

## War and Identity in Angola

### Two Case-Studies\*

The civil war in Angola, which ended in 2002 with the death of rebel National Union for Total Independence of Angola (Unita) leader Jonas Savimbi, may be counted as one of the world's forgotten conflicts<sup>1</sup>. At most, it is cited as one of the many examples of the humanitarian crisis in Africa. But profound analysis of the situation has hardly been made in any of the mass media. In high politics and big business, Angola's oil and diamonds drew more attention than the people living in the country. Scholarly studies often frame warfare and violence in Africa in abstract, structural terms. Also in the case of Angola, there is only limited attention for local perspectives on the war.

This article is partly based on interpretations given by Angolans on their history. This will not necessarily lead to a « truer » interpretation<sup>2</sup>, but it will, as we shall see, reveal the importance of identity construction both as cause and consequence of the war. In the state discourse on history, the theme of identity is deliberately absent. For the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), that claimed to be a universalist, secular, socialist party, it was not at all convenient to stress the importance of particular identities, such as ethnicity or race. Furthermore the role of religion, ranging from protective magic to the influence of the churches, has been largely ignored in the official MPLA discourse. Identity could at best play a role in relation to other aspects of the « superstructure », such as literature and culture. It ought not to interfere with serious matters – economics and politics.

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1. See M. ANSTEE, « Angola. The Forgotten Tragedy. A Test Case for UN Peace-Keeping », *International Relations*, IX (6), 1993 : 495-511.  
2. C. MESSIANT, « "Chez nous, même le passé est imprévisible". L'expérience d'une recherche sur le nationalisme angolais, et particulièrement le MPLA : sources, critique, besoins actuels de la recherche », *Lusotopie*, 1998 : 178.

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Influences in the ethnic, racial or religious sphere were labelled « tribalism », « racism », and « obscurantism », and strictly linked to the « enemy ». The labels were used to quell criticism on the regime and to harm political opponents. Identity and culture hence remained little discussed in the official versions of Angola's political history<sup>3</sup>.

As such, identity – the process of distinguishing oneself from others – is not negative or positive. It can be used as a resource to generate cultural vitality, make people aware of the value of history and lead to a sense of worthiness. Using identity in this manner may help people to develop relations of mutual respect with others. Identity can, however, also be misused. It may then lead to indulging in excessive pride and a denigrating attitude toward others. In any war, the construction of « the enemy » is a process that entails a « politics of belonging », drawing the boundary between « us » and « them ». This process is never value-free. In wartime especially, the negative sides of identity construction are more likely to come to the fore. « The enemy » is presented as an invisible, grotesque Other, while « we » are visible, normal human beings<sup>4</sup>.

This remark already shows that identity cannot be conceived of as a static, unified and monolithic given; identities are continuously being constructed and re-constructed. Identity is fragmentary, multi-layered and subject to change. People do not have one, single identity: we always combine various layers of identity. Sometimes people can choose freely what aspects of identity to emphasise, sometimes they are forced into one or the other category. The conceptualisation of identity as a multi-layered process of construction calls for a historical approach. In this article I will describe the process through which identities were constructed and subsequently « essentialised », *i.e.* presented *as if* they were unalterable and everlasting. I will do so on the basis of two case-studies: the making of Kongo nationalism in Northern Angola and the construction of the categories « town » and « bush » in south-eastern Angola. These case-studies are by no means unique within the Angolan context. There are other examples of the changing stature of ethnicity: a case in point has been the growing importance of being Ovimbundu<sup>5</sup>. In the past, religious and national identity could be interwoven: during the colonial era Congregationalists called themselves « American ». Such was seen as threatening the colonial ambitions of « Portugalisation »<sup>6</sup>. In some cases, these processes of identity construction have had positive effects. In others, the forms of mobilization have been misused to blacken, or even exert violence toward, others.

The first case-study is based on literature and interviews collected during a visit to Luanda in July and August 2002 and on archival material, assembled in Lisbon, Oxford and Amsterdam. Literacy is relatively widespread in Northern Angola and some research has been done on the area. Therefore there is a considerable body of written texts on the region, both by

3. C. MESSIANT, « Chez nous... », *op.cit.* : 157-197.

4. F. NYAMNJOH & M. ROWLANDS, « Elite Associations and the Politics of Belonging in Cameroon », *Africa* (Edinburgh), LXVIII (3), 1998 : 320-337 ; P. FUSSELL, *The Great War and modern memory*, Oxford, 2000 : 75-76.

