and islands, and who were prone to many social exclusions and being sold.[184] When Europeans – first Christian missionaries and explorers, followed by the German and later the British colonisers – arrived in the region, they found it and its inhabitants already named “Swahili”. It was these Europeans who introduced and largely propagated the concept of a Swahili identity through their writings. They also ethnicised and fixed the Swahili identity, and practised indirect rule in the region through the *Baswahili*.[185]

Kiswahili and elements of *uswahili* (Swahili identity) reached Southern and Central Africa by means of trade, slavery and conquests. According to Northrup, the *Waswahili* (whom he calls “Afro-Arab”) traders in the service of the Sultan of Zanzibar penetrated the eastern Congo in 1865.[186] To enter Congo, these Afro-Arabs used Lake Tanganyika because the powerful kingdoms of Rwanda and Burundi prevented them from passing through their territories. Therefore, crossing Tanganyika using canoes, they arrived at Ujiji and Uvira (in the Kivu region) where they built their first posts.[187] Northrup argues that among all the intruders who invaded the Eastern Congo, the Zanzibari left “the most lasting impression”, including that of the “communication network, language, administration and labour pattern”.[188]

The arrival of Arab-Swahili traders in the Congo had remarkable impacts at sociocultural and political levels in the region, especially on existing polities. It was, however, met with resistance from the powerful kingdoms of the pre-colonial Congo, including that of the Mangbetu, Azande and Bashi, which flourished in the region since 18th century.[189] Other leaders of small polities such as the Kabambare chief (also known as Mwini Kusu) used the Arab-Swahili to strengthen his chiefdoms by entering into alliances with Zanzibari. These alliances had devastating effects elsewhere. For example, strong kingdoms such as the Lunda and Luba in the north and west of Katanga collapsed as a result of these alliances.[190] According to Fetter, these Swahili speakers also attempted to rule as state sovereigns over the region they exploited even though many did not achieve "firm political authority in the region."[191] Msiri is the only one these Swahili traders (of a Nyamwezi origin) known to have established a powerful empire in actual Katanga. He is remembered for fighting early Belgian occupation in the 1880s until his death in 1891 at the hand of Leopold's men.[192]

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[183] Ray, “Defining the Swahili,” 67-69.

[184] Races also as socio-economic classes in 19th century Zanzibar were Arabs, Indians, indigenuous inlanders and slaves. It was among these indigenous inlanders that the Swahili identity was invented. See Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones*, 34-37.

[185] Ray, “Defining the Swahili.” *The Swahili World* (2018), 67.

[186] David Northrup, *Beyond the bend in the river: African labor in eastern Zaire* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1988), 13.

[187] Northrup, *Beyond the bend*, 23-24.

[188] Northrup, *Beyond the bend*, 23.

[189] Northrup, Beyond the Bend, 14-15; Xavier Luffin, “Arabic and Swahili Documents from the Pre-Colonial Congo and the EIC (Congo Free State, 1885–1908): Who were the Scribes?,” In Brigaglia, Andrea, and Mauro Nobili, eds. *The arts and crafts of literacy: Islamic manuscript cultures in sub-Saharan Africa. Vol. 12.* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 279-296.

The history of Kiswahili in the Congo, and the violence of those who brought it, is the basis of the common sayings that "*Kiswahili ni luga ya utumwa*" (Kiswahili is a language of slavery)[193] and a "*luga ya kigeni*" (a foreign language).[194] It was the Afro-Arabs businesses (mainly of ivory and slaves) that backed up King Leopold's philanthropic reason to occupy the Congo region. And although during the Berlin Conference, Leopold II made ending the Afro-Arabs occupation and slavery one of his first main priorities in the Congo, Afro-Arabs and King Leopold's agents would turn out to be more rivals and even collaborators than enemies, as they were all competing to exploiting the human and natural resources in the region.[195] This rivalry would later shape the antagonism with which Kiswahili was debated in the "Language Question" by the Belgian colonial administrators in the Congo. In general, Kiswahili was perceived as alien to Congo despite that it was spoken by a large number of people in the eastern and south-eastern regions of the Congo, including provinces such as the former Katanga, Kivu and Upper Congo.[196] Lingala, on the other hand, was accepted as ideal for "the civilising mission", including education and administration, in the western Congo where Belgians set their first and most important colonial posts.

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[190] Bruce Fetter, *Colonial rule and regional imbalance in central Africa* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), 128-129.

[191] Fetter, *Colonial Rule*, 129.

[192] Fetter, *Colonial Imbalance*, 128-129.

[193] This can also be translated as "Kiswahili is the language of servitude".

[194] Interview with Joyce, a Tanzanian business woman, Cape Town, 20/ 05/ 2016. She mentioned that those two phrases are famous among Tanzanians.

[195] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 20-21; Jacques Depelchin, *Silences in African history: Between the syndromes of discovery and abolition* (Dar Es Salam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2005), 91.

[196] Mateene, "The promotion of African languages as languages of instruction in central Africa," 14.

Lingala: Origin and the Language Question in the Belgian Congo

Lingala is the language generally spoken by people of various ethnic identities in the Western region of the Congo, in particular, Kinshasa, Equateur, and Oriental regions. It is also spoken in the neighbouring Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. Most Congolese linguists and scholars of Congolese popular culture agree that Lingala exerts its influence on the whole Congo, compared to other languages such as Kikondo, Kiswahili and Tshiluba.[197] This national power of Lingala is linked to the historical developments that occurred in Kinshasa from the time of colonialism. Lingala became the lingua Franca of Kinshasa because of the influx of labour migrants from the north-west region of the Congo, mainly people moving from the Equateur and Orientale.[198] Although Lingala emerged as a language of trade along the riverine people in the western region of the Congo, particularly along the Congo River, its cultural and political hegemony is the rooted in the establishment and development of the first colonial posts along the Congo River in the Congo Free State. From the early 1930s, the Belgian colonial administrators promoted Lingala as the language of the Congolese colonial army. In the 1940s, the sociocultural power of Lingala became evident as it emerged as the favoured language of Congolese music.[199] Later, films produced in Kinshasa and visualised throughout the entire country also promoted Lingala.[200] Lingala maintained this status throughout the Mobutu's era as the language of power, associated with national identity partly because Mobutu himself was from the Lingala-speaking region of Equateur in addition to being a product of Léopoldville. Thus, in addition to further strengthening Lingala as the language of the state security forces throughout the entire national territory, he also made it a crucial tool of his infamous authenticity politics.[201]

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[197] Eyamba G. Bokamba, "Nationalism and the emergence of Lingala as a supranational language in DR Congo," *World Englishes* 38, no. 1-2 (2019), 53-66; Didier L. Goyvaerts, "The emergence of Lingala in Bukavu, Zaire," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 33, no. 2 (1995), 299-314.

[198] Bokamba, "Nationalism and the emergence of Lingala as a supranational language in DR Congo," 53-66; Kahombo Mateene, "The promotion of African languages as languages of instruction in central Africa," Paper presented at Meeting of experts on the promotion of African languages in eastern and central Africa as media of culture and life-long education (Dar es Salaam, 15-21 December 1971).

[199] Mateene, "The promotion of African languages as languages of instruction in central Africa,"; Bokamba, "Nationalism and the emergence of Lingala as a supranational language in DR Congo," *World Englishes* 38, no. 1-2 (2019), 53-66; Goyvaerts, "The emergence of Lingala in Bukavu, Zaire," 299-314.

[200] Katrien Pype, "Historical routes towards religious television fiction in post-Mobutu Kinshasa," *Studies in World Christianity* 15, no. 2 (2009), 131-148; Rosette Sifa Vuninga, "Théâtres and mikilistes: Congolese films and Congolese diasporic identity in the Post-Mobutu period (1998-2011)," M.A. diss., University of the Western Cape, 2014.

[201] This was a policy that Mobutu painted as a step to deconolise the country at cultural and economic levels. It turned out, however, to be the strongest foundation of his dictatorship and appropriation of the country's wealth in the name of nationalising all companies originally owed by foreigners. See for example, Bob White,

While the foreignness of Kiswahili is not disputed among Congolese speakers and scholarship alike, Lingala is often questioned as an artificial language invented by Belgians and other Europeans. This was noted during its codification. Henry Morton Stanley, the infamous explorer who handed over the Congo to Leopold, reported to have encountered the “Ngala people” in 1877.[202] Though this is often cited as the first time Europeans made reference to Bangala or “Ngala”, Meeuwis argues that it was just an “imagined ethnonym” Stanley used to designate the multilingual people living on the bend of the Congo River in the north-western region. Then in 1884, the Europeans added a layer of consolidation to the imagined Bangala community, by founding a colonial post in the “Bangala” area and naming it “Bangala station”. It was not until 1888 that Bangala was also referred to as a language. The designation changed to Lingala after 1900.[203]

From the above, it is clear that Lingala’s related identity – the Bangala – is a textbook case of colonial inventions of identities in Africa.[204] The language has been referred to by various nicknames by both Africans and Europeans in the western region of Congo, especially around the Belgian colonial posts on the Congo River. Meeuwis explains that before it became fixed as Lingala, since the arrival of Europeans in the region, it was referred to as a “*langue du commerce*” (trade language), then a “*langue du fleuve*” ([Congo] river language) and then a “*langue de l’Etat*” (language of the state/government). These labels point to the varying or changing functions of the language since the late 19th century arrival of the Europeans in the region.[205]

Lingala is made of a mixture of widespread lexical borrowing from the various ethnic languages of people living along the Congo River. One language, however, dominates the Lingala that was coded by the Catholic and Protestant missionaries in early colonial time: the Bobangi.[206] Congolese linguists have diverging opinions as to whether Africans or European settlers used the so-called Bobangi first. Some scholars argue that European settlers used

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"L’incroyable machine d’authenticité: l’animation politique et l’usage public de la culture dans le Zaïre de Mobutu," *Anthropologie et sociétés* 30, no. 2 (2006), 43-63; Carter Grice, *“Happy are those who sing and dance”: Mobutu, Franco, and the struggle for Zairian identity*. PhD diss., Western Carolina University, 2011, 55-82.

[202] Goyvaerts, “Power, ethnicity, and the remarkable rise of Lingala in Bukavu,” 29-30.

[203] Michael Meeuwis, “The linguistic features of Bangala before Lingala: The pidginization of Bobangi in the 1880s and 1890s,” *Afrikanistik Online* 2019 (2019), 3-6.

[204] See for example Carola Lentz, *Ethnicity and the making of history in Northern Ghana* (London: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Amselle, Jean-Loup, and Elikia M'Bokolo, eds. *Au cœur de l'ethnie: ethnies, tribalisme et État en Afrique* (Paris: La découverte, 2017).

[205] Meeuwis, “The linguistic features of Bangala before Lingala,”3.

[206] Samarin, “The origins of Kituba and Lingala,” 66-67.

Bobangi as a vehicular language to communicate with local populations. They argue that some locals referred to Bobangi as "Bulamatari", meaning "the white man's language". Africans living along the Congo River, near colonial posts and Christian Missions, started speaking "Bobangi" as some form of speech imitating the ways in which Europeans spoke African languages.[207] Samarin has a rather interesting view on the debate, as he argues that Bobangi (which forms the largest of the lingua franca Lingala is made of) was used by Africans to imitate other Africans "who represented the whites, for they too stood in a position of power over the locals".[208] Traders and migrant workers from other African countries, who were an important part of the "other" Africans perceived by local riverine people as being in a position of power, mostly West Africans, also played a role in the development of Lingala. According to Samarin, these migrant workers of the Congo Free State were the ones who provided the means of communicating with locals, based on words from various languages they picked up from different regions that they crossed, in and outside the Congo.[209] Missionaries confirm in their writings that between 1888 and 1892 "Bangala" was "a language understood by anyone along at least 500 miles of the Congo River".[210]

Therefore, the idea that Lingala was a "real" "local" Congolese language is highly contested among Congolese linguists. Most scholars see Lingala as a colonial workforce invention and its origin and development as highly influenced by African immigrant workers of the Congo Free State. This was why Lingala as a language worthy of being used in the Belgian colonial administration was contested until the 1930s.[211] And even though the similarity between Lingala and the rest of the riverine people's ethnic languages is not disputed, its emergence as a language of trade along the Congo River is contested. Some linguists[212] argue that trade played only a small role in the history of Lingala in the western region of Congo, and that it

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[207] Samarin, "The origins of Kituba and Lingala," 66.
[208] Samarin, "The origins of Kituba and Lingala," 66-67.
[209] Among these migrant workers were also former Zanzibari slaves. See Musila, "Kivu, Bridge between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans," 18.
[210] Goyvaerts, "Power, ethnicity, and the remarkable rise of Lingala in Bukavu," 30.
[211] Goyvaerts, "Power, ethnicity, and the remarkable rise of Lingala in Bukavu," 30-31.
[212] Jan Knappert, "The origin and development of Lingala," in I. Hancock (ed.) *Readings in Creole Studies,* (Ghent: E. Story-Scientia P.V.B.A., 1979), 153–64; William J. Samarin, "The origins of Kituba and Lingala," *Journal of African languages and linguistics* 12, no. 1 (1990), 52.

was rather Belgian colonialists and their migrant workers who were most responsible for the existence of Lingala.[213]

Missionaries, colonisers and the roots of regional imbalance in the Congo

Like Kiswahili, the recognition and promotion of Lingala as a "native" language was highly contested during the Language Question[214] in the Belgian Congo, mostly for reasons related to its origin. Congolese linguists such as Mateene argue that Lingala was almost rejected as an intermediary language between the Europeans' and natives' languages because it lacked "cultural heritage to draw on".[215] Goyvaerts also argues that the history of Lingala is difficult to trace because of its linguistic resemblances with other local languages spoken.[216] Catholic missionaries who worked closely with Belgian colonial administrators struggled to reach an agreement over which language between Lingala and Kikongo should be promoted as a "medium of instruction" in Kinshasa schools. The Scheut Fathers preferred Lingala, while the Jesuits thought that Kikongo was the best for their works and in instructing their adepts. For the Jesuits, Lingala was judged "inferior" because it was spoken by "marginal elements of the society" (including soldiers and workers) from 1900 to the 1920s.[217] Protestant missionaries also resisted the codification of the Lingala language because of its "artificial" nature and its reputation.[218] While comparing Lingala with other ethnic languages in the region, such as Kikongo, which they had previously learned and coded, Protestant missionaries also remarked that Lingala did not exist. In other words, they realised to a considerable extent that they were making it up, they were inventing it as they started to codify and use it in their works.[219]

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[213] Knappert, "The origin and development of Lingala,", 153–64; William J. Samarin, "The origins of Kituba and Lingala," *Journal of African languages and linguistics* 12, no. 1 (1990), 52.

[214] Between 1918 and 1924 when Louis Franck became Minister of Colonies for Belgium, he committed himself to correcting past mistakes on native policies in the Belgian Congo which were inspired by the indirect rule of the British as well as the assimilation method of the Portuguese. He opted for "adaptationism" which, according to him, would promote "respect" for Congo native culture by protecting it against westernisation. To achieve this, one of the things to engage was the "Language Question" which consisted of debating and deciding which Congolese languages would serve in colonial missions and the native education. See Michael Meeuwis, "The origins of Belgian colonial language policies in the Congo," *Language Matters* 42, no. 2 (2011), 194-200.

[215] Kahombo Mateene, "The promotion of African languages as languages of instruction in central Africa," Paper presented at a meeting of experts on the promotion of African languages in eastern and central Africa as media of culture and life-long education (Dar es Salaam, 15-21 December 1971), 14.

[216] Goyvaerts, "Power, ethnicity, and the remarkable rise of Lingala in Bukavu,"30.

[217] Goyvaerts, "Power, ethnicity, and the remarkable rise of Lingala in Bukavu," 30-31.

[218] As the language spoken by the lower-class workers as well as the *Force Publique* (the Congo Free State native army) whom Samarin refers to as "the militia" of the Congo Free State. Protestant Missionaries also described Lingala as an "imperfect off-shoot of Ngala language" in a 1921 Conference on the native languages. William J. Samarin, "Protestant missions and the history of Lingala," *Journal of religion in Africa* 16, no. 2 (1986), 150.

If indeed Catholic missions were the major players in language policy during the early Leopoldian era, more than protestant missions,[220] then indeed Kiswahili could not compete with Lingala. One important reason for this is that the Afro-Arabs through whom Kiswahili entered the Congo were also disliked by Catholic missionaries. In his work on Kiswahili and colonialism in Katanga, Johannes Fabian explains how Catholic missions at first resisted the promotion of Kiswahili because they saw it as "tantamount to promoting a vehicle of Islam".[221] Then in the 1920s, the White Fathers finally made their own *sarufi* (Kiswahili grammar) books and dictionary of a Kiswahili "capable of translating Christian doctrine directly from a Latin tradition without a detour in a European language".[222] Codifying Kiswahili was needed for reasons including the different kinds of Kiswahili which were spoken in different places, including Katanga (mostly in the *Union Minière de Haut Katanga* [UMHK] migrant workers' zone), the Kivu region and other *waungwana* zones (zones which were conquered and controlled by east African traders such as Maniema, Fizi and Kisangani).[223]

The eastern region of the Congo, which is the Kivu (one of the major Kiswahili-speaking regions), came last in Belgian colonial interest. According to Fetter, until 1908, the year when Congo officially became a Belgian colony, its eastern region was not completely occupied by Belgians. This argument is backed by administration and population maps of 1908.[224] Until the First World War, little was known about the Grand Kivu region (which includes the North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema provinces). Fetter supports his claim by explaining that Kivu was the only region in which the Belgians could not determine the effects of the war. And to illustrate further the regional imbalance in the colonial Congo, Fetter also shows that in the 1950s, the Kivu and Equateur provinces had the lowest percentage of school attendance, 17% altogether, while Leopoldville had the highest, followed by Katanga.[225]

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[219] Samarin, "'Official Language': the Case of Lingala," 393.
[220] Barbra A. Yates, "The origins of language policy in Zaire," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 18, no. 02 (1980), 257.
[221] Fabian, *Language and Colonial Power*, 147.
[222] Fabian, *Language and Colonial Power*, 147.
[223] See chapter 6 in Fabian, *Language and Colonial Power*.
[224] Fetter, *Colonial rule and regional imbalance*, 139.

Although the national borders of the Congo Free State were determined during the Neutrality Act of the Berlin Conference in 1885, King Leopold II and Belgium knew little to nothing about the eastern region of the newly acquired territory in central Africa. In fact, it was not until the Belgian colonisation that the Kivu region would fall under the control of the Belgian. The Belgians had to confront other European colonial powers, including the British and the Germans, who were also trying to annex some territories of the Kivu region to their colonies. The British, who were in Uganda, wanted some territories in North Kivu, while the Germans, who occupied Tanganyika and Ruanda-Urundi, claimed some territories in South Kivu beyond the Ruzizi River (the actual natural border between South Kivu and Rwanda) and even the Kivu Lake. Lake Kivu and the Ruzizi River, according to the map drawn at the Neutrality Act of 1885, were supposed to mark the natural borders between the German territory of Rwanda and the eastern region of the Congo Free State. However, they both happened to fall in the Congo Free State's territory. Interestingly, Lake Kivu itself was not really put on the map until 1894 (about ten years after the Berlin conference) by Von Götzen. That marked the official beginning of the negotiations of the eastern Congo borders, which would be marked with a series of incidents between Congolese/Belgians, Germans and British in the eastern region (Kivu). It was not until May 1910 that the eastern borders of the Belgian Congo were set and would be recognised by Germany in 1913.[226] In addition to the series of confrontations among European colonial forces in the region, the local people of the Kivu region also launched their own campaigns against the Belgians which further delayed the occupation and administration of the eastern region unlike its western region counterpart which was under the Belgian control since the late 1880s.[227]

Unlike the "Ngala" people, whose kindness Stanley vouched for since his first expedition in the Congo River basin, Europeans, as seen above, were met with resistance from the people

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[225] Fetter, *Colonial rule and regional imbalance,* 173.

[226] The source for this information is in André Lederer's brief history of the negotiation of the Belgian Congo borders in its eastern region. It discusses a number of incidents between the Belgians, Germans, and British colonial administrators over territories in the Kivu region. See, André Lederer "Incident de frontière au Kivu," *Civilisations. Revue internationale d'anthropologie et de sciences humaines* 41 (1993), 415-426. See also Martin Doevenspeck, "Constructing the border from below: narratives from the Congolese–Rwandan state boundary," *Political Geography* 30, no. 3 (2011), 129-142.

[227] For example, mwami Kabare of Bashi ethnic group in the Kivu region fought against the Belgians for nine years from1907. Kasongo Niembo of Maniema also fought them in 1907. See Fetter, *Colonial rule and regional imbalance,* 138-139.

in the Kivu region. In fact, the first Europeans to settle in the Kivu region were Italian farmers in the 1920s.[228] The Belgians took advantage of the situation by ensuring that these Italians and other European farmers in the region conformed to their way of handling the “natives” by subjecting them to “belgianisation”.[229] This process, as Ndaywel explains, consisted of promoting Belgian colonial values among the whites already living in the Kivu region so they could contribute to native administration in the region. To ensure the plan was executed, the Belgians created the *Comité National du Kivu* (CNKi).[230] It was through CNKi that the first colonial land expropriation occurred in the Kivu region. The establishment of Albert Park (now Virunga) was one of the projects for which the confiscated lands were used. Other arable lands were grabbed for farming by Europeans of varying nationalities, including Germans, Italians and Dutch.[231]

The late annexation of the Kivu resulted in a socioeconomic development gap between the eastern and western regions of Congo, as well as problems to connect the two regions socioeconomically and even politically. The relative development of the western region since the late 1880s, however, was first and foremost to the benefits of the metropolis. The biggest colonial posts in the western region, including Luebo, Nouvelle Anvers, Coquilhatville, Basoko, and Leopoldville, all served as colonial goods’ storage. Their strategic position on the Congo River was to facilitate their transportation to the Atlantic Ocean for their shipment to Europe.[232]

With the rise of the struggle for the independence of the Congo, other sociocultural factors associated with the unique history of the eastern Congo became important anti-Belgian (and European in general) tools. In Maniema for example, Kiswahili and Islam were gradually used as icons of colonial resistance. In this region, which is the biggest home for Congolese Muslims, it is important to note that Zanzibari occupation did not occur simultaneously with the conversion to Islam. According to Bimangu and Tshibangu, most people in Maniema and Kisangani only converted to Islam from the 1930s because they viewed Christian missions, especially Catholic ones, as tools of European domination. While Christian missions preached against many local traditional beliefs in this region, Islam on the other hand, was accepted because, unlike the church, it had nothing really against polygamy.[233] It is also known that on the eve of independence, most of the locals who adopted the Arab-Swahili culture (including Islam and speaking Kiswahili) joined nationalistic political parties such as Lumumba's *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC).[234]

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[228] Fetter, *Colonial rule and regional imbalance,* 138.
[229] Isidore é Nziem Ndaywel, *Histoire générale du Congo: de l'héritage ancien à la République Démocratique,* (Bruxelles: De Boeck & Larsier, 1998), 379.
[230] Ndaywel, *Histoire générale du Congo,*379.
[231] Ndaywel, *Histoire générale du Congo,* 379-380.
[232] Fetter, *Colonial rule and regional imbalance,* 131-132.

Ethno-regionalism in the struggle for Independence

The 1950s is an important decade in the struggle against colonialism in the Belgian Congo. The country experienced winds of change, especially in Léopoldville. Since its establishment as the capital of the Belgian Congo in 1923, Léopoldville attracted people from all over the country with ambitions ranging from education to employment and business opportunities. Of the four of Congo's ethno-regional groups, Bangala and Bakongo were the first to populate the capital since-precolonial time. They also formed the majority of the Belgian colonial labour because the earliest colonial posts were set in their homelands.[235] For the politically ambitious from any part of the Congo, however, Leopoldville was the right place to be in the late fifties in order to enter the political and independence movement led by the *évolués*. [236]

Regional politics and ethnicism largely shaped the struggle for the independence of the Congo in the 1950s. The four regional groups – Baswahili, Bakongo, Bangala and Baluba – which were engineered by Belgians about three decades earlier, and ethnic groupings quickly turned into niches of political movements. This is not unique to Congo. Berman who revisited the invention of ethnicity in Africa during the "inter-war decades" [237] argues that "ethnicities were, in particular, the creations of elites seeking the basis for a conservative modernization".[238] On his research in East Africa, Peterson also notes that "ethnic patriotism" that emerged in the first half of the 20th century was necessary as it served as the "framework in which self-interested cultural entrepreneurs responded to the post-war crisis of social discipline".[239] By the late 1950s, what Berman terms "the politics of political tribalism"[240] was already well established in the Congo as the numerous ethnic associations across the country and in Kinshasa, in particular, turned into political parties competing to lead the very soon to be independent Congo.

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[233] Bimangu and Tshibangu, "Contribution à l'histoire de l'implantation de l'Islam au zaïre," 229-230.
[234] Bimangu and Tshibangu, "Contribution à l'histoire de l'implantation de l'Islam au zaïre," 230.
[235] Fetter, *Colonial Imbalance*, 130-132.
[236] A class of Congolese intellectual elite or "petty bourgois elite" who led the movement for the independence of the Congo in the late 1950s. See Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 77-81.
[237] Berman, "Ethnicity, patronage and the African state," 322.
[238] Berman, "Ethnicity, patronage and the African state," 305.

In the 1950s, a number of political parties emerged in the Congo. They include ABAKO (*Alliance de Bakongo*) led by Joseph Kasavubu, CONAKAT (*Confederation des Associations Tribales de Katanga*) of Moise Tshombe, and Lumumba's MNC (*Mouvement National Congolais*).[241] Nzongola-Ntalaja argues that each of these political party leaders' aims were first and foremost to promote their own ethnic groups. For example ABAKO was originally understood as a "cultural association for the promotion of Kikongo".[242] And if it was not for its "solid political base among the Kongo masses in Kinshasa and the Lower Congo", ABAKO could never have become the "head of the Congolese independence movement".[243] The eastern region also joined the independence movement through forming their own political parties, joining the existing ones, or allying themselves with others to form more powerful ones.

The eastern region of Congo was also active during the 1950s' political awakening led from the capital, Kinshasa. But there were also political parties which were formed in the eastern region, particularly the Kivu region. However, unlike those that emerged from the western region, mainly the capital, most of those formed in the eastern Congo, in addition to being strongly ethnic-based, were either formed in alliance or sympathised with the Belgians and other Europeans in their region. In other words, they were pro-European.[244] The most prominent of these political parties and which were recognised at independence in 1960 include the *Alliance Rural Progressiste* (ARP), the *Parti National du Progrès* (PNP) and the *Centre de Regroupement Africain* (CEREA). At the eve of independence, PNP was the most infamous for being a colonial- and chiefs-based party. In Kirotshe (North Kivu), another party favoured by Europeans and ethnic chiefs was the *Alliance Rural Progressiste* (ARP). The party's primary aim was "to unify those who live outside the big cities and to create obstacle to the influence of the growing extra-traditional elements".[245] ARP supported federalism and believed in collaboration with the Europeans, especially those "who love the rural areas".[246] The latter were the farmers of various European nationalities who invaded the fertile lands of the Kivu after the First World War.[247] ARP was greatly supported by the Belgo-Congolese Union and was perceived as "highly moderate" and backed by "tribal leaders" of Bahunde, Bahavu, Banande and also Bashi in North Kivu and South Kivu in 1960. ARP was so popular before Independence that it won the elections over other bigger and supposedly nationalist parties from the "Kivu-Maniema" such as CEREA and MNC/L.[248] CEREA in particular, despite its fame in the Kivu region since 1958, failed to stand up among mega political parties such as ABAKO and MNC/L. The latter was its biggest competition since 1959 when it opened offices in the Kivu region. In fact, MNC/L was ahead of CEREA at a national level in membership and popularity because it was represented in all the provinces before independence, while CEREA was only in Kivu and Kinshasa. CEREA was also less progressive compared to other leading political parties in Kinshasa. According to Verhaegen, when ABAKO and MNC/L were already advocating for instant independence and boycotting the Belgian Parliament's authority, CEREA was peacefully negotiating for the fixation of Independence Day. It was only from January 1959 that CEREA became a supporter of the idea of "independence now" after a few meetings in which they revised their status, doctrine and new strategies to follow regarding the country's decolonisation.[249]

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[239] Dereck R. Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: a history of dissent, c. 1935-1972*. No. 122 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 26. See also Richard Banégas, "Côte d'Ivoire: patriotism, ethnonationalism and other African modes of self-writing," *African Affairs* 105, no. 421 (2006), 535-552.

[240] Berman, "Ethnicity, patronage and the African state," 336.

[241] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo,* 83.

[242] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo,* 82.

[243] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo,* 82.

[244] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo,* 82-84.

Like in other regions such as Kinshasa and Katanga, in 1959, ethnic associations in the Kivu region mutated into political parties, sometimes by allying themselves to well-established ones. Unlike ABAKO, CONAKAT and other political parties with names that pointed directly to their ethno-regional origin, the names of political parties that emerged in the eastern Congo in the late 1950s were not obvious about their leanings. For example, despite presenting itself as nationalist, CEREA was not exempt from ethnicism and regionalism. In addition to being founded in August 1958 in Bukavu by three men belonging to the Bashi ethnic group, CEREA's major objectives included "develop[ing] the culture and knowledge of the members".[250] There were however other political parties that had names that clearly indicated their ethnic roots. One well-known example includes UNERGA (*Union de Warega*) – an association of the Barega (an ethnic group from the Kivu region) diaspora of Burundi (Bujumbura, precisely) founded in 1945. UNERGA started as a football team of Barega, and thus entered into Congolese history as one of the first Congolese sport associations. A branch of UNERGA was created in Bukavu in 1950 with the major objective being to regroup Barega from Pangi, Mwenga, Shabunda and Walikale. UNERGA collapsed because of internal conflicts due to the different origins of its members. Its former members allied themselves with PNP and ARP in the 1960 elections.[251] The other party was the *Essor Social des Bashis* (ESSOBA) founded in Bukavu. This organisation's aim was to "defend the interests of the Bashi, principally in Bukavu".[252] Other examples include the *Alliance Nationale de Wazimba* (ANWa), which aimed to assemble all Wazimba in Bukavu, and La *Mutuel de Wakusu du Kivu* (MUWAKI), which was also operating in Léopoldville.[253]

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[245] Cited in Benoit Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo. Vol. 2. Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques* (Bruxelles: CRISP, 1966), 80.
[246] Cited by Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, 80.
[247] Ndeywel, *Histoire Générale du Congo*, 379.
[248] Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, 80-81.
[249] Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, 70-71.
[250] Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, 70.

As the "independence now" movement grew massively in Kinshasa, in the eastern region some new parties were being formed with the sole purpose of preventing more people in joining the nationalist MNC/L. Such parties included the *Mouvement social de Maniema* (MOUSOMA or MSM), created in 1959 in Maniema (Kivu). MOUSOMA was supported by the colonial administration and European business-owners with the hope that it might diminish the success and fame of MNC/L and CEREA in the region.[254] However, while the nationalist leanings of MNC/L was rarely contested, in the Kivu region conflicts related to greed, power struggles, socioeconomic class and the ethnic identities of members greatly tarnished the party.[255] Both Nzongola-Ntalaja and Verhaegen discuss how greed and corruption within MNC/L in Kivu would later lead to the failure of the Lumumbist rebellion, known as the Simba Rebellion, between 1962 and 1964.

The early 1960s in the Congo were marked by a number of unrests of a secessionist nature along ethno-regional lines.[256] Although immediately after independence in 1960 there were uprising and secessions in regions such as Katanga and Kasai, the Simba Rebellion shook

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[251] Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, 84-85.
[252] Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, 89.
[253] Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, 89.
[254] Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, 76-78.
[255] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 83.
[256] The most memorable of them include the Katanga secession (1960), the assassination of Lumumba (1961) and the Simba rebellion (1964-1967). These events emerged as part of the dynamics of the Cold War in the Congo. See Jacques B. de La Buissière and Georges-Henri Dumont, "Les autorités belges et la décolonisation du Congo," *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP* 18 (2010), 64; Jean-Francois Orru, and Rémi Pelon, and Philippe Gentilhomme," Le diamant dans la géopolitique africaine," *Afrique contemporaine* 1 (2007), 184-189.

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Congo the most because it was a people's war for the "second" or "total" independence of the Congo. It threatened both the political powers in Kinshasa and the economic interests of the global superpowers (mostly the anti-Soviets) in the country. But greed over access to and control of wealth and ethno-regionalism among the Simba Rebellion pioneers would only lead to another missed opportunity. In 1965 Mobutu Sese Seko, with the help of western superpowers and mercenaries, crushed the Lumumbists, ended the rebellion and became the President of the Congo for three decades. His reign, such as that of his predecessors and the colonial regime, remained centred on the western region, and he surrounded himself with his ethnic kin and friends. Lingala, his language, and that of the geopolitical west of the Congo, remained the language of power until another rebellion, once again led from the eastern region (like the Simba) led to his ousting in 1997. The struggle to oust Mobutu emerged, once again, as an ethno-regional power struggle between the geopolitical east and west of the Congo.

Ethno-regional identity and the politics of nation-building in Mobutu's era

The wheels of ethno-regionalism were already set in motion with the Belgian colonial administration and how it dealt with the "language question" in relation to identities in the Congo.[257] It is through this process that some regional and ethnic groups were socioculturally, economically and even politically elevated above others. I discussed earlier how the struggle for independence was highly shaped by regionalism, tribalism and other forms of stratification. According to Lentz, however, regional consciousness is a step away from ethnicism, which developed in Africa after the Second World War. However, she sees sub-regional and ethnic identities as continuously interfering with the continent's development.[258] Kalulambi reinforces Lentz's argument for the case of the DRC by arguing that in the 1950s there was an attempt to unify the Congolese under one nation, but this failed largely because ethnic conflicts were fuelling "political ambitions" on the eve of independence.[259] Focusing on the Baluba ethnic group, Kalulambi concludes that the "nation" in the sense of "collective and political memory" did not translate into a unifying history of

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[257] Fabian, *Language and Colonial Power*.

[258] Carola Lentz, "Colonial constructions and African initiatives: the history of ethnicity in Northwestern Ghana," *Ethnos* 65, no. 1 (2000), 128.

[259] Kalulambi, *Etre Luba au XX ieme Siecle*, 182.

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Congolese people.[260] Indeed when Mobutu ascended to power, he invested his leadership in nationalist projects resembling a genuine move to decolonising the country. Ironically, this nationalism became the very foundation of his dictatorship.

To ensure the success of Congo's "second republic", Mobutu "skilfully consolidated a new regime which was unitary and bureaucratic".[261] Within just two years in the presidency, Mobutu banned all other political parties. This "unitary constitution", as Manning calls it, was meant to achieve nationalism.[262] For Mobutu, the equation was simple: "multipartism = divisions, tribalism, regionalism".[263] Having argued that, Mobutu proceeded the idea that "monopartism = integrator model of all the Zairian ethnic groups for the emergence of a national consciousness".[264] It is in this spirit that his *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR) became the *parti unique* until the early 1990s. Through all this, Mobutu aimed at showing the Congolese that his government was inclusive and against any form of discrimination and ethnic divisions or favouritism. As argued in his recent biography, Mobutu's promise to restore a "unitary Congo" was accomplished to a considerable extent. This could be seen through his redrawing of the map of the Congo by shrinking its provinces from twenty one left by the Belgians at the Congo's independence to twelve in the early 1970s. This, as Langellier argues, suppressed "smaller provinces" which emerged out of ethnicism rooted in the early Belgian native administration in the Congo.[265] Indeed in 1974, the new constitution prohibited discrimination based on "racial or ethnic belongings".[266] Mobutu knew that tribalism and ethnicism were a threat for nation-building, but their "instrumentalisation" was crucial in achieving the political power he needed and in maintaining it.[267]

According to Snyder, Mobutu did not just limit the "growth of opposition" but also made sure that it remained divided under ethno-regional lines. According to Snyder, Mobutu's strategy to remain in power consisted of "exacerbating regional and ethnic identities, thereby fragmenting civil society and impending broad-based mobilisation" against his politics.[268]

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[260] Kalulambi, *Etre Luba au XX ieme Siecle*, 179.
[261] Patrick Manning, *Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa 1880-1995* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 150.
[262] Manning, *Francophone Sub-saharan Africa*, 150-151.
[263] Kalulambi, *Etre Luba*, 183.
[264] Kalulambi, *Etre Luba*, 183.
[265] Jean-Pierre Langellier, *Mobutu* (Paris: Perrin, 2022), 140.
[266] Ntumba, "Ethnicité, citoyenneté et gouvernementalité," 10-11.
[267] Ntumba, "Ethnicité, citoyenneté et gouvernementalité,"14.
[268] Richard Snyder, "Explaining transitions from neopatrimonial dictatorships," *Comparative Politics* (1992), 392.

This strategy served to aggravate ethnic and regional affiliations, which he encouraged especially among the leaders as the only way to "extract state resources."[269] For this reason, the nation remained largely divided along politicised regional, ethnic and kinship relations in all its aspects. These divisions sustained Mobutu's regime. It is because civil society and intergroup organisations continuously suffered internal divisions that they spectacularly failed in mobilising against Mobutu.[270] Meanwhile, political and economic opportunities remained mostly centralised in Kinshasa, from education to healthcare to international mobility. Poor infrastructures also exacerbated the cost of travelling across the country, mostly from the eastern to western region. As Goyvaerts argues, Congo was divided between Kinshasa on one hand and the rest of the country on the other.[271]

Being himself a Lingala speaker and an ethnic Ngbandi from the Equateur region (one of the riverine regions and home to the Bangala), Mobutu did not just maintain sociopolitical power Lingala acquired during the Belgian colonial time. He also extended its power to the rest of the country by making it the langue of *Forces Armées Zaïroises* (FAZ, the Zairian national army) throughout the entire country.[272] In Kinshasa, however, Lingala played an important role in bringing various ethnic groups closer together and calming tensions among them especially in the early 1960s.[273] But the overwhelmingly perceived hegemony of Lingala over Kikongo, Tshiluba and Kiswahili was certainly caused by the privilege both Lingala speakers and the Bangala people in particular received in Mobutu's era.[274] This situation changed drastically when Mobutu's reign was put to an end by a rebellion led from the eastern Congo in 1996.

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[269] Snyder, "Explaining transitions from neopatrimonial dictatorships," 392.
[270] Snyder, "Explaining transitions from neopatrimonial dictatorships," 193.
[271] Goyvaerts, "Power, ethnicity and the remarkable rise of Lingala in Bukavu," 38.
[272] Goyvaerts, "Power, ethnicity and the remarkable rise of Lingala in Bukavu," 37-38.
[273] Goyvaerts, "Power, ethnicity and the remarkable rise of Lingala in Bukavu," 37.
[274] It is also known among Congolese that Mobutu could also socioeconomically penalise an entire region if he happened to have an enemy from that region or ethnic group. For example, it is believed among Baluba that Mobutu did not develop infrastructures in Kasai, or even built universities there because of his political conflict with Etienne Tshisekedi. Interview with Dr Pierre Mulamba, Cape Town, 12/ 07/ 2015.

Kabila and the rise of *Baswahili*

The 1990s were marked by a number of socioeconomic and political crises in the Congo. Some of them represented turning moments in the country's history and in the region more broadly.[275] The first was in 1991 when Mobutu reluctantly allowed multipartitism and launched a transitional government. This period also marked the end of the Cold War and, consequently, the beginning of the end of Mobutu's glory, rooted in the support of Western superpowers, just like that of other dictators of his time across the continent. The second was the violent conflicts in neighbouring Great Lakes countries, including Rwanda and Burundi, in the early1990s, leading to a number of refugees pouring into Zaire.[276] The third was the war led by Laurent Kabila and his *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo* (AFDL) to oust Mobutu, which started in the Kivu region in 1996, followed by a war to oust L. Kabila himself in 1998, which marked the beginning of a violent conflict that caused millions of deaths and whose repercussions are still felt.[277] Of interest for this research is how *Baswahili-Kinois* identities manifested themselves during both the war to oust Mobutu and the unfolding Congo crisis.

In October 1996, the Kivu was the first region to fall under AFDL, whose rebellion was widely embraced as a "liberation".[278] The strategies used by L. Kabila to convince that indeed his war was a struggle to free the Congo from Mobutu was, however, a *déjà vu*. Throughout the many rallies he held in the region after the ADFL took control of it, L. Kabila made use of nationalistic discourse in which he brandished his Lumumbist identity. Kabila's combatant's skills and nationalism have never been that convincing however, given the criticism of those who knew him during the Lumumbist rebellion about three decades earlier, such as Che Guevara.[279]

By the time L. Kabila returned to the Congolese political scene in 1996 as the AFDL leader, he was not only known as Lumumbist (and Simba Rebel leader veteran), but also as anti-Mobutist. The two political identities were enough to resuscitate people's hope for a

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[275] A good analysis of the regional dimension of the Congo crisis can be found in Filip Reyntjens, *The great African war: Congo and regional geopolitics, 1996-2006* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[276] Gerard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan genocide, and the making of a continental catastrophe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Susan Thomson, Rwanda: From Genocide to Precarious Peace (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018) 33-35.

[277] See for example Reyntjens, *The Great African War;* Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*.

[278] See for example Reyntjens, *The Great African War;* Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*.

[279] Thomas Turner, "Kabila returns, in a cloud of uncertainty," *African Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1997), 24-25.

nationalist leader they lost in Lumumba's brutal assassination, and thus mobilise a great number of Congolese who had endured three decades of Mobutu's regime. L. Kabila's ethno-regional identity, however, played a crucial role in gaining him popularity in the east and south-east of the country and other *Baswahili* regions. Kabila was both a *Muswahili* and a *Katangais*.[280] In other words, he was an ethnic Mulubakat from Katanga who lived in the Kivu region, more precisely in the Fizi region, where he was famous especially among the Babembe ethnic group, who were a strong base of the Simba rebellion.[281] Thus, in his first public (re)appearance in Bukavu in 1996 as AFDL's spokesperson, L. Kabila did his best to reassure Zairians that the rebellion was indeed a Congolese one, not a foreign attack as many anticipated, and especially not the accomplishment of the rumour circulating since 1962 that foreigners were planning to secure themselves a territory in the eastern Congo.[282] People quickly embraced the AFDL as a liberation movement because its leader, beside his Lumumbist and anti-Mobutuism, was a son of the region. This was reaffirmed through his perfect French and "Kiswahili safi" ("proper" or "clean" Kiswahili) he employed in public speeches.[283] This Kiswahili *safi* was a variant which most eastern Congolese recognised from the *Sarufi* (Kiswahili grammar) lessons from primary and secondary schools. It the mainstraim Kiswahili from Tanzania, where L. Kabila was exiled after the defeat of the Simba Rebellion in 1965.

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[280] Unlike Mobutu, L. Kabila's speeches were not so much about ethnicism and regionalism in the Congo. But after the 1998 attacks by the RCD rebels, he invested so much effort in calling upon Congolese to unite against the "new enemies", his former allies from the countries bordering the eastern Congo, mainly "Rwandans". He openly told Congolese people in numerous speeches that they were the enemies, which lead to violent attacks on people of Rwandan ancestries and Congolese whose physical morphology suited the "Tutsi" stereotypes. See for example Rene Lemarchand, "The fire in the great lakes, *Current History* 98, no. 628 (1999), 195-201; "The August 1998 Rebellion and Affected Groups," https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a7fb0.html, accessed on 21/10/2021. See One of L. Kabila's interviews here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uae3SJFXLPQ, especially from 9:00.

[281] For more on Babembe and their involvement in people's liberation movement since from Congo's independence to Kabila era, see Benoit Verhaegen, "Les rébellions populaires au Congo en 1964," *Cahiers d'études africaines* (1967), 345-359; Koen Vlassenroot, "Citizenship, identity formation & conflict in South Kivu: the case of the Banyamulenge," *Review of African Political Economy* 29, no. 93-94 (2002), 499-516; Judith Verweijen, "From autochthony to violence? Discursive and coercive social practices of the Mai-Mai in Fizi, eastern DR Congo," *African Studies Review* (2015), 157-180.

[282] It is mostly the Rwandans who have always been accused of trying to secure land in the Congo. See for example Jean-Claude Willame, "Laurent Désiré Kabila: les origines d'une anabase," *Politique africaine* 72 (1998), 71; Monique Mas, "République démocratique du Congo. De Mobutu à Kabila: Les deux guerres du Congo (1996-1998)," *RFI*, 10/07/2006.

[283] All contemporaries of the AFDL rebellion from Kivu interviewed on this question confirmed that it was after the many speeches of L. Kabila in French and Kiswahili that they believed him and his struggle to liberate them against Mobutu. They also recalled how his Kiswahili was polished, the Tanzanian Kiswahili. Interviews were conducted in Cape Town between December 2015 and December 2017.

L. Kabila and his AFDL recruited young Kivucian soldiers from October 1996 and continued to recruit in each region as they marched on Kinshasa in May 1997. After proclaiming the liberation of Kinshasa, which also marked the end of the Mobutu regime, the *Kinois* almost immediately contested the liberators. In Kinshasa, the victory of the AFDL army brought them power which they abused on civilians. Among other things, *Kinoises* (Kinshasa women) had to choose carefully what they wore in public immediately after AFDL took over. Anything perceived as indecent or immoral was aggressively "corrected", almost in the way of the imposed dress code of Mobutu's *"recours à l'authenticité"* since the 1970s.[284] If a woman was found dressed indecently (for example, wearing short or tight clothes), she risked public humiliation. This included insults, being beaten up, or worse, being stripped in public.[285] The behaviour of the *kadogo* and their *wakubwa* (officers or "bosses") was often interpreted as a *Baswahili* behaviour, not only in Kinshasa but also in other non-Kiswahili-speaking provinces of the western DRC. They were not only perceived as the "new Bangala" but also as "foreigners", non-locals.

Research on how "people from below" understood the wars to oust Mobutu and that to oust L. Kabila found that in Kinshasa and other provinces in the western region these wars were understood by ordinary people as a foreign invention and occupation. The foreignness of the AFDL was defined by western Congolese at national and regional level.[286] At national level, L. Kabila's army and staff were perceived as non-Congolese because they included recruits and collaborators from the eastern Congo bordering countries including Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and even Tanzania.[287] They were also "strangers" at a regional level for not being from the "east" and not speaking Lingala. By "east", as Ngonga explained, *Kinois* specifically meant "le Kivu" (the Kivu region).[288] Turner argues that victory of the AFDL in Kinshasa, the Lingala speakers, whose majority belonged to the Bakongo and Bangala ethnic

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[284] See for example Mushete Ngindu, "Le propos du recours à l'authenticité et le christianisme au Zaïre," *Cahiers des religions africaines* 8, no. 16 (1974), 209-230; Bob White, "L'incroyable machine d'authenticité: l'animation politique et l'usage public de la culture dans le Zaïre de Mobutu," *Anthropologie et sociétés* 30, no. 2 (2006), 43-63.

[285] Maido M. A. Ngonga, "Survivre à la guerre des autres: Un défi populaire en RDC: RDC, la guerre vue d'en bas," *Politique africaine* 84 (2001), 44. This is also broad topic which involves masculinity and patriarchal beliefs in which not only these soldiers grew up but also the people's beliefs around military identity in the Congo. On military identity, see for example Godfrey Maringira, "Militarised minds: The lives of ex-combatants in South Africa," *Sociology* 49, no. 1 (2015), 72-87.

[286] See Richard Banégas and Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "RDC, La Guerre Vue D'en Bas. Special Issue," *Politique Africaine* 84 (2000).

[287] See also Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 225-229; Reyntjens, *The Great African War.*

[288] Ngonga, "Survivre dans la guerre des autres," 38-39.

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groups, reacted against *Baswahili* "strangers", who were now ruling the Congo.[289] *Kinois*' resentment of the new liberators, and the assumption that they were being punished for their regional identity, exacerbated with the violence with which *kadogo* proceeded to address issues related to "moral economy", in Garbin and Godin words, in Kinshasa.[290] They did so by engaging in a number of punitive actions against what they perceived as social vices, including limiting the number of people on public transport, imposing a certain "decent" way of dressing on women which included the banning of tights and short dresses, etc.[291] Failure to conform with the new norms lead to public humiliation, verbal or physical abuse and other forms of punishments.[292] As Kiswahili became widely associated with army violence (just like Lingala for Mobutu's recently defeated army) and foreign occupation, [293] elsewhere in Kiswahili speaking regions, such as the east where the rebellion and their leaders originated, ordinary people were preoccupied with the "kind" of Kiswahili the new liberators spoke as it was familiar but "foreign".

Researchers have already tackled the "centrality of foreign languages" in war time.[294] Footit and Kelly, for example, argue that war is often expected to engender its "own language landscapes" that emerge from "all participants in the conflicts".[295] In the case of the Congo War and its aftermath, the Kiswahili of the AFDL army pointed to local and non-local parts involved in it. In fact, the Congo War has largely been debated both in terms of Congolese identity and citizenship and has largely been attributed to people "of questionable nationality", in Nzongola-Ntalaja's words. [296] Therefore the "kind" of Kiswahili that was spoken by the AFDL army largely points to those dynamics. People in Kivu referred to it as *Kiswahili ya bajeshi* (soldiers' Kiswahili).[297] With this Kiswahili, a number of Kiswahili

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[289] Turner, "Kabila returns," 32.

[290] Garbin and Godin, "Saving the Congo," 117. Pype's research also found that in Kinshasa, elderly people who lived in Kinshasa in the colonial and early post-colonial time (when Kinshasa was still called Leopoldville) find it now characterized with "anti-social and immoral survival behaviour" that seem to be inspired with or propagated through the country's popular culture, mostly music. Katrien Pype, "Dancing to the rhythm of Léopoldville: nostalgia, urban critique and generational difference in Kinshasa's TV music shows," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 29, no. 2 (2017), 166.

[291] Ngonga, "Survivre dans la guerre des autres," 44.

[292] Such as undressing an indecently dressed woman in public.

[293] According to Jackson, the Congo War also reinforced Swahiliphone/Lingalophone around authochtony discourse. See Jackson, "Sons of which soil," 114.

[294] Hilary Footitt, and Michael Kelly, eds. *Languages and the Military: alliances, occupation and peace building* (Basingstoke, GB: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); J. Dawes, *The language of war: literature and culture in the US from the Civil War through World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[295] Footitt and Kelly, *Languages and the Military*, 1-2.

[296] Nzongola-Ntalaja, The Congo, 229. See also Ngonga, "Survivre dans la guerre des autres," 39-44; Jackson, "Sons of which soil", 114.

[297] "Kiswahili of the military", which was closer to the Kiswahili spoken by the Ugandan and Rwandan army.

concepts were added to the local Kiswahili vocabulary. Some of these concepts were familiar to other Kiswahili speaking countries such as Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. These familiar Kiswahili words, however, were issued new meanings that were related to the military. For example, army titles, which just the day before were referred to as *commandant* (officer) or the Lingala word *mokonzi* (chief, boss or lord), disappeared to give place to *afande* (as "colonel" are called in Tanzania and other countries such as Uganda where Kiswahili is the language of the army), *mukubwa* ("elder" or "the old one" but in this context it meant chief or boss) and *mzee* (a title enjoyed by Laurent Kabila that means "the elder one"[298]). For the *kadogo*, their "army language" was as important an asset for their "military identity" as wearing plastic boots, a military uniform and carrying a big gun (AK-47) by which they were recognised.[299]

There is less to compare between the *kadogo*'s nine months' glory as front soldiers of the AFDL rebellion and the three decades of Bangala men who held the most envied positions in Mobutu's army as I discuss later.[300] In fact, L. Kabila changed his micro and macro regional politics and leanings after the 1998 RCD attacks by surrounding himself with ethnic Balukat from his Katanga home region and relying on *Kinois* masses, as well as making alliances with countries bordering the western region of the Congo, mainly with Angolans and other SADC countries' nationals, such as Zimbabweans and Namibians. It was these countries that provided him with the mercenaries and logistics that prevented Kinshasa and other provinces in the western region of the Congo to succumb to the RCD attacks in August 1998.[301]

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[298] *Mzee* is also a word associated with both maturity and wisdom. On *Afande*, see for example Human Rights Watch, *Uganda in Eastern DRC: Fueling Political and Ethnic Strife*, 1 March 2001, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a87e8.html, accessed 10 May 2021

[299] In particular, the plastic boots *kadogo* worn from Kivu to Kinshasa in the AFDL were unique to them. Their wakubwa wore proper military boots and were recognised by their revolvers around their belt. For more on military identity, see Godfrey Maringira, "Militarised minds: The lives of ex-combatants in South Africa." *Sociology* 49, no. 1 (2015), 74-75.

[300] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 246.

[301] Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 158-159. Léonard N'Sanda Buleli, "Le Maniema, de la guerre de l'AFDL à la guerre du RCD," *Politique africaine* 4 (2001), 70-72.

The RCD war and the death of L. Kabila

The antagonist relationships between *Kinois* and *Baswahili* took yet another a drastic turn between late 1998 and early 2001 in two events: the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) attacks on the Congo (August 1998) and the death of L. Kabila at the hand of his *kadogo* bodyguard from the Kivu region in January 2001. This war was regionally complex at local and internal levels.[302] The RCD who launched a war to overthrow L. Kabila in 1998 were mostly made of his former AFDL allies from across different regions of the Congo, although backed by Rwanda and Uganda and with the blessings of the United States of America (USA).[303] These alliances confirmed the ongoing rumour throughout the country (not just Kinshasa), since the AFDL attacks in 1996, of a "foreign" occupation masked as a war to liberate the Congo. After L. Kabila cleared that "confusion" through his many political addresses in liberated regions during the nine months period of the AFDL war. However, he and AFDL sympathisers reinforced the non-local version of the RCD attacks. They did so to cover their own responsibilities in the new attacks as well as the real cause behind the attacks.[304] As observed, after the 1998 failed attacks on Kinshasa, L. Kabila publicly addressed the *Kinois* in Lingala, telling them who the enemies of the Congo were, and thanking them for the ways in which they fought to chase the enemy out. After thanking those who used whatever weapons they had in fighting the attackers and their allies in Kinshasa, he emphasised that the attacks were launched by unhappy foreigners in complicity with some Congolese, who did not want to return to their countries after helping in the war against Mobutu. L. Kabila explained that those "foreigners" wanted to stay to loot the wealth of the country. Through this process, L. Kabila also reinforced the western Congolese antipathy toward eastern Congolese by assuring them that indeed the easterners were siding with non-Congolese enemies to disturb the country.[305] Scholars however recognise that despite the involvement of foreigners in the many rebel groups fighting in the Congo during the short rule of L. Kabila, these were largely Congolese people's initiatives.[306]

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[302] For a better understanding of the international and local agents involved in the Congo Wars, see Reyntjens, *The Great African War.*

[303] Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 197; Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 241.

[304] Ngonga, "Survivre dans la guerre des autres," 39-40.

[305] Indeed after the 1998 attacks failed in Kinshasa but succeeded with the occupation of the eastern region of the Congo, antagonism between Baswahili and *Kinois* worsened, occasionally escalating into violence especially toward Kiswahili speakers with Rwandans' stereotyped physical appearance. Ngonga, "Survivre dans la guerre des autres", 44-46.

[306] Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 197; Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 241; Buleli, "La guerre du Maniema," 72; Ngonga, "Survivre dans la guerre des autres," 39-40.

Nzongola-Ntalaja is one of those scholars who paid attention to how people in the Kivu resisted not just the RCD occupation of their region since 1998 but also the central government in Kinshasa. He does so by arguing that local rebel groups such as the Mai Mai and the Simba who were constantly fighting against the RCD in the eastern Congo were not necessarily allied to L. Kabila and his AFDL.[307] In the eastern Congo the RCD was therefore as contested as it was in the rest of the Congo. As Nzongola-Ntalaja further explains, in the Kivu region ordinary people and civil society alike rose against the RCD through protests and denouncing the human rights violations their army members committed on unarmed civilians, such as mass killing,[308] raping and the many losses of human lives, caused by multiple socioeconomic crises and insecurities in the region ever since it fell under their occupation.[309] Thus, both the emergence of the RCD and the everyday resistance of the eastern Congolese were against "external aggression" as well as "new forms of dictatorship by the Kabila's regime".[310] The latter is an important cause behind L. Kabila's Congolese allies rebelling against him, among whom those who sought eastern neighbouring countries' support to overthrow him.

As Schatzberg observed, "while promising democracy to the DRC's 42 million people", L. Kabila "named himself president, claiming broad executive, legislative, and judicial powers pending the adoption of the constitution."[311] Similarly, Nzongola-Ntalaja also questioned L. Kabila's leadership skills by stating that "on two separate occasions" Kabila passed on an opportunity to "unite a country behind him". The first was when he succeeded in overthrowing Mobutu; he could have grabbed that same opportunity to "rebuild social and economic infrastructures" destroyed under Mobutu's regime. The second opportunity he had was after the 1998 RCD attacks to which Kabila could have reacted with a "patriotic war". Moreover, Kabila's dictatorial tendencies were seen in the way that he did not care to include the "democratic forces that have been seeking to democratise Congo during the early 1990s

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[307] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo,* 241.

[308] The Kasika and Makobola massacres are two mass killings of unarmed villagers including women and children on 24th August and 30th December 1998, respectively. In each, at least a 1000 was killed shot, burned in their houses, or mutilated. See "RDC: 22 ans après le massacre, retour à Kasika où la blessure des charniers reste vive," *RFI*, 04/09/2020, https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20200904-rdc-22-ans-apr%C3%A8s-le-massacre-retour-%C3%A0-kasika-o%C3%B9-la-blessure-charniers-reste-vive, accessed on 15/06/2021; "RDC: 21 ans après le massacre de Makobola, les habitants réclament justice," *RFI*, 29/12/2019, at https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20191229-rdc-massacre-makobola-ceremonies-habitants-reclament-justice, accessed on 15/06/ 2021.

[309] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo,* 242.

[310] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 241.

[311] Schatzberg, "Beyond Mobutu: Kabila and the Congo," 69-70.

with the *Conference Nationale Souveraine* (CNS)". Instead, explains Nzongola-Ntalaja, Kabila "opted for personal rule in a typical African fashion, with reliance on relatives and cronies".[312] His "relatives" were obviously the Kiswahili speakers but not those who were among the first to join his war campaign to oust Mobutu – the Kivucians. They were rather the *Katangais*, his home region brothers on whom he continued to rely until his assassination in January 2001.

The ethno-regional rhetoric in the media reports and the investigation into L. Kabila's assassination further exacerbated the east/west tensions, especially in Kinshasa. For example, *Jeune Afrique* quoted Dominique Sakombi, L. Kabila's Minister of Information, saying that "It is a soldier originating from Kivu who shot the President". More interestingly, the author also explains "Kivu" as the "oriental flank of the country occupied by Rwandan and Ugandan forces".[313] Saying a "soldier" alone could not prove enough motive for the assassination. His ethno-regional identity was the most important in depicting the Kivucians as former allies of L. Kabila and now his enemies. And by emphasising that it was a *kadogo*, the media dismissed the assassin's capacity to act alone and at the same time established broader regional and international conspirators behind the assassination.

On the one hand, L. Kabila's assassination confirmed there was indeed a *Baswahili* invasion. On the other hand, it confirmed L. Kabila's claims since his AFDL military campaign in the Kivu in late 1996 that he was a nationalistic leader.[314] Indeed his death was interpreted by the majority of Congolese as a martyrhood in the model of Patrice Lumumba's. And as if the fate of Lumumba was haunting L. Kabila, he was assassinated on the 16th of January 2001 at the eve of the country's commemoration of 40 years since Lumumba's assassination on the 17th of January 1961.[315] Like Lumumba's death and the Cold War politics in Africa, L. Kabila's was also considered a political assassination. Some analysts pointed to both the western enemies and their local collaborators, who included neighbouring countries and local

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[312] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 246.

[313] Here is how it reads in the original online article in French: « C'est un soldat originaire du Kivu [flanc oriental du pays occupé par les troupes rwandaises et ougandaises] qui a tiré sur le président ». See Francis Kpatindé, "Le jour où un simple « *kadogo* » a tué Laurent-Désiré Kabila," *Jeune Afrique*, 16 January 2011.

[314] Schatzberg, "Beyond Mobutu: Kabila and the Congo," 69-70.

[315] For more on Patrice Lumumba's life and political career, see for example Leo Zeilig, *Lumumba: Africa's lost leader* (London: House Publishing, 2008).

Congolese, with the main reasons being to instate a political leadership in the Congo that they could control and to exploit its wealth.[316]

There is a way, however, of looking beyond a politicised ethno-regionalism in the death of L. Kabila. One way of doing it is by focusing on what happened to the thousands of young eastern Congolese young men who formed the *kadogo* battalion and who were positioned in front of all the violent confrontations of the nine months' AFDL war. The young men marched from Kivu to Kinshasa and were known to have been primarily motivated by the socioeconomic promises of the AFDL leaders.[317] In other words, they did not join the AFDL war because L. Kabila and his AFDL group were their ethno-regional brothers. If the eastern Congolese leaders within the AFDL had political ambitions of the eastern Congolese ruling the Congo, ordinary people committed to the struggle such as the young *kadogo* were highly motivated by the economic gains they were promised. Understanding what they endured, the failed promises, and their capacity to avenge themselves is part of acknowledging the agency of "people from below" in the events that culminated into the assassination of L. Kabila.

As scholars[318] argue, the *kadogo's* burden began in 1997 when their leader Anselme Masasu Nindaga[319] was first arrested by L. Kabila accusing him of forming a militia and treason before being secretly assassinated. By then, many *kadogo* were confined in a camp near Kisangani. They were tricked into believing that it was for training purposes after which they were to be integrated in the national army. Hardship in this camp lead to many *kadogo* escaping, some of them joining the pro- and others, the anti-Kabila groups operating in the eastern Congo. Those who remained in Kinshasa were simply wandering about, often confused with street children.[320]

Under the circumstances, it could have been a random soldier from the western Congo region who killed L. Kabila. The ethno-regional political motives could still be found, for L. Kabila was a south-eastern Congolese, not a western Congolese. But perhaps, instead of the *Baswahili* and the neighbouring countries in the eastern Congo as accomplices, it could have

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[316] On Lumumba's assassination and the Cold War in the Congo, see for example Stephen R. Weissman, "What really happened in Congo: the CIA, the murder of Lumumba, and the rise of Mobutu," The Council of Foreign Relations Publication, *Foreign Affairs 93.* (2014).

[317] Koen Vlassenroot and Frank Van Acker, "War as exit from exclusion? The formation of Mayi-Mayi militias in Eastern Congo," *Afrika Focus* 17, no. 1-2 (2001).

[318] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 246; Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 253-255.

[319] Mindaga founded the Revolutionary Movement for the Liberation of Zaire in 1994, one of the groups that came together to form the AFDL in September 1996. He was from South-Kivu.

[320] Van Acker and Vlassenroot, "Les «maï-maï» et les fonctions de la violence milicienne dans l'est du Congo," 107.

been interpreted as the Bakongo's doings in collaboration with countries bordering the western region of Congo, mainly Angola.[321] And if L. Kabila's assassin were a *Kinois* or an ethnic Mungala person, the reason could have been that he was sent by Mobutu's sympathisers unhappy to have lost political power to the *Baswahili*/ *Katangais*. However, laying the blame on Baswahili – Kivucians in particular – was inevitable mostly because of the war and occupation of the Kivu region by the RCD. For the majority of western Congolese and *Katangais*, the identity of the assassin, and his relation to Kabila as his trusted bodyguard, further proved that the *Baswahili* were hungry for political power and were working with foreign enemies of the Congo.

Such assumptions from many western Congolese persisted during the reign of Joseph Kabila who literally succeeded his father Laurent Kabila after his death. In power from 2001 to 2018, Joseph Kabila has also failed to reconcile the geopolitical west and east of the country. More than his late father, Joseph Kabila's *Muswahili* identity made him a very unpopular leader throughout the whole of Congo, especially in the western Congo region, and particularly in Kinshasa. And having failed to end the conflict in the eastern region, he is often seen with suspicion or scepticism, either as someone unable to secure the country or as an accomplice in the conflict. In his era, ethno-regionalism feuds between *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* have exacerbated to the extent that all *Baswahili* have been stereotypically associated with Kabilism. They are also called traitors, the ones who sold the country.

Conclusion

The identities embedded in *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* cannot be discussed in isolation from the history of foreign penetration and occupation of the Congo in the late 19th century, namely by the Belgians and the "Afro-Arabs" from East Africa. The languages – Kiswahili and Lingala – could have developed independently from imperial occupations in the eastern and western Congo respectively because both regions feature in the rich history of pre-colonial African states as established "contact zones" long before the arrival of the Afro-Arabs and the Belgians in the late 19th century. It is, however, the Belgian colonialists' classification and management of "native" identities that are the root of regionalisation, ethnicisation and politicisation of identities embedded in Lingala and Kiswahili. Initially, it was order, control and the politics of divide and rule that inspired the Belgians to promote Lingala, Kiswahili, Kikongo and Tshiluba out of the hundreds of languages spoken on Congolese soil. While the Kikongo and Tshiluba ethnicity is rooted within the history of pre-European kingdoms in the region, Lingala and Kiswahili were rather atypical, mostly because they were spoken by people of various ethnic backgrounds in the west and east of the Congo respectively.

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[321] Angola is one of the SADC countries accused of having a hand in L. Kabila's assassination. See for example Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 253-255.

I contend that the *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* identities do not only symbolise the Afro-Arab and Belgian occupations of the late 19th century, but also their cultural and socioeconomic impacts on people and place. The precolonial history of the east and west of Congo and the chronological gap in Belgian colonial control of the two regions are important causes for the continuous imbalance between the two regions in post-independence Congo. The latter did not only result in an unequal socioeconomic state between the two regions, and the failure to successfully unite them in terms of infrastructure, but also translated into a political power struggle between the two regions, especially in post-independence Congo.

During the struggle for independence and in the post-colonial period, Congolese politicians built their power upon the very problematic Belgian identity politics in the Congo. From Kasavubu to Mobutu and the Kabilas, manipulation and instrumentalisation of ethno-regionalism continued to shape the cycle of political power dynamics in the Congo. The fear that each ethno-regional group be dominated by the other, generated tensions and power struggles between regions, especially after the fall of Mobutu. I argued that in this particular period, events that exacerbated antagonism between the eastern and western Congolese include the war to oust Mobutu and the AFDL army victory in Kinshasa, the 1998 RCD attacks and the beginning of the conflict in the eastern region, Laurent Kabila’s assassination and the persisting conflicts in the eastern Congo.

The above, and the sociopolitical crisis they brought in the Congo, are the major reasons for a mass exodus of many Congolese to countries such as South Africa, where this research was conducted among Congolese migrant communities. Focusing on the Congolese of Cape Town and in the post-Mobutu period, the rest of the dissertation discusses the politics of regional identities in the way in which *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* negotiate their migrant status and social networks in South Africa.

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Chapter Two

Baswahili and *Kinois* in Cape Town: Ethno-regional identity and refugee paper networks

Pascal – a Congolese tailor from Bukavu (South Kivu, DRC) who lived in Delft (a township in Cape Town) – arrived in South Africa, more precisely in Durban, in 1995.[322] Pascal and his family moved to Burundi in the 1980s after his relatives who lived there told them that Burundi was a good country for business and job opportunities, and it paid better than in Zaire. Both his parents were tailors. He became a skilful tailor himself just from observing and helping his parents in their atelier. Pascal left Burundi in 1993 with other Burundians, and headed to Tanzania after the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye, which plunged the country into an ethnic war. In Tanzania he declared himself a refugee from Burundi fleeing ethnic violence. He left Tanzania for Malawi after hearing that Burundian refugees were better taken care of there and that there were prospects of a possible relocation to North America. His refugee days in Malawi were interrupted after he received news about Burundian refugees being well received in South Africa. He was also told that in South Africa the process of relocating refugees to western countries (including the USA, Canada, Australia and the Scandinavian countries) was faster than in Malawi.

Pascal entered South Africa through Mozambique. He was mostly motivated by the fact that in South Africa refugees were not put into camps but were free to find jobs and were immediately integrated into the local community. This suited him, as he also needed to support his family back in Burundi. He arrived in South Africa in 1995 and declared himself a refugee from Burundi and was issued an Asylum Seeker document. The Congolese community he found in Durban was welcoming and helped him secure a small space in a hair salon to set up his sewing workshop. Between 1997 and 1998, Pascal struggled to renew his

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[322] Pascal Abdul Kigambi passed away in August 2017 in Bujumbura surrounded by his family. He returned there to seek medical treatment after days in the South African healthcare with no progress. My last recorded interview with Pascal was on 15/06/2016 although we often met and chatted at his workshop in Delft and at the Lusu-Lega (the ethnic association of Barega [from the Kivu region] of Cape Town) meetings before he got ill. Pascal was a co-founder of the Lusu-Lega of Durban in 1997. He led the association as its President from 1997 to 2000 when he officially moved to Cape Town.

asylum seeker document at the Home Affairs in Durban. He decided to travel to Cape Town following the news of refugee status documents being easily issued to Congolese there. Pascal visited the Cape Town Refugee Reception Office and declared himself a newcomer, this time as a Congolese refugee fleeing the war in the Kivu region. He was issued a new asylum seeker document on a Congolese nationality. In 2000, he moved to Cape Town for good after hearing news of job opportunities, safety, and immigrants' businesses flourishing there with less competition than in Durban. The same year, he applied for refugee status documents at the Cape Town Refugee Reception Office. He received it in the first interview, in which he fabricated a narrative that he was forcibly recruited among the Mai Mai rebels (in the Kivu region, east of the DRC) and had to flee the country because he was considered a deserter for not wanting to stay in the movement. That was despite the fact that Pascal had not been in the DRC since 1986 when he left to join his family in Burundi. One of his friends he met in Tanzania in the early 1990s, who was then living in Cape Town, was the one who advised Pascal about the story to tell during his interview.

Pascal got his first job as a security guard in an apartment complex in Cape Town, also through his networks of friends, and later opened his first *atelier de couture* (sewing workshop) in Delft where, during the time I interviewed him, he was working. He resided in the same neighbourhood with his South African girlfriend. His daughter, born in Durban to a Zulu mother in 1997, visited him regularly.

Pascal's story and that of others I will be referring to throughout this chapter are crucial to understanding the Congolese's various practices of negotiating immigrant identity in South Africa since the 1990s. His story highlights the sociopolitical situation in Congo's neighbouring countries and how they shaped the identity politics with which Congolese negotiated their migrant identity in South Africa before the Congo war started in 1998. It also raises issues related to changes in the South African migration policies and how the Congolese adapted to them in their quest for refugee status in South Africa. Moreover, Pascal's story touches on the significance of social networks in the first step to settling in and integrating socioeconomically in South Africa. Most importantly, his story shows the importance of selective narratives of the Congo conflict in ensuring a positive outcome for the application of refugee papers. Being from the conflict zone of the DRC and mastering the details and dynamics of the Congo war/ conflict are crucial in motivating for a refugee status in South Africa. The story also shows the importance of social networks, especially those knowledgeable of both the Congo conflict and the refugee paper process in South Africa. And finally, through Pascal's story, one can only imagine how difficult it can be for those who are not from the conflict zone of the Congo to make their case for refugee status in South Africa.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which the Congolese have negotiated their immigrant identity in South Africa on the basis of their home region identities, focusing on the *Baswahili* (eastern Congolese, those from the conflict zone of the DRC) and *Bato ya mangala* (western Congolese) and the politics of their home region with which they have negotiated their refugee identity in Cape Town. In general, I look at the regionalisation of the DRC war/ conflict in the determination of the refugee status of the Congolese in South Africa and the way in which it has contributed to the growing refugee paper networks shaped by ethno-regionalism among the Congolese of Cape Town. I contend that the question regarding which region of the DRC one hails from and how directly the conflict has affected them is not just crucial in the outcome of a refugee status application. It is also set to discriminate against Congolese groups from regions other than the eastern Congo. However, the endeavour of all Congolese to answer the above question for a positive outcome in their refugee-related documentation has turned the eastern Congolese identity as well as the narrative of the experience of violence of the Congo conflict into the most valuable trading commodity in the refugee paper networks of the Congolese in Cape Town.

This chapter is largely based on information I collected during my fieldwork among Congolese refugees and asylum seekers in Cape Town, including observation and interviews. I have interviewed both *Kinois* and *Kivucians* to answer the main question on the impacts of their home region to their refugee document applications. I also interviewed those Congolese involved in refugee paper networks. I paid particular attention to the views of those who have been in South Africa since the late 1990s for two main reasons. The first reason is that they were able to list the changes in the South African refugee system in handling the two major waves of Congolese immigrants in the post-Mobutu era (the first being from 1996 to 2004 and the second from 2005 to the current time). The second reason is that they could help write the trends in the politics of identity used by Congolese to overcome paper challenges.