5. C. MESSIANT, « Angola, voies de l'ethnisation et de la décomposition. I - De la guerre à la paix (1975-1991) : le conflit armé, les interventions internationales et le peuple angolais » *Lusotopie*, I (2), 1994 : 160-170, 192-195.

6. D. PÉCLARD, « "Eu sou americano". Dynamiques du champ missionnaire dans le planalto central angolais au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle », *Lusotopie*, 1998 : 357-376.

people born in the region and observers from the outside. This stands in contrast with the South-East of Angola. Hardly any research has been undertaken in this area and until very recently no elite-formation took place that entrenched writing to a strong degree. Therefore, the second case-study is largely based on fieldwork undertaken in Rundu, a growing town in the Kavango region of Northern Namibia. In 1996, 1997 and 1999, during a period of more than a year, about hundred immigrants from south-east Angola were interviewed.

### Ethnicity and the nation in Northern Angola

The first case-study is the example of identity in Northern Angola. In the classic interpretations of Angolan nationalism, the role of ethnicity and religion is stressed. Thus René Pélissier as well as John Marcum classify the three Angolan nationalist movements in ethnic, religious terms. MPLA was linked to Mbundu and *mestiços* with a Roman Catholic or Methodist background ; the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) related to Baptist Bakongo ; Unita to Congregationalist Ovimbundu<sup>7</sup>. Of the three movements, FNLA was seen as most strongly tied to its ethnic roots : « Ethnicity is most pronounced in the stream of nationalism that developed within the community of some 700.000 Kikongo-speaking Bakongo of Northern Angola »<sup>8</sup>. The ethnic interpretation of Angolan nationalism has already been expanded<sup>9</sup> and criticised<sup>10</sup> for the Unita-Ovimbundu case. Here I would like to focus on the ways in which Northern Angolans related to ethnic and national identity.

The debates on ethnicity in Africa have been intense. While nationalism has been by and large evaluated as a positive force, ethnic identity was often seen as primitive and negative : « tribalism » would divide the nation. In this modernist discourse, the tribe was seen as internally homogenous and associated with « traditional » rural Africa. This view has been criticised by pointing out that nationalism and ethnicity are not as different as is implied in such modernist discourse. It is more fruitful to view ethnicity as a historical process, not as a relic from days gone by. Ethnicity can be studied, just as nationalism, as a debate on citizenship, as an imagined community<sup>11</sup>. Such a view challenges the notion of « tribe » as a unified whole ; as John Lonsdale writes about « the Kikuyu » : « They were now becoming one people, under the influence of social change and cultural nationalism, and therefore still more explicitly divided than before »<sup>12</sup>. This also implies that ethnicity is not necessarily more evil than nationalism : both can be used and

7. J. MARCUM, *The Angolan revolution. II. Exile politics and guerrilla warfare (1962-1976)*, Cambridge-London, MIT Press, 1978 : 50.

8. J. MARCUM, « Angola : background to the conflict », *Mawazo (Makerere)*, IV (4), 1976 : 5.

9. L.M. HEYWOOD, « Unita and Ethnic Nationalism in Angola », *Journal of Modern African Studies* (Cambridge), XXVII (1), 1989 : 47-66.

10. D. PÉCLARD, « "Eu sou americano"... », *op. cit.* : 357-376.

11. J. LONSDALE, « The Moral Economy of Mau Mau », in B. BERMAN & J. LONSDALE, *Unhappy valley. Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, London, James Currey/Nairobi, Heinemann Kenya/Athens, Ohio University Press, 1991 : 267 ; B. ANDERSON, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London-New York, Verso, 1983.

12. J. LONSDALE, « Mau Maus of the mind revisited », unpublished manuscript, Cambridge, 1994 : 3.

abused<sup>13</sup>. As we shall see below, in the literature on Angola the modernist assumptions about ethnicity have hardly been challenged.