The Mobutu era and asylum seeking in South Africa

In the heyday of President Mobutu's regime, migration to South Africa was a luxury mostly enjoyed by skilled migrant workers as well as rich politicians and businessmen of Zaire.[323] This was made possible because of the trade relations between the two countries and the friendship between President Mobutu and President Botha.[324] "Ordinary" Congolese began arriving in South Africa often by "foot" (clandestinely) along with other citizens from war-torn countries along their eastern and western borders from the early 1990s. Zairians did not just share the routes to South Africa with these citizens; they also shared the strategies with which they negotiated migrant status – as refugees – in the countries they crossed or sojourned until they reached South Africa. Eastern Congolese often travelled along with other Great Lakes Region citizens while western Congolese in general followed Angolans fleeing the Angolan Civil War. Once in South Africa, these nationals, as well as the Congolese arriving with them, declared themselves asylum seekers or refugees.

The socioeconomic and political crises in Zaire made the global news in the last decade of the Mobutu era. Among other things, "public employees were not receiving their salaries for months or even years, and the army and police that were supposed to protect citizens became, on the contrary, citizens' nightmares."[325] However, despite these socioeconomic crises, Zaire also experienced a major influx of migrants from its western and eastern neighbouring countries in the 1990s. Ethnic violence in the neighbouring Great Lakes Region countries (Rwanda and Burundi) led to Zaire becoming one of the major receivers of refugees from these countries.[326] Zaire therefore compromised its national security by hosting hundreds of Angolans fleeing the civil war ever since the late 1970s.[327] According to Adelman, some of these refugees, while on the Zairean soil, engaged in "the continuation of violence as a mode for settling conflicts in the states from which they fled and in destabilizing the neighbouring

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[323] Denis Kazadi Kadima, "Congolese Immigrants in South Africa," *Codesria Bulletin* 1-2 (1999), 14-23; Saint Jose Inaka, "Combattants and Anti-Combattants (*Collabo*s): Congolese Transnational Politics in Pretoria." *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 38, no. 1 (2016), 5-8.

[324] Janet MacGaffey and Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga, *Congo-Paris: transnational traders on the margins of the law*. (Indiana University Press, 2000), 48.

[325] Mabiengwa E. Naniuzeyi, "The state of the state in Congo-Zaire: A survey of the Mobutu regime," *Journal of black studies* 29, no. 5 (1999), 669.

[326] Koen Vlassenroot, "Citizenship, identity formation & conflict in South Kivu: the case of the Banyamulenge," *Review of African Political Economy* 29, no. 93-94 (2002), 499-516.

[327] Thomas Turner, "Angola's role in the Congo war," In *The African Stakes of the Congo War*, 75-92. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2002. Also see "Jean Nguza Karl-i-Bond, Zairean Foreign Minister, speaking at a press conference on his country's attitude towards Angola" in March 1976, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqMGWVbVRhE, accessed on 11/10/2020.

states in which they found sanctuary".[328] Moreover, the role of President Mobutu in the Angolan conflict as an anti-communist agent and supporter of Jonas Savimbi against the Angolan central government worsened the insecurity in the region neighbouring Angola.[329] In the early 1990s, the conflict in Rwanda and Burundi also brought a number of refugees to eastern Zaire. Among other things, enemy forces were continuously engaging in cross-border fights between Angolan and Zairian territories. In the eastern Congo, particularly in the Kivu region, the ethnic conflict from Rwanda and Burundi was engaged on Congo soil. Conflicts that have haunted the eastern Congo since the late 1990s were greatly shaped by historical cycles of ethnic violence in these countries ever since their struggle for political independence from Belgium.[330] Unfortunately this early 1990s cross-border armed ethnic violence between Zaire and its neighbouring countries, and which occasionally targeted some Zairian ethnic groups (such as those who had historical ties with Rwanda and Burundi or who displayed their stereotyped physical traits[331]) in places such the Kivu region, did not qualify Zairians as refugees in South Africa.[332]

Apart from the insecurities Zaire experienced as a result of the wars in its eastern and western neighbouring countries, there were at least two events rooted in its own internal politics that shook it and that drove a number of its citizens out of the country in the early 1990s. One was mentioned earlier, the ethnic violence against people from Kasai in the Katanga province between 1992 and 1993. The second occurrence was the mutiny of the Zairian army in 1993. Both events were characterised by violence that resulted in the loss of lives and property.[333] South Africa was one of those countries where middle class Zairians, fearing that the worst was yet to come, chose to migrate. However, these crises, despite the threat they caused to human lives in general and that they targeted some ethno-regional groups, did not qualify Zairians on the basis of the UNHRC's definition of refugees in South Africa. The exceptions however were a few prominent politicians known to oppose President Mobutu who were individually issued political asylum in European countries and South Africa.[334] According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion".[335] To those with the means and skills to migrate to South Africa as economic migrants, the early 1990s brought a numbers of changes to the South Africa visa policy for Zairians. From 1993, all the visa free favours to visit South Africa for three months and the liberty to change visa conditions while in South Africa were waved off. Zairians had acquired these favours since 1988 as a result of Zaire being South Africa's second African trading partner (after Zimbabwe) and from the friendship between President Botha and Mobutu.[336] These migration policies in South Africa were revised as a result of the influx of refugees from the many war-torn countries across Africa such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda, Burundi and Congo-Brazzaville. Thus, with the hardening of the South African visa process, the Congolese often opted to using Angolan and other war-ridden Great Lakes Region countries' nationalities to seek refuge in South Africa. Pascal's story illustrates how some *Baswahili* used the Burundian civil war to claim asylum in countries such as Tanzania, Malawi and South Africa in the early 1990s.

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[328] Howard Adelman, "Why refugee warriors are threats," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 18, no. 1 (1998), 49-70.

[329] Adelman, "Why refugee warriors are threats."

[330] René Lemarchand, "Genocide in the Great Lakes: which genocide? Whose genocide?," *African Studies Review* (1998), 3-16.

[331] There are a number of Banywarwanda ethnic groups in the Congo, mainly in North and South Kivu. They came in different waves from the pre-colonial era to the early 1960s and are Congolese citizens. They were among the most targeted in the migration of the Rwandan and Burundian ethnic conflicts. See for example Paul Mathieu, Mafkiri Tsongo Angélus, "Guerres paysannes au Nord-Kivu (République démocratique du Congo), 1937-1994, "*Cahiers d'études africaines*, vol. 38, n°150-152 (1998), 385-416.

[332] Paul Mathieu and Mafikiri A. Tsongo, "Guerres paysannes au Nord-Kivu (République démocratique du Congo), 1937-1994 (Peasant Wars in North Kivu (Congo), 1937-1994)," *Cahiers d'études africaines* (1998), 385-416; Idean Salehyan, "The externalities of civil strife: Refugees as a source of international conflict," *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 4 (2008), 787.

[333] Jonny Steinberg, "A mixed reception: Mozambican and Congolese refugees in South Africa," *Institute for Security Studies Monographs* 2005, no. 117 (2005), 25.

Boluka is a trained chef from Kinshasa who arrived in Cape Town in 1993 and his story is a case of a western Congolese trajectory to South Africa:

> I left Kinshasa in 1990 first to Angola to make money and then see if I could find my way to *mikili* (Europe). But life was tough and Congolese were suffering a lot in Luanda because the Angolan government hated us [Zairians] because of Mobutu's support to Savimbi. As war in Angola continued, me and my friends decided to follow Angolans fleeing the war to Namibia because there we could easily cross into South Africa. So we went to Windhoek where we stayed for about six month; we said we were refugees from Angola. It is from there that we crossed into South Africa

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[334] In his research on Congolese transanationalism in Pretoria, Inaka mentions the many Congolese political refugees who lived in South Africa who were among those who were recruited by President Laurent Kabila to form the AFDL rebellion to overthrow Mobutu in 1996. See Saint Jose Inaka, "Combattants and Anti-Combattants (*Collabos*): Congolese Transnational Politics in Pretoria," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 38, no. 1 (2016), 5-28. See also Anne Morelli, "Belgique, terre d'accueil? Rejet et accueil des exilés politiques en Belgique de 1830 à nos jours," *Publications de l'École Française de Rome* 146, no. 1 (1991), 117-128.
[335] https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html, accessed on 27/11/2020.
[336] Steinberg, "A mixed reception," 24; MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, *Congo-Paris*, 48-49.

> straight to Cape Town by track. Once in Cape Town, we said we were from Angola and we got our *ngunda*[337] [asylum seeker document]. We had to say we were from Angola so we could get the papers because they were not giving to Zairians then.[338]

Boluka used the conflict in Angola to negotiate an immigrant status in South Africa. In addition, his trajectory to South Africa, which involved a long stay in Angola and Namibia, equipped him with the necessary knowledge to claim an immigrant identity in South Africa as an Angolan. Speaking Portuguese, knowing the geography of Angola, as well as details of the Angolan Civil War (from his own experience and that of Angolans he travelled and stayed with in refugee camps in Namibia) all contributed to his success in becoming an Angolan refugee in South Africa in the early 1990s. It was not until the late 1990s when the Congo wars began, and the subsequent crisis, that Congolese were finally accepted, although not without difficulties, as refugees.

The Congo Wars, identity, citizenship and Congolese refugees in South Africa

The Basic Agreement signed between South Africa and the United High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1993 led to the country welcoming a number of refugees from war-torn countries such as those mentioned previously. However, the Aliens Control Act of 1991 was still very much influential in the way in which immigrants in South Africa were dealt with up until at least 2002 "when the Immigration Act no 13 […] was promulgated".[339] Up until 1997, South Africa's handling of asylum seekers was unique and confusing as it did not comply with the United Nations' (UN) nor the African Union Organisation's (AUO) conventions in implementing policies of asylum seekers and refugees.[340] Thus, refugees suffered a lot of abuses related to xenophobia and corruption of the Home Affairs officials, police and army forces, in addition to the mass mobilisation against African immigrants,

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[337] According to Inaka, "ngunda" or "kobwaka ngunda" derives from the Lingala expression "Kokota Ngonda" which translates as "to exile in a great forest". The concept is generally used among Congolese (and other Francophone) immigrants to express the hardship associated with living abroad and the struggle to achieve an economic breakthrough. See Saint José Camille Koto Mondoko Inaka, "Congolese immigrant workers in Pretoria, South Africa: a sociological approach in the age of migration," PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2014, 109.

[338] Interview with Boluka, a professional chef from Kinshasa, Cape Town, 10 July 2017.

[339] Owen, *Congolese Social Networks*, 42.

[340] Peter Bouckaert, *Prohibited Persons: Abuse of Undocumented Migrants, Asylum-seekers, and Refugees in South Africa* (Human Rights Watch, 1998), 4.

which was also frequent since 1994 in South Africa.[341] Extortion and uninformed decisions leading to rejecting asylum seekers applications were among the abuses immigrants endured from Home Affairs officials and which I return to in more detail later. In addition, they were prone to arbitrary arrests and deportations.[342] Congolese nationals were among those affected by these policies until the late 1990s, when the war to oust Mobutu began later escalating into what some scholars have described as "the great African war" from the early 2000s until now.[343]

The beginning of the Second Congo War coincided with the "Progressive Refugee Act of 1998" in South Africa. According to Pugh, this new Refugee Act materialised only in 2000.[344] Among other things, this bill opened "avenues for decision appeals to ensure fairness and to prevent *refoulement*, including the formation of Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs charged with reviewing those decisions by Refugee Status Determination Officers that found an asylum claimant's application to be manifestly unfounded."[345] However, Pugh noted that the 1998 Progressive Refugee Act's "efficacy" was compromised from the beginning because of the time it took to be implemented.[346] And even though deportation (*refoulement*) was finally ruled out, in general the act did not translate into a solution for the challenges Congolese and other refugees and asylum seekers continued to experience daily in obtaining documentation in South Africa. Among other things, asylum seekers continued to be denied entry at South African borders up until 2008, despite the promise of the new Refugees Act that "no asylum seeker may be denied entry at a border post".[347]

The 1998 Refugee Act and the crisis in the DRC finally qualified Congolese to acquire refugee status in South Africa, but with a number of terms and conditions. Even during the period of the Congo Wars (1998-2003), each refugee status applicant was dealt with individually. Some research participants spoke of having to rely on the "mood of the Home Affairs officer" or on "luck" for a positive outcome of their refugee status application. Mark,

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[341] Bouckaert, *Prohibited Persons: Abuse of Undocumented Migrants, Asylum-seekers, and Refugees in South Africa*, 4-5; Kevin Tessier, "The challenge of immigration policy in the new South Africa," *Ind. J. Global Legal Stud.* 3 (1995), 255-260.
[342] Bouckaert, *Prohibited Persons: Abuse of Undocumented Migrants, Asylum-seekers, and Refugees in South Africa*, 5.
[343] Filip Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 8; Thomas Turner "Angola's role in the Congo war," In John Clark ed. *The African Stakes of the Congo War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 75-92.
[344] Sarah Pugh, "Human Mobility in South Africa," in Fabio Bagio ed. *Africans on the Move. Cape Town: The Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa* (Cape Town: SIHMA: 2014). 175.
[345] Pugh, "Human Mobility in South Africa," 175.
[346] Pugh, "Human Mobility in South Africa," 175.
[347] Pugh, "Human Mobility in South Africa," 182.

a musician from Kinshasa, explained how he was not as lucky as his cousin – also from Kinshasa– the day they were both interviewed for refugee status document in 2002:

> My cousin and I finally got interviewed for refugee status. I was after him in the queue. He was called by this guy [a Home Affairs official] for his interview and about two minutes later, another one called me. I was asked where I was from in the DRC. I said Kinshasa. Then he asked me why I wanted to stay in South Africa. I said because of the war. Then he told me 'but the war is in the east of the DRC, not in Kinshasa. Sorry my man, you can go back to Kinshasa'. And just like that he gave me a 'must leave'.[348] My cousin got his 'status' despite the fact that he told the same story of war I did.[349]

Mark's story testifies to the way in which the outcome of refugee status application could be unpredictable, even in the time of the Congo War before it became officially dubbed the "crisis in the eastern Congo" after 2003. In the above case, the same story led to opposite results. In general, Home Affairs has always been preoccupied with distinguishing between Congolese refugees and non-refugees among refugee status applicants. One major way in which they did so was through the regional and sometimes ethnic identity of the applicant.[350] This categorisation, as Fassin argues, is one of the ways in which host countries produce boundaries among immigrants as they engage in giving them different treatments on the basis of some defined identities.[351]

Among those who applied for refugee status in South Africa, those who did not succeed in their interviews were automatically classified as "economic migrants". The difference between the two was made more complex by the fact that the ethno-regional identity of the applicants was seemingly not the only criterion. Those who were denied refugee status had two characteristics: they were either people from regions others than the eastern Congo, or people from the eastern region, the conflict region, who were not convincing enough in describing how the conflict directly affected them. But at least between 1998 and 2003, the eastern Congolese were looked upon with great favour by the South African refugee system, and most often granted refugee status.

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[348] The rejection that can be appealed/ renewed for as much as one likes. As a matter of fact, a good number of Congolese live with them as their only form of identity document in South Africa. This is mostly because the *refoulement* (rejection leading to deportation) is no longer applied on unsuccessful asylum seekers or refugee status applicants.

[349] Interview with Mark, a Congolese musician in Cape Town, 3/06/2016.

[350] Owen, *Congolese Social Networks*, 40-46.

[351] Didier Fassin, "Policing borders, producing boundaries. The governmentality of immigration in dark times," *Annual Review of anthropology* 40 (2011), 214-215.

A further strain on the system was added when African nationals from neighbouring countries began to claim refugee status as Congolese – just as the Congolese had done with their neighbours at the time of Mobutu. People from Rwanda, Burundi, Angola and even Congo-Brazzaville applied for refugee status pretending to be Congolese citizens, and making reference to the eastern Congo conflict.[352] This added to the number of applicants and increased rejections in refugee paper application outcomes. It created dissatisfaction among those Congolese struggling to secure documentation in South Africa, often described with more than a hint of xenophobia. Olivier, a nightclub security guard in Cape Town from Kinshasa, explains his case:

> I could not get my status as a Congolese refugee because I said I was born in Kinshasa but grew up in Bukavu. But I know some Burundians who said they were from Kivu and – just like that – they were issued refugee status as Congolese. These people [Burundians and Rwandans] can do better than us because they have *Baswahili* friends who help them with *connection* for free. But we are Congolese, yet they would charge us for information and give it free to their neighbours. [353]

It is not surprising that nationals from the Great Lakes Region countries such as Rwanda and Burundi be successful in applying for refugee status using a Congolese nationality – just as Congolese like Pascal could “pirate” neighbouring crises – for the purpose of their asylum seeker status application in various countries including South Africa. Neighbouring Great Lakes Region’s nationals could draw on geographical knowledge and on having lived in the Eastern Congo at some time (or knowing someone who has lived there) to formulate a successful story of an eastern Congolese war victim. These citizens could also utilise historical knowledge of the conflict through word-of-mouth stories or knowledge accumulated from sharing a house or community with eastern Congolese to help make their case in South Africa as Congolese refugees. Or they could resort to Eastern Congolese refugee paper networks, as the last part of Olivier's story suggests. I will discuss these networks later. The point is that, geographically and socioculturally, it was easier for citizens from other Great Lakes Region countries to acquire refugee documents in South Africa under the guise of eastern Congolese than most Congolese from the western region of the Congo who have never been in the eastern region or who are less informed about the Congo Wars and their dynamics. The complications and difficulties Congolese encountered in securing refugee documentation in South Africa did not just lead to more antagonism between the Congolese and their eastern neighbouring countries' citizens in South Africa; they also exacerbated ethno-regional tensions among themselves, especially between eastern and western Congolese.

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[352] This type of information is not recorded anywhere. However, it is internal knowledge among refugees and has been the cause of the many regular fights among refugees and asylum seekers queuing for documentation at Home Affairs. While I have witnessed some of these fights myself between 2004 and 2016, participants who have been in South Africa since the 1990s attested to have witnessed them from the time they arrived in South Africa. At least all my research participants confirmed it and know some of these nationals who are Congolese on their refugee documents while from Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, Angola and Congo-Brazzaville. This is also regularly debated as “a problem that needs a solution” in many of the Congolese associations’ meetings I have attended for academic research purposes since 2011.

[353] Interview with Olivier, a Congolese bouncer (nightclub security guard), Cape Town, 14/08/2017.

Jackson's argument that at "national level", "the lingering perception of an east/west, Swahilophone/Lingalaphone cleavage that is readily inflected by autochthony talk" has migrated among the Congolese diaspora of South Africa.[354] As shown in Chapter 1, the identity discourse of east/ west that emerged with the post-Mobutu Congo conflict has been that which alludes to Congolese citizenship and identity. The eastern Congolese or *Baswahili*, as Jackson's research argues, were often associated with being "less" Congolese, traitors who gave way to enemies who occupy their region and with whom they loot the country's resources.[355] In Cape Town, stories of western Congolese, such as Olivier's, on the role of *Baswahili* in helping non-Congolese acquire Congolese documentations reproduce the very same discourse of traitor or *collabos*, a widespread concept among western Congolese diaspora activists of the Joseph Kabila era whom I discuss in detail in the last chapter of this dissertation.[356] *Baswahili* have once again become the ones through whom "infiltration" of Congolese space occurs – this time, the Congolese diasporic space.

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[354] Jackson, "Sons of which soil? The language and politics of autochthony in Eastern DR Congo," 114.

[355] Jackson, "Sons of which soil? The language and politics of autochthony in Eastern DR Congo," 114. See also Stephen Jackson and Claire Médard, "«Nos richesses sont pillées!» Économies de guerre et rumeurs de crime au Kivu," *Politique africaine* 4 (2001), 117-135.

[356] A "*collabo*" also refers to a collaborator of other enemies of the Congo at regional and international levels, particularly neighbouring countries involved in the Congo conflicts and the western superpowers. See for example Michel Kingolo Luzingu, "Socio-anthropologie du phénomène des "combattants" dans la diaspora congolaise (RDC). INGETA, AINSI SOIT-IL," PhD diss., Paris, EHESS (2020); Joe Trapido and Norbert Mbu-Mputu, "Les Combattants, Ideologies of exile, return and nationalism in the DRC," *Journal of Refugee Studies* (2020), 727-746; Saint Jose Inaka, "Combattants and Anti-Combattants (*Collabos*): Congolese Transnational Politics in Pretoria," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 38, no. 1 (2016), 5-15.

In and outside Home Affairs: Refugee documentation networks

The Second Congo war was declared over in 2003 but the conflict in the eastern Congo intensified with even more gross human right abuses and resource looting. In this period, Congolese continued to arrive *en masse* in South Africa but were met with new challenges from South Africa's migration policy and immigrant resentments that occasionally culminated into xenophobic attacks.[357] With regard to accessing refugee documentation, post-2012 is particularly important for reasons including the further amendments to the Refugee Act and the closing down of a number of Refugee Reception Offices across South Africa, including that of Cape Town. Some human rights agencies concerned with refugees, such the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, the Adonis Musati Project and the Cape Town Refugee Centre, have dedicated themselves to addressing the difficulties that refugees experience accessing their basic rights in South Africa, such as documentation.[358] However, some refugees and corrupt immigration officials found opportunity in these new policies to exploit desperate refugee paper applicants financially.

Congolese immigrants are among those affected by what some scholars of migration in South Africa describe as "administrative incompetence and irregularities" that increased within the Department of Home Affairs between 1994 and 2004.[359]This period is crucial with regards to the influx of refugees from many war-torn African countries including those of the Great Lakes Region and others I mentioned earlier. Landau also argues that "business exists to get people all the papers they need from Home Affairs" (including a study visa, tourist visa, work permits, etc. but mostly for refugees) to highlight the degree of corruption in the South African migration system in that time.[360] In his 2008 research, Neocosmos also points to the way in which "police officers and officials from the Department of Home Affairs are given

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[357] Much has been written on migration in South Africa with the focus on the xenophobic violence in the post-apartheid era. See for example David Everatt, "Xenophobia, state and society in South Africa, 2008–2010," *Politikon* 38, no. 1 (2011) 7-36; Loren Brett Landau, Kaajal Ramjathan-Keogh, and Gayatri Singh, *Xenophobia in South Africa and problems related to it*. Johannesburg: Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, 2005; Christy McConnell, "Migration and xenophobia in South Africa," *Conflict trends* 2009, no. 1 (2009), 34-40.

[358] See a much recent article written in the aftermath of refugee crisis in Cape Town: Sikanyiso Masuku "How South Africa is denying refugees their rights: what needs to change," *The Conversation*, 12/05/2020, https://theconversation.com/how-south-africa-is-denying-refugees-their-rights-what-needs-to-change-135692, accessed on 08/12/2020. Also see some of the initiatives of the University of Cape Town's Refugee Right Unit: http://www.refugeerights.uct.ac.za/news/international-association-refugee-and-migration-judges-conference, accessed on 08/12/2020.

[359] Lauren B. Landau, "Protection and dignity in Johannesburg: Shortcomings of South Africa's urban refugee policy," *Journal of refugee studies* 19, no. 3 (2006), 317.

[360] Neocosmos, *From Foreign Natives to Native Foreigners*, 91.

such excessive powers over extremely vulnerable people that the bribery, extortion and corruption become not only possible but regular practices".[361]

Generally, research on migration in post-apartheid South Africa concerned with the everyday life of migrants has, in one way or another, tackled issues related to incompetence and corruption within the Department of Home Affairs. However, the question of the agency of immigrants remains less addressed. Immigrants are not mere victims of the South African migration system. In fact, they have often turned the "incompetence and irregularities" of the Department of Home Affairs to their advantage. An example includes stocking multiple immigration statuses, such as holding a passport of the country of origin (or another country) with a valid South African visa of any sort while also holding a valid asylum seeker or refugee document, a fact all research participants who arrived in South Africa before at least 2006 were familiar with.

When I arrived in South Africa in 2004, other refugees I was close to advised me not to surrender my passport when applying for my refugee document but rather to keep it then find some other kind of visa such as a work or study permit, "just in case". Those who had more than one immigrant statuses/ documents had different uses for them. Some used their passports to travel to neighbouring countries for "businesses". An asylum seeker is like a "prisoner" – as Congolese like to say – in South Africa because with such documents, they are not allowed to leave South Africa unless they change or cancel their asylum seeker status. In addition, they are not supposed to carry their home country passport because normally, when a person declares themselves an asylum seeker or refugee, they hand over their country's passport if they admit to having arrived in South Africa using a passport. That too, at the time, could not be verified at Home Affairs. Consequently, people often just declared that they did not have any identification document from their home country. And when they finally acquire a refugee's travel document, they could use it to travel everywhere except their country of nationality. In their home country, they risk arrest when they present themselves with a refugee travel document. And if somehow they manage to return to South Africa with their home country's migration stamp indicating entry, they would be denied entry back to South Africa and their refugee status cancelled. Thus, Congolese who wanted to go home used their Congolese passports to do so when the South African immigration system could not detect that a person had another immigrant status. When visiting public hospitals, claiming their taxes back or looking for a job, they used their refugee document. This went on until shortly after the 2008 xenophobic attacks. Then some worrying news started circulating among us refugees. It appeared that the Home Affairs system was finally able to detect multiple immigration statuses.

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[361] Michael Neocosmos, "Neocosmos: The Politics of Fear and the Fear of Politics (Essay on the pogroms)," *Abahlali baseMjondolo. Home of the Abhlali baseMjondolo Shackdwellers' Movement South Africa* (2008), 589-590.

The closing of such loopholes exacerbated the difficulties in accessing not just refugee documentations but also other socioeconomic opportunities. With refugee papers being the needed status for many and now the only choice to ensure a permanent stay in South Africa, applicants often found themselves "being forced to pay bribes and being made to wait longer for services, or being denied such services altogether."[362] Bribery for immigration documents, however, is a process. It is in the details of this process that one can best understand the parts involved, especially how immigrants themselves are involved. I engage with this through discussing two types of "middlemen", often immigrants, who mediate between corrupt immigrant officers and paper applicants willing to pay a fee. One operates outside the office and the other inside the office.

Middlemen outside

Landau's research details how the money that refugees pay for documents is distributed between various agents involved. The first of these payments go the gatemen of Home Affairs who are the security guards. Inside the office, extortion continues by the translators and Home Affairs officials.[363] These money making networks, according to Landau, have generated "economies" within the Department of Home Affairs leading sometimes to the "front-line staff" competing for "the most profitable posts".[364] However, research on migration in post-apartheid South Africa is yet to deeply engage with the question of the power dynamics between the "corrupt" immigration officers inside the office and the middlemen they rely on, who happen to be themselves immigrants. I am trying to fill this void by offering a case study of the middlemen's practices among Congolese refugees, finding out more about the experience of those involved, their roles and their gains in this chain of business. However, researching these power dynamics in South Africa without compromising the vulnerability of immigrants in general and refugees and asylum seekers in particular comes with a great amount of discomfort given the criminalisation African immigrants have been stereotypically associated with in post-apartheid South Africa.[365]

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[362] Masuku, "How South Africa is denying refugees their rights."
[363] Landau, "Protection and dignity in Johannesburg," 317.
[364] Landau, "Protection and dignity in Johannesburg," 317.

According to Crush and Peberdy, refugees are less likely to "see crime as an option, even as a survival strategy".[366] However, in the history of "ordinary" people's everyday life in South Africa and in the DRC, a criminal approach to survival is well known and understood in terms of agency. It is therefore through the dynamics of this agency that one can engage with the ways in which immigrants participate in their fellows' exploitation by the some corrupt immigration officials in South Africa as a "survival strategy".

Because I am discussing refugee paper networks as a business, I use the concept of "middlemen" inspired by research on markets in which intermediaries play a crucial role between a seller and a buyer.[367] "Middlemen" is also a concept that refers to local or African "intermediaries" in some of the darkest episodes of African history such as the slave trade, colonisation and even neo-colonialism that became characteristic of the post-colonial era through the politics of patronage and natural resources exploitation.[368] These intermediaries were the bridge between their people and the outsiders who invaded to exploit and oppress. In most cases, it is through them that slavery and colonialism, for example, became possible. As Moyd explains in his work on colonial conquest in East Africa, middlemen were often recruited from the oppressed community they belonged to, in order to help the oppressors. In other words, they found economic opportunities in the suffering of their own people or community.[369] The same way in which these middlemen facilitated slavery and other forms of occupation and exploitation in Africa, there are also middlemen in the immigration sector. While there are those who facilitate exploitation and extortion of fellow immigrants as I discuss later, there also exist those who specialise in smoothing the process through providing a better understanding and helping with the process of immigration for a fee. In Francophone east African countries these immigration facilitators are known as “fixers”.

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[365] See for example Alan Morris, "'Our fellow Africans make our lives hell': the lives of Congolese and Nigerians living in Johannesburg," *Ethnic and Racial studies* 21, no. 6 (1998), 1116-1136; Michael Neocosmos, "The politics of fear and the fear of politics: Reflections on xenophobic violence in South Africa," *Journal of Asian and African studies* 43, no. 6 (2008), 586-594.

[366] Johnathan Crush and Sally Peberdy, "Criminal tendencies: Immigrants and illegality in South Africa," *Southern African Migration Project*, (2018), 9.

[367] Gary Biglaiser, "Middlemen as experts," *The RAND journal of Economics* (1993), 212-223; Ariel Rubinstein and Asher Wolinsky, "Middlemen," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 102, no. 3 (1987), 581-593.

[368] See for example Moyd, Michelle R. *Violent intermediaries: African soldiers, conquest, and everyday colonialism in German East Africa*. Ohio University Press, 2014; Herbst, Jeffrey. *The structural adjustment of politics in Africa*. *World Development* 18, no. 7 (1990), 949-958.

[369] Moyd, Michelle R. *Violent intermediaries*. See also Robert Paul Thomas and Richard Nelson Bean, "The fishers of men: The profits of the slave trade," *The Journal of Economic History* 34, no. 4 (1974), 885-914.

In his research in Togo, Piot explains the “fixer” as the person best known to assist those who wish to participate in the USA’s Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery. In Piot’s case, the fixer often has a well-known office where those in need of his services meet him for a fee. His services include explaining what is asked in the application form, and sometimes helping fill it out for the sake of language and grammatical accuracy. The fixer can also advise on how to answer the interview questions, for example in a way that is free of contradictions and other suspicious declarations that could lead to one’s file being rejected. In the immigration office during the applicant’s interview, however, the fixer is never involved.[370] Immigrants, mostly refugees in South Africa who work with corrupt immigration officers are different from Piot’s fixers. They operate clandestinely, “black market” style, unlike the “fixer” who has a well-known office and some kind of official tariff for their various services. Just like the classic middlemen of the transatlantic slave trade and colonial conquests, the middlemen of refugee documents have played a crucial role in sustaining corruption and extortion of fellow refugee migrants in South Africa.

The middlemen, in the context of Congolese applying for refugee documents, work directly or indirectly with an immigration officer. Their relationship is, to a large extent, of mutual dependency. However, at most, it can be one that weighs more on the side of the middleman. One major finding of my research is that middlemen – in my case all refugees themselves – were often the ones who received the largest cut from the paper “businesses”. And while at the time of my fieldwork this escalated, it is not a new phenomenon. In research conducted in 2003, Neocosmos quotes a research participant explaining how he acquired his asylum seeker permit in Johannesburg: “…many people now pay for these documents. I paid one guy R1000 and he in turn paid somebody else R300 to get the documents for me”.[371]

Stories that relate how middlemen came to be in such positions are helpful in making sense of the power relations between them and the immigration officers in the office. These aspects are barely touched upon in research that portray immigrants – mostly refugees – as victim of corruption that has been rampant in the Department of Home Affairs in post-apartheid South Africa. These stories contribute to a better appreciation of the complexities of the power relations involved especially with regard to the agency of the middlemen. Take Salomon, for example, a Congolese who has been in South Africa since 1999 and who is famous among the Congolese in Cape Town for his refugee paper "connections". When I asked him how he managed to get closer to people in charge at Home Affairs, he responded:

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[370] Charles Piot, *The Fixer* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

[371] Quoted in Neocosmos, *From Foreign Natives to Native Foreigners*, 91. See also Jonathan Hyslop, “Political corruption: Before and after apartheid,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 4 (2005), 785; Jonathan Klaaren and Jaya Ramji, “Inside illegality: migration policing in South Africa after apartheid,” *Africa today* (2001), 35-47; John Mamokhere and Khensani R. Chauke, “The multiplicity of challenges faced by South African borders: A case of Limpopo Province,” *Journal of Public Affairs* 20, no. 3 (2020), 5.

> One of them was my neighbour in Nyanga when I moved to Cape Town in 2000 after a year in Durban. I only had my asylum seeker document then. He was a friendly guy and he saw me struggling with communicating in English. He asked me if I was employed. I told him I needed proper papers to have a job. He asked which paper and I told him "refugee status". Then he asked me to show him my paper [asylum seeker document]. He looked at it and with a friendly attitude he said "but you are qualified to apply for a refugee status. I am working tomorrow. We can leave together. I will interview you myself." That is how lucky I was and from that day on, he was not just my good neighbour but also a close friend. My relatives got papers through him and many of my friends. Then I started charging people I knew who qualified for refugee's status but who were struggling to secure interview dates at Home Affairs. I just told my neighbour they were my friends or relatives. Then one day, I had to propose him a "business" explaining to him how people were willing to pay to get papers. [372]

Salomon's story is not one of a victim of hatred that African immigrants are known to endure in South African townships, nor of injustice and extortions from the officers within the Home Affairs. His story relates his experience with a friendly, kind and helpful South African neighbour who also happened to be an immigrant officer. Apparently, the Home Affairs officer was not extorting money from desperate refugees before he met Salomon and decided to help him, out of good faith, to get his (and that of his friends and relatives) rightful refugee status. It was Salomon who suggested the idea of making fellow refugees pay for papers to the immigration officer. Salomon also determined the price and always took the biggest cut out of it.[373]

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[372] Interview with Salomon, Cape Town, 08/01/2016.

[373] And Salomon insisted that the Home Affairs officer has no clue of the money he charges the paper applicant. He only knows what Salomon tells him or gives to him.

Salomon’s story shows how he conceived the refugee paper business idea and proposed it to the immigrant officer. Others of Congolese associations of Cape Town who are involved in refugee paper “connections” have proceeded like Salomon, in the sense that they were the ones who approached immigrant officers for paper businesses “proposals”. However, unlike Salomon, the others I know were introduced to the immigration officer by “someone” already in the business, someone like Salomon. Salomon confirmed this as he himself has his “guys” who are known by his Home Affairs “partners” and whom he trusts to do the work when he is absent.

Middlemen operating outside the immigration office play the most important and strategic role of keeping the business running. They do so through their many tasks which include meeting and discussing with the applicant, agreeing on the price, the collection of money from those willing and ready to pay, and distribution of the money between themselves and all the parties involved. Their task is much more significant than the officer whose task is just to issue the documentation and then collect his shares safely from the middleman. In other words, nothing else really links the immigration officer to the applicant who paid. Salomon explains:

> I do all the work. Then after the person pays me, I make a call inside [of Home Affairs] to communicate your name and the CTR number. Then the person enters the office like everyone else, get interviewed as if it was serious…and then you wait with everyone else. Then your name will be called among the successful applicants. You see, that is all the Home Affairs guy does. He does not know what I go through with these people before they pay their money. Some make you walk up and down, waste your airtime and petrol, some call you late at nights asking for your services. He [the immigration officer] only issues papers and gets money. [374]

The above also explains why the bigger part of the payment goes to the middleman. Indeed he spends his own resources and time to secure paper deals. He risks meeting up with applicants, which as Salomon explain could be risky because it might be a trap from the South Africa police. Sometimes the idea to “pay” for refugee papers is initiated from people inside the office. In this process, middlemen are still needed to ensure that the negotiations and transactions are done smoothly. Such middlemen include the translators or interpreters.

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[374] Interview with Salomon, Cape Town, 17/07/2016.

Middleman inside

The main middlemen inside the office are the translators. They play a crucial role in the outcome of refugee paper applications through their language and message translation skills.[375] However, occasionally they do more than translating interview questions and answers between the applicant and the immigrant officer. In the refugee paper networks, they also play the role of "mediator" or "negotiator" between an immigrant wishing to pay a fee to ensure success in his application and the immigration officer. Thus, sometimes, even those who speak and understand English request an interpreter just to facilitate the process of bribing. Lina is from Bukavu, in the Kivu region, and a former interpreter for refugees and asylum seekers at the Cape Town Refugee Reception centre. She explains what else an interpreter was for:

> Some people whom I interpreted for were far better than me in English. Many who came for refugee status had been in South Africa longer than me and they were postgraduate students here [in Cape Town]. They understood what the officer was asking, but in their answer in French or Kiswahili or Lingala, they could say "…tell him that I need this paper urgently and I am willing to pay now."[376]

One can see that the translator is also a "negotiator", a facilitator in deal makings between the immigration agent and the paper applicant. However, translators can make their own deals directly with the applicant by being the one to suggest the idea of paying for the document, just like the middlemen outside. Lina explained:

> If the one [immigration officer] who is conducting the interview is into the business, then right from the beginning, when I translated the very first question, I would advise the applicant to give "something" so things could go smoothly. Then I would tell him "my" price in French or Kiswahili, and to the officer, I will just answer back in English using "our code". The biggest rule was not to mention 'numbers' as he has told me already the minimum price for refugee status …[377]

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[375] Landau, "Protection and dignity in Johannesburg," 317.

[376] For translators, this was a very profitable business. Lina earned less than R2000/ month. She was in the office three days a week but each day she went home with a minimum of R 2000. The officers she worked with charged between R600 and R1000 for a refugee status and she proudly added. Interview with Lina, a former Home Affairs interpreter, Cape Town, 29/ 07/ 2016.

[377] Interview with Lina, a former Home Affairs interpreter, Cape Town, 29/07/2016.

In this case, the translator could initiate the bribery process. The power of the translator with regards to how she or he managed both parts cannot be underestimated. Both the officer and the applicant were often deceived. The applicant was given a price and the officer another. The translator who collected the payment would determine the cut that goes to the officer. This secrecy was achieved through the use of a foreign language between the translator and the applicant, which excluded the immigration officer.

The fact that translators, just like the middlemen outside, are in this case immigrants themselves and refugees, shows that immigrants are not always passive or mere victims of the often highly criticised South African immigration system. Salomon's and Lina's stories about how they became "middlemen" and the ways in which they exercised and financially maximised their positions point to a certain degree of agency, not mere victimhood. Focusing on the corrupt South African immigration officers who charge refugees for their most basic rights, such as documentation, tends to reduce immigrants to the simple status of victim. I illustrate this further as I dwell on the ethno-regional politics in Congolese refugee documents' networks in Cape Town since the Congo conflict.

Baswahili business, *Bato ya mangala* customers

In general, most Congolese would be eager to make use of informal means to obtain refugee documentation in South Africa, mostly because of the socioeconomic settings they grew up in in the Congo. The economic situation and mind-set of the country was captured by what in popular culture was known as the "article 15" of the constitution: *débrouillez-vous* ("fend for yourself", "sort yourself out").[378] As the main legacy of the tree decades of Mobutu' leadership, *débrouillez-vous* is about surviving by all means. It involves the use of personal networks to access anything. It is the root of the prevalence of an informal economy not only in the DRC but among Congolese transnationally, as research carried in the early 2000s in countries such as France and South Africa argue.[379]

Ethno-regionalism has been an important determinant of Congolese refugee status in South Africa as well as a leading factor in refugee paper networks. Information, therefore, on how to access refugee documentation is as valuable for newcomers as it is for those who have been in the country for years under an asylum seeker permit (Section 22 Permit). The reason is that a refugee status document (Section 24 Permit) allows its holder "to remain for a specified period of 2 years in South Africa, and it is renewable upon expiration of its validity after the review".[380] These terms raise insecurities among refugees who cannot relax because, at every renewal, there is a review process involved which can still lead to cancellation. For unknown reasons the validity period of the refugee status keeps changing. For example, in October 2011, I went to renew my refugee status which had expired after two years. I was issued, without any interview, a new one which was valid for four years. The same day, another Congolese who was waiting got theirs renewed for only one year. My work colleague was excited when I told her my renewed refugee status was valid for four years. She went to renew hers a few days afterwards and was issued one that was valid for two years. Such an unpredictable outcome is among the reasons why those with financial means make use of the refugee paper networks to ensure the desired outcome.

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[378] Jean-Luc Piermay, "L'article 15, ou le Zaïre à la recherche d'articulations de rechange," *Travaux de l'Institut de Géographie de Reims* 83, no. 1 (1993), 99-107.

[379] Owen, *Congolese social networks*, 60; MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, and Rémy Bazenguissa. *Congo-Paris.*

Congolese involved in refugee paper networks have often used the above examples to encourage people to make use of their services. They use instances of those who received rejections after an interview for refugee status and who were stuck with the "Appeal and Review Process" as the worst case scenario. A "rejection" is the outcome of a refugee status applicant whose interview reveals "unfounded" reasons for wanting to remain in South Africa. A "rejection" does not imply deportation. Instead, the applicant is issued a 30 day valid document stipulating a chance to appeal if they believe to have a "well-founded fear of persecution" but their "claim has been rejected".[381] Those involved in refugee paper networks therefore warn newcomers and asylum seekers about the difficulties that such an outcome on refugee status application can generate in terms of socioeconomic integration in South Africa.

Recent research by Masuku on the 2019 refugee crisis in Cape Town shows that rejections of refugee status applications are as high as 96%. Moreover, the delay in obtaining an appeal hearing could be in the region of months or even years. And in the whole of South Africa there is only one Refugee Appeal Board, which sits two or three times a year.[382] Because of these delays, immigrants often have to rely on the appeal document as the only form of legal identity document in South Africa. Such an appeal document is valid between 14 and 90 days, which implies regular queues at the Home Affairs office for its extension. Therefore, asylum seekers who have been in South Africa for a longer period pending refugee status interviews, those who are scheduled for a hearing to appeal the rejection of their application, and the newcomers, are all likely to seek help for a fee to ensure they do not find themselves in a bureaucratic limbo.

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[380] http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/refugee-status-asylum, accessed on 02/12/2020.
[381] http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/refugee-status-asylum, accessed on 03/12/2020.
[382] Masuku, "How South Africa is denying refugees their rights."

After 2003, rejections among Congolese refugee status applicants increased, mostly because the Congo War was declared to have ended. Violent conflict in the eastern Congo, however, worsened and continued to be the major ground on which Congolese – regardless of their home region – claimed refugee status in South Africa. Nonetheless even eastern Congolese faced challenges qualifying for refugee status despite the widely reported news of the ongoing violent conflict in their region. Betts's 2010 research confirms this. He wrote that "there is a general acknowledgement that conditions in the South Kivu – in terms of livelihoods and social services – are too poor to actively promote return" of eastern Congo refugees. However, the UNHCR maintained that "there is a limited generalized violence or persecution in South Kivu".[383] Such arguments are backed with the fact that after 1998, most of the violence of the conflict in the eastern Congo happened in the rural areas. Their impacts on urban areas where most of the Congolese refugees in countries such as South Africa come from have often been overlooked or poorly reported on in the media. Because of that, each applicant of a refugee status, even when they were from the conflict region of the DRC, was dealt with individually in terms of how directly the conflict affected them, thus making them vulnerable to rejections. Nevertheless, eastern and western Congolese differ in the amount of confidence they have in answering questions related to the Congo conflict for reasons beyond being from the conflict region. They are generally connected to the many resourceful social networks (as I discuss in the following chapter) of their ethno-regional kinsfolks in Cape Town through which they get exposed to the most intimate information regarding ways to ensure success in their application for documentations. Through these networks, they also get connected to some of the people involved in the refugee paper networks who are their regional or ethnic kin and who sometimes can assist them for less or no cost (as Salomon did with his friends and relatives with the help of his immigrant officer neighbour before he turned it into a business). This is the reason why eastern Congolese are relatively less exploited by refugee documents networks than their western counterparts.

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[383] Alexander Betts, Alexander, "Survival migration: A new protection framework," *Global Governance* 16, no.3 (2010), 371.

The refugee paper networks of Congolese in Cape Town rely on the classical principles of demand and supply, which, respectively, are fulfilled by the buyer and the seller.[384] There are a number of factors that shape the demand and supply in the refugee paper "business" in South Africa and they include time and space in relation to the situation in the DRC and the migration policies of South Africa. After 2011, for example, the elections in the DRC were one of the reasons for the high number of rejections in refugee status applications, because it was taken as a further proof that the DRC was relatively stable socio-politically.[385] Further difficulties in accessing refugee documents came from South Africa's decision to close a good number of the Refugee Reception Offices (RROs) in the country, with the exception of three, located in Durban, Musina and Pretoria. In places like Cape Town where there is no longer an RRO, demands in the refugee paper "businesses" have increased.

For the Congolese of Cape Town specifically, the "paper business" has mostly targeted *Bato ya mangala*. According to both Lina and Salomon (the translator and a paper "dealer", respectively, that I mentioned earlier), in the era of the Congo conflict, the western Congolese are often the most willing to pay for papers. This was the case even before 2003 when the South African refugee system was relatively sympathetic towards Congolese nationals in general.[386] In the aftermath of the closing down of the Cape Town RRO, all Congolese were faced with difficulties in securing refugee documentations, but mostly those hailing from the west of the country. The reason is that the *Baswahili* who negotiate refugee documentation can do so in a relatively familiar environment, in the sense that those running refugee paper networks hail from their region. *Bato ya mangala,* on the other hand, have to do so across regional boundaries, and often encounter hostility as a consequence.[387]

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[384] See for example George J Stigler, "The early history of empirical studies of consumer behaviour," *Journal of Political Economy* 62, no. 2 (1954), 95-113.

[385] Since 2015, the issue was Congolese increasingly receiving rejections on their refugee status application is regularly debated in Congolese migrants associations such as Amis BK Cape Town Amis BK (an association of eastern Congolese which I discuss in detail in the next chapter). Among other things, the rejections were largely attributed to the last elections in the Congo as it was perceived to have sent the wrong signal that Congo was at peace. It was also attributed to the many protests some Congolese diasporic movements (made in the majority of western Congolese) have engaged in in South Africa especially since early 2012, as I discuss in the last chapter.

[386] Joy Owen, "'On Se Débrouille': Congolese Migrants' Search for Survival and Success in Muizenberg, Cape Town," PhD diss. Rhodes University (2011), 60.

[387] In the eastern Congolese associations' meetings I have attended, sharing information about refugee papers is one of the frequent topics. An example includes the Amis BK meeting of 25/02/2018 about "the importance of having information and how to use it". The information focused on was on how to access refugee rights in Cape Town. The chair warned members not to be like *Kinois* "benye kila mutu anaanzaka kulia amo mu coop ya document" (whom everyone eats from in information about [refugee] documents). He strongly advised that people "speak to the right people" who work with refugees because "bamingi mu amo ni bakwetu na bataweza saidiya ku bure" (most of them are from home [the Kivu region] and they can help you for free).

Language is an important factor in the use of informal means to accessing refugee documentations. In these networks, Kiswahili is the language of power, just like it has attempted to be politically in the post-Mobutu regime in the Congo.[388] Salomon mentioned that he could tell a good *coop* – "cooperation" or opportunity for business – just from the language a person speaks. He explained that those "from home [Kivu region]" would speak Kiswahili and ask for information, which he would sometimes share for little or no fee, because "*ni ndugu*" (he is a relative/ a comrade/ one of us). In other words, he assisted them as part of inter-regional solidarity. Those who spoke languages other than Kiswahili – such as Lingala, French or even English – are serious *coop.* The same principle is applied by western Congolese wanting a trustworthy paper "dealer". The first sign that a middleman can deliver in the paper business is being a *Muswahili* and having a mastery of Kiswahili. In other words, those from the western region know that *Baswahili* are the ones who engage in this business successfully and are the experts of the system. These "dealers" are also detected by their potential customers on the basis of their poor Lingala, non-*Kinois* accent, or for not speaking Lingala at all.

Baswahili expertise is also needed for constructing convincing narratives of experiences of the violence of the Congo conflict. In other words, this violence (or rather its construction) has been turned into one of the most valuable commodities in the refugee paper networks. In this process, the narratives of the Congo conflict violence are adapted to the refugee status interview questions; they are reconstructed for a positive outcome. Interviews begin with simple questions relating to the eastern Congo and to details of the conflict. Then one is asked the ultimate question of explaining why they cannot return to Congo, why they think they need a refugee status to stay in South Africa. The applicant's answers to these questions are also scrutinised for contradictions, incoherence and outright lies. But most importantly, the applicant's story must be *fondé* ("grounded") as Congolese simply like to put it; this means convincing enough. This part is tricky because to judge the above, the immigration officer compares what the applicant is saying with what he has heard before from other applicants. It is not clear how exactly they determine unfounded reasons since they do not carry any script to compare with the story of the applicant. Eastern Congolese refugees, however, have in many ways shaped what the Home Affairs officials would come to perceive as "true" narratives of the Congo conflict. Jeff, a *Kinois* musician in Cape Town was one of my research interlocutors and who believed the *Baswahili*'s answers to the refugee paper interview questions were contributing to the rejections *Kinois* and other regional groups were experiencing in their applications. He explained one of the moments in which he witnessed it:

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[388] Francis N. Njubi, "Remapping Kiswahili: A Political geography of language, identity and Africanity," *African studies in geography from below* (2009), 105-131; Thomas Turner, "Kabila returns, in a cloud of uncertainty," *African Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1997), 23-37.

> I was being interviewed for my refugee status, which I was lucky to get after 11 years in South Africa. I heard a woman saying she was from Goma [South Kivu] shouting to the Home Affairs guy interviewing her: "I am from Goma, ask any Congolese here what is happening there. I am not from Kinshasa or Lubumbashi…". You see? That is like saying *Kinois* and *Katangais* do not deserve papers because they are not from Kivu. You see it is them [*Baswahili*] who put that in their [Home Affairs officials] heads.[389]

What happens in Goma since the Congo War (where the woman Jeff mentioned is from) and the Kivu in general is known through global media, including Congolese social media. Since the early 2000s, places near Goma such as Beni and Ituri are among the most affected by the violence in the eastern Congo, including gross human right violations such as rape, killings, body tortures, kidnapping and child soldiers.[390] These war crimes feature often in the narratives of refugee paper applicants of their personal experience of the Congo conflict when explaining why they wish to remain in South Africa and why they cannot return to the DRC. The more gruesome they are, the more likely the positive outcome of the refugee papers' application. Thus, women often bring in stories of themselves or someone in their household having been raped. Others, mostly men, would speak of being kidnapped or forced into a militia band, or being the only survivor of their family lost to war attacks. Others would use scars on their body to invent torture and other physical harms they had endured from being attacked by militias. These stories have become so widespread that Congolese laugh about their ingenious inventions of the Congo conflict victimhood. They often humorously warn one another against the possible "bad luck" that the many lies told in refugee paper interviews could bring to their lives, and these lies being the possible reason why "it [the conflict and its violence] does not end".[391] For example, in Cape Town, a certain woman became famous for inventing a story of being gang-raped by members of the Mai Mai rebels, using her old scars near her private parts she got from falling while playing at school as a child. She even arranged for witnesses to back up her story. They were the ones spreading the news of how her lies got her a relocation to a third country, in Canada apparently, after their own applications were unsuccessful.

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[389] Interview with Jeff, Cape Town, 13/ 06/ 2016.

[390] See for example, Stephen Jackson, "Making a killing: criminality & coping in the Kivu war economy," *Review of African Political Economy* 29, no. 93-94 (2002), 517-536.

[391] This topic is often debated in most meetings especially when there are newcomers preparing for their first interviews for their asylum seeker document application. Often people want to know "what is being said these days" to help construct their narratives. However, it was largely debated in the Amis Bk (an association of people from the Kivu region in Cape Town) of 25/02/2018 when the man in charge of its External Affairs was advising on what to include in the answer to the refugee status interview questions. He was knowledgeable on

Kinois and other non-eastern groups therefore know that eastern Congolese are the ones to rely on in order to ensure success of their refugee paper applications. They need eastern Congolese's help to borrow both their eastern Congolese identity and their narratives of the Congo conflict victimhood to access Congolese refugee rights in South Africa. However, this "overrepresentation of the victimization"[392] that the eastern Congolese have engaged in since the Congo war has certainly led to "an unrealistic assessment of the likelihood of victimization" of other groups such as *Kinois* and other non-eastern Congolese.[393]

Baswahili have certainly appropriated themselves the identity of Congolese refugees. However, the direct victims of the eastern Congo conflict barely afford to leave their villages, let alone to seek asylum in South Africa. They mostly end up in local refugee camps, often a few kilometres from the militias they ran from, and are cared for poorly by the many agencies, mostly local and international NGOs that make a living from their misfortune. In these camps, insecurities continue to hunt them as armed bands prey on their vulnerability.[394] This is because they are mostly rural people who cannot afford the luxury of seeking asylum or refugee status as far as in South Africa. There is a certain socioeconomic status associated with refugees as international migrants beyond what the UNHCR describes as "fear of

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the topic because he had attended most UNCHR meetings and other organisations that work with refugees around Cape Town. They include Adonis Musathi, the Scalabrini Centre, and Sonke Gender Justice. Among other things, he warned people against telling stories that do not portray them as direct victims of the violence. Regarding "what works", he mentioned rape, surviving death, torture, being forced to join armed groups, being "wanted" for being a threatening witness to massacre, or a deserter of a militia/ rebel group, and so on. That is when a member asked about the implications of those lies citing possible "bad luck" they could bring to the applicant and the country (as it remains in insecurity for years). Another woman who has translated for the UNHCR for refugees applying to relocate to a third country (in the west) warned against the fact that the UNHCR and Home Affairs no longer trust the rape stories that almost all woman applicants claim to have been victim of. She advises that saying one was a wife or partner of a militia member or was wanted for their activism against the violence were among those being rewarded.

[392] Eileen ES Bjornstrom, Robert L. Kaufman, Ruth D. Peterson, and Michael D. Slater, "Race and ethnic representations of lawbreakers and victims in crime news: A national study of television coverage," *Social problems* 57, no. 2 (2010), 269.

[393] Bjornstrom et al., "Race and ethnic representations of lawbreakers and victims in crime news," (2010), 289.

[394] For example, youth are often mobilised to join or re-join armed bands from these local refugee camps, including recruitment of child soldiers. See for example, Sarah Kenyon Lischer, "War, displacement, and the recruitment of child soldiers in the democratic republic of Congo," *Child soldiers in the age of fractured states* (2010), 143-159.

persecution" in their home country. Richmond noted that the process of being issued a refugee status in a third country is a privilege mostly reserved for those "responding to the uneven development of the global economy, to the demands for labour."[395] Criteria such as level of education, age and professional skills are prioritised over security reasons associated with fear of persecution that led to their migration. This also resonates with the scholarly argument that not all self-proclaimed refugees are forced migrants.[396] Unlike most of my research participants from the eastern Congo who took time (such as applying for travel documents and organising transportation, often by aeroplane) to prepare for their journeys to migrate to South Africa as refugees, the rural Congolese had often had to leave everything behind when running for their lives. And their lack of financial means is why they have often been limited to internal or local refugee status.

The above points to the limits of the generalisation of the eastern Congo conflict as well as the class dimension to internal refugee identity among eastern Congolese. There is no doubts that the DRC continues to endure a violent conflict in its eastern region. However, excluding other Congolese ethno-regional groups from refugee status suggests that the South African refugee system overlooks the repercussions of the conflict in the east of Congo on the rest of the country, mainly the capital Kinshasa. Many Congolese continue to be rejected in their refugee status application, as they are considered non-refugees or economic migrants. However, the socioeconomic and political crises the DRC has endured since the ousting of Mobutu cannot be detached from the conflict in its eastern region.

In South Africa, the regionalisation of Congolese refugee status applications and "paper businesses" has not only exacerbated ethno-regional rivalries among Congolese. It has also constituted a fertile ground for economic exploitation on ethno-regional lines. The eastern Congolese involved in refugee paper networks exploit the western Congolese for at least two reasons: economic survival in South Africa and a reprisal against the *Kinois* and other western Congolese who often perceive them as "less" Congolese for the reasons discussed in Chapter 1 and further in Chapter 4. As one Kivucian who "deals" in refugee papers explained candidly: "*Kinois* love to be Congolese, calling all of us from Kivu '*barwandais*'. It is funny how, when it comes to proving that they are Congolese refugees in Home Affairs, *Kinois* have to rely on us to help them do so, even by paying us. Who is the 'real' Congolese now?"[397]

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[395] Anthony H. Richmond, "Sociological theories of international migration: the case of refugees," *Current Sociology* 36, no. 2 (1988), 21.
[396] Richmond, "Sociological theories of international migration," 9.

For many *Bato ya mangala*, becoming or being a Congolese refugee involves a lot of compromise, which some of the participants defined using words such as humiliation, *trahison* (betrayal) and *lâcheté* (cowardice). Humiliation comes not only from having to borrow the identity of the very people they look down at as "less" Congolese, but also from sometimes having to pay to pass as one of them. As I explained in Chapter 1, *Muswahili* identity involves being from the Kivu region and speaking Kiswahili, and both the region and the language are what make *Baswahili* "less" Congolese in popular *Kinois* discourse. In the post-Mobutu era, the *Baswahili*'s identity is also considered an identity of the intruders (foreigners involved in the DRC conflict) or their collaborators, the ones through whom the country is invaded and occupied. They are also seen as the ones who are benefiting most from the war economy, together with their historical neighbours and sociocultural siblings. And since the war started in 1998, Rwandans, Rwandophones or pro-Rwandans are names that *Bato ya mangala* have derogatively used to describe the *Baswahili* in and outside the DRC.[398]

Betrayal and cowardice are used to express the ways in which *Kinois*, *Bato ya mangala* (western Congolese in general) have to deny their identity – in which they take so much pride – inside Home Affairs, just to be issued a refugee document. Yet, in the end, they often receive a "rejection", which means that they are forced to live as "less" Congolese refugees or begin the process all over again. Thus, the Lingala phrase "*ngunda eza na respect te*"[399] – "there is no respect in being a refugee/ asylum seeker" or "being a refugee does not have respect" – is commonly used among *Bato ya mangala* to express such humiliations and other frustrations associated with being a refugee in countries such as South Africa.

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[397] Interview with Salomon, Cape Town, 08/ 01/ 2016.

[398] Richard Banégas and Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Vivre dans la guerre," *Politique africaine* 4 (2001), 9-10; Jackson, "Sons of which soil?," 95-123; Inaka,"Combattants and anti-combattants (*collabos*)".

[399] This phrase can be translated as "there is no respect in being a refugee/ asylum seeker" or "being a refugee does not have respect". The expression is used when discriminated against or when one feels like he is not living up to the standard of life he deserves just because he or she is a refugee. For example, graduates from Congo in working unskilled labour sector in South Africa, such as car guards, security guards, cleaners, etc. often uses the phrase to express their frustrations.

Conclusion

From the late 1990s, the sociopolitical situation in the DRC and changes in migration policy contributed to the increase of Congolese migration to South Africa. In the DRC, this period marked the beginning of a series of violent conflicts which included two wars. This period coincided with South Africa joining the 1951 Geneva Convention in 1996, followed by the Refugee Act of 1998, which became effective from 2000, and which led to issuing Refugee Status documents to asylum seekers. I explained, however, how dynamics of the Congo conflict have remained influential in migration policies applied to Congolese asylum seekers and refugees. I argued that from the late 1990s to at least 2003, when the Congo war was declared over, the Congolese – regardless of whether they were from the war zone – were largely issued refugee documents. With the official ending of the Congo war, the conflict in the eastern Congo intensified. The South African department of Home Affairs used this regional dimension of the Congo conflict to further discriminate against the Congolese hailing from the western region, especially Kinshasa.

The regionalisation of the DRC conflict made the process of acquiring documentation more cumbersome, especially for non-eastern Congolese. Out of desperation, many turned to informal networks to obtain documentation. This led to the growth of a “paper business” largely controlled by eastern Congolese who rose to the status of the “custodians” of Congolese refugee identity. I argue that although these businesses can be understood as part of the socioeconomic networks of Congolese immigrants in South Africa, there is some form of entitlement attached to them, which revolves around an appropriation of Congolese refugee identity by the eastern Congolese – the *Baswahili*.

Chapter Three

Congolese regional and ethnic networks in Cape Town

In this chapter, I discuss Congolese social networks in Cape Town focussing on ethnic and regional associations that emerged after the 2006 elections in the DRC and the 2008 xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Unlike the refugee paper networks which are mostly money-making business in the sense of buyer-seller transactions, the networks I discuss in this chapter are largely of mutual help and socioeconomic support among members. Although I am more devoted to the (re)emergence of the home region as an important basis for network formation among Congolese migrants, I juxtapose it with ethnic associations to discuss not just what the two forms of association have in common in their politics of internal organisation, objectives, means to attending these objectives and prevention of dissolution, but also how they interfere with and largely shape each other. I begin with providing a historical overview of Congolese and migrant networks in Cape Town. Then, I make use of selective case studies of the current ethnic and regional associations in Cape Town to show that borders and boundaries in these associations cannot be detached from the homeland politics and its implications on Congolese diasporic networks, as well as the hardship that immigrants in general and Congolese in particular, experience daily in post-apartheid South Africa. In terms of method, the chapter largely relies on participant observations among Congolese associations and interviews with their members as well as Congolese who have been in South Africa since the 1990s. The latter was essential in reconstructing a historical background of Congolese networks in Cape Town especially in understanding shifts and changes in these networks and what shapes them.

The Congolese and immigrants' networks in Cape Town (1990s-2006)

In his work on the global history of immigrants' associations, Moya points to the challenges scholars have encountered in attempting to define an "association" especially for immigrants.[400] The "typologies" of these associations as well as their varying sizes, functions and politics, are among the reasons that make them challenging to conceptualise.[401] Their names, objectives and membership criterion are important factors not to defining them per se, but to explaining what they are. It is only by knowing and understanding what they are for that one can attempt to classify them as "rotating credits", religious, hometown, ethnic and even political associations.[402] The same kinds of associations are the most widespread among various communities, including the Congolese of Cape Town.

Up to at least 2005, Congolese associations in South Africa had two sets of characteristics. The first is that they were largely inclusive in their membership and were initiated on various identities which often extended beyond Congolese citizenship. The second is that they were mostly informal and apolitical. This means they were less homeland-oriented and more about socioeconomic integration in South Africa. Research conducted in Cape Town in the early 2000s confirms, however, that the Congolese were a notable immigrant community in Cape Town then.[403] Most importantly, this research also demonstrates that the Congolese did not stand in isolation from other immigrants in their community.[404] The African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) in Muizenberg (Cape Town) opened in this period (2003-2004) and all its first students were foreigners from across the continent. One of the three Congolese men of the 2003-2004 AIMS class remembered:

> We were welcomed at AIMS on the 4th of September 2003. The Facility Manger told us that Muizenberg will be a nice place for us because it has Africans from all over

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[400] Jose C. Moya, "Immigrants and associations: a global and historical perspective," *Journal of ethnic and migration studies* 31, no. 5 (2005), 834-835.

[401] Moya, "Immigrants and associations," 834-835.

[402] Moya, "Immigrants and associations," 834-835.

[403] Rodolf Lekogo, "Francophone Africans in Cape Town: a failed migration?." *Cross, C. et al* (2006), 207-218; Owen, *Congolese Social Networks;* Cecile B. Vigouroux, ""The smuggling of La Francophonie": Francophone Africans in Anglophone Cape Town (South Africa), "*Language in Society* 37, no. 3 (2008); See also Owen, *Congolese Social Networks;* Baruti Amisi, 'An exploration of the livelihood strategies of Durban Congolese refugees: New issues in refugee research,' *University of KwaZulu Natal Working Paper,* 123 (2006).

[404] Cecile B. Vigouroux, "'The smuggling of La Francophonie': Francophone Africans in Anglophone Cape Town (South Africa), " *Language in Society* 37, no. 3 (2008), 415-434; Vigouroux, "'There are no Whites in Africa'"; Lekogo, "Francophone Africans in Cape Town: a failed migration?." ; See also Owen, *Congolese Social Networks;* Baruti Amisi, 'An exploration of the livelihood strategies of Durban Congolese refugees: New issues in refugee research,' *University of KwaZulu Natal Working Paper,* 123 (2006).

> the continent. Our driver and tour guide was a Congolese and knew the place very well. He said he arrived in South Africa in 1995 with his family. He took us to some Nigerian houses where we could eat their food and practise our English. There were many people from Cameroon, Congo-Brazza, Rwanda, Burundi, Senegal and others who spoke French. We heard of churches too where we could pray in French and the Francophone meetings. My colleagues and I who spoke French were often invited but we never had time to go because we were too busy with studies.[405]

The testimony of the above AIMS alumni is one of many confirming that since the late 1990s, Congolese associated with other migrant nationals of Cape Town on the basis of some shared identities and other common interests such as language, socialising habits and religious belief. For example, associations based on a shared language included the Francophones, Swahiliphones and Anglophones. These associations also formed according to macro-region (cross-border region) such as the Great Lakes region, West Africa, East Africa, Maghreb, to name but a few.

A common linguistic identity is important in migrant network formations.[406] The French language brought nationals from French speaking countries together in South Africa in the period this research focuses on. They included nationals from former French colonies such as Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Senegal, the Republic of Congo and Belgian colonies including the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi. In Cape Town, Francophone immigrants were not only remarkable because of their many businesses in free markets, the street and in their homes. Their presence also stood out in public transport, such as the train line from Cape Town – where most of them worked, ran their businesses and visited the Department of Home Affairs for refugee document application and renewal – to Simonstown (the terminus) which included the Retreat and Muizenberg neighbourhoods which hosted most immigrants.[407] They were remarkable for "being loud in French", explained Papy, a barman and former inhabitant of Muizenberg in 2001.

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[405] Interview with Dr Pierre Abraham Mulamba, a computer scientist and AIMS alumni, Cape Town, 17/ 02/ 2017.

[406] Adams Bodomo and Roberval Teixeira-E-Silva. "Language matters: the role of linguistic identity in the establishment of the lusophone African community in Macau." *African Studies* 71, no. 1 (2012), 71.

[407] Owen, *Congolese social networks.*

An important Francophone space included the Pan African Market on Long Street in the Cape Town city centre.[408] Most of us, including my research participants, who have had the experience with the Market since the early 2000s, can confirm Tayob's argument that the Pan African Market "is much more than a trading space".[409] The Market opened in 1996 as a tourist market for arts and curios from across the continent. Among its first and most prominent traders and shop owners were Francophone West Africans, mostly Malians and Senegalese. Among other things, the Pan African Market was a place for information sharing, ranging from how to get a person or things from anywhere in the continent to South Africa to job and business connections in Cape Town.[410] From newcomers who were still undocumented to documented refugees who could not secure employment in Cape Town, the market was one of the places to "hang out" and which ensured "making something at the end of the day".[411] A school teacher and a Congolese community leader who arrived in Cape Town in 2000 shared his impression: "When we arrived in Cape Town, there were three important places we were introduced: the Church, Home Affairs and the Pan African Market". A barman who arrived in Cape Town in 2003 remembered: "After we finished queuing at Home Affairs, we would spend the rest of the day on Long Street and hang around the Pan African Market. You always bumped into someone you know there".[412] And an uber driver who arrived in Cape Town the same year described the Pan African Market as a place where "you felt closer to anyone who speak a language you know". He named Cameroonians, Ivoirians, Congolese (Brazzaville), Senegalese, Malians, Rwandans and Burundians as shop owners, shopkeepers and as nationals "who regularly hung around the

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[408] This is a popular African immigrants' market in Cape Town and an amazing tourist stop for souvenirs from Africa. It has shops of African crafts and restaurants, among others. For more details, see https://www.capetown.travel/member/the-pan-african-market/, accessed on 06/11/2020. I first visited the Pan-African market in 2004 after my first visit to Home Affairs. I remember my friend introducing me to Tanzanians, Mozambicans and Malawians, among others, who owned stands in the market. I was impressed they could all speak Kiswahili. West Africans I was introduced to were Senegalese, Malian, Cameroonians and Congolese. Congolese I spoke to were shopkeepers, they did not own shops though they told me some of the shops were owned by Congolese too. In 2016 when I returned for research purposes, shops were not as busy as before. However, the Market and its surroundings have not changed in terms of being that space where one hears voices in Wolof, Kiswahili, pidgin English, Portuguese, French, Lingala, to name but a few. In each shop, I was captivated by the sound of classical African musicians such as Salif Keita and Franco Luambo, or smell of familiar home food.

[409] Huda Tayob, "Black Markets: Opaque sites of refuge in Cape Town," in Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (ed.), *Refuge in a Moving World: Tracing refugee and migrant journeys across disciplines* (London: UCL Press, 2020), 353.

[410] Huda, "Black Markets: Opaque sites of refuge in Cape Town," 352-355.

[411] Interview with Papy, a uber driver and a former Muizenberg resident, Cape Town, 12/06/2017.

[412] Conversation with Amis Bk committee members after the Amis BK monthly meeting of the 28/08/2016.

Market".[413] Through these connections, the uber driver developed close friendship with many Francophone people.

The DRC shares sociocultural ties with its neighbouring Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries because of its geographical location, which is at the heart of the continent, as well as its pre-colonial and colonial sociocultural dynamics.[414] These ties have proven resilient to colonial boarders as some of them have developed into cross-border ethnic nationalism in the post-colonial era.[415] It is therefore not surprising that in Cape Town, Congolese could easily relate and associate not just with Francophone, but also Swahiliphone and Lusophone people.

Swahiliphone, in particular, is an important cross-border linguistic identity that Congolese shared with other Swahili speaker nationals since the 1990s in South Africa. Unlike the current use of the word "*Baswahili*" among Congolese transnationals, which is roughly limited to Swahili speakers from the DRC, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the *Baswahili* community of Cape Town included all Kiswahili speaker migrants such as Tanzanians, Kenyans, Burundians, Rwandans, Ugandans and even some Malawians and Mozambicans. Sharing networks with these nationals, in particular, helped Congolese in learning and improving their English, which was necessary in their quest to socioeconomic integration in South Africa.

In the early 2000s, Congolese associated with other migrant nationals' spaces of socialising, including market places, bars and shebeens owned by migrant nationals from Nigeria, Cameroon and DRC. Most of these places were run informally and clandestinely in residential homes in neighbourhood such as Maitland, Woodstock, Saltriver and Muizenberg.[416] *Nganda* (as Congolese shebeens or informal bars are called) were well known in neighbourhoods such as Muizenberg in the early 2000s. *Nganda* originated in Zaire in the early 1970s during the Zairianisation period. They emerged as "clandestine bars" and as people's response to Mobutu imposing a closing time to public bars as part of his authenticity campaign.[417] *Nganda* are one of the most common Congolese informal economies that have migrated with Congolese in the western countries as well as in South Africa. They are often owned by women. In Mobutu's time, they were generally owned by "mistresses" of upper class men, including politicians and businessmen.[418] In South Africa, *nganda* found a fertile ground because since the apartheid era, they were an important part of the informal economy, especially in the "black" townships.[419]

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[413] Interview with Papy, a uber driver and a former Muizenberg resident, Cape Town, 12/06/2017.

[414] Karl Edvard Laman, "Languages Used in the Congo Basin. A Linguistic Survey," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 1, no. 3 (1928), 372-380. See also Fabian, *Language and colonial power.*

[415] For example the Bundu dia Kongo movement that seeks to unite and raise ethnic-nationalism among the Bakongo people of the DRC, Congo-Brazzaville, Angola, and even Namibia. Another one includes the Lunda people of the Katanga region who are also in Zambia. See for example, Yolanda Covington-Ward, *Gesture and power: Religion, nationalism, and everyday performance in Congo* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018), 187-226; James A. Pritchett, "The Kingdom of Kazembe: History and Politics in North-Eastern Zambia and Katanga to 1950," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 36, no. 2 (2003), 433–35.

[416] Interview with Boluka, a former Congolese community leader in Muizenberg and Langa who has been in Cape Town since 1993. Cape Town, 27/09/2020.

One well-remembered *nganda* by Muizenberg residents in the late 1990s to the early 2000s is *Chez Mireille* (Mireille's place). Mireille and her boyfriend Blanchard Bakala's home in Muizenberg was a common place for African migrants in the early 2000s. A close friend to the couple remembered Mireille's house was a place "to drink, eat home food, listen to our music and spend time with our women".[420] It was also a place for network formation across nationalities, class and gender. Other Congolese bars and clubs such as Fulangenge, Chez Virginie, Tiffany's and Chez Ntemba were spaces of social network formations, not just across kinship, friendship and ethnicity, but also across nationality. Some of these associations nurtured into business partnerships, job connections and even associations of "mutual help".[421]

Religious organisations and institutions, such as Christian churches and mosques, also brought Congolese close to one another, to other African immigrants and even to local South Africans. This happened even before the booming of Congolese charismatic churches in Cape Town.[422] Like elsewhere, worship places were an important aspect of migrants' integration into South Africa.[423] It is mostly from the early 2000s that Congolese slowly left inter-national South African churches to establish their own, with services in Lingala, Kiswahili and French, and with translation in English.