### *MPLA on FNLA*

After the war in the North started on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1961, MPLA sought to co-operate with the Union of the Peoples of Angola (UPA). When this failed, when MPLA was increasingly harassed in Congo-Léopoldville and its columns were killed by UPA troops in Northern Angola, more negative reactions came forth. An increasingly bitter exchange of propaganda started to develop. The MPLA focused on three elements when denouncing UPA/FNLA : racism, tribalism, and foreignness.

Initially the racial argument received special attention. UPA/FNLA was said to have waged a propaganda campaign against all whites and *mestiços*. MPLA accused UPA of having ordered the indiscriminate killing of non-blacks during the revolt in March 1961. Afterwards *mestiços* belonging to MPLA columns had fell victim to UPA forces. UPA was also described as a tribal movement. This argument became especially important after MPLA had been ousted from Zaire in 1963. Before this time MPLA was actively seeking a following amongst Angolans speakers living in Lower Congo. In this region, many positions at the local government level were held by ABAKO members, most of whom preferred MPLA presence to any incursions of the rival UPA. MPLA thus gained some access in the Congolese region with the highest percentage of Kikongo-speaking Angolans<sup>14</sup>. After it left Congo, MPLA, in its propaganda, increasingly stated UPA/FNLA to be a tribal movement. Despite its name change, in MPLA's view, UPA had remained an exclusively northern party and only appealed to the Bakongo. When UPA and the Democratic Party of Angola (PDA) joined to form FNLA in 1962, MPLA propaganda did not change : a « tribal » party plus another « tribal » party could only become more « tribal ». Such « tribalism » was invariably presented as backward and evil.

Finally MPLA emphasized that FNLA was a « foreign » party ; its leadership had no ties with Angola and the movement could only survive because of Mobutu's support. It was a « tribal refugee movement in exile »<sup>15</sup>. Especially during the decolonisation process, between 1974 and 1976, FNLA was denounced as a foreign movement. That many in FNLA army spoke Lingala rather than Portuguese and that Zairian troops were involved did much to the increased use of this argument. Furthermore during the struggle for independence all Angolan nationalist movements relied on external support and had their bases in exile. After MPLA started operating from

13. See J. LONSDALE, « Moral ethnicity and political tribalism », in P. KAARSHOLM (ed.), *Inventions and boundaries : historical and anthropological approaches to the study of ethnicity and nationalism*, Roskilde, Roskilde University, 1994 : 130-150.

14. J. MARCUM, *Exile politics and guerrilla warfare*, op. cit. : 121-122. One reason for the growing rift between the ABAKO and the UPA, was UPA's decision to abandon the aim of establishing an independent kingdom of Kongo : this was regarded as betrayal in ABAKO circles. See F. J. GRÉNELL, « History of the Baptist Church in Angola, 1879-1975 », *BMS archives*, Oxford, Th 87A, 1998 : 198.

15. NIZA, Angola Comité, Historisch Archief Angola, 1961-1976, box 2 : « MPLA documents issued by the MPLA representation in Sweden », n° 1 : « Who is leading the struggle in Angola ? » (translated from *Södra Africa* 10, 1970) ; *Ibid.*, box 1 : « A FNLA em Angola » (MPLA, Luanda 1975) ; « Angola : textes et documents », *Études Congolaises* (Léopoldville), III (9), 1962 : 64-67, 70-74.

Luanda, « foreignness » became a more widespread argument in the campaign against FNLA.

In the colonial discourse, similar arguments were used : UPA was stamped as a racist, tribalist and foreign movement. The colonial propaganda, however, was far more contradictory : the revolt was at once denounced as a foreign, communist attack, as tribal, superstitious atavism, and as a Protestant conspiracy<sup>16</sup>. Still, FNLA eagerly employed this congruence to belittle MPLA's critique<sup>17</sup>. MPLA's critique on FNLA also coincided with the interpretation of many outside observers. References to ethnicity were interpreted in the light of « tribalism » and « separatism ». René Pélissier distinguishes « modernists » from « ethno-nationalists », thus implying that « ethno-nationalists » are not « modern »<sup>18</sup>.