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[417] Janet MacGaffey and Rémy Bazenguissa, "Ostentation in a clandestine setting: young Congolese and Zairian migrants in Nganda bars in Paris," *Mondes en développement* 23 (1995), 105-106.
[418] MacGaffey and Bazenguissa, "Ostentation in a clandestine setting," 106.
[419] See for example Laura Drivdal and Mary Lawhon, "Plural regulation of shebeens (informal drinking places)," *South African Geographical Journal* 96, no. 1 (2014), 97-112.
[420] Interview with Boluka "Bolls" who was also a close friend of Mireille and Blanchard, Cape Town, 27/09/2020.
[421] MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, *Congo-Paris*.
[422] Baruti Amisi, *An exploration of the livelihood strategies of Durban Congolese refugees* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 16; Rampeioane Hlobo, "Local integration as a durable solution: A study of Congolese refugees in Johannesburg," PhD diss., University of the Witwatersrand, 2004, 5.
[423] Helen R. Ebaugh, "Religion and the new immigrants," *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (2003), 227.

One religious organisation, the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, founded by the Scalabrini Catholic Mission Fathers, stands out for its work among African refugees and asylum seekers. Since 1994 when it was founded, the Scalabrini Centre focused on refugees and asylum seekers' rights in South Africa.[424] It has offered skill training through short courses such as computer literacy and English classes. The centre collaborated with the University of Cape Town's Law Clinic's Refugee Unit to assist refugees and other displaced people in issues related to documentation. Both the Scalabrini Centre and the University of Cape Town's Law Clinic's Refugee Unit also conducted and published policy-oriented research on refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa.[425]

As I observed, the Scalabrini Centre and other institutions working with refugees, such as the Cape Town Refugee Centre and Home Affairs, were also used by immigrants to develop their own survival networks, particularly around the informal means to accessing refugee documentations (see previous chapter). Salomon (the refugee paper dealer that I mentioned in Chapter 2), for example, frequently visited the Scalabrini Centre since 2002, not to benefit from old clothes, food vouchers or for help in accessing refugee documentation, but to look for "business opportunities" and to expand his network of refugee related "dealings". There he dealt with people "from Angola, Rwanda and Burundi since 2002". All participants shared Salomon's view that the Centre was full of immigrants of different nationalities, newcomers and old alike, in need of socioeconomic "connections" in South Africa.[426]

From the mid-2000s, as the immigrant population grew considerably in Cape Town, their networks slowly adopted more narrowed criteria around membership. These criteria were constructed around specific home country identities. Nationality, home region and ethnicity emerged as the most common bases of social network formations among migrant nationals, including Congolese. I focus on trends and dynamics of current ethnic and regional associations in Cape Town through selective case studies.

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[424] Leah Mundell, and Emma Carone, "Models for migrant leadership: the Cape Town women's platform," *African Human Mobility Review* 2, no. 2 (2016), 491. For more on the Scalabrini Missions, see here: https://www.scalabrini.org.za/about-us/, accessed on 23/01/2021.

[425] The Scalabrini Missions are known for caring for "the needs of migrants and refugees, displaced people, seafarers and others affected by human mobility" across the globe. In South Africa, they have been working with migrants from conflict-torn countries since 1994. For more on Scalabrini Centre in Cape Town, see https://www.scalabrini.org.za/about-us/ and on Refugee Unit of the University of Cape Town's Clinic Law: http://www.refugeerights.uct.ac.za/about-us-8.

[426] In addition, the Scalabrini Centre is also bountiful in home products such as food (for example *ndakala* [dried little fish]), *pagne* (African fabrics), skin bleaching cosmetics and other goods that immigrants are attracted to, which people carry in their handbags or backpacks to sell after meetings, workshops and other activities at the Scalabrini and other refugee immigrants centres.

Chinyabuguma Cape Town: Ethnic associations

Research shows that ethnic solidarity, in Africa in general and the DRC in particular, pre-dates colonisation and that it constituted a solid base of mobilisation against European occupations in the transatlantic slave trade era.[427] In the Congo Free State and Belgian Congo, the Sankuru revolutions of 1905 and 1920 are examples of ethnic solidarity and mobilisation in the Congo. As De Jongh explains, in these revolutions the *bwanga* (traditional medicine) which were made to "neutralise Whites' force" were conceived within one ethnic group before moving to much bigger territories.[428] Other examples of ethnic solidarity include the Bashi people's resistance against the Afro-Arab slavers and later the European settlers and colonisers in eastern Congo (see chapter 1). It is therefore not surprising that in colonial Congo, ethnic associations were allowed. However, they were constantly scrutinised to ensure their activities remained within the scope of "culture", not politics.[429] Needless to say that colonial control did not stop them from becoming involved in politics, given that most of these association transformed into political parties at the eve of the independence, beginning by the ABAKO (*Association de Bakongo*) (cfr Chapter 1) which was formed in the late 1940s as an ethnic Bakongo association in Leopoldville and which became the first to lead Congo towards independence.[430]

Outside the Congo, however, ethnic associations of Congolese migrants are recorded from the Belgian colonial era. An example includes UNERGA (*the mutuel de Barega*, of the Barega ethnic group of Kivu region) which developed in Burundi from the late 1940s and which the Barega of Cape Town praise as one of the oldest in the history of diasporic ethnic associations of Congolese.[431] Another example is the Babembe (from Fizi region in eastern

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[427] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 41-54.

[428] Ed De Jonghe, "Formations récentes de sociétés secrètes au Congo belge," *Africa* 9, no. 1 (1936), 56-57.

[429] According to the 80-years old lawyer, Université Catholique de Bukavu (UCB/ South Kivu) lecturer and retired politician, Thomas Lwango, in Belgian Congo, ethnic associations were to be strictly "cultural". This, he explained, meant people could meet to talk about "their traditions, weddings in family, ancestral celebrations, […] anything but politics or critics of the colonial regime because most revolutions against colonialism started as "tribal" meetings then moved into something sinister," Interview with *Maitre* Thomas Lwango, Bukavu (DRC), 24/ 01/ 2017.

[430] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 82.

[431] Benoit Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo* (tome 2) (Brussel: CRISP, 1969), 84-85.

DRC) diaspora in Kigoma (Tanzania) who were an important base for the Simba rebellion (the Lumubist rebellion) in the 1960s.[432] The Babembe, such as those belonging to the M'bondo (Babembe ethnic association) of Cape Town I interacted with, are all proud of this historical moment for the role of their ethnic group in the war aiming for a total independence of the Congo.[433] A conversation with the committee members of M'bondo Cape Town revealed that their ethnic association could be one of the oldest of Congolese in East African countries as well as in apartheid South Africa.[434] In post-apartheid South Africa, ethnic associations are among the most organised of Congolese networks.

In their early 2000s research on Congolese refugee networks, Amisi and Ballard argue that Congolese "ethnic organisations were not seen as important in Johannesburg", in contrast to Cape Town and Durban.[435] This must be based on the fact that most Congolese ethnic-based networks they identified included those of the Bafuliro, Babembe, Bakusu, Bamongo and Bakongo were all located in Durban and Cape Town. [436] The vast majority of these associations were from the eastern Congo (apart from the Bakongo and Bangala associations). However, research by Mavungu in the early 2000s but published in 2007 points to a number of ethnic associations from the western region of the DRC existing in Johannesburg, which are not mentioned in Amisi and Ballard's research.[437] They included Nsalasani (of Bakongo), Murbaz (of Bakongo from Bandundu) and Alibaba (of Bangala).[438] These networks were formed to overcome the sociocultural and economic challenges that

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[432] See the map of "the route of the rebel reinforcements" from Kigoma (Tanzania) to Baraka (in Fizi region, the Babembe land) and the rest of the Fizi region in Hans *White Soldiers in Black Africa: Related from His Own Experiences* (Nasionale Beekhandel Beperk, 1967), 16.

[433] Europeans and African mercenaries fighting for Tshombe and the central government in Kinshasa during the 1960s later admitted to having fought the most challenging battles in the Babembe region and against Babembe fighters. The latter formed the majority of the Simba rebels. See Germani, *White Soldiers in Black Africa*, 1; Judith Verweijen, "From Simba rebellion to Simba's militia: the historical development of the discourse and practice of autodéfense in Fizi/Uvira, eastern DRC," paper for the Conference on Paramilitaries, Civil Militias and Civil Defense Forces, Yale University, 2012.

[434] The three men I interacted with on the subject shared the view that a good number of Babembe who were involved in the Simba Rebellion fled to Tanzania, Burundi and South Africa after the war. In South Africa, they hide under Tanzanian and Burundian nationalities. This makes sense considering that South Africa was aligned with the Congolese central government against the Communist Simba rebels.

[435] Amisi and Ballard, *In the absence of citizenship*, 8-9.

[436] Amisi and Ballard, *In the absence of citizenship*, 8-9.

[437] It is hard to say whether when Amisi and Ballard conducted their research these western Congolese ethnic associations did not exist or perhaps they were only looking for eastern Congolese associations as they are the only ones mentioned in their papers.

[438] Mazembo Mavungu, "Social capital, economic performance and political engagement: A case study of Congolese Immigrants in Central Johannesburg," PhD diss., 2006, 51-53.

Congolese immigrants faced daily in South Africa.[439] They were important bases of diasporic mobilisation and recruiting "pressure groups" needed in diaspora activism.[440]

The Congolese ethnic associations I identified in Cape Town during my fieldwork (2016-2017) are all from the eastern Congo, more precisely the Kivu region. They include Chinyabuguma (of Bashi ethnic group from South Kivu), Buguma (of Bafuliro from Uvira), Lusu-Lega (of Barega people from Maniema and South Kivu), M'bondo (of Babembe from Fizi).[441] Between 2005 and 2006, a number of Congolese associations dissolved as a result of the differing political affiliations of their members in 2006 during the Congo's first democratic elections campaign in the diaspora. Among those that dissolved were the western Congolese ethnic associations in Cape Town and others I discuss later in this chapter. The ethnic associations emerged or re-emerged (under a different leadership and membership policy) in the post-2008 xenophobic attacks in South Africa and post-2011 elections in the DRC.

To discuss the dynamics within the current ethnic associations in Cape Town, I focus on Chinyabuguma, an association grouping of Bashi people.[442] I chose it for two major reasons. The first is Chinyabuguma's history and internal politics in relation to the Kivu region and the eastern Congolese diaspora. The second is the fact that its structure and politics (mainly around inclusion, exclusion, objectives, and assistance) are similar to other ethnic associations that I engaged with in Cape Town. Thus it is a good case study for a general understanding of the dynamics of Congolese ethnic associations.

Chinyabuguma Cape Town: historical overview

Chinyabuguma means "unity" or "togetherness" in Mashi (the language of the Bashi). The association was founded in Maitland (Cape Town) in 2006 by a group of male friends from

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[439] Baruti Amisi, *An exploration of the livelihood strategies of Durban Congolese refugees* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 4.

[440] Through these associations, Congolese initiated and co-ordinated a number of protests in reaction to the injustices they faced daily in South Africa as well as the violence of the war crisis in their country in general and the eastern region of the Congo in particular, especially in the early 2000s. See Amisi and Ballard, *In the absence of citizenship*, 8-14. On Congolese diasporic "pressure groups" that emerged in the early 2000s, see Sarah Demart and Leila Bodeux, "Postcolonial stakes of the Congolese political fields (DRC) in Belgium, 50 years after the Independence," *African Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Africa in a Global World* (2013), 83.

[441] These ethnic associations, however, are not necessarily the ones in the early 2000s research of the same names, as I explain later.

[442] On the history of Bashi, see for example David Newbury, "Bushi and the historians: historiographical themes in Eastern Kivu," *History in Africa* 5 (1978), 131-151.

Bukavu (South Kivu region). Until 2015, when its founding members got into an argument over changing the policy of the association, Chinyabuguma was strictly a Bashi men association. While new members – friends or relatives of the members – could attend only when invited by influential members of the group, women were not allowed membership or to participate in the meetings. The reason was that the founder members conceived Chinyabuguma as *e'ngombe* (the male initiation hut in Mashi), a strictly man space. Women could only enter to serve food or drop off drinks. Since 2015, a good number of its former leaders relocated to North America, and under a new leadership, Chinyabuguma revised its membership policy. Among other things, full membership was allowed to women and social activities were increased and made more family-friendly (for example outings and picnics in child-friendly spaces and cultural activities in which women and children play the most important role).

Chinyabuguma quickly emerged as an eastern Congolese association for reasons including the influence of its founding members on the eastern Congolese community as well as the neighbourhood where its "headquarters" were originally located in Cape Town. Chinyabuguma was founded and based in Maitland, an area known to the Congolese of Cape Town as a Kivucian neighbourhood in general and ethnic Bashi in particular.[443]

Chinyabuguma membership is defined based on what the research on boundaries in ethnic association explains as a "primordialist" approach according to which membership to an ethnic community is acquired by birth.[444] Chinyabuguma membership requires being born to Bashi parents, or at least from a Mushi father as Bashi are strictly patrilineal, unlike, for example, the Bakongo, who have "matrilineal clans".[445] Member's names (mostly in Mashi), stating where in Bushi (as Bashi territories or villages are called) they originate or are from, and speaking "some" Mashi are the general ways the members, especially the leading committee, can trust a new member is really a Mushi. Membership is maintained through attending the meetings and paying monthly contributions. The leading team (or committee) is known as *bashamuka* – which they translate in English as “wise men”.[446] The most important members of the Chinyabuguma committee include the president (often the one chairing all the meetings), the secretary who takes minutes of every meeting and the treasurer who collects and manages the association’s funds.

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[443] Interview with Tafadhali Lubungo, a Chinyabuguma co-founder and the man who initiated gender inclusiveness as well as the idea of registering the association as a Not for Profit Organisation (NPO) in South Africa in 2015.

[444] Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic boundary making: Institutions, power, networks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

[445] See for example, Wyatt MacGaffey, *Kongo political culture: the conceptual challenge of the particular*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 11.

Promoting Bashi culture in Cape Town and its challenges

Like other cultural associations abroad, Chinyabuguma Cape Town aims to promote “a cultural identity in exile” as well as providing a “platform for cultural expression”.[447] As Barth argues, “belonging to an ethnic category implies being a certain kind of person”. He adds that “having that basic identity, it also implies a claim to be judged, and to judge oneself, by those standards that are relevant to that identity”.[448] Chinyabuguma members often debate what being a Mushi entails and it centres around a certain behaviour defined in terms of gender and mutual but mostly generational respect (in the sense of more respect being due to elders). In this “cultural” understanding, women and youngsters know their place in relation to men and elders, respectively. I discuss women in Chinyabuguma later in this chapter. However, while everyone in Chinyabuguma agrees on these Bashi traditions, tension often arises from agreeing on how much of “Bashiness” can be achieved from the diaspora of Cape Town. While some aspects of culture are less likely polemical in how they are understood and performed in Cape Town and in Chinyabuguma in particular, others have been one of the major sources of the reproduction of conflicting sub-identities in the association, constructed around class and dividing members between “real” Bashi and the rest. To illustrate this, I discuss fashion and language in the politics of Bashi culture promotion in Chinyabuguma.

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[446] *Bashamuka* (*mushamuka* in singular) is the most respectful title a Mushi man can be given. The title is associated with wisdom. Bashi consult *bashamuka* for any serious matter in Bashi society including weddings, naming a child, selling or buying land, matrimonial matters, etc. In weddings, for example, *bashamuka* are the ones who discuss the bride price and they will be the ones to teach the groom all about being a married man. Van Acker defines *bashamuka* as “landed powers with responsibility for a hill” however, in everyday life, they stand for all sort of manhood wisdom strictly rooted in Bashi culture of which the man is the keeper. It has no female version! For more on *bashamuka*, see for example Frank Van Acker, *Of clubs and conflict: the dissolvant power of social capital in Kivu (DR Congo)*, Department of Development Studies, Faculty of Applied Economics, UFSIA, University of Antwerp, 2000, 2; Louise Polak-Bynon, “Le mariage au Bushi,” *Africana Linguistica* 5, no. 1 (1971), 79-117; David Newbury and Catharine Newbury, “King and Chief: Colonial Politics on Ijwi Island (Zaire),” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15, no. 2 (1982), 221-246.

[447] Ernest A. Pineteh, “Spaces of inclusion and exclusion: the dynamics of Cameroonian associations in Johannesburg, South Africa,” *African Identities* 9, no. 4 (2011), 410.

[448] Frederick Barth, *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1998), 14.

The end-year function, which was also the official introduction of the newly elected leading team on Chinyabuguma, illustrates how Bashi perform their culture in Cape Town as well as its limitations. The event was on of 23 December 2017 and it was referred to by the leading committee as *kuyimika*[449] – enthronisation. Members were asked in advance to dress up as "a Mushi worthy of that name" for the ceremony. The President of Chinyabuguma who stood as *mwami* (king) had dressed up in what he assumed was "traditional", with *intole* (Bashi traditional dancers) hair (which were made of synthetic fibres instead of animal skin hairs as it is for Bashi) and had a long *itumu* (spear). As each new leading committee member endeavoured to include what they assumed to be an item of Bashi royal costume (beaded necklaces and bracelets, holding a stick, adding a piece of African fabric on top of their shirt, etc.), at this event, every other ordinary member – mostly women, however – dressed in "African culture".[450] This was a familiar pan-Africanist fashion which is recognisable through the "African print" fabric (*pagne*)[451] clothes and accessories such as beaded jewellery. The food (such as *ugali*,[452] cassava leaves, *ndakala*[453], etc.) that was served, as well as the African music and dance to compliment the few Bashi songs on the playlist, were also more evocative of pan-Africanism than Bashi culture.[454] This seeming deviation from Bashi cultural celebration in such a Chinyabuguma event, I argue, has its own politics that is rooted in the fact that Chinyabuguma is first and foremost an African immigrant association in a "white" (or "non-black") Cape Town[455] and a refugee NPO in South Africa.

Speaking Mashi – the Bashi language – is another important factor of Bashi identity that Chinyabuguma has been committed to promoting since it was founded. In most of its monthly meetings, Chinyabuguma has always encouraged its members to speak Mashi among themselves and to their children.[456] This effort was reinforced in 2017 as the *bashamuka* (the leading team) attempted to make speaking Mashi one of the criterions (in addition to regularly attending meetings and paying monthly contributions) to become a committee member in the future. This was out of the admiration for ethnic associations such as M'bondo Cape Town for its strict use of Kibembe (the Babembe language) in their meetings. Such language policy in the M'bondo association, however, has one major disadvantage: it discouraged many who do not speak or understand Kibembe to attend meetings. For Chinyabuguma, however, promoting Mashi as the language of the association failed from the beginning, as noted at the event of 23 December 2017 – the end-year celebration and official introduction of the newly elected leading committee. Most of the newly elected committee members could barely greet in Mashi, let alone make a speech in it. Instead they delivered their speeches in a mix of French, English and Kiswahili. Many who wished to apply for committee membership but who restrained themselves, because speaking Mashi was a criterion, felt cheated. At this ceremony, the people I was sharing the table with lamented that "it [speaking Mashi as one of the major criteria in applying for membership in the new committee] was just a politics to discourage us from applying so they could keep themselves there".[457]

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[449] For how *kuyimika* is done, see video of the enthronization of Mwami Majiri IV of Kaziba here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ManzlNIQeH4, accessed on 06/01/2021.

[450] Liberty Eaton and Johann Louw, "Culture and self in South Africa: Individualism-collectivism predictions," *The Journal of social psychology* 140, no. 2 (2000), 210-211.

[451] These fabrics are also known as kitenge (Kiswahili) or pagnes (French) and their Africanism is contested in scholarship because of their history and origin of their fabrication outside Africa. See for example Essel, Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel, "Deconstructing the concept of 'African print' in the Ghanaian experience," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 11, no. 1 (2017), 37-52.

[452] Ugali is also called pap or fufu in Lingala. It is a starch made of maize cassava roots flower and it is served with vegetable, fish or stew.

[453] Little dried fishes.

[454] See for example Maulana Karenga, "The pan-African initiative in the Americas: Culture, common struggle and the Odu Ifa," in Georgia A. Persons ed. *Race and democracy in the Americas*, (New York: Routledge, 2019), 156-172.

[455] This is how Congolese perceive Cape Town, in comparison to Johannesburg and Durban, despite that since the early 2000s, research has argued for the changing racial demmography of Cape Town with increase in Africans. See for example John Western, "Africa is coming to the Cape," *Geographical Review* 91, no. 4 (2001), 617-640.

The politics of language in ethnic associations such as Chinyabuguma Cape Town has caused conflicts between the youngsters and elders of the association but also between Bashi who grew up in the city or away from the Bashi villages/ homelands, who are called "*yerebuka*", and those who grew up in Bashi villages. The latter tended to consider themselves as

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[456] The late Samuel Lwakasi has been among those who initiated the idea of teaching Chinyabuguma members Mashi since he was made the Youth Leader of the association in 2017. He was the youngest of the leading team of Chinyabuguma and among the few who could speak Mashi fluently. Samuel died on the 21 October 2020 after being hit by a train at the Rosebank train station in Cape Town, about two years after he graduated in Mechanical Engineering from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). His last words posted on the Chinyabuguma Whatsapp Group were in the morning at 10:23, the very day he passed away: "We [Congolese] are to blame, not only the leaders, the way our system was designed is to always see a progress which we never plan of. Today Congo keeps on failing because we as Congolese never turn our eyes and ask ourselves how can one contribute to a change or push for change to happen. If you love something you will always find a way. Remember your voice is important [emoji of Congo flag] #CongosBleeding". Samuel was reacting to a post on #CongosBleeding; #CongoGenocide of gruesome photographs of chained Congolese natives in the Congo Free State juxtaposed with what looked like a recent photo of a mass grave funeral in the eastern Congo. It is unclear whether the dead were massacred by rebels in the eastern Congo or of the many who died in a collapse of an artisanal gold mine in Kamituga (Kivu) around the same period. The caption on the picture Samuel was reacting to reads "There is a genocide that's been happening in Congo since King Leopold II invaded us. The world turned a blind eye then and it continues to do so…Can you lend your voice and share this #CongosBleeding # congogenocide".

[457] In the Chinyabuguma meeting of February 2018, unhappy members insisted on getting an explanation regarding how those men who could barely greet in Mashi were admitted as committee member candidates in the first place.

"authentic" Bashi and the ones the *yerebuka* should look up to in terms of what a Mushi identity entails. *Yerebuka* have often felt bullied, called "hybrids" by the "authentic" Bashi and consider them "ignorant" of Bashi culture or "lost" in identity. A former member of Chinyabuguma of Kinshasa complained that "Chinyabuguma is being reduced to '*groupe de ressortissants du Bushi*' [group of those who come from Bushi]".[458]

Those who do not speak Mashi, in revenge, stereotypically refer to those who do as "*villageois*" (villagers) and to themselves as "*citadins*" (town people). In ordinary discourse, the two groups are translated in terms of *bashenzi* (uncivilised or primitives) and *civilisés* – language rooted in the slave trade and colonial history (see chapter 1). *Bashenzi*, though perceived as "backward", are recognised as "custodians" of the Bashi culture[459] while the *civilisés* are the majority of those who control the association in terms of finances, as I discuss in detail later. Thus, the power relation between the *yerebuka* and the "authentic" Bashi of Chinyabuguma is problematically unbalanced and the biggest threat to the future of the association. The latter shapes the politics of activities scheduled beyond stereotypical Bashi culture such as giving importance to women through including them among the speakers in Chinyabuguma sociocultural events.

Gender and Chinyabuguma

Between 2016 and 2017, in most monthly meetings ideas were shared on how to attract more women in Chinyabuguma, which, as I mentioned earlier, was founded and conceived as a strictly male association. For example, the meeting on the 5th of March 2017 was entirely dedicated to discussing strategies to increase women's physical presence in the monthly meetings and other activities of the association. However, this was not merely because the new Chinyabuguma wanted to be more inclusive than the old one. The idea to have more women's presence and involvement came hand in hand with the plan to register Chinyabuguma as a Not-for-Profit Organisation (NPO) in South Africa since 2015 when it was (re)founded. The early 2017 meetings that aimed at increasing membership in women were conducted out of frustration because in 2016 Chinyabuguma was finally registered as an NPO in South Africa and women were still less present in monthly meetings. This was perceived as disadvantageous for the annual reports including membership statistics in terms of gender balance, which are required by the Department of Social Development. This could also disadvantage Chinyabuguma in case of funds applications to local and international organisations for their projects.[460]

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[458] Interview with Mwami, a student, Cape Town, 10/03/2016.

[459] They are the ones consulted on questions regarding Bashi culture, history, and even in writing Chinyabuguma's rules or conduct.

Promoting gender equity in Chinyabuguma required to revise and even bend the most basic criteria for membership: being a Mushi. Membership was extended to non-Bashi women who were married to or romantically involved with male members. Men were also encouraged to invite female "friends" to the monthly meetings, regardless of the status and nature of their relationships. These women could attend monthly meetings and other Chinyabuguma social gatherings such as family outings and parties. They signed the attendance register and could pay their contributions. They, however, were not considered full members and their interventions or suggestions in the meetings were less regarded because they were not Bashi. They were left hanging between being members and regular visitors. Their status in relation to membership did not matter to the leading team of Chinyabuguma who only needed them on their attendance registers to back up the yearly reports for the Department of Social Development. These women also benefited the association financially through their contributions. Unlike the men of the association however, a woman member was not encouraged to invite a non-Mushi male partner or friend. These male-centred rules were defended by one of the Chinyabuguma co-founders as "guided by Bashi traditions. The women in our associations must be Bashi or women of Bashi men."[461]

Gender inclusion politics in the ethnic associations I studied in Cape Town, such as M'bondo, Lusu-Lega and Chinyabuguma, is less about cultural beliefs and more about reaching the association's objectives. Some ethnic associations, however, have successfully made use of the aspects of their ethnic beliefs around gender to increase women presence in their activities. For example, in Lusu-Lega (the Barega ethnic group) association, any woman, regardless of their ethnic identity, can join the association on their own or by invitation from any member. The reason is that for the Barega, "mwanamuke hakuwake na kabila" (a woman does not have an ethnic group).[462] This implies that a woman's ethnic identity is considered “neutral” or does not count, awaiting to be assigned or confirmed by marriage by which she joins that of her husband. Applying this “belief” in the Lusu-Lega association has a double advantage. The first is that it is the reason why there was a fair gender balance in the association’s meetings, sometimes with women’s attendance surpassing that of men. The second is that when Lusu-Lega finally acquires a NPO status in South Africa, as they were in the process of applying for one, gender balance in their membership will hardly be an issue. Another advantage of including any unmarried woman is that it is a good incentive to have men – unmarried and married – regularly attend meetings and financially support the association.

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[460] This was emphasised by the chair of the meeting, the President of Chinyabuguma.

[461] Interview with Jean Claude, a committee member of Chinyabuguma, Cape Town, 02/10/2017.

[462] That is what Rash, a committee member of Lusu-Lega Cape Town told me when I first attended their meeting in February 2016 for research purposes. He explained that to me when I was thanking him and the others for allowing me in the meeting despite that I was not a Murega. With other friendly members of their association, they explained to me that until I am married I do not have an ethnic identity. They added that they cannot exclude me from the meeting because "maybe you will end up with a Murega [man/ husband], who knows?"

Despite having relaxed the rules on gender in participating in Chinyabuguma’s activities, women’s attendance in general remained low and almost seasonal, depending on what was being discussed or activities going on in the association. For example, I observed that the topic of the election of the new leading team attracted many men and women alike because they wanted to support their friends and family who were candidates by voting for them. The November 2017 meeting was voting day and it was the most attended meeting I recorded since 2015. It was also relatively balanced in terms of the men and women who attended.

Internal conflicts among women of Chinyabuguma is another major cause for the difficulties the leading team encountered in their quest to increase women’s presence in the association’s monthly meetings. The hostilities between the married and the unmarried women is remarkable and have often been debated in meetings with the aim to reconcile the two categories.[463] Between 2015 and early 2017, I noted that there were only four women who regularly attended monthly meetings. They were unmarried with children except one. Wives of Chinyabuguma men, however, perceived the commitment of the unmarried women to the association as intending to grab their husbands’ attention or to benefitting the most from material support of the association.

In the Chinyabuguma association, issues related to funds mismanagement were often linked to women, especially the unmarried ones, and ways the association benefit them. This phenomenon is not unique to Chinyabuguma as seen in research by Schwarz and Baßfeld, which aimed at testing the theories that in social networks physically attractive women "receive help more often than less attractive ones".[464] In Chinyabuguma, some unmarried women are often accused of manipulating the leaders and other men of influence to cater for their material needs above everyone else's. Most of these accusations in Chinyabuguma, however, are generally debated as rumours, with the exception of one that was openly debated in monthly meetings and leaders' meetings between 2015 and 2018. This was about one particular woman whose son's education Chinyabuguma had taken care of since 2014 when it was still under the old leadership. Some members wanted the association to stop the project altogether. Others thought the association should carry on with the project until the boy finished school as it could prove the association's commitment to the socioeconomic wellbeing of its members in yearly reports. The man in charge of the youth – Samuel Murhula Lwakasi[465] – encouraged Chinyabuguma to continue supporting the boy's education as part of the youth empowerment initiative that the association was considering to introduce in its objectives. Many members, however, questioned the reasons, motives and the circumstances under which this boy was chosen and why, before and after him, there was never anyone else that Chinyabuguma had assisted in that regard.[466] Expressions such as "kuhonga"[467] were used by unhappy members, mostly wives of Chinyabuguma, to describe the exceptional kindness that particular woman enjoyed from Chinyabuguma. Married women boycotted her in after-meeting groupings and during family outings and parties as a rumour that she was a mistress of Chinyabuguma leaders spread further to other associations of eastern Congolese, such as Amis BK, which I discuss latter.[468]

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[463] There are no clear cuts between the married and unmarried women because there are still subcategories within the two groups. They included those officially married (civil, religious, traditional marriage) or those who are not officially married but share a home with a man and often have children. Unmarried ones include the divorcees, the single ones, and those in romantic relationships but do not officially share the house/room with “their man”.

Women of Chinyabuguma – married and unmarried – exerted a complex agency on the transformation of the association. It cannot be limited to competing for men's attention or to being passive members simply because they did not regularly attend the meetings or because they were not represented in the leading team of men only up to 2017. In fact, women did not only help Chinyabuguma in terms of ideas, they also offered availability and skills (cooking, serving, suggesting menu, decorating the venues, minding the children, cleaning, etc.) during the association's functions and other sociocultural activities. Through their personal relationships with the leading team, women have been influential in the association's policy of mutual help and the most benefitting from its implementation.[469]

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[464] Sascha Schwarz and Lisa Baßfeld, "Do men help only beautiful women in social networks?," *Current Psychology* 38, no. 4 (2019), 965-976.

[465] The youth empowerment project was also proposed by the late Samuel Lwakasi. He also advocated for a youth space in the association where children and youth could be taught about Bashi culture and traditions including Mashi lessons.

[466] Chinyabuguma meeting of the 7th of May 2017 was fully dedicated to reviewing whether Chinyabuguma should carry on with supporting the boy's school as the majority of the members were growing unsupportive of the project. Among other thing, those against it cited the boy's mother not showing enough gratitude for what the association was doing for her son. Another woman married to a member of the leading team mentioned "elle se comporte comme une ayant-droit" (she acts as if the association owes her that).

[467] *Kuhonga* is the Swahili term used to describe any form of payment or compensation made for sexual favours. It is often used to refer to any form of payments made to a prostitute.

[468] At some point her example was used in Amis BK association's meeting as an example of how women can destroy the association. However, it made sense because most of Amis BK members were also in Chinyabuguma.

Contributions and members' support

Like for most socioeconomic networks of immigrants, survival in the host country through self and mutual help was the major reason for creating and people adhering to associations such as Chinyabuguma.[470] As Bates argued decades ago, "ties that bind the members of ethnic groups are often material interests, and not traditional obligations."[471] "Orhaheb' embuga arhailola" in Mashi can be translated as "he or she who does not give away shall not expect to be given (back)". This was and remains the principle behind the monthly contributions of R100 by each Chinyabuguma member and it is the minimum a committee member can give. In meetings, before the notebook of the contributions is circulated, members were often reminded of the importance of their contributions and other special contributions as part of their moral obligation to the association.

While monthly membership contributions served to feed the *caisse* (savings) of the association, special contributions were required in times of a death of close relatives of members in South Africa or elsewhere. It was also needed in case a member gave birth or was getting married, to help settle medical bills, to bail out a member form jail, etc. In some instances, the association also raised funds from its members to support orphans and widows in various ways, which included buying groceries, paying school fees, helping with rent money, etc. In these instances, contributions could be any amount. However, how much one gave often depended on their personal relationship with the person in need or how they wished to impress other members of the association. In times of urgent need, people could also borrow money from the *caisse* of the association, but often only regular contributors were eligible for such favours.

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[469] It was in 2017 that a woman – Chantal Mudherwa – joined the Chinyabuguma committee for the first time. She is the vice treasurer of the association.

[470] Caponio, "Policy networks and immigrants' associations in Italy," 947.

[471] Robert H. Bates, "Ethnic competition and modernization in contemporary Africa," *Comparative Political Studies* 6, no. 4 (1974), 459.

Power relations within Chinyabuguma are shaped by membership contributions and financial interventions for members in need. As Bonacich and Modell argue in their research on associations of Japanese-Americans in the United States of America, there are two major problems that generally haunt most ethnic associations. The first is obvious: ethnic associations have boundary issues such as membership excluding other ethnic groups. The second is economic class, which often leads to intra-ethnic conflict.[472] The latter is also true with regards to tensions and even conflicts around contributing and accessing financial help in Chinyabuguma. Those who did not contribute regularly, who owed the association money and whose payment was overdue, as well as those who did not contribute but got regular financial assistance from the association (like the boy's mother I discussed earlier) were often debated as "problems" for the association. Being zealously committed to financially supporting the association through extra donations and contributions in money, or perhaps through providing a free meeting venue in one's home or business place – were another source of conflict within Chinyabuguma but which were never talked about as such. Instead, in every meeting, such habits were praised and encouraged.

Chinyabuguma was divided between the regular contributors and sponsors and those who did not contribute regularly but who were the ones often in need of assistance. The former had the power to influence Chinyabuguma's reimbursement of funds and to decide on their intended projects. Ordinary members know and understand such politics. Thus, those in need often speak privately to these "sponsors" to ask for their support for a demand they are about to make to the association. In fact, these "sponsors", who include members of the leading team, discuss and decide who gets help before discussing it in official meetings just as a formality. Because of this, personal relationships and interests guide their choices and recommendations. Tensions often arise between regular attendees and regular contributors who also happen not to regularly attend the monthly meetings yet they influence the decision making of the association, especially regarding financial assistance of regular members in need. Indeed, those who attend the meetings regularly contribute less. They are also the ones reprimanded when they miss a meeting. This is simply explained by the fact that Chinyabuguma encourages people to contribute even if they are absent from the meetings. However, ordinary members, who in addition to not contributing regularly are also irregular in the meetings, were even more discriminated against in a time of need for the association's financial support, because the leading team, with the support of other members, could point to the fact that they were not regular in meetings, therefore, not known and not deserving of the help.

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[472] Edna Bonacich and John Modell, *The economic basis of ethnic solidarity: Small business in the Japanese American community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 2-3.

Ethnic associations such as Chinyabuguma are prone to class-related tensions between the sponsors and ordinary members. Problems mostly emerge from the politics of fundraising, management and access. Multi-ethnic associations, such as those which are formed on the basis of home region that I discuss next, have more complex identity politics.

Amis BK Cape Town: Regional association

Since the late 1990s, Cape Town was home to Congolese regional associations that are not mentioned in the research on Congolese social networks of the early 2000s.[473] For example, Bony Beya, a cameraman and an active member of the Congolese diaspora of Cape Town, mentioned some Congolese associations he was invited to join when he arrived in Cape Towns:

> In 2003 when I arrived, there were many associations I was being invited to. One was of my people from the Kasai region called "Association de Grand Kasai". I also attended *Association de Bangala's* meetings. It was for all people from the Equateur region. I was invited by my Mongo[474] friend. They did so even though they knew I was a Muluba. Any Congolese was welcome in their association. When a church brother invited me at the "Conscience Congolaise" meeting, my other friend who was a Mukongo advised me not to go because it was an association of Balubakat and other *Katangais*. Later we find out we were wrong. Those in fact were Baluba and other ethnic groups from the two Kasai [Kasai Oriental and Kasai Occidental] who lived in Katanga and who fled to South Africa during *la chasse aux Baluba*[475] in 1993.[476]

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[473] Cecile B. Vigouroux, ""The smuggling of La Francophonie": Francophone Africans in Anglophone Cape Town (South Africa), " *Language in Society* 37, no. 3 (2008), 415-434; Vigouroux, "'There are no Whites in Africa'"; Lekogo, "Francophone Africans in Cape Town: a failed migration?." ; See also Owen, *Congolese Social Networks;* Baruti Amisi, 'An exploration of the livelihood strategies of Durban Congolese refugees: New issues in refugee research,' *University of KwaZulu Natal Working Paper*, 123 (2006).