### FNLA on MPLA

Gervase Clarence-Smith has pointed out that nationalism is not any more modern than ethnicity : both ethnicity as an imagined community and the concept « Angola » in its present form started to have political relevance by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19</sup>. For at least a number of Angolans, the « nation » forms as much as a problem as ethnicity. Daniel Ntoni-Nzinga related national identity to colonial violence : « The peoples who formed the emerging Angolan nation did not choose to be Angolans but were forced to be Angolans at gunpoint »<sup>20</sup>. Of all colonial powers, Portugal took least interest in the communities living under its control. As « Portugalization » was stressed as the ideal, many local political structures were destroyed and language laws decreed against the use of local languages<sup>21</sup>. In this light it is not surprising that some Angolans did not at all see the tribe as backward and intrinsically bad. « Detribalization » was at times interpreted as a form of colonial oppression and so some *assimilados* sought to re-discover their African roots. In Protestant circles, the stress on Portuguese as the language of education was much resented and there were Protestants proudly asserting that Protestantism was a « tribal religion ». Some observers saw it as positive that UPA was having « tribal, linguistic, religious, social links » with « the masses » and opposed this to the « isolated » MPLA, consisting of « privileged, urban » *mestiços* and *assimilados*, having only « external contacts »<sup>22</sup>. This discourse was also used by Unita in the 1990s, in the form

16. J. MARCUM, *The Angolan Revolution. I. The anatomy of an explosion (1950-1962)*. Cambridge-London, MIT Press, 1969 : 130-131, 147-148 ; J. Alves das NEVES, *Raízes do terrorismo em Angola e Moçambique (1969)*, Lisbon, Gráfica Imperial, 1970 : 29-30, 37.

17. FNLA, *Boletim informativo* (Lisbon), edição para Portugal, n° 1, May 1977 : 4.

18. R. PÉLISSIER, *Le naufrage des caravelles. Études sur la fin de l'empire portugais (1961-1975)*, Orgeval, Pélissier, 1979 : 103-107 ; B. DAVIDSON, *In the eye of the storm. Angola's people*, London, Longman, 1972 : 206, 210.

19. G. CLARENCE-SMITH, « Le problème ethnique en Angola », in J.-P. CHRÉTIEN & G. PRUNIER (eds), *Les ethnies ont une histoire*, Paris, Karthala, 1989 : 406.

20. D. NTONI NZINGA, « Previous Initiatives to Bring Peace to Angola, "lessons learnt" and recommendations for the future », in NIZA, *Angolan Reflections on Peace Building*, Amsterdam, NIZA, 1999 : 9 ; B. DAVIDSON, *The black Man's Burden. Africa and the Curse of the Nation State*, Nairobi, Times Books, 1992.

21. G. CLARENCE-SMITH, « Le problème ethnique... », *op. cit.* : 412-413.

22. D.L. WHEELER & R. PÉLISSIER, *Angola*, New York-Washington-London, Praeger, 1971 : 150-152 ; L.W. HENDERSON, « Ethno-Linguistic Worlds », and « Protestantism : a Tribal Religion », in R.T. PARSONS (ed.), *Windows on Africa*, Leiden, Brill, 1971 : 50-60, 61-80 ; P.-P. ROSSI, *Pour une guerre oubliée*, Paris, Julliard, 1969 : 30, 33.

of an opposition between Unita's « africaness » versus MPLA's « near-to-white » *mestiço* oppression<sup>23</sup>.

FNLA of course vehemently denied ethnicity to be a factor in its mobilization. Membership was open for all Angolans and many of the leadership were not Bakongo at all. In an interview Ngola Kabangu stressed the role of Ovimbundu membership in UPA/FNLA and held that he personally only had had to face some suspicion from the « base » in the beginning: also as a non-Kongo he was accepted rapidly<sup>24</sup>. FNLA had slogans that stressed Angolan unity: « Cokwe and Kimbundu, we are Angolans, Luenas and Kikongo, we are Angolans, Ovimbundus and Kimbundus, we are Angolans. We are Angolans united »<sup>25</sup>. Just as in later Unita propaganda, the Angolan peoples were presented in the plural, in contrast to MPLA's stress on « From Kabinda to Kunene, one people, one nation »<sup>26</sup>. For the Union of The Peoples of Northern Angola (UPNA) in the late fifties, the aim to establish an independent Kongo was not a tribal affair: Kongo had been unjustly annexed to Angola in 1885. As the present boundaries were the consequence of colonial conquest, it was not separatist, in the eyes of many UPA members, to include this issue in the struggle against colonialism.