[474] An ethnic group from Equateur region.

[475] Ethnic violence against Baluba in Katanga happened between 1992 and 1994. See Introduction and chapter 2.

[476] Interview with Bony Beya, a Congolese cameraman and photographer, Cape Town, 16/ 09/ 2020.

Participants who lived in Cape Town before 2005 confirmed the existence of the association of the Grand Kasai (of people from Kasai Oriental and Kasai Occidental provinces), the association of Bangala of people from Equateur, and Conscience *Katangais*e of Luba from the Katanga region mentioned by Bony Beya. In the above, Bony Beya also points to the flexibility in terms of ethno-regional identity and membership in these associations at his time. Another important fact regarding the pre-2006 Congolese associations in Cape Town is their fragility in relation to those that emerged afterwards, particularly after the 2008 xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Regional associations were constantly collapsing and (re)emerging, with more or less the same objectives and similar membership policies but with new leadership.

The Conscience Congolaise, for example, was a well-known *Katangais* association, active in Cape Town before 2006. According to former members, ethnic tensions (mostly between Baluba and Balubakat) and opposing political affiliations of members during the 2006 elections in the DRC, led to the association's dissolution and the formation of the Conscience *Katangais*e by the majority of Balubakats of the association as a way of excluding those of Kasai. However, Conscience *Katangais*e also collapsed over members' disagreements on which candidate to support in the 2011 presidential elections in the DRC. A new Katanga region-based association, Alliance *Katangais*e, emerged in the aftermath of the 2011 elections with more secessionist ideologies built around the economic power of the Katanga region and the way the country exploits it to the detriment of the *Katangais* themselves.[477]

After the first democratic elections in 2006 in the Congo, new Congolese associations emerged in Cape Town. They were mostly eastern Congolese. While most of them were ethnic based, one particular regional association stood out since 2008: Amis BK Cape Town, the Friends of Bukavu. According to its constitution, Amis BK was founded in Cape Town by four "individuals", namely Assani Muhanuzi, Amani Namufakage, Freddy Munyololo Muganza and Jean Berchmans Musole. They are all from Bukavu and identify as "garcons

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[477] According to Paul, Conscience *Katangais* of Cape Town co-founder, the aim of their association is to make all *Katangais* know that "they do not need the rest of the country [DRC]. We can be independent from the rest of the country.", Interview with Paul, Cape Town, 18/04/2018. Such ideology has fuelled the secessionist wars the Katanga region has experienced since the Congo's independence in 1960. See for example Miles Larmer and Erik Kennes, "Rethinking the Katangese secession," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42, no. 4 (2014), 741-761. See also https://www.facebook.com/alliance*Katangais*e/?tn-str=k*F for more on Alliance *Katangais*e of Cape Town.

BK" (Bukavu boys). According to Amani Namufakage, its current President and co-founder, the association had at least 200 members in 2017 of which about 100 were active members.

The first article of Amis BK's Constitution explains the meaning and origin of its name: "the association named 'Amis BK' was founded in Bukavu". It adds that "here in South Africa, the organisation is merely a branch of the one registered in the DRC but functions independently from its mother and sister associations". By "mother and sister associations" the constitution is referring to other associations in and outside the DRC of the same name and objectives, such as Amis BK Pretoria, Amis BK Durban, Amis BK Lubumbashi (at the University of Lubumbashi) and Amis BK Club in Bukavu, to name but a few.

Amis BK is a "regional" and an "apolitical" association. Such self-representation on official documentation submitted for its registration as a NPO in South Africa aimed to show how it differed from past and contemporary Congolese associations whose home country-related political activities, ethnic mobilisations and public protests with occasional clashes with South African police had a negative impact on their integration, especially given the fragile tolerance local South Africans have toward immigrants.[478] Regarding its vision and objectives, Amis BK's Constitution states that it is "structured to serve its indigent members in South Africa, with special focus on refugee families…"[479] This is another strategy that alludes to Amis BK being more oriented toward helping the most needy of the Congolese refugees. More than anything, it is the integration of Congolese within the South African community and less about homeland politics that Amis BK likes to emphasise as its main objective, unless of course there is something happening in the homeland which can be used to advance Amis BK's agenda as a Not-for-Profit Organisation (NPO) in South Africa.

The persistence of the conflict in the Kivu region, the increase of Kivucian refugees in Cape Town, and the rising ethno-regionalism among the Congolese inspired Amis BK's creation as a "mutual help" association. It is, however, the 2008 xenophobic attacks in South Africa that motivated the founding members to register Amis BK as a NPO in South Africa. The xenophobic attacks also lead Amis BK to engage themes related to integration in South Africa in their monthly meetings' discussions in addition to mutual help (such as improving relationships with the locals they share communities with). Amis BK has since *collabo*rated with other NPOs/ NGOs working with refugees in Cape Town such as the Adonis Musati Project, Gift of the Givers, Sonke Gender Justice and Vision for the Development of Fizi (VIDEFI).

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[478] On Congolese activities, ethnic mobilisation, and protests in South Africa before 2006, see for example Baruti Amisi and Richard Ballard, *In the absence of citizenship: Congolese refugee struggle and organisation in South Africa* (Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, 2005).
[479] See Article 5 of Amis BK constitution (2008).

Meetings, membership contribution, mutual support

In terms of meetings and membership contributions, Amis BK broadly follows the modus operandi of the other ethic associations I discussed earlier. Since its establishment in 2007, Amis BK members meet every last Sunday of the month in the Observatory (Cape Town) community hall. Its committee team meets every last Saturday of the month to discuss, debate and decide the subject of the next general meeting. Membership monthly contribution has been fixed at R50 per month since 2008. Although contributions are given to the *chargé des Finances* ("the one in charge of the finances", the treasurer), members were encouraged to set debit orders for the R50 to be paid directly into the Amis BK account every month. Others paid a R600 sum for the whole year at any time of the year. Some are regular contributors, some are not, and others do not contribute at all. Unlike other associations such as Chinyabuguma, not only are the monthly contributions for Amis BK more affordable, but those who do not contribute do not feel pressured as much. In times of celebration and outings, special contributions are asked based on the activities planned.

Unlike ethnic associations, which focus on creating a network of material mutual help, the psychological well-being of its members is among the priorities of Amis BK, as is ensuring that members are well informed regarding opportunities for which they could qualify as refugees and asylum seekers.[480] In meetings, information on places where free counselling is available are often shared. The Scalabrini Centre and the Cape Town Refugee Centre are among the places Amis BK recommends to members for psychological assistance. To motivate members to make use of these facilities, cases of suicide and mental illness among Congolese in Cape Town are often mentioned to warn members against the consequences of not seeking psychological help or to refuse to take depression as a serious clinical issue.

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[480] Information on how asylum seekers and refugees can apply for a relocation in a country in Europe and America has recently been one of the hottest topics in Amis BK meetings. How to qualify for a relocation in a western country and ways to get in touch with the UNHCR officials involved in the project, how to fill in the application form (specifically which information to include to make it more convincing) and what stories to tell in the interview to be selected and to speed up the process, have often been of interest to almost all members. Tips on how to get someone (a relative or spouse or a friend) to South Africa are also shared in Amis BK. How to get a visa or who to see for those who wish to travel clandestinely – are also shared in small group talks after or before the meetings.

Inclusion and its limits

Amis BK's original membership policy was linked to its name and had no boundaries. According to Amis BK's founders and its constitution, membership was originally extended to anyone, regardless of their nationality, who supported the association's cause. Up until 2008, monthly meetings – except the committee members' meetings which were in French and Kiswahili as all of them were from Bukavu – were held in English and French as a way of accommodating non-Congolese and members from regions other than the Kivu. Amis BK's vision was inspired by other Congolese transnational associations which, around the same time, were concerned with raising awareness about the violent conflict in the Kivu region and its human right violations. One organisation in particular inspired Amis BK: the Friends of the Congo, based in the United States of America. Its spokesperson, Kambale Musavuli, had met with Amis BK committee members to talk about his organisation's vision and to listen to and possibly advise Amis BK on how best to achieve its goals as a young association.[481] Amis BK, however, did not keep up with its multinational idea of membership and its idea to advocate for the sociopolitical well-being of the Congo, more particularly, the Kivu region, in the model of Friends of the Congo. By 2009, when Amis BK registered as a NPO in South Africa, it had already lost non-Congolese members from countries such as Cameroon, Nigeria, Tanzania and South Africa, who attended its meetings around the period it was launched in 2007. Members from other regions of the DRC, mainly those from the western region which Kinshasa embodies, had also stopped attending its activities.

One of the ways in which boundaries that reduced Amis BK to an association of people from Kivu was through the language of the meetings. Replacing French and English with Kiswahili as the language of all meetings in mid-2009 discouraged all non-Kiswahili speakers from the DRC and other countries to attend. Complaints from unhappy members about how the association continued to lose members included that the leaders of Amis BK have exclusively turned it into an association of South Kivucians.[482] However, even with Amis BK redefining itself within the South Kivu borders, many other issues continued to shape inclusion and exclusion within Amis BK. *Tribalisme* and *favoritisme* were the concepts used by some current and former members I interacted with regarding why Amis BK membership had grown thinner. Both concepts were widespread during the President Mobutu era and they emerged from the ways in which Mobutu favoured his ethno-regional people as well as his friends while ruling Zaire.[483] *Favoritisme* was used to express how Amis BK was run "as a club of friends", as a member put it, in terms of favours and other benefits including decision making and material assistance in the association. Ethnicism, however, was the most complex vice haunting the association given the ethnic makeup of its leading team as well as most of its regular members.

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[481] For more on Friends of the Congo, see their website: https://friendsofthecongo.org/leadership/

[482] This was debated in October 2017 committee meeting during which members reflected on the ways in which Amis BK has derailed from its vision including membership extension to all Congolese and non-Congolese. The meeting was in preparation of the 10th anniversary of Amis BK.

Ethnicism in Amis BK

From its constitution, it is clear that Amis BK's creation was inspired by the mistakes of past and even co-existent Congolese associations. This is seen in how Amis BK presents itself in terms of vision, objectives and even membership. Amis BK was founded with a particular aim to rise above ethnic associations which were perceived both as weak and threatening the emergence of a Congolese diaspora and which was needed to raise awareness of Congolese refugees' rights under one voice.[484] Like Congolese association before 2006, Amis BK has experienced internal fractures related to the varying interests of both its committee and ordinary members. By stressing its regional nature, Amis BK emphasised both its multi-ethnic nature and non-ethnicism. As a Kivu association, this meant Amis BK was inclusive of all the ethnic groups of the Grand Kivu region such as Bashi, Barega, Babembe, Banande, Bavira and Bahindu.[485] The result, however, was Amis BK becoming a fertile ground for the reproduction of ethnic feuds and tensions of the Kivu region in Cape Town.

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[483] Abdoulaye Souley, "Ajustement structurel et effondrement des modèles idéologiques: Crise et renouveau de l'État africain," *Etudes internationales* 22, no. 2 (1991), 257.

[484] Interview with Musole, a co-founder of Amis BK, Cape Town, 07/09/2016.

[485] Most scholarly works on ethnic identities in the Kivu region are on ethnicity in relation to the ongoing conflict in the region since the late 1990s. However, this research is barely precise with regard to how many ethnic groups exist in the region as they are more concerned with the so called "autochthone" ethnic groups (such as Banande, Bafuluriro, Babembe, etc.) that engage in conflicts with Congolese of Rwandan ancestry over land and socio-political rights in the Kivu. See for example Koen Vlassenroot, "Reading the Congolese crisis," *Conflict and social transformation in Eastern DR Congo* (2004), 39-60; Frank Van Acker, "Where did all the land go? Enclosure & social struggle in Kivu (DR Congo)," *Review of African Political Economy* 32, no. 103 (2005), 79-98. However, some sources argue that South Kivu has nine "principal ethnic groups" (excluding some minorities groups) which include Bashi, Babembe, Bavira, Barundi, Bahavu, Barega, Batwa, Banyindu, Bafuleru (https://www.congovirtuel.com/page_province_sud_kivu.php, accessed on 25/12/2020). The North-Kivu region has 10 ethnic groups including Banade, Bahunde, Batutsi, Bakano, Bakumu, Bambuti, Banyanga, Bakusu, Batembo and Bahutu. See for example, Tabin Lissendja Bahama, "Conflits Armés et Fragilité De L'autorité Étatique au Nord-Kivu en République Démocratique du Congo," *European scientific journal february* 13, no. 5 (2017), 406.

Amis BK's leading team is made of two ethnic groups, namely Bashi and Barega, both from the South Kivu region. Those two ethnic groups have a history of tensions associated with the "struggle for political power" in the Kivu region.[486] The same power struggle was visible in Amis BK through the ways in which the overwhelming Bashi majority in the leading team has always been contested by members of other ethnic groups, especially the Barega. This is a problem that originates from Amis BK's creation, because out of the four of its founding members, one only is a Murega and he has always been among the most outspoken of the Bashi hegemony in the association. Its current committee has 20 members, among whom three are Barega. Moreover, all of Amis BK's committee of leaders were also active members of Chinyabuguma (the Bashi ethnic association I discussed earlier). Confrontations from the non-Bashi of Amis BK increased in monthly meetings regarding the ethnic discrimination against non-Bashi of the leading committee and ordinary members. To divert the attention of the unhappy non-Bashi members, from 2015 the committee started encouraging all members also to actively attend their respective ethnic associations, citing the collaboration between Amis BK and all the ethnic associations of the Kivu region.

The Amis BK meeting of the 26 June 2016 was one of the most memorable in this respect. While discussing the Congo's 56th Independence Day celebration activities, the President of Amis BK also seized the opportunity to remind members of the importance of knowing their respective "culture, tradition, and language". Citing M'bondo (the Babembe ethnic association) as a good example to follow, he explained in Kiswahili: "*Mubembe anasemaka Kibembe ata kama iko mu Alaska*" (a Mubembe still speaks Kibembe even if he lives in Alaska). Then he commented, mentioning just one particular ethnic group: "*lakini Mushi, wapi!*" (but a Mushi, non!).[487] It is possible that by reflex or by knowledge, the President used his own ethnic group as an example. But given his commitment to the Bashi ethnic association, his statement became further support of the Bashi hegemony in Amis BK. This was further proven in the second point of discussion of the meeting which was how to manage the Independence Day celebration and how to *collabo*rate with ethnic associations to make sure activities did not clash.

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[486] Justin Bisanswa, "Memory, history and historiography of Congo-Zaïre." In Mamadou Diawara, Bernard Lategan, Jörn Rüsen eds. *Historical Memory in Africa: Dealing with the Past, Reaching for the Future in an Intercultural Context* 12 (2010), 73.

[487] I mentioned earlier that Babembe are the only ones who led their association's meetings in Kibembe. And indeed, members are encouraged to communicate in Kibembe every time they meet.

The Independence Day celebration was set for Saturday the 2nd of July as the official 30th of June Congo's Independence Day fell on a Thursday, a working day. The 2nd of July 2016, however, corresponded or rather clashed with Chinyabuguma's monthly meeting (it happens on every first Sunday of the month). This was debated in Amis BK by the President and the majority of members, who were also Chinyabuguma members. Tensions emerged as the President, supported by other Chinyabuguma members in the meeting, decided to find a "solution" to accommodate Chinyabuguma members in the celebration. Despite the tensions and some non-Bashi members of Amis BK showing their discontent (including some walking out of the meeting), the President of Amis BK ensured that an agreement considerate enough of the Chinyabuguma priorities was reached. The Bashi of Amis BK therefore decided that the football game (Amis BK versus M'bondo) would be from 2pm to 4pm while the Chinyabuguma meeting was happening. Then around 4pm, when the soccer game would supposedly be over, Chinyabuguma members would join in for the *braai* (barbecue) and the conference with the topic of the violence occurring in Beni (in the eastern Congo). The ethnic minorities of Amis BK and other Bashi who did not sympathise with ethnic associations lamented why Chinyabuguma, out of all the other associations from the Kivu, should be given such high consideration.

The above incident is one of many reasons why unhappy Amis BK members have often wondered whether there is a difference between Chinyabuguma and Amis BK. It is a genuine concern given that at the soccer game, the members of M'bondo (Babembe ethnic association), who had a friendly soccer game with Amis BK in celebration of the Congo's 56th Independence Day anniversary, could not stop saying "*tusiache Bashi batupige*" (we must not let the Bashi beat us), speaking of Amis BK as a sort of extension of Chinyabuguma. [488]

The power struggle between Amis BK and Chinyabuguma is complex as it stems from the ideology that "the President of a country is powerful but he knows he is still a subject of his *mwami* [ethnic chief]".[489] In the Amis BK meeting of the 31 July 2017, non-Bashi members attended in high numbers to further confront Amis BK's leading team on the issue of

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[488] During the soccer game, I chatted with some fans of M'bondo regarding why they do not come to Amis BK meetings. They answered that "tuko deja na mutualite yetu" (we already have our own ethnic association), in the words of the man who was in charge of the team's soccer uniforms. Research fieldwork, Cape Town, 2/07/2016.

[489] That was the response the President of Amis BK gave me when I asked him about the struggle that has been going on between Amis BK and Chinyabuguma after the Amis BK monthly meeting of the 31 July 2017 in which the heated debated on Chinyabuguma controlling Amis BK continued.

“between Amis BK and Chinyabuguma, which one is which” as raised in the June meeting in preparation for the Congo Independence celebration. A Chinyabuguma committee member and ordinary member of Amis BK gave a threatening response pertaining to the power of Chinyabuguma over Amis BK: “if all Bashi leave Amis BK, the association will collapse”. However, the most indisputable power of Chinyabuguma over Amis BK came from the fact that the very same three men of the four who founded Amis BK also founded Chinyabuguma when their ethnicist tendencies was contested by some members.

The ethnic tensions within Amis BK do not make it any less a regional association. In fact, these tensions reflect the complex politics of ethnicity in the region, both in the DRC and transnationally among Congolese. Unlike other regional associations of Congolese in Cape Town before it, Amis BK has proven resilient for having survived ethnicism since it was founded in 2007. And unlike other regional associations before it which did not survive the ethnic and political tensions among its members, Amis BK has survived the 2011 elections in the Congo and its exacerbations of identity conflicts among the Congolese diaspora networks including that of Cape Town. Amis BK was first shaken by diverting interests and ethnic conflicts among its founding members; then it survived the growing ethnic associations of eastern Congolese to which it lost a good number of members. It continues to survive the interference of Chinyabuguma by the majority of Bashi founders of Amis BK. The ethnic tensions within Amis BK can therefore be overlooked given how it strives to live up to most of its objectives including assisting the most needy of its members and being the association of reference for the *Baswahili* community of Cape Town.

Conclusion

Material discussed in this chapter shows that in Cape Town, Congolese social networks are shaped by the homeland’s and the host country’s sociocultural and political situation. In particular, the 2006 elections in the DRC and the 2008 xenophobic attacks in South Africa are major turning points with regard to the objectives for and identity politics in membership of these associations. While the 2006 elections in the DRC impacted considerably on the ethno-regional politics among Congolese and their social networks transnationally, the 2008 xenophobic attacks in South Africa inspired the NPO-isation of Congolese associations as a way of sustaining and securing them coverage in South Africa.

I argue that up to the early 2000s, Congolese social networks were less defined in terms of borders and boundaries, which made them more inclusive but prone to dissolution on the very same basis of inclusiveness they were founded upon. After 2006, the associations that (re)emerged were clearly defined in terms of objectives and membership. The latter was mostly based on homeland identities which were most pronounced in the conflict leading to the dissolutions of the earlier associations. Associations that emerged in the aftermath of 2006 were inspired by the crucial place that regionalism, ethnicism, class and political affiliation occupy in Congolese social networks, and their potential not only to destroy but to hold them together. The Eastern Congolese associations focused on in this chapter emerged out of the mistakes of the western and south-eastern associations which did not survive the very same policy of inclusiveness they were founded upon.

I provided examples supporting that the home region as a basis of network formation is not new to Congolese immigrants in South Africa (and Cape Town in particular). I argue however, that the resilience of Amis BK as a Kivu people's association is strongly rooted in the regionalism that has grown rampant among the Congolese diasporas in the Joseph Kabila era, especially along the east/west divide. Moreover, despite not being immune to ethnic-, class-, gender- and homeland politics-related issues that are characteristic of most social networks of Congolese, regional associations such as Amis BK is established on multiculturalism. It therefore represents a step towards more inclusive networks of Congolese migrants, and which is progressing towards a Congolese diaspora that transcends ethnic differences.

The tensions between Chinyabuguma and Amis BK, I argue, are not just evidence to the fact that ethnicism is inevitable in regional associations but they also point to the diasporic projection of the complex relationships that exist between region and ethnicity in the Congo. In the next chapter, I read regionalism in more radicalist "Congolese diaspora" groups of Cape Town.

Chapter Four

From the Kamikaze and *Brazzavillois* to the *Combattants* and *Baswahili*

While one's homeland, region or province of origin, and ethnicity have been the most common bases of network formation among Congolese immigrants in South Africa, there exists Congolese groupings that loosely present themselves as "Congolese associations" or "Congolese diaspora" organisations or associations. These associations' objectives go beyond assuring their members' wellbeing in the host country; they also aim to connect with other diasporic movements across the globe to bring about sociopolitical changes in the home country.[490] Their formations, dissolution and re-emergence, like the associations discussed in the previous chapter, are often trigged by the host country's and the home country's sociopolitical factors. However, despite these associations' inclusiveness, they are not exempt from the politics of identity shaped by homeland and diasporic notions of belonging. In Cape Town, such Congolese "national" associations, which go by different names, emerged in the post-Mobutu period with objectives ranging from protecting Congolese from other nationals to ridding the Congolese diaspora of "traitors" and "cowards" who are either siding with the ruling political power in Congo, or not participating in the diasporic political struggle.

This chapter focuses on two Congolese diaspora associations in Cape Town which emerged a decade apart: the Kamikaze and the *combattants*. While the two associations were initiated by western Congolese, they differ from the eastern Congolese founded associations I discussed in the previous chapter in two major ways. The first is that they both claim to advocate for all Congolese's rights, regardless of their home identities. The second is the radicalism, including violence, by which they lead their activities. The Kamikaze used violence to protect the Congolese from other nationals in South Africa, while the *combattants* were more preoccupied with changing the sociopolitical situation in the Congo and to exposing and punishing the “internal enemy” of the Congo based in the diaspora. Such objectives, and means to reach them, led to the *combattants* to target the eastern Congolese, especially between 2011 and 2017. In this chapter, I argue that the aims and modus operandi of the Kamikaze and the *combattants* are crucial to understanding the shifts in Congolese transnationalism as well as the politics of non-ethno-regionalism in the Congolese diasporic networks of Cape Town in the post-Mobutu period. This chapter draws largely on ethnography in Cape Town including observations and interviews with members and former members of the *combattants* and Kamikaze groups, and the Congolese who knew them and their operations.

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[490] See for example David Garbin and Marie Godin, "'Saving the Congo': transnational social fields and politics of home in the Congolese diaspora," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (2013), 113-130; Fiona B. Adamson, "The growing importance of diaspora politics," *Current History* 115, no. 784 (2016), 291-297; Terrence Lyons, Harald Svein Ege, Birhanu Teferra Aspen, and Bekele Shiferaw, "The Ethiopian diaspora and homeland conflict," *Power* 44, no. 2 (2007), 215-231.

The Kamikaze of Cape Town (2000-2008)

The Kamikaze were founded in Cape Town in 2000 by a group of five men, composed of four Congolese from Kinshasa and one from Brazzaville. The four *Kinois* had been friends since childhood and had left Kinshasa together in 1991, first headed to Angola, then to South Africa through Namibia in 1993. They met and befriended Daoud from Brazzaville in Angola. Boluka “Bolls” initiated the idea of founding the group, named it “Kamikaze” and led and co-ordinated the activities of the Kamikaze until its dissolution in 2008. The name of Kamikaze, as Boluka explained, was inspired by the legendary *kamikaze* of Japan in the Second World War, suicide-bombers who launched more than 400 attacks on Allied ships and aircrafts between 1944 and 1945.[491] There is, however, little relation between the early 2000 Congolese Kamikaze of Cape Town and the code of dying with dignity or the honour in fighting for a noble cause, which was the foundation of Japan’s *kamikaze*. Nevertheless, Boluka explained that “Kamikaze are better than mercenaries because we were always ready to sacrifice our lives to protect Congolese against other people and no one paid us to do so.”

Boluka and other members of Kamikaze were mostly inspired by the use of the term in everyday life in the DRC. Kamikaze is indeed a common name in Congolese popular culture, mostly in Kinshasa. For example, the notorious youth gang from Kinshasa known as *kuluna* use Kamikaze as an alternative name.[492] There is also a group of street dancers and a football club which both go by the name of Kamikaze. It is also a term used in charismatic churches to refer to spiritual destroyers who have nothing to lose.[493]

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[491] Robin L Rielly, Kamikaze *attacks of World War II: A complete history of Japanese suicide strikes on American ships, by aircraft and other means* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2010), 1.
[492] Filip De Boeck, ““Poverty” and the politics of syncopation: urban examples from Kinshasa (DR Congo),” *Current Anthropology* 56, no. 11 (2015), 151.

In a recent migration study, the word *kamikaze* has also been used in discussing sub-Saharan youth who clandestinely migrate to Europe from Mauritania and Morocco to the Canary Islands using small boats.[494] Given the many risks that characterise these clandestine voyages, a Spanish general based on the Canary Islands used the concept of “Kamikaze migrants” to explain the deadly risks involved in such voyages, which include death by drowning. “They have nothing to lose and everything to gain” was how the Spanish general made sense of the risks these Africans take in such clandestine migration.[495] In the DRC, more generally in Kinshasa, the concept of “*tiya mutu bakata*”[496] is more or less synonymous with “Kamikaze” and it has characterised the migration trajectories of Boluka and friends since they left the DRC in the early 1990s, first to Angola. It is also the expression Boluka used to explain why the Kamikaze was established as well as the many risky and unlawful activities the Kamikaze were involved in. *Tiya mutu ba kata* is an expression that implies survival at all costs. In other words: die trying.

While the associations I discussed in the previous chapter emerged in the context of the inter-Congolese relationships shaped by the growing number of Congolese in Cape Town, the Kamikaze emerged in the context of Congolese relationships with other national migrants much earlier. The formation of the Kamikaze was sparked by the feuds in Cape Town between Congolese from the Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville as it is often called) and those from the DRC. One day in April 2000, Boluka was in Worcester for business with his four friends when he received a call from Muizenberg: “Bolls! Bolls! No way out here. No Congolese women going to the shop, no Congolese kid going to school”. “Why?” he asked. “The people from Congo-Brazza have blocked everywhere…” he was told. That morning when he received that call, Boluka was about to conclude “a business deal of R47 000” but he had to stop everything and rush to Cape Town (CBD) to “mobilise his men” to get ready to go to Muizenberg. They drove in “four vehicles” to Muizenberg. Once there, they found the *Brazzavillois* waiting for them, armed with knives and guns. Boluka was in front and fought using his judo and other fighting skills he learned when he was young in Kinshasa and Angola. The violent attacks of the Kamikaze on their *Brazzavillois* opponents led to many Congolese from Congo-Brazzaville “running away from Muizenberg” in the two weeks following the day of the big fight.[497]

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[493] Pastor Bernard of Word of Life Cape Town explained “*Kamikaze spirituels*” as people whose souls have already been lost to the devil and who enter people’s lives with the sole intension of destroying them, killing them physically and/or spiritually, and in so doing dying themselves because they have nothing to lose.

[494] Luna Vives, “Unwanted sea migrants across the EU border: The Canary Islands,” *Political Geography* 61 (2017), 181-192; Jørgen Carling and Maria Hernandez Carretero, “Kamikaze migrants? Understanding and tackling high-risk migration from Africa,” In *conference Narratives of Migration Management and Cooperation with Countries of Origin and Transit*, 2008.

[495] María Hernández-Carretero and Jørgen Carling, “Beyond” Kamikaze migrants”: risk taking in West African boat migration to Europe,” *Human Organization* (2012), 407.

[496] From Lingala, it can literally be translated as “lay down your head so it can be chopped off”. It is used to mean taking great risks.

Although not with much detail and precision, research on African migrants in Cape Town makes mentions of these tensions.[498] Vigouroux, who researched African migrants in Cape Town since the 1990s, for example, points to possible competition and tensions between migrant citizens from the two Congos and she argues that nationals from these two countries comprised the majority of the Francophone community in Cape Town (with those from the DRC being the first).[499] Muizenberg and Langa in particular were areas with a high concentration of various African nationals ever since the 1990s. In the late 1990s, Muizenberg was already nicknamed “little Congo”, not only because the Congolese represented 64% of its remarkable African immigrant community, but also because of the Congolese cultural hegemony.[500] As Boluka put it in Lingala: “*Muizenberg ezalaki base na biso, place ya sentiment na biso, place ya retrouvail, place ya recreation*” (Muizenberg was our base, our sentimental place, a place of reunion, a place of recreation).[501] In the early 2000s, Muizenberg was to Congolese what Bellville (nicknamed Mogadishu) was to Somalis.[502]

What lacks from research on immigrants such as the ones mentioned above is immigrant-on-immigrant tensions, sometimes involving violence, and immigrants’ gang-like groups which

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[497] Interview with Boluka “Bolls” Bokabela, a Congolese leader, co-founder and leader of the Kamikaze, Cape Town, 27/09/2020.

Cécile B. Vigouroux, ““The Smuggling of La Francophonie”: Francophone Africans in Anglophone Cape Town (South Africa),” *Language in Society* (2008), 419-420; Rodolf Lekogo, “Francophone Africans in Cape Town: a failed migration?,” *Cross, C. et al* (2006), 207-218.

[498] See also Vigouroux, ““The Smuggling of La Francophonie”,” 432.

[499] Cécile B. Vigouroux, ““The Smuggling of La Francophonie”: Francophone Africans in Anglophone Cape Town (South Africa),” *Language in Society* (2008), 419-420.

[500] Owen wrote on Congolese activities in Muizenberg which led to the xenophobic reaction from the local South Africans in the neighbourhood in the early 2000s. She speaks of *nganda* and *sape* festivals – both of which are Congolese “culture”. She even spoke to Congolese men including one who opened up that “I sell drugs, I kill” and who admitted to having served a six years jail time. Joy Owen, “The embodied performance of Congolese masculinities in Muizenberg, Cape Town,” *Journal of Social Development in Africa* 29, no. 1 (2014), 181-182.

[501] Interview with Boluka, Cape Town, 27/09/2020.

[502] Ala Rabiha Alhourani, “Performative ethnography: difference and conviviality of everyday multiculturalism in Bellville (Cape Town),” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 29, no. 2 (2017), 211-226; Owen, *Congolese Social Networks*, 181-182.

"ruled" in places with a high concentration of African immigrants such as Muizenberg in the 1990s and early 2000s; secondly, how home identities, especially regionalism, played in inter- or intra-immigrant relations. In her early 2000s research, for example, Owen discusses the recurrent violence that characterised the way in which the Congolese "performed" their masculinity in public and in their heterogeneous romantic relationships.[503] Owen explains that such behaviour, along with illegal dealings they were involved in, was the major reason behind the xenophobic attitude African immigrants endured in Muizenberg. However, she speaks in general terms without pointing to specific groups, and says little about immigrant-on-immigrant attitudes in that regard. what she refers to as the hegemonic attitude of the Congolese in areas such as Muizenberg.[504] The period covered in Owen's research, however, coincides with the heyday of the Kamikaze's activities in Muizenberg and the Cape Town CBD, a period memorable for all my research participants who were in Cape Town during the late 1990s. Thus, I wondered whether the regular tensions and often physical fights that Congolese from the two Congos engaged in were not mistaken as fights among same national, especially in Owen's participant observation in public spaces. This is possible given that both *Kinois* and *Brazzavillois* generally speak Lingala and French.

The* Kinois *and* Brazzavillois *war in Muizenberg, April 2000

The events leading to the infamous April 2000 fights through which the Kamikaze established themselves as a "group" are crucial in understanding the complexities of the Kamikaze and what became known as the conflict between *Kinois* and *Brazzavillois* in Cape Town. It all started in Muizenberg at the home of a (in)famous Congolese couple – Mireille and Blanchard – where they ran a *nganda* (as a *shebeen* is called in Congo) known as "Chez Mireille". Mireille was "a beautiful woman and a hustler" in Boluka's description. A man belonging to the Ninjas (whom I return to later) asked Mireille to leave her partner Blanchard to be with him. When Mireille rejected his proposal, the man and his Ninjas threatened to kill Blanchard and burn their house/*nganda* unless she changed her mind. They continued to threaten her and that is when she and her husband called on the Kamikaze to "deal" with the Ninjas. The first confrontation was verbal. The Ninjas, however, retaliated by threatening the entire Congolese community of Muizenberg. That is when the Kamikaze members were called in again and when they came "armed" and found the Ninjas also armed. Although no one died in the fights, many of them ended up in hospitals, wounded. To some former residents of Muizenberg who witnessed the April 2000 events and who knew the Kamikaze, the Ninjas and Chez Mireille, however, had a slightly different story about what caused the April 2000 fight.

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[503] Owen, "The embodied performance of Congolese masculinities in Muizenberg," 48.

[504] This, as participants who lived in Muizenberg from the 1990s to the early 2000s recalled, could be seen through Congolese remarkable presence in the Saltriver-Simonstown train line, churches, house-run bars and restaurants (*nganda*), sport activities such as soccer games, and the *sape* competitions in the streets and clubs. See also Owen, *Congolese Social Networks*, 163-173.

According to Adolph who was one of the Congolese community leaders[505] in Muizenberg, "Chez Mireille was a place where Kamikaze liked to hang out and most people who frequented that place included drug dealers, *bandits*, and prostitutes. The woman was involved with dangerous people from everywhere and her place brought so many insecurities in the neighbourhood because they [Mireille and Blanchard] were Kamikaze." He added that the April 2000 fights between "some" *Kinois* and "some" *Brazzavillois* were about drug dealing, "just a typical territorial gang fight in which us members of the community became victims". Indeed it was not until the Ninjas threatened that they did not want to see any Congolese leaving their homes, including children going to school, that the feuds between the Kamikaze and the Ninjas became about the Congolese community, women and children "in particular".[506] The conflict between the Kamikaze and the Ninjas was in fact transferring into the community of Muizenberg to the extent that many people were starting to believe that there was really some "war" happening between the *Brazzavillois* and the *Kinois*. The reason was that both the Kamikaze and the Ninjas were engaged in recruiting members and sympathisers in Muizenberg through spreading unfounded xenophobic rumours to their respective compatriots.[507]

Because of the above events, the Kamikaze founders refer to the early 2000s period as "*la guerre de 40-45*" (the war of [19]40-45, the Second World War). They claim to have fought for "the freedom of the Congolese of Cape Town even though many do not recognise or appreciate it today".[508] However, apart from the Kamikaze, former residents of Muizenberg that I interacted with on the subject shared the view that "it was not a fight between *Brazzavillois* and *Congolais*, but between the Ninjas and the Kamikaze".[509] Understanding who the Ninjas were in relation to the Kamikaze is crucial in locating these groups and their fight in trans-local politics, most importantly, in engaging their regional dimensions.

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[505] Adolph was one of those who called for a dialogue in Muizenberg, inviting the Kamikaze and their opponents to make peace. The two leaders involved in this process include Mr Mage, the leader of the *Brazzavillois* community and *Pasteur* Didier (the former owner of Agence la Grace in Cape Town and stood for the Congolese community.

[506] According to Boluka, the Kamikaze's objective was to "Protect the Congolese of Cape Town, particularly those of Muizenberg, against the Congolese from Brazzaville" and "protecting Congolese women and children". Interview with Boluka, Cape Town, 27/09/2020.

[507] For example, the Kamikaze who fought with the Ninjas would tell other Congolese that they were attacked simply for being Congolese. This in return contributed to sowing panic in the entire community Congolese community that the *Brazzavillois* were attacking Congolese. That is how a personal problem between Mireille and the Ninjas was transformed into a threat to all Congolese in Muizenberg. Other fights between individuals in *nganda* or clubs or even simple misunderstandings between housemates of different nationalities, started also being interpreted in a xenophobic manner as Adolphe explained.

The Ninjas and the Kamikaze: a trans-border regionalism

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, South Africa in general and Cape Town in particular, hosted African migrants from war- and conflict-torn countries, which included the DRC and its eastern and western neighbouring countries. Some names of armed or fighting factions involved in these wars migrated to South Africa. Thus, in places such as Muizenberg, names such as ex-FAZ (former members of the *Forces Armées Zaïroises*, the Mobutu army), the Mai Mai (a rebel movement in the DRC), and even *bamulele*.[510] Other familiar names included the Ninjas and Cobras – militia groups from Congo Brazzaville. These two in particular were of interest to the Kamikaze in places such as Muizenberg and Langa in the 1990s and early 2000s. One important fact in this regard is that the Kamikaze, who were known for their hatred toward the *Brazzavillois*, had a *Brazzavillois* prominent member who was also a co-founder, and the only one who was occasionally financing the group. More interestingly, this *Brazzavillois* of the Kamikaze was also a Cobra – a rival group of the Ninjas ever since the Congo-Brazzaville war in the 1990s. Thus, unlike the Kamikaze who formed in Cape Town, the Ninjas (whom the Kamikaze constantly fought with) and the Cobras originate in the Republic of Congo's War. Understanding the background of these groups is crucial in understanding the cross-border transnational regionalism in the formation and objectives of the Kamikaze.

The Ninjas were one of the three militia groups that formed between 1992 and 1994, and that were linked to the three political opponents of Congo-Brazzaville. They included the Cobras of Denis Sassou Nguessou (the current President of the Republic of Congo), the Cocoyes of

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[508] Interview with Boluka, 08/10/2020.

[509] Interview with Adolph, a restaurant manager and former resident of Muizenberg, 10/11/2020.

[510] The latter refers to the followers of Pierre Mulele, who led the Kwilu front of the Lumumbist rebellion which happened in the context of the Congo independence crises and the Cold War. For more on Pierre Mulele and the Kwilu Rebellion, see for example Emery M. Kalema, "The Mulele "Rebellion," Congolese Regimes, and the Politics of Forgetting," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 235 (2019), 747-781; Emery M. Kalema, "The Mulele "Rebellion": Bodily Pain and the Politics of Death (Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1963-1968)," *Politique africaine* 3 (2021), 145-172.

Pascal Lissouba and the Ninjas of Bernard Kolélas.[511] Between 1997 and 1999, President Sassou Nguessou's Cobras and the government's army, with the help of Angolan mercenaries, crushed the Ninjas and the Cocoyes. Then from 1999 to 2002, a series of peace agreements were signed between the three factions, ending with President Sassou Nguessou integrating them all into the national army.[512] However, their leaders – Lissouba and Kolélas – were not allowed back in the country. [513]

The Kamikaze's fights with the Ninjas seem to have been masterminded by the Cobra man of the group. The Kamikaze co-founders' insistence that their main aim was to protect the Congolese against other nationals preying on them was not proven as the only foreigners they attacked were the *Brazzavillois,* particularly the Ninjas and their sympathisers.[514] However, the Angolans, as also noted in research by Owen, were a large migrant community that shared spaces with the Congolese in Cape Town next to Rwandans, Burundians, Nigerians and Cameroonians, among others.[515]As participants who were in Muizenberg recalled, there were tensions between the Congolese and their fellow Great Lakes Region nationals in market places, *ngandas* and even in Home Affairs queues during refugee papers-related visits. The Kamikaze I interacted with had no particular idea about the conflicts between the Congolese, Burundians and Rwandans, probably because they usually happened with eastern Congolese, not the *Kinois* whom the Kamikaze identified with. In addition, Angolans often engaged in feuds and occasional fights with Congolese. Adolph, a former resident of Muizenberg, also explained:

> They [Angolans] particularly hated us and they could tell you that in your face. There were many men from Angola who often engaged in fights especially in the market

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[511] See Pierre Englebert and James Ron, "Primary commodities and war: Congo-Brazzaville's ambivalent resource curse," *Comparative Politics* (2004), 61-81.

[512] There was however a re-insurgency in 2002 when under the command of Frederick Bintsamou (also known as Pasteur Ntoumi) which led to new agreements with the Sassou-Nguessou government including re-integration of the remaining Ninjas in the national army and Bintsamou himself being issued the post of Deputy Minister in Charge of Peace in the central government.

[513] Englebert "Primary commodities and war: Congo-Brazzaville's ambivalent resource curse,"61-81.

[514] When I asked Boluka and Patrick (both co-founders of the Kamikaze) to name other nationals that the Kamikaze protected Congolese from, they mentioned Nigerians, Namibians and South Africans. When I asked them to give details of some of the fights with these other nationals, they only made examples about Namibians. One particular clash between the Kamikaze and some Namibians happened between 1999 and 2000 when the Kamikaze hunted some Namibians down who they believed were responsible for the death of their close friend, a Congolese man named Eddie Mbemba burned to death in his room in a house in Milnerton (Cape Town). According to Patrick, all the suspects regarding the murder that they handed to the South African police were freed the next morning because "the men told the police that we were harassing them and they had nothing to do with the death of our brother. And just like that, they freed them. You see, we had to teach them a lesson." Follow-up interview with Boluka and Patrick, former Kamikaze, Cape Town, 14/11/2020.

[515] Owen, *Congolese Social Networks*, 128.

> place, home affairs queues, and Muizenberg streets. We knew most of them were former soldiers. In *ngandas* or soccer fields, they could start a fight from nothing. And they hated [both] us and the *Brazzavillois*. Those were the ones who were often attacking Congolese, mugging and beating.[516]

As for the Kamikaze, they knew some Angolans were fighting but mostly among themselves between the Savimbi and the Dos Santos former combatants and sympathisers. Boluka knew about "some" Angolans' feuds with "some" Congolese but clarified that the Kamikaze were never involved in the fights with Angolans. But he also emotionally recalled the many injustices of a xenophobic nature that he and other Congolese endured in Angola when living there.

The positioning of Zaire in the Angolan war, as well as the experience of the Congolese migrants in Angola, shaped the attitude of the Kamikaze toward both the *Brazzavillois* and the Angolans. The Angolans' resentment against the Congolese is justified by the role of Zaire in the Angolan conflict, especially its contribution to the war effort on the side of Jonas Savimbi especially in the Lunda Norte region. Research shows that from 1992, young unemployed Congolese from Kinshasa and surrounding regions started arriving in Lunda Norte to work as unlicensed diamond diggers for Savimbi's UNITA. In addition to the Zairian government backing up Savimbi's UNITA army, these Congolese men constituted UNITA's primary labour.[517] Boluka is one of these Zairian young men who left Kinshasa in 1991 to Lunda Norte to "look for diamonds". He then moved to Luanda because "it was too painful to make money in Lunda, too much suffering from Savimbi men", he said. Indeed, De Boeck describes some of the punishments the Congolese, who could not comply with UNITA's rules in the diamond mines or who were caught trying to steal a diamond, endured. They included torture, beatings, being put in a hole for days, and being killed.[518]

In Luanda, Congolese were subjected to other forms of xenophobia because they constituted the largest group of the many migrant nationals in Angola.[519] In addition to Congolese being perceived as Savimbi agents or spies, they were among the most stereotyped of the African migrant community in Angola. Congolese were accused of criminal activities including human trafficking, illegal mining, border smuggling and illegal stays in the country. Like in the UNITA controlled region, such as Lunda Norte, in Luanda the Congolese were also exploited as cheap labour, especially in the construction sector.[520] Out of disdain, Congolese were called "*Langa*" in Luanda.[521] Ironically, once in Cape Town, "we all became Langa", explained Boluka with a sense of humour, "because all of us refugees, even those from Angola, we were integrated in Langa[522] in 1993 when we arrived [in South Africa]; we were all the same now, no *Angolais*, no *Namibiens*, no *Congolais*, we were all '*makwerekwere*'".[523]

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[516] Interview with Adolphe. Congolese of the first AIMS class in 2003 have confirmed that they were also warned about Angolans in Muizenberg.

[517] Filip de Boeck, "Garimpeiro worlds: Digging, dying & 'hunting' for diamonds in Angola," *Review of African Political Economy* 28, no. 90 (2001), 553-555.

[518] de Boeck, "Garimpeiro worlds: Digging, dying & 'hunting' for diamonds in Angola," 555.

[519] Fabio Baggio, "Human Mobility in Angola," in Fabio Baggio ed. *Africans on the move* (Cape Town: SIHAMA 2014), 128-130.

Despite the above experience of Congolese, especially the founding members of the Kamikaze, in Angola, I identified three main reasons why the Kamikaze would have picked a fight with the *Brazzavillois* but not the Angolans. The first is understood in the macro-region politics in which Angola is perceived as the more powerful country when compared to Congo-Brazzaville. In addition, Angola and the DRC have been greater allies than the DRC and Congo-Brazzaville have been in the regional politics with countries bordering the western region of the DRC. This was so during the Mobutu period and Zaire's interference in the Angolan war, as well as in the way that Angola rescued the western region of the Congo – where all the Kamikaze founders are from – during the Second Congo War (1998-2003).[524] Despite the social injustices the Congolese, such as the Kamikaze founders, experienced in Angola, it is therefore not surprising that Boluka believes that "those [Angolans] are our brothers, they are nothing like the *Brazzavillois*. At least Angola has been home to us [the Kamikaze]". Secondly, all the Kamikaze founders were (and still are) Angolans on their refugee status in South Africa (see also Chapter 2). Lastly, it is evident that the Kamikaze's actions against the Ninjas were largely influenced by the Cobra man among them. This makes the Kamikaze allies of the Cobras – a rival group of the Ninjas since the Republic of

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[520] Baggio, "Human Mobility in Angola,"130.

[521] I asked Boluka why "Langa" and what does it mean. His answer: "Langa as in Zaiko Langa Langa (a Congolese music band) because they used to mock us in Angola that our country is only rich in Zaiko Langa Langa music."

[522] A "black" township in Cape Town. See also Dinis Fernando Da Costa, "A discourse analysis of code-switching practices among Angolan Migrants in Cape Town, South Africa," MA diss., University of the Western Cape, 2010, 46.

[523] Interview with Boluka, 08/10/2020. "Makwerekwere" or "kwerekwere" is a word South Africans use pejoratively for African immigrants. See for example James Muzondidya, "Makwerekwere: Migration, citizenship and identity among Zimbabweans in South Africa," *Zimbabwe's new diaspora: Displacement and the cultural politics of survival* (2010), 37-58.

[524] See Filip Reyntjens, *The great African war: Congo and regional geopolitics, 1996-2006* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 61-65.

Congo war.[525] However, frustrations from their migration trajectory, especially their experience in Angola, largely shaped their aggressiveness toward the *Brazzavillois*:

> We [Congolese] endured a lot in Angola. No one liked us there. Angolans hated us, treated us poorly… you know Congolese lives did not matter to them. In Lunda it was difficult with Savimbi's men. In Luanda it was even worse as we were all considered traitors and agents of Savimbi. Now that we are here [in South Africa], we cannot let a small country such as Congo-Brazzaville bully us.[526]

The last sentence of the above statement can be analysed in terms of the regional politics of the Second Congo War which coincided with the founding of the Kamikaze in 2000. The role of the "small" countries bordering the eastern region of the DRC in the Congo War were already making headlines and Angola had grown infamous as the ally who saved the western region of the DRC from succumbing to the attacks of the RCD in 1998 and the beginning of the Second Congo War. If the Kamikaze feared Angolans because they knew what they were capable of when they were in Angola, respecting them as "brothers" in South Africa is more based on the fact that they shared the same nationality on their migration status (see Chapter 2) and having lived in Angola. It is for this reason that the Kamikaze were also called "*ba Kinois Angolais*" by other Congolese from Kinshasa. Boluka proudly explained that they were different from other *Kinois* because they are "*bana Luanda*"[527] (Luanda boys). However, for the Congolese from Katanga and Kivu, Kamikaze were simply "*ba Kinois*".

Non ethno-regional, non-political?

While Kamikaze leaders were multi-ethnic – including Bamongo, Bakongo and Bateke – they all (with the exception of one man from Congo-Brazzaville) identified as Lingala-speaking *Kinois*. In early 2002, in a situation rife with ethno-regional conflict between the Kiswahili speakers and Lingala speakers in Muizenberg, the Kamikaze were often perceived as nothing more than a *Kinois* gang. Indeed, the Congolese who called on the Kamikaze for their "services" were mostly *Kinois*. Boluka confirmed this: "*Baswahili* were managing their own affairs between themselves. You know how they like to do their own things they do not associate with us people from Kinshasa. But we [the Kamikaze] were always there to help every time a *mwana mayi*[528] called on us".

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[525] Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga, "Les Ninja, les Cobra et les Zoulou crèvent l'écran à Brazzaville: le rôle les médias et la construction des identités de violence politique," *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 33, no. 2-3 (1999), 329-361.

[526] Interview with Boluka, Cape Town, 27/09/2020.

[527] This concept emerged in the early 1990s among Kinshasa youngsters. It originally referred to those who made a fortune from unlicensed diamond digging in Luanda Norte region. *Bana Lunda* or *bana Luanda* in Kinshasa is now used to refer to anyone who goes to Angola for any business or who has lived in Angola. In Cape Town, it is used by most Congolese who speak Portuguese for having lived in Angola prior to coming to South Africa. See also Filip de Boeck, "Garimpeiro worlds: Digging, dying & 'hunting'for diamonds in Angola," *Review of African Political Economy* 28, no. 90 (2001), 555-561.

The above also points to a possible hand of the Kamikaze in the feuds between *Kinois* and *Katangais* in the early 2000s in places such as Muizenberg. While Boluka acknowledged the tensions between the two groups, his explanation was that the "*Katangais* hated us because we confronted them when they disdained us in public places." Adolphe, who is from Katanga, explained that in Muizenberg, *Katangais* and *Kinois* did not often get along but "whenever there was a heated argument or physical fight between a *Kinois* and a *Katangais* in a *nganda* or soccer field, the *Kinois* was either a Kamikaze or their friend. It was always them who brought trouble everywhere." Two Congolese students from the AIMS 2003-2004 class also stated that "in Muizenberg, the fights between Congolese always involved a Kamikaze". It is uncertain whether the Kamikaze did not pick on *Katangais* as part of the feud of *Kinois-Katangais*, but they certainly acted, at least occasionally, on behalf of their *Kinois* friends, against the *Katangais*. However, the Kamikaze's fights remained mostly oriented toward other nationals they were in conflict with than on particular Congolese ethno-regional groups, unlike the *combattants* group who emerged a decade after them.

The Kamikaze's objectives and *modus operandi* were certainly shaped by the hardship that African immigrants, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, experienced in the democratically young South Africa before 2000.[529] Moreover, their migration trajectory and experience from Zaire to Angola, then to Namibia and finally to South Africa, shaped their survival networks and their attitude toward other immigrant nationals they had previously shared migrant space with. Two decades after the Kamikaze's foundation, their struggle is as nostalgic of Mobutu's "*belle époque*", now reimagined by some Congolese transnational diaspora groups such as the *combattants* whom I discuss next.[530] Often when the "good" times of the Mobutu era are debated among Congolese, people do so only in reference to the country's crisis, especially the gross human rights violations that have characterised the Congo Wars and conflicts since the late 1990s.[531]

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[528] "Mwana mayi" is another term for a *Kinois*.

[529] Peter Bouckaert, *Prohibited Persons: Abuse of Undocumented Migrants, Asylum-seekers, and Refugees in South Africa* (Human Rights Watch, 1998), 1-6; Jeff Handmaker, "Who determines policy? Promoting the right of asylum in South Africa," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 11, no. 2 (1999), 290-309.

[530] Nadir Djennad, "Qui sont les "*combattants*" congolais?," https://www.dw.com/fr/qui-sont-les-*combattants*-congolais/a-51840729, accessed on 24/07/2022.

In these debates, everyone recognises that the current Congolese crises is rooted in Mobutu's politics at local and international levels. But in the end, everyone agrees that "though there was [economic] crisis, at least back then, the 'neighbours' feared us and we slept peacefully. Now anyone comes, takes, and kills".[532] The same goes with how the Kamikaze and their contemporaries make sense of their struggle now. It is only through the current crises in the Congolese diaspora and the role of these diaspora associations that the Kamikaze are now occasionally appreciated beyond "banditism". Looking back, the Kamikaze remain one of those atypical Congolese associations that did not invest in dividing the Congolese community of Cape Town along home regional or ethnic identities.

Combattants and *collabos* in Cape Town

The *combattants* are a Congolese diaspora movement that formed in London in 2006 and then spread among other Congolese diaspora across the globe, mostly in the western countries and in South Africa.[533] Research on *combattants* in Western countries such as the UK and Belgium understand them as "radicalist activists" who emerged as part of the "politicisation of the Congolese diaspora" in the post Laurent Kabila era and as a transnational anti-Joseph Kabila movement.[534] In general, the *combattants* affiliated themselves with the two main opposition parties including *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social* (UDPS) of Etienne Tshisekedi and the diaspora-based *Alliance des patriotes pour la refondation du Congo* (APARECO) of Honoré Ngbanda, a former Mobutuist.[535] In countries such as Belgium, the *combattants'* protests were joined in by other Congolese diaspora "pressure groups" that emerged in the early 2000s known to "target the political power in Kinshasa". The two most prominent of these groups include *Bana Congo* ("Congo's children") and the women's group *Bamama to tolema* ("women let's stand up").[536] The *combattants* are also known for calling their enemies "*collabos*" – a concept borrowed from the Second World War and which was used to refer to the *c*ollaborators of the Nazi regime, especially during the occupation of France.[537] Roughly, for *combattants*, *collabos* are collaborators of the internal and external enemies of Congo.[538]

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[531] Séverine Autesserre. *The trouble with the Congo: Local violence and the failure of international peacebuilding* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[532] Here I am quoting a member of Amis BK association during the meeting of 24 June 2018 when discussing the country's leadership since Independence, six days to the celebration of the 58 years since Congo's Independence.

[533] David Garbin and Marie Godin, "'Saving the Congo': transnational social fields and politics of home in the Congolese diaspora," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (2013), 117.

[534] Garbin and Godin, "'Saving the Congo': transnational social fields and politics of home in the Congolese diaspora," 116-117.

[535] Demart and Bodeux, "Postcolonial Stakes of Congolese (DRC) Political Space," 83.

Inaka, who studied the *combattants* in Pretoria, South Africa in the aftermath of the 2011 elections in the DRC, links them to an emerging Congolese transnationalism shaped by ethno-regionalism.[539] Inaka backs up his argument by analysing the way in which the *combattants* defined *collabos* and how they detected them, as well as how *combattants* defined themselves in terms of Congolese ethno-regional identity. For them, a *collabo* was a Kiswahili speaker from the eastern DRC, more specifically the conflict zone, which is the Kivu region. The *combattants* identified as Lingala speakers from the western region of Congo. Inaka argues that the "*combattants*/ anti-*combattants* (*collabos*)" incarnated the east/west divide and the regional identity discourse in Congolese transnationalism in the Joseph Kabila era.[540] However, the *combattants*, who formed in London in 2006 and who rose to fame during the 2011 electoral campaign, were a much more inclusive Congolese diasporic movement.

During the 2011 electoral campaign, most Congolese, regardless of their ethno-regional identities, valued what the *combattants'* movement worldwide stood for: raising political awareness from abroad with regard to the 2011 elections and ensuring Kabila's rule was put to an end. They rallied and mobilised through social media in various diasporas to campaign against President Kabila. Protesters included "prominent members of the [Congolese] diaspora" such as pastors, community leaders, artists, musicians, students, academics, etc.[541]

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[536] Demart and Bodeux, "Postcolonial Stakes of Congolese (DRC) Political Space," 83.

[537] Garbin and Godin, ""Saving the Congo,"117.

[538] *Combattants* define *collabos* beyond being a supporter of President Joseph Kabila's regime. For example, RCD members and supporters are known to be against Kabila but they are *collabos* for being backed by foreign forces such as Rwanda and Uganda. Same as Mr Vital Kamerhe and his ANC. Although he is a Kabila opposant, he is not accepted by the majority of *Kinois*, especially the *combattants*, because he is a Kivucian and rumoured to be of Rwandan origin. *Combattants* generally consider Kivucians to be *collabos* even when they are known to oppose Kabila.

[539] Inaka, "*Combattants* and anti-*combattants* (*collabos*): Congolese transnational politics in Pretoria."

[540] Inaka, "*Combattants* and anti-*combattants* (*collabos*): Congolese transnational politics in Pretoria."

[541] In Belgium, for example, it was only "after ten days of clashes" with the police that "public figures" who have been part of the demonstrations "distanced themselves from the movement" because it became very violent with "daily toll" including arrests of "dozens of demonstrators". See Demart and Bodeux, "Postcolonial Stakes of Congolese (DRC) Political Space," 73-74.

At this time, these protests were mostly legal in South Africa and western countries. After the election results in November 2011, the *combattant* movement became more radicalised.[542]

In Cape Town, like elsewhere, from December 2011 a good number of Congolese who believed in the "irregularities" in the elections that led to the second term of President Kabila joined the *combattants*-led protests.[543] However, by February 2012, the *combattants* changed the course of their struggle and methods from denouncing the power abuse in the DRC to identifying and punishing politicians and their accomplices they could lay hand on from the diaspora. Violence, physical and verbal abuses, as well as humiliation became important tools in ridding the DRC and its diaspora of *collabos*. This process is known as *mutakalisation*[544] and it was in use by the *combattants* of Europe since 2006 on *collabos*, including Congolese politicians, celebrities and even charismatic churches' pastors.[545] Literally translated, the word *mutakalisation* means "exposing one's nakedness". The *combattants* often caught the person and then made them confess to their collaboration with Kabila's regime and admit that Kabila was not the right leader for the Congo. Often, *combattants* gave their victim a script written in a strong language, full of insults for the *collabos* to read as their personal message to Kabila. Most of the DRC-based *collabos* were targeted at airports in western countries and South Africa. In Cape Town, *combattants* also attacked their enemies on the street, in shopping centres, Congolese churches, market places or work sites (for security guards and bouncers, in general). They also targeted politicians and businessmen on business trips such as at international meetings/ conferences. An example includes the *mutakalisation* of the Congolese Minister of Mines while attending an international mining conference in Cape Town in March 2012.[546] The *combattants* also targeted people on the basis of their ethno-regional identities.

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[542] Sarah Demart, and Leila Bodeux, "Postcolonial stakes of the Congolese political fields (DRC) in Belgium, 50 years after the Independence," *African Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Africa in a Global World* (2013), 83; Garbin and Godin, ""Saving the Congo,"117.

[543] Demart and Bodeux, "Postcolonial Stakes of Congolese (DRC) Political Space," 73-74.

[544] "*Mutakalisation*" means undressing someone, exposing their nakedness. For the *combattants*, it consists, among other things, of catching a *collabo* (from airport, bars, conference venues, etc.), making them sit or kneel on the floor, forcing them to confess to their (political) sins and making them insult Joseph Kabila while being filmed. The most extreme cases involved literally stripping off a *collabo* naked and filming him to post on their social media.

[545] See Trapido and Mbu-Mputu, "Les *combattants*, Ideologies of exile, return and nationalism in the DRC," 727; Demart and Bodeux, "Postcolonial Stakes of Congolese (DRC) Political Space,"85; Inaka "*combattants* and anti-*combattants* (*collabos*)," 14.

[546] The *mutakalisation* of Minister Martin Kabolunga in Cape Town can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKjG6JoKvDQ, accessed on 13/07/2021. See also https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEKjynhpsHk, accessed on 13/07/2021.

Even though Congolese politicians, artists and pastors who were the most targeted by the *combattants* hailed from various ethno-regional identities, the eastern Congolese were the most accused and attacked as *collabos* for two reasons. The first is that, according to the *combattants, Baswahili* are the most blamed for the RCD war in 1998, the assassination of L. Kabila and the conflict that continues in their region, as I discussed in Chapter 1.[547] The second is that they supposedly were the ones who voted for Kabila in 2011 because "They believe that he (Kabila) is one of their own".[548] The fact that many *Baswahili* distanced themselves from the *combattants*' public and private activities at the beginning of 2012 was manipulated by the *combattants* to support such allegations.[549]

Baswahili *as* collabos

The *combattants*, as Demart and Bodeux argue, "exacerbated" beliefs around Congolese identity, political affiliations and patriotism.[550] This patriotism was often expressed in the *combattants*' favourite song "*zongisa bango na Rwanda*" (send them back to Rwanda) or "*zongisa ye na Rwanda*" (send him back to Rwanda).[551] The song was not only used against politicians such as Joseph Kabila and Congolese of Rwandan origin;[552] the *combattants* in general derogatorily referred to all Kivucians as *barwandais*.[553] As a transnational Congolese diaspora movement, the *combattants* were preoccupied with drawing a straight line between "traitors" and "patriots",[554] which they defined respectively along eastern and western Congolese identities. This is why the feuds between the *combattants* and the *collabos* transcended into tensions between *Kinois* and *Baswahili* in places such as Cape Town ever since at least January 2012 during the protests against the Congo election results led to

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[547] See also Inaka, "*combattants* and Anti-*combattants* (*collabos*),"13.
[548] Quoted in Inaka, "*combattants* and Anti-*combattants* (*collabos*),"13.
[549] Inaka, "*combattants* and Anti-*combattants* (*collabos*)," 13-14.
[550] Demart and Bodeux, "Postcolonial Stakes of Congolese (DRC) Political Space," 86-87.
[551] Trapido and Mbu-Mputu, "Les *combattants*, Ideologies of exile, return and nationalism in the DRC," 741; Demart and Bodeux, "Postcolonial Stakes of Congolese (DRC) Political Space," 82-83. See the song "Zongisa ye na Rwanda" being performed during UDPS campaign in Kinshasa here. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFcAgCq1ZAI, accessed on the 16/07/2021.
[552] Demart and Bodeux explain that the *combattants'* struggle to free the Congolese is based on the history of foreign invasions, occupations, and looting of resources in the Congo from the colonial to post-colonial time. In this history, the western super powers and the "Rwandophones" are the invaders and the Congolese political elite their puppets. See Demart and Bodeux, "Postcolonial Stakes of Congolese (DRC) Political Space," 87-92.
[553] A former journalist from Bukavu living in London, Oliver Katoto, tried to correct this stereotype in his youtube channel. One of the comments on his video reads "I agree *Baswahili* are Rwandans … Go back to Rwanda. Why do you hold onto our country? … Go back to your Rwanda, your country". See the video and comment here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c59GpxMQjJo, accessed on 15/07/2021. On *combattants* calling Baswahili "barwandais", see also Inaka, "*combattants* and anti-*combattants* (*collabos*): Congolese transnational politics in Pretoria," 12-14.
[554] Demart and Bodeux, "Postcolonial Stakes of Congolese (DRC) Political Space," 87.

President Kabila's third term in office.[555] During these protests and in this period in general, eastern Congolese were attacked by the *combattants* in night clubs and work and business places, and their social gatherings were disrupted or sabotaged. This was witnessed by a large number of my research participants. For example, a barber from Uvira (South Kivu) was one of the people attacked by *combattants* during the anti-Kabila protests in 2012. "They suddenly started shouting at us calling us '*ba infiltrés*!' '*ba collabo*s!' '*ba Rwandais*!'[556] just because they heard us speaking in Kiswahili," he recalls. Malinga, also a barber from Uvira, was attacked at his shop and called "*Rwandais*" because he intervened in a fight where "some *Kinois*" were attacking his Burundian friend after the latter fired his *Kinois* shopkeeper in Parow, Cape Town. [557]

The *combattants*' attacks were also directed at eastern Congolese networks. A conversation with the leading committee of the Amis BK association highlighted that between 2012 and 2015, their social gatherings were constantly sabotaged by the *combattants*.[558] Kivucians regarded these attacks as purely vindictive, having less to do with the Kabilists/anti-Kabilists dichotomy. As a Congolese vendor in Bellville (Cape Town) explained: "Kivucians voted for him [Kabila] in 2006 but we were not the only ones. *Katangais* did too. But you do not see them [*combattants*] attacking *Katangais*".[559] Although not as frequently as the Kivucians, other groups such as the *Katangais* were also attacked by the *combattants*.

As seen in the above, any dispute with the *combattants* could transform into an ethno-regional identity conflict. In 2014, for example, the *combattants*, led by Mike Alomba, sent an ultimatum to the Congolese musician Fere Gola about his concert in Cape Town scheduled for 14th February 2014. The *combattants* were exasperated by the fact that Fere Gola booked himself for a concert knowing that the *combattants* had banned Congolese artists from the DRC and elsewhere from performing in the diaspora. In the message, they also warned Mr Kayembe – a Congolese businessman and owner of Chez Ntemba night club in Cape Town – against his club hosting the musician. Mike, a *combattant,* said:

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[555] I had a focus group discussion with seven members of Amis BK associations who were attacked by the *combattants* while partaking in the anti-Kabila protests of January 2012. The *combattants* attacked them physically calling then *baRwandais* just for speaking Kiswahili.

[556] The intruders! The *collabos*! The Rwandans!

[557] John and Malinga, barbers, Bellville (Cape Town), 14/ 07/ 2017.

[558] Interview with the President of Amis Bk.

[559] Interview with Ombeni, a Congolese artist, Cape Town, 17/02/2016.

> *Depuis independence ti leo, tous les problemes oyo etouchaka Congo dans le coeur eutaka kaka na Katanga. Ba Simon Kimbangu bakufa na Katanga, ba Lumumba toujours na Katanga, ba cesessions ebandaka kaka na Katnaga. Meme dans la lute C'est toujours les Katangais nde bazo causer biso ba tords. Chez Temba so nom continue a se repeater na mmabe nyonso oyo ezo koma na diaspora*.[560]
>
> From the [Congo's] independence to now, all the problems that have deeply affected the Congo come from Katanga. People like Simon Kimbangu died in Katanga, Lumumba also [died] in Katanga. Secessions always led from Katanga. Even now in our [*combattants*'] struggle, it is *Katangais* again who are trying to make us fail. Chez Temba's name is continuously repeated in all the bad happening in the [Congolese] diaspora.

While the priority was to prevent Fere Gola from performing in Cape Town, the *combattants* did not hesitate to make it a Katanga region problem simply because the sponsor and host of Fere Gola was Mr Kayembe "Chez Temba", a rich businessman from Katanga. *Combattant* Mike himself is a Muluba man from Kasai, the ethnic group that was targeted in the ethnic violence of the early 1990s in Katanga.[561] However, according to *combattant* Pacho, Chez Temba, who is from Lubumbashi, settled in South Africa as a result of the same attacks on people from Kasai in Katanga. Pacho says Chez Temba is himself a *Kasaien*.[562] It is his wealth and associations with rich and powerful people, and celebrities ranging from politicians and businessmen to artists, that made the *combattants* single him out as a *collabo*.

Of all the regional groups, however, the *Baswahili* were the least trusted by the *combattants*. Their gatherings were considered highly suspicious, especially when they were political. The fact that leading Congolese political parties had their diasporic representation in South Africa is what gave the *combattants* more reason to destabilise those who did not politically side with them, in other words those that sided with the main opposition party (such as the UDPS and to a considerable extent, the diaspora-based APARECO). However, the *combattants* perceived eastern Congolese political activities as pushing the agenda of the unwanted ruling party in the Congo or working on some "'liberation movement' that does not include 'real' Congolese"[563].

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[560] The full video can be watched here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yi0v6FUbDuw, accessed on 15/07/2021.

[561] Donatien Dibwe, "La collecte des sources orales. Expériences d'enquêtes relatives au conflit Katangais-Kasaïens du Katanga (1991-1994)," *Civilisations. Revue internationale d'anthropologie et de sciences humaines* 54 (2006), 45-55.

[562] Interview with *combattant* Pacho, a night club security guard, Cape Town, 19/07/2017.

What seems to be the *combattants*' appropriation of Congolese diasporic activities, especially politically related ones, is not just undemocratic; but eastern Congolese such as Amis BK leading committee members see it as interfering with eastern Congolese diasporic political awakening. For example, the *combattants* launched an attack on members of the *Force pour le Développement du Congo* (EFD), a political party founded in Pretoria (South Africa) at the end of 2016 by Aimé Bukasa from the Kivu region. The *combattants* attacked members of EFD in the Goodwood Casino on the 2nd of July 2017 during the Party's launch in Cape Town, calling it "*parti ya ba infiltrés*" (party of the intruders). Between 2013 and 2017, they also constantly attacked and intimidated members of the *Union pour la Nation Congolaise* (UNC) political party of Cape Town because its founder is Vital Kamerhe – a Kivu politician (in)famous for having worked closely with Joseph Kabila during his first term (2006-2011). The President of the UNC branch of Cape Town who knew a large number of the EFD members in Cape Town lamented: "I am not part of this political initiative, but I am deeply offended by the ways in which the *combattants* attacked these men for their political beliefs. It is clear they do not stand for democracy yet they want to change the political regime in the DRC". For the UNC Cape Town leader, "the attacks on EFD prominent members was an attack to all Kivucians" because it is further proof that "Kivucians are not allowed to exercise their political rights".[564]

The widespread rumours about spies of the Congolese government and foreign enemies of the Congo in the diaspora also played a role in fuelling the *combattants'* suspicions against the eastern Congolese and their associations in Cape Town. However, my research is hardly the first to mention the fear of spies growing rampant among diasporas.[565] Moreover, news of spies from or sponsored by home countries' governments or their enemies in Cape Town are not unique to Congolese diaspora. As I noted since 2011, they are also widespread among other migrant nationals such as those from other Great Lakes Region countries in their shared business spaces, mostly barbershops, hair salons, and even amongst car guards in commercial centres' parking lots, as I observed during fieldwork. Research by Turner, published in 2008, explores the topic by highlighting the "long distance politics" that Great Lakes nationals such as Burundians are involved in. He discusses "the mutual influence" between the country of exile and the homeland as part of "the quest for political citizenship inside and outside the territory of the nation-state".[566] The *combattants* take the spy news seriously; thus they do not trust *Baswahili* in their movement. However, they despise even more *Baswahili* associating with citizens from other Great Lakes region. At the same time, some *Baswahili* with whom I interacted held the view that the *combattants* are the ones responsible for the greater number of spies in the diaspora.

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[563] I am quoting *combattant* Pacho explaining how *Baswahili* have always been involved in movement that brought chaos to Congo and how "discreet" they are. He cited how the AFDL started in the Congolese diaspora but never included the fighters of UDPS who were also in the diaspora and who were struggling for years. This idea is certainly rooted in the well-known role of the Congolese diaspora in the formation of what became the AFDL that overthrew Mobutu as well as the RCD which attempted to overthrow L. Kabila in the late 1990s. See also Inaka, "*combattants* and anti-*combattants* (*collabos*)," 9-11.

[564] Interview with Associate Professor Justin Munyakazi and President of *Union Nationale Congolaise* (UNC) of Cape Town, Cape Town, 12/07/2017.

[565] For example, 2015 research among Eritrean migrants in Europe argues for the ways in which "state control transcends Eritrean national borders". See David Bozzini, "The fines and the spies: Fears of state surveillance in Eritrea and in the diaspora," *Social Analysis* 59, no. 4 (2015), 32-49.

Many Congolese, particularly those who visit home regularly, are more critical of the *combattants*' activities. Eastern Congolese in particular fear they could be interrogated on *combattants*-related political activities when they visit their country, more importantly their region, the Kivu. The reason includes the fact that to some extent, groups like the *combattants* can be regarded as those diaspora groups that Baser and Swain describe as "militant and hard-line" who are known to occasionally fund warfare and compromise peacebuilding in their homeland.[567] The *combattants*, however, are less likely to invest in funding a war to bring about socio-political changes in the DRC for reasons including the fact that they are more preoccupied with their own socioeconomic survival in their host countries, particularly in South Africa where the majority of them struggle to secure decent jobs leading to many working in informal sectors even when they hold university degrees.[568] The *combattants*, though, have gained themselves a renown as the most outstanding and indeed resilient of the Congolese diasporic activist groups not just of the Joseph Kabila era but in the history of Congolese diaspora-led activism for socio-political change in the homeland. On the one hand, this is thanks to the relative freedom of expression enjoyed from the comfort of their host countries (and the relative freedom of expression enjoyed by Congolese in general compared to the Mobutu era). On the other hand, they owe their fame to the era of the information technology they emerged in, and their excess use of it to pass messages between their respective host countries and the home land.[569] By this means, their messages and actions have reached and inspired protests in the DRC as seen with the many public protests in Kinshasa since the last term of President Joseph Kabila and the many activist-journalists talks on social media and local television channels in which they engage topics which are critical to leadership. Groups of youth activists in the war zone of the eastern Congo, especially the group known as La LUCHA (*Lutte pour le changement* [struggle for change]) also display similarities with the *combattants* groups. These similarities are more visible in La LUCHA's public protests and their use of social media to denounce the human right abuses of the conflict in their region and the failures of the Kabila regime.[570] I argue this based also on the fact that La LUCHA's actions made headlines at the same time the *combattants'* did. Moreover, most of the *combattants* and pro-*combattants* I interacted with had a great esteem for La LUCHA as the only eastern Congolese youth activists' group they either knew about or acknowledged positively.