The racial argument was much more important in UPA/FNLA propaganda than the ethnic. It was argued that *mestiços* were given the same privileges as the white colonizers. The black people of Angola were oppressed not only by Portuguese colonialists, but also by their stooges<sup>27</sup>. This tied in with a wide-spread antipathy, in the North, toward those who sought to adopt Portuguese language and culture. Even in the 1990s, some Northerners saw Portuguese as an imported language and would prefer to have one or more African languages as the national language of Angola<sup>28</sup>. MPLA's employment of Portuguese was viewed as un-african and foreign, its *mestiço* leadership as privileged and having ties with the oppressors: how else could Neto have escaped so easily from a Portuguese prison?<sup>29</sup> UPA/FNLA claimed to be the voice of the poor black Africans in contrast to the elitist MPLA.

The references to Africa did not relate to a traditional, rural life. John Marcum has stressed the rural, peasant character of Bakongo nationalism, opposing this to the « educated Luanda-Mbundu town dwellers »<sup>30</sup>. Yet, from the start Bakongo nationalism was organised by Angolans living in urban centres, such as Matadi and Léopoldville. The difference does not lie in an opposition between town and country, nor between modern and ethnic; but rather in the direction that the nationalist movement took.

23. C. MESSIANT, « Angola, les voies de l'ethnisation et de la décomposition. II : Transition à la démocratie ou marche à la guerre ? L'épanouissement des deux "partis armés" (mai 1991-septembre 1992) », *Lusotopie*, 1995 : 189-191.

24. Interview n° 1, with Mr. Ngola Kabangu, Luanda, 7<sup>th</sup> August 2002; interview n° 2, with Mr. Luís da Silva and Mr. Christophe de Matos Kina, Luanda, 10 August 2002.

25. Interview n° 3, with Mr. Augusto José Farias, Luanda, 12<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

26. C. MESSIANT, « Angola, les voies... II », *op.cit.* : 190.

27. R. CHILCOTE, *Emerging Nationalism in Portuguese Africa - Documents*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1972 : 44-56.

28. S.S. Rodriguez NETO, *A integração social dos regressados em Luanda*, Master Thesis, Lisboa, ISCTE, 2001 : 73.

29. NIZA, Angola Comité, Historisch Archief Angola, 1961-1976, Box 2 : GRAE, « Le GRAE et la CONCP » : 5.

30. J. MARCUM, *The Anatomy of an Explosion*, *op. cit.* : 49; J. MARCUM, *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare*, *op. cit.* : 49-51.

Northern nationalism was from the start oriented toward Léopoldville and not Luanda. Although many UPA members came from coffee-holding families ousted by Portuguese immigrants in the early 1950s, many had experienced urban life and, by 1974, FNLA was a profoundly urban movement.

### « *Kongolanité* »

History was a fundamental source of inspiration for Kongo nationalism. This was the case in the 1950s and continues to be true. Kongo kingdom especially is used to describe a glorious Kongo past. This « deep » history is used to counter the « arrogance » of those who say that they have left tribalism behind them, but are in fact people « without a past »<sup>31</sup>. Knowledge of Kongo history is also presented as central to an understanding of Christianity : Kongo are compared to Israelites, it is held that Jesus might have been a Mukongo and that Jerusalem was in fact nothing else than Mbanza Kongo. In pan-Kongo discourse, the cultural heritage of the Kongo people receives much attention. The importance of mastering the Kikongo language is stressed and people display their knowledge of proverbs<sup>32</sup>.