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[566] Simon Turner, "The waxing and waning of the political field in Burundi and its diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 4 (2008), 742-743.

[567] Bahar Baser and Ashok Swain, "Diasporas as peacemakers: third party mediation in homeland conflicts," *International Journal on World Peace* (2008), 9-11; Jolle Demmers, "New Wars and Diasporas: suggestions for reserach and policy," *Peace, Conflict and Development* 11 (2007), 1-26.

[568] On Congolese migrants in South Africa being educated despite working mostly in informal sector, see also Jonny Steinberg, "A mixed reception: Mozambican and Congolese refugees in South Africa," *Institute for Security Studies Monographs* 2005, no. 117 (2005).

La LUCHA was founded in Goma (North Kivu) in May 2012 – the same year *combattants* were making headlines in the diaspora with their many anti-Kabila protests. The influence of the *combattants* on La LUCHA is clear especially in their shared slogan "*Kabila degage*".[571] Although known for their non-violent mode of operation, the confrontations with the Congolese police that characterise La LUCHA protests often exceed what was observed during the *combattants* protests in South Africa and Belgium between December 2011 and 2013. La LUCHA members are men and women in school and university. Unlike the *combattants*, the La LUCHA movement is based in the conflict-torn region of North Kivu, where they daily face dangers from both the national government agents and the armed groups involved in the violent conflict in the region.[572] There is even a possibility that La

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[569] Marie Godin and Giorgia Doná, ""Refugee voices," new social media and politics of representation: young Congolese in the diaspora and beyond," *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 32, no. 1 (2016), 60-71; Katrien Pype, "(Not) in sync–digital time and forms of (dis-) connecting: ethnographic notes from Kinshasa (DR Congo)," *Media, Culture & Society* 43, no. 7 (2021), 1197-1212.

[570] Suda Perera, Victor Anas Kambale, and Josaphat Musamba Bussy, "Youth Participation and Non-Violent Resistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: The Case of LUCHA," Uongozi Institute, Research Paper no 57, (2018).

[571] See their activities, including videos of protests and other images on their website: http://www.luchacongo.org/, accessed 13/04/2021.

[572] Members of La LUCHA are often arrested, abducted, murdered, tortured and intimidated for denouncing and protesting against human rights violence committed by both the forces of the government and the rebel groups in the region. See for example "Goma: Lucha dénonce des menaces contre ses membres," *Radio Okapi*,

LUCHA could outgrow the *combattant* group because of their popularity among the eastern Congolese diaspora.[573] Participants who value La LUCHA's struggle see them as an emerging Congolese diasporic militant group with eastern Congo's interest at heart. The *combattants*' lack of fixed objectives and their leaders continuously divided and fighting for leading positions within the movement reflect the issues haunting the Congolese associations of "mutual help".

The* combattants' *groups as socioeconomic networks

To understand the *combattants* as any other Congolese social network, one needs to focus on the shifts in the movement from 2012, the people they target in their attacks (the *collabos*), and the details of these attacks. Moreover, one has to pay attention to the *combattants'* campaign in South Africa, besides the home country's sociopolitical situation. From 2012, the *combattants'* movement became more radical through its uses of violence. They expanded their definition of *collabos* beyond Congolese elite politicians and other assumingly supporting or sympathising with the Kabila regime, and the division within the movement led to formation of many *combattants'* groups. The *combattants* are divided not only on the basis of the opposition politicians with whom they affiliate, but also on their economic interests and mode of operation. Many participants shared the Kamikaze leaders' idea that the *combattant* groups are a "cope", meaning an activity people engage in for material benefits ranging from money to accessing a network of influential wealthy Congolese including elite politicians, businessmen and celebrities. Conflicts within the *combattants* movement of Cape Town therefore are not so different from those characterising the internal structure of other Congolese associations such as those discussed in Chapter 2. The *combattant* groups suffer from internal conflicts and divisions for reasons including ethnicism and economic class struggles, mainly around the benefits associated with the hierarchy within the movement.

1/12/2015. https://www.radiookapi.net/2015/12/01/actualite/en-bref/goma-lucha-denonce-des-menaces-contre-ses-membres, accessed on 17/07/2021; https://www.voaafrique.com/a/la-lucha-organise-une-marche-pour-d%C3%A9noncer-les-tueries-dans-l-est-de-la-rdc/5735529.html, accessed on 17/07/2021.

[573] As a matter of fact, La LUCHA has since 2017 began its diasporic mobilisation to expand their militarism and mobilisation beyond Congo national territory by opening a "section" in Paris (France) in December 2017. See Pierrot Boisselet, "RDC: la Lucha lance une section à Paris pour mobiliser la diaspora," *Jeune Afrique,* 14/12/2017, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/502601/politique/rdc-la-lucha-lance-une-section-a-paris-pour-mobiliser-la-diaspora/, accessed on 17/07/2021.

The *combattant* "bosses" of Cape Town include Papy Sukami, Mike Alomba and Christian Sita. These leaders, especially Sukami and Alomba, have attacked one another publicly and digitally, each claiming that the others are *collabos*, are "corrupt" and have taken bribes from enemies. Christian Sita Mampuya is often the spokesperson for the Congolese Diaspora of the Western Cape to the South African media. Unlike the other two, who are well known for their violence, especially *mutakalisation*, Christian is often criticised for his non-violent methods and endeavours to unite the Congolese community of Cape Town, especially reconciling the *Baswahili* and *Kinois* to bring them all into the *combattant* movement.[574] Fellow *combattant* leaders see Christian as "too moderate", "too soft" and "compromised".[575] Mike Alomba, whose influence extends from Salt River to Cape Town CBD, was suspended by fellow *combattants* who accused him of "forging relations with *collabos*" in the Kabila government and being on their payroll.[576] Papy Sukami, who controls the Bellville-Parow area, underwent *mutakalisation* in Bellville for taking money from some "*collabos*".[577] He is also the most feared because he is rumoured to be a "*katakata*" (assassin)[578] ever since his time in Kinshasa.

Paying attention to the details of the *combattants'* attacks on some *collabos* can also help understand the material benefits that motivate some of their actions. The violence and how it is executed differs from one *collabo* to another. Most ordinary people that the *combattants* attack are often just verbally abused and intimidated, usually at their business or workplace.[579] The rich and famous ones are captured or shortly kidnapped, their valuables seized. Wealhy and famous ones are also humiliated and filmed to show off to other *combattants* transnationally and as a warning to other high profiled *collabos*. These include Congolese political elites and celebrities such as charismatic church pastors, journalists, actors, musicians, businessmen, etc. These are the *collabos* that the *combattants* are more interested in, and when they get to them, the attacks always involve dispossessing them of their valuables such as jewellery, cash, credit cards and cellphones. Occasionally, when *combattants* could not take these valuables from their victims, they damaged them. For example, when sabotaging eastern Congolese gatherings, they often damaged their victims' property, such as cars, by scratching them, breaking their windows or deflating their tyres.[580] After many complaints from victims, the *combattants* waved their "policy" by demanding to eastern Congolese associations such as Amis BK and pro-eastern Congolese political parties such as the UNC of Cape Town to "speak" to them before booking meetings.[581]

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[574] Christian Sita is also involved in *Baswahili* associations and often attends their sociocultural gatherings. For example, in 2018 at the 10 years anniversary celebration of VIDEFI – a *Baswahili* founded NGO in Bellville, Cape Town – he was one of the guest speakers as one of the collaborators of VIDEFI and respected member of the Congolese community of Cape Town. He is considered the head of the Congolese diaspora of Cape Town.

[575] Interview with *combattant* Dofi. See also Sita's interview on the protests of Congolese of Congolese of Cape Town of the Minembwe conflicts here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KqcijD5t4o&t=4s, accessed on 15/07/2021.

[576] See Mike Alomba's *mutakalisation* by other Cape Town *combattants* in 2014 here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPl1DA8oRT4; accessed on 15/07/2021. And his interview on the accusations here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdMKnBUMwGQ, accessed on 15/07/2021.

[577] Interview with *combattant* Fido who also showed me the footage of Sukami's *mutakalisation* in Bellville. The footage no longer exist on You Tube.

[578] "Katakata" means cutting in small pieces with a knife or machete. Katakata are assassins in Kinshasa known to dismember their victims after they have killed them.

[579] See Katrien Pype, "Stones Thrown Online. The Politics of Insults, Distance and Impunity in Congolese Polémique," in Philipp Budka, John Postill, and Birgit Bräuchler eds., *Theorising Media and Conflict* (New York: Berghahn Books), 237-254.

Violence and the targeting of wealthy Congolese were part of the *combattants*' strategies to force people to pay a fee to the *combattants*' leaders in order to conduct their activities without being disturbed. Such a habit is rooted in the corrupt system most *combattants* who grew up in Congo were familiar with ever since the Mobutu era. The *combattants*' *modus operandi*, especially the way they aggress their victims in Lingala while stripping them of their belongings recalls the violence of Mobutu's soldiers on civilians.[582] This is the origin of the Kiswahili saying that "*uka salimiya soda, anakulomba piece*", meaning "if you greet a soldier, he will ask you for your 'ID'". When a Mobutu soldier asked to see an ID, it meant a request for money or other valuable good. These soldiers did not just do so with impunity, but their behaviour was socially normalised to such an extent that people, especially when outside late at night, would take the precaution of always keeping some cash on themselves. With poor and irregular salaries, their gun and uniform and to a large extent their use of Lingala were what most Mobutu's ordinary soldiers economically survived from.[583] The *combattants* were also "characterized by a military rhetoric and often dress[ed] in combat uniform" (army camouflage).[584] They have also been described by scholars as being of "low social status", having "the low education level of some activists", and their activities as being

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[580] For example when the *combattants* attacked the Amis BK's conference at the Mowbray's Baptist church (Cape Town) in 2015. The guest speaker was Professor Mbata, a Congolese based at the University of South Africa.

[581] Conversation with Amis BK committee members, Cape Town, 12/09/2017.

[582] Mabiengwa Emmanuel Naniuzeyi, "The state of the state in Congo-Zaire: A survey of the Mobutu regime," *Journal of black studies* 29, no. 5 (1999), 669-683.

[583] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 189; Mabiengwa Emmanuel Naniuzeyi, "The state of the state in Congo-Zaire: A survey of the Mobutu regime," *Journal of black studies* 29, no. 5 (1999), 669-683.

[584] Demart and Bodeux, "Postcolonial stakes of the Congolese political fields (DRC) in Belgium, 50 years after the Independence," 85.

"politics from below".[585] The *combattants* may be perceived as "lower" class citizens because of the socioeconomic hardship the majority of them endure daily in places such as South Africa. However, many of them, particularly their leaders and spokespersons in Cape Town such as Mike Alomba and Christian Sita Mampunya, are university graduates. They are articulated in their speeches in French and even English. Mampunya, in particular, has many times served as a news correspondent reporting on Congolese protests for South African national televisions such as SABC.[586] He and others I interacted with in Cape Town do not fit the description of "lout"[587] the *combattants* are stereotypically associated with. However, there is evidence suggesting that some *combattants'* dedication to the movement are motivated by material and other benefits.

The *combattants'* extra-political activities are too overwhelming to simply frame them as radicalist diaspora political activists.[588] Despite the *combattants*' anger being generally directed towards the eastern Congolese, their activities also heavily affected *Kinois* communities in which they operated as debt collectors and settlers of matrimonial disputes, among other things. The majority of *Kinois* I interacted with – including Congolese church pastors, businessmen, and musicians – argued that they were the most affected by the *combattants'* operations, even more so than other regional groups. They reminded me of attacks on *Kinois* churches, and of fights in night clubs and market places between *combattants* and ordinary *Kinois* business owners. Between 2013 and 2016, for example, the news of Congolese women reporting their abusive male partners to the *combattants* was widespread and critically debated in Congolese business places and associations' meetings I attended. Market women, including hairdressers in Bellville, Parow and Cape Town CBD, often approached the *combattants* to discipline their male partners. "Even for R200, they could beat him up for you", explained a hairdresser in Bellville.[589] The *combattants* were also used as debt collectors among security workers and bouncers, and to settle disputes in *likelemba* (rotating credits) groups.[590] In addition, they were often embroiled in struggles with fellow *combattants* because they were also constantly arguing over these money-making activities individual members engaged in and their impacts on the reputation of the movement. On most occasions however, these fights, were incited more by arguments about who collected money from which *collabos* and who kept it for himself than they were about who was a sell-out.

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[585] Demart and Bodeux "Postcolonial stakes of the Congolese political fields (DRC) in Belgium, 50 years after the Independence," 90, 93, 77; Inaka, "*Combattants* and anti-*combattants* (*collabos*).
[586] See for example https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KqcijD5t4o, accessed on 11/05/2022.
[587] Inaka, "Combattants and anticombattants (Collabos)", 15.
[588] David Garbin and Marie Godin, "'Saving the Congo': transnational social fields and politics of home in the Congolese diaspora," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (2013), 116.
[589] Interview with maman Helene, a Congolese from Lubumbashi hairdresser in Bellville, Cape Town, 09/02/2017.
[590] Rosette S. Vuninga, "*combattants*: Activists or Criminals? A Reflection on Ethnoregionalism and Political Violence among Congolese Immigrants in South Africa," http://forums.ssrc.org/kujenga-

Therefore the view that "all *combattants*' intimidations and violence are so we can pay them to not disturb us" is not only shared by the UNC members of Cape Town with whom I interacted during my research; it is also argued by other Congolese who have been attacked by the *combattants* such as the security guards of the Congolese night club, Chez Temba.[591] Thus the *combattants*' slogan "*tozo bundela mboka*" (we are fighting for the country [DRC]) is as questionable as the Kamikaze's claim that they were fighting to protect Congolese against the *Brazzavillois* and other nationals in the early 2000s.

Combattants *versus* Baswahili *and Congolese diasporic activism in Cape Town*

In Cape Town, the east/west diasporic tensions that resulted in the feuds between the *collabos* and *combattants* are related to Congolese diasporic activism in South Africa. This activism is double-oriented as it centres both on the rights of Congolese immigrants, in particular, Congolese refugee rights, but also ways to protest in order to bring about sociopolitical changes in the DRC. The eastern and western Congolese are in agreement about the crises in their home country and the socioeconomic hardship they face daily in South Africa. However, the two regional groups are more divided over what should be prioritised in this activism and the methods of protests. Consequently, the Congolese struggle to unite in their diasporic activism. Since the emergence of the *combattants'* movement, there have been many occasions related to world events and home-country celebrations or manifestations that could have brought all the Congolese of Cape Town together, but instead it brought divides along *Kinois* and *Baswahili* lines. In 2017 during my research fieldwork, I singled out two events in that regard: the World Refugee Day and the Congo Independence Day.

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amani/2017/03/14/*combattants*-activists-or-criminals-a-reflection-on-ethnoregionalism-and-political-violence-among-congolese-immigrants-in-south-africa/#.WQO7styxWM9, accessed on 29/ 04/ 2017.

[591] All leaders of the eastern Congolese associations I interviewed confirmed having to bribe the *combattants* at some stage when hosting important sociocultural events; Focus Group Discuss with UNC members of Amis BK group, Cape Town, 11/02/ 2017.

World Refugee Day

The 20th of June is World Refugee Day (WRD).[592] It was established in 2000 based on Refugee Day and observed in Africa since 1975 "under the supervision of the Organization of African Unity".[593] The WRD has been important to both the South African government and African immigrant communities, especially since the 2008 xenophobic attacks. The 2017 WRD was one of those rare opportunities for Congolese nationals to come together to raise issues relating to the daily challenges they face as refugees in South Africa while promoting awareness about the crises that continue to affect their country. Instead, the events divided Congolese immigrants, who could not agree about how the WRD should be commemorated and about the themes it should focus on.

Immigrants' and South African institutions working with refugees had events planned to celebrate the 2017 WRD. In their addresses, these institutions did not only highlight their work with refugees and expressed their sympathies with the adversities experienced by refugees in South Africa, but they also attempted to distribute the blame between the locals and the immigrants in the overall hardship and the xenophobic attitudes that immigrants have endured in post-apartheid South Africa.[594] The Scalabrini Centre was among the NGOs working with refugees in South Africa and, together with refugees, they "marched to Parliament to deliver a memorandum of appreciation for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa."[595] On the same occasion, the South African department of Home Affairs hosted a "dialogue aimed at promoting social cohesion among refugees, the migrant community and citizens".[596]

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[592] Kristin B. Sandvik, "Unpacking World Refugee Day: Humanitarian governance and human rights practice?," *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 2, no. 2 (2010), 287-298.

[593] The World Refugee Day was established by the UNHCR in 2000 and was first celebrated on 20th June 2001 "both as a community-building effort, and as part of the organisation's strategy to manage and re-territorialize the governance of displaced populations." See Kristin B. Sandvik, "Unpacking World Refugee Day: Humanitarian governance and human rights practice?," *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 2, no. 2 (2010), 287-298.

[594] For example, the Scalabrini Centre explained that "Those who hold xenophobic sentiments are often struggling to find work, justice and stability. Furthermore, it has been said in social commentary that rushing to 'assist' those affected by xenophobia can result in those with xenophobic opinions intensifying their beliefs, as it is perceived as another instance in which foreigners are receiving 'special attention'". See https://scalabrini.org.za/world-refugee-day-at-scalabrini-centre-cape-town/, accessed on 25/ 01/ 2018.

[595] https://scalabrini.org.za/world-refugee-day-20-june/, accessed on 3/ 09/ 2017.

[596] https://www.gov.za/speeches/home-affairs-holds-dialogue-part-world-refugee-day-20-jun-19-jun-2017-0000, accessed on 02/ 09/ 2017.

The above dialogue by the Department of Home Affairs as well as the Scalabrini event were embraced by Kivucian associations such as Amis BK which encouraged its members to attend. The *Baswahili* associations were keen to align themselves with whatever would please the South African government, to show both their gratitude and willingness to integrate in the host community. Under pressure by the *combattants*' and pro-*combattants'* associations, hardly any *Kinois* attended these meetings. As *combattant* Dofi from Bellville said, they refused to "bootlick the system that is unjust" to them.

While the *combattant*-led groups were interested in exposing the injustices of the South African refugee system, the *Baswahili* associations were more oriented toward showing their gratitude and willingness to integrate in the host community. For example, in the Amis BK meeting of 17th June 2017, the issue of WRD was discussed in relation to how it could be made impactful by using it to introduce Amis BK to other South African NGOs working with refugees. Amis BK even delegated members to represent it at the conference of the WRD at the Scalabrini Centre. As usual, Amis BK's "ambassador" role was not only to listen and report back on everything discussed on refugee opportunities, but also to ensure that Amis BK and their main objective – "a peaceful integration of all Congolese in South Africa" (in Amis BK's president's words) – was known to all the other organisations and associations present at the event.

In this meeting of Amis BK, an association known as "Unifarm" was also discussed, which the chair of the meeting described as an "association of *Kinois* of Hout Bay". Unifarm was said to be "resisting the refugee day." Amis BK members were warned against joining activities organised by Unifarm by emphasising that their members were but *combattants* in disguise. This association had planned to use the WRD to protest against the ways in which the Congolese from Kinshasa were discriminated against, not only by the Department of Home Affairs, but also by all the other associations that provide services to refugees in South Africa. Unifarm was said to be preparing a protest and a conference with "xenophobia" as theme. Amis BK received their invitation, but they decided not to attend for two reasons. The first was that Unifarm were *Kinois*, *combattants* and pro-*combattants*. Therefore, it would not be safe for Kivucians to mix with them. The second was that Unifarm intended to upset the South African government with talks of xenophobia, whereas "we are advocating integration", added the president of Amis BK.[597] And so, for Congolese, the WRD in Cape Town ended up dividing *Baswahili* and *Kinois* once more because of their differing agendas.

Congo Independence Day

The 2nd of July 2017 was chosen by Amis BK as the day to celebrate the DRC's 57th Independence anniversary.[598] On this occasion, another association known as the Joe Slovo Community played a soccer game with Amis BK. At the game, members of Amis BK called them *Barundi* (people from Burundi) because of the nationality of the majority of the members of the Joe Slovo Community. As observed since the early 2000s, relationships between the diaspora from the Great Lakes Region in Cape Town have degraded as a result of the persisting conflict in the Congo. However, it was the watchful eye of the *combattants* that put an official end to the sociocultural *collabo*rations between Congolese and nationals from their eastern neighbouring countries that had existed from the 1990s. In particular, the *combattants* did not tolerate *Kivucians* gathering with "Rwandans" (as *combattants* in particular, and most Congolese in general, often call Rwandans, Burundians and Ugandans as a group).[599]

The Joe Slovo Community was not the only "foreign" association wanting a *collabo*ration with Amis BK on Congo's Independence Day in 2017. On the 27th of June 2017, Amis BK received an email from an association called African United FC asking them to contribute an amount of R500 for "the manifestation commemorating our countries' accession to the independence: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi as well as Rwanda on the 30th June, 1st July and the 2nd July, respectively".[600] The letter was signed "your brothers, AFRICAN UNITED FC". This invitation could not be handled by the President of Amis BK alone, knowing how some members would interpret his decision to team up with those nationals in shared celebrations. Hence he forwarded the letter to the association's committee members so they could decide together how to reply to the African United FC, which was another pro-Burundian and pro-Rwandan association. It is not surprising that the so called

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[597] Amis Bk committee meeting, Cape Town, 17/07/2017.

[598] The actual Independence Day is on the 30th of June, but given that it fell on a Friday, a working day, the majority decided that Sunday the 2nd was the best day to celebrate.

[599] René Lemarchand, "Consociationalism and power sharing in Africa: Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo," *African Affairs* 106, no. 422 (2006), 1-20; Filip Reyntjens, *The Great African war: Congo and Regional Geopolitics, 1996-2006* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[600] That is how the dates appear in the email. But Rwanda and Burundi got their independence on the 1st of July 1961.

"*La Diaspora Congolaise de Cape Town*", largely made of *Kinois* and *combattants*, had not received any emails from associations such as the Joe Slovo Community and the African United FC.[601] At the soccer game, I asked the leader of the Joe Slovo Community how his association came up with the idea of getting together on the Independence celebration day. He replied: "Look, we are all the same, we are from the Great Lakes Region", obviously referring to the eastern Congolese community, not to Congolese in general and especially not the *combattants*-led *Kinois* community. In the end, the Amis BK committee opted to celebrate with the Joe Slovo Community.

This choice of Amis BK confirmed the view held by the majority of *Kinois* that Kivucians preferred to side with foreign enemies of the DRC rather than with their fellow countrymen from the western region. A conversation with one of the Unifarm members revealed that in fact they did send invitations to other Kivucian community leaders, including ethnic association leaders. The Unifarm had organised a conference about the DRC's sociopolitical situation and xenophobia in South Africa. None of the Kivu associations accepted joining what Dofi (a *combattant* and Unifarm member) described as a "noble cause that could help change the attitude of South Africans toward immigrants while also informing the world about what we endure in South Africa". He added that "it is clear they [Kivucians] want us [*Kinois*] to remain discriminated against…".[602] At the same time, the event of Amis BK with the Joe Slovo Community, was poorly attended by Amis BK members compared to past Independence Day celebrations. A later meeting revealed that some members were uncomfortable to share such an event with the Joe Slovo Community for two reasons: firstly, they were uncomfortable to celebrate with "non-Congolese"; secondly, they were afraid the *combattants* could sabotage the event and attack them in the process.[603]

These two events divided the Congolese from different home regions in terms of their vision of diasporic activism. Both groups—from the East and the West—felt the need to use these events to advocate for their home country and their well-being as immigrants in South Africa. But they could not agree about what should be done and how it should be done. Both groups ended up having their events as planned and passing on the intended message to their audience. Each group was guided by its experience in South Africa. *Baswahili* wanted to show gratitude to South Africa through engaging with topics concerning integration and collaboration between their associations and the local South African ones and working to ensure the immigrants understood the crucial part they play in how well or otherwise they were treated in South Africa. *Kinois* on the other hand wanted to expose the injustices immigrants face, using the South African working-class style of protests. The *Baswahili* feared that if the *Kinois* protested openly and violently (as the Congolese Diaspora of Cape Town or the Western Cape) against their host government, this could be taken as a provocation that could worsen the xenophobic attitude of South Africans, and all African immigrants could end up being affected. As one Kivucian put it:

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[601] Interview with *combattant* Dofi, Cape Town, 29/03/2019.
[602] Interview with *combattants* Pacho and Dofi, Cape Town, 16/08/2017.
[603] Noted in Amis BK monthly meeting, Cape Town, 30/07/2017.

> The Congolese government has never done anything for its people. Since Mobutu, we know "*on doit se debrouiller*" and the *Kinois* know it very well too. It is therefore a mere provocation to oblige South Africans to do things for us while they have their own people suffering from extreme poverty and they are unable to attend to their own needs. Protesting in the ways South Africans do will definitely assure the South Africans that we are competing with them just like they justified their violent xenophobic attacks in the past years. I have no problem attending *Kinois*' activities. I have been in their churches and other conferences organised by some of them in the past but I will never be part of violent protests, they know we cannot do that. And if we invite them to a conference or any peaceful conversation regarding our country or solutions on how to help each other to settle successfully in South Africa, they often come to sabotage it and to call us names.[604]

Both Kivucians' and *Kinois*' (and *combattants* in particular) actions were shaped by the differences in the way in which they experience hardship in South Africa. The challenge comes from finding an agreement not so much on possible solutions to the Congolese refugee migrants' socioeconomic hardship in South Africa, but from which problems should be addressed first and which protest method – radicalism or moderation – should be employed to get the South African government and the UNHCR solve the problems. However, it is difficult for the two communities to reach common ground given how differently they are treated in South Africa.

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[604] An Amis BK member reacting to the World Refugee Day and why they did not join the march organised by the Unifarm organisation. Amis BK meeting, 30/07/2017.

New paths for the **combattants?**

In the effort to make an impact as a Congolese diaspora movement of Cape Town, the *combattants* incorporated some of the resilience techniques used by eastern Congolese associations into their policies. Thus, despite the fact that the *combattants* engaged in a number of protests and other activities related to Congolese transnational politics in Cape Town, especially from 2011, under the name “Congolese diaspora of Cape Town”, in 2018 the association officially registered at the South African Department of Social Development as a Not for Profit Organisation (NPO). It is now officially known as the Congolese Diaspora of the Western Cape (CDWC). The name does not only suggest that the *combattants* of Cape Town are distancing themselves from the old ways and other *combattants* groups across the globe and in other provinces of South Africa; it is also a redefinition of the *combattant* as the representation of the Congolese community of the Western Cape province.

On the Congolese Diaspora of the Western Cape’s website, *combattants* have redefined their two main aims. The first is “to defend and promote the interests and well-being of all Congolese nationals, irrespective of their race, gender, age, tribe, political affiliation and social standings, living in the province of Western Cape, in South Africa”. The second states that they “thrive to improve the living experience of all Congolese nationals residing in the province of the Western Cape and also galvanise all social and political forces to bring about change in our mother land, the DR Congo”. In addition, the Congolese Diaspora of the Western Cape is clear that “all political and social associations that would like to join forces with us are welcome”. The logo on the website of the Congolese Diaspora of the Western Cape under “how to take action” indicates the important place that unity through inclusion of all Congolese in ethno-regional groups occupies in their new vision. This is seen in the picture of four people working together to lift and straighten a leaning pole with a DRC flag with the words “*Muluba, Mukongo, Mungala, Muswahili, ensemble pour le Congo*”.[605]

This effort to include all Congolese, especially those from previously persecuted ethno-regional groups, is seen in the expanded participation in the association by members, who now also include Kivucians such as Isambecho Kiza, who is the manager of VIDEFI and one of the leading members of the M’bondo (the Babembe ethnic association of Cape Town). A follow-up interview with Dofi – a Cape Peninsula University of Science and Technology

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[605] http://www.dcwc.co.za/TakeAction.aspx, accessed on 02/06/2019.

(CPUT) student and a well-known *combattant* – revealed that *combattants* have been working to discipline their members to ensure they respect their constitution.[606] However, as much as the *combattants*' effort to change their image is starting to materialise in some respects, the Congolese community in general and the eastern Congolese in particular are sceptical with regards to their genuine intentions.

Conclusion

In the history of the Congolese diaspora networks in Cape Town, the *kamikaze* marked an epoch of survival by all means in South Africa and less involvement in homeland politics. The Kamikaze evoke a trans-bordered regionalism, shaped by the regional politics between the DRC and the war-torn countries bordering its western region in the last decade of the President Mobutu's rule. Moreover, the Kamikaze as a network was shaped by the migration experience and trajectories of its founding members from Zaire to Angola and then to South Africa through Namibia. The Kamikaze group is also crucial in understanding conflicts in (inter-)migrant networks in Cape Town and how they were shaped by macro-regionalism up until the early 2000s.

The *combattants,* on the other hand, emerged a decade after the *kamikaze* under different sociopolitical settings in both the DRC and the Congolese diaspora of South Africa. During the *combattants*' era, Congolese immigrants have increased in number but so too the socioeconomic hardship for immigrants, particularly refugees and asylum seekers in Cape Town. Moreover, Congolese home-based networks have multiplied, in addition to an increased politicisation of Congolese diaspora from "below", shaped by regionalism. I argue therefore that it is the frustrations from the socioenomic hardship they endure as migrants in South Africa, particularly as western Congolese, as well as the realisation that there is nothing to return to in the home country as the political and economic crises continue, that inform the *combattants*' objectives and modus operandi, particularly, the antagonism they have toward eastern Congolese.

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[606] According to *combattant* Dofi, the *combattants* no longer condone the use of unnecessary violence as a means to an end. They also no longer tolerate their members using the association's privileges for personal gains (such as being paid to settle matrimonial disputes or debt collections). They have been working to rid the movement of corruption which characterised it since it emerged in Cape Town in 2011. Dofi explained that if a member was found going against the new rules of the *combattants*, he was severely and publicly dealt with. Interview with Dofi, Cape Town, 29/03/ 2019.

Conclusion

Regionalism among the Congolese of Cape Town, especially that related to the east-west divide that this research focused on, is shaped by the homeland politics as well as that of the host country, South Africa. Understanding the dynamics of eastern and western regional identities that *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* incarnate respectively, requires one to revisit the history of Congo. As proven in the works of Congo linguists and historians, Lingala and Kiswahili's history cannot be detached from the invasions of the Congo region during the late 19th century, first by the Afro-Arabs from East Africa through its eastern region and about two decades later by the Belgians through its western region. The identities of *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* emanating mostly from speaking Kiswahili and Lingala and identifying with the eastern or western region of the DRC, respectively, are mainly a Belgian invention that emerged from their native administration policy aiming at order and control. In post-independence, therefore, *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* as political identities continue to reflect the rivalry between the Belgians and the Afro-Arabs on the Congo soil as well as the sociopolitical and often economic rift between the eastern and western region of the Congo that is rooted in the gap in the colonial occupation of the two regions. These two foreign forces, I argue, largely shaped and reinforced the regional imbalances at socioeconomic and political levels between the two regions of the Congo. In the post-colonial period, *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* identities translated into a regional political power struggle, as proven in the timeline of Congo's crises since its independence in the early 1960s – from the Simba Rebellion to the rebellion to oust Mobutu and that to oust L. Kabila in the late 1990s, and the subsequent conflicts that still haunts the Congo today, especially its eastern region. This post-Mobutu crisis is the main reason for Congolese migrating to countries such as South Africa, particularly Cape Town. It is in Cape Town where this research was conducted with the focus on reading regionalism in Congolese diasporic identity politics and social network formations.

The Congolese I focused on in this research – mainly refugees and asylum seekers – migrated to South Africa in various waves from Zaire's crisis of the early 1990s to the war to oust Mobutu to the last term of Joseph Kabila. Each of these waves was informed by the sociopolitical and economic situation in the Congo in general. These waves, however, differ, in the politics of identity under which individuals negotiated their migrant status in South

Africa. Moreover, each wave altered Congolese transnationalism in South Africa, shaping and reshaping it based on the sociopolitical situation of the home country as well as that of the host country they walked into. With regards to the identity politics with which Congolese negotiated their migrant status in South Africa, I argued that prior to the late 1990s, ethno-regional identity could not matter where Congolese citizenship did not. Characteristic of this period therefore, included the Congolese borrowing a war victim identity from Congo's western and eastern region neighbouring countries who were at war in order to claim asylum/ refugee status in South Africa so as to avoid delays, rejections and deportation which was common in South Africa at least until 1998.

Towards the end of the Second Congo War, the politics of identity with which the Congolese negotiated their immigrant status in South Africa shifted from borrowing a foreign nationality to borrowing their compatriots' regional one. The Congo crisis, its changing dynamics, its identity discourse and its regional dimensions (as an eastern Congo crisis) contributed to the antagonism between *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala* in Cape Town. It was not until the Second Congo War was declared over in 2003 that one's "home region" increasingly became a crucial determinant of the refugee status application in South Africa. I argue that as the "Congo war" was changed to "conflict in the eastern Congo" from 2003, so too did the question of where one was from in the DRC and how directly the conflict affected them became the main determinant of the outcome for refugee status application of the Congolese in South Africa. This worked to the advantage of *Baswahili* for being from the conflict region while *Bato ya mangala* and others from non-conflict regions were often rejected as "economic migrants" for being from regions other than the conflict or war zone (eastern regions) of the DRC.

This regionalisation of the DRC conflict in qualifying or dismissing Congolese refugee applicants in South Africa in general, and Cape Town in particular, I argued, (re)produced and reinforced among Congolese immigrants the very same discourse of identity, based on theories of autochthony and citizenship that were characteristic of the Congo Conflict ever since the late 1990s. The very same way *Bato ya mangala* have appropriated themselves with the identity of "real Congolese", *Baswahili* have vengefully done the same with the identity of "real Congolese refugees". In both cases, each group engaged in an identity discourse that excluded the other. More than anything, the regionalisation of the Congo conflict in the South Africa refugee system has produced two socioeconomic classes based on the home regions and in which the eastern Congolese are the upper class. *Bato ya mangala* on the other hand, are yet to find the same comfort, as their leadership represents a thorn in the side of South African officials by simultaneously publicly exposing the socioeconomic and political crises of their homeland as well as the injustices of the domestic refugee system. The former justifies why the latter should not happen and why all Congolese – regardless of their home region – deserve refugee status in South Africa.

Regional divisions among Congolese migrants in places such as South Africa provided a fertile ground for the politicisation of the Congolese diaporas in the Joseph Kabila era. The 2011 elections, which led to President Kabila's last term in office, were particular, with the formation of radicalist diasporic "pressure groups" known as the *combattants*. They did not only raise Congolese political awareness from abroad to the home country through public protests and social media, but they also targeted anti-patriotics whom they defined on an ethno-regional line, targeting eastern Congolese in particular. The rise of the *combattants* exacerbated regionalism among the Congolese and occasionally turned feuds and tensions between eastern and western Congolese into violence. Such violence recalls another "Congolese" association of the early 2000s: the Kamikaze. The Kamikaze and *combattants*, in addition to being both (pro)western Congolese groups and making use of violence in their activities, shared problematic politics of non-regionalism (and non-ethnicism), claiming to be more inclusive of and looking out for all Congolese. These two groups, I argue, are the very incarnation not just of the way regionalism – local and trans-border – has a great impact on Congolese transnationalism in South Africa in the post-Mobutu era, but also how the everyday life of Congolese immigrants, especially their networks, conveys the local and trans-border regional dimensions and dynamics of the Congo wars and conflicts.

More research is needed in issues regarding the politics of identity in Congolese transnationalism in South Africa, which I could not engage with because of the scope of my study. For example, an exploration into the gender dynamics of Congolese transnational politics in South Africa could be interesting given the increasingly important role that women play in the former male dominated or strictly men-only associations. I am particularly interested in the women within the *combattant* movement during the first and second term of President Joseph Kabila. Further research on the ethno-regional politics among Congolese migrants of South Africa regarding the two other Congolese ethno-region groups, namely the Baluba and Bakongo, is equally needed to understand how they navigate being "minorities", forced to fit under *Baswahili* and *Bato ya mangala*, in the era of diasporic identity politics shaped by ethno-regionalism in the post-Mobutu period.

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