The king was the most important character in the narratives about Kongo past. Kingship has often been presented as a symbol of internal tribal unity. Thus Abshire and Samuels felt that Jan Vansina's statement on the king of Kongo and politics in the Belgian Congo was also applicable to the Angolan context : « ...twentieth-century Bakongo have given the old kingdom a luster it probably never had in reality, and the memory of the kingdom remains a very important unifying force »<sup>33</sup>. Yet, kingship did not only unify the Bakongo ; it divided them as well. The succession conflict after the death of Dom Pedro VII in 1955 was waged between various branches of Kongo aristocracy and their following. Many Baptist Bakongo from São Salvador region supported the educated candidate proposed by a group from Matadi, while others, mostly Catholics, rallied behind the candidate that was approved of by the Portuguese administration, the Roman Catholic clergy and elders of the Kivuzi clan. The former group organized itself under the name of UPNA, with as its most important aim the independence of the kingdom of Kongo. When it turned out that a program relating to Kongo independence would garner little international support, UPNA was transformed into UPA, aiming at Angola's independence. Those who could not stomach this change, joined the group that supported the Kivuzi candidate and in 1960 they formed Ngwizako (Ngwizani a Kongo). Apart from these groups, there were other groups with a large Kikongo-speaking following, some concerned with the issue of the Kongo king, others not<sup>34</sup>. In

31. J.-M. MABEKO-TALI, « La "chasse au Zaïrois" à Luanda », *Présence africaine* (Paris), 57, 1995 : 74 ; various interviews, Luanda, 2002.

32. Various interviews, especially n° 4 with Rev. João Makoondekwa, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2002, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2002 ; various pamphlets in the PIDE, archives in Lisbon, p.e., Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo (henceforth TT), PIDE, Delegação de Angola (Del. A), 11.12. A : 659-660 : UPA, « Estimulo », 6<sup>th</sup> June 1960 ; *Ibid.*, 11.12.C : 583-584 : UPA, « Aviso », s.d. (translated : 27<sup>th</sup> June 1961).

33. D.M. ABSHIRE & M.A. SAMUELS, *Portuguese Africa : a Handbook*, London, Pall Mall Press, 1969 : 118-120, referring to Jan Vansina.

34. The UPNA was not, as is often maintained, founded in 1954, but probably in the course of July 1957. The ABAKO and its Angolan branch Nto-bako aimed at an independent

other words, the thesis of tribal cohesion can hardly been maintained: political cleavages, tensions between the various sub-groups, religious issues, clan differences, status and class deeply divided the Bakongo. Just as with the Kikuyu case, « Kongolanité »<sup>35</sup> rather formed an axis around which to argue, than unquestioning unity.

Not all Baptist Bakongo belonged to UPA and not all UPA were Bakongo or Baptist. Not all those fighting in March 1961 were doing so in the name of UPA and the revolt was not restricted to Kongo area: in Dembos many Kimbundu speakers were involved. In the 1950s and early 1960s, many people were open to any nationalist party. The links between region and movement only became more stringent in the course of the war. In 1961 few people had heard of UPA, of ABAKO, or MPLA. Some had heard about Neto, others of Kansavubu (Kasavubu), the elder Pinnock or Lumumba. But, who belonged to which party, and which party stood for what, was by no means clear. People from various backgrounds were involved in the uprising in Luanda in February 1961. For example, a letter could refer to « our doctor Neto », and, at the same time ask for UPA membership cards and express the hope that Lumumba would soon come to power. In the first phase of the war, the leadership of the various groups did not yet eye each other with the hatred that later came to be<sup>36</sup>.

### *Integration into Congo/Zaire*

After the war started in March 1961, thousands of Northerners fled over the border: by 1972 their number had reached over half a million<sup>37</sup>. There had always been much contact between Northern Angola and the Belgian Congo. With the influx after March 1961, the number of Angolan Bakongo became proportionally very high: for example, in one church with a local congregation of fifty members, four hundred refugees entered<sup>38</sup>. Also in terms of elite formation the exodus from Northern Angola had many consequences. There had always been a preponderance of Bakongo among the Angolan elite in Congolese towns, but before 1961 there had been a much greater diversity.

Contact between Northern Angola and Congo/Zaire had been intensive all along. Events such as the Buta affair of 1913-1914 and the land appropriation by Portuguese immigrants in the 1950s had led to large-scale emigration. During the entire colonial period, men sought to avoid forced labour and were attracted by the higher wages in Congo. While Southerners were brought in to work on the coffee plantations in Northern Angola, many Northerners worked in the sugar companies in Lower and Central-Congo.

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kingdom of Kongo. The Cabindan AREC aimed at Cabindan independence. The Aliazo (Alliance des Ressortissants de Zombo) had never been concerned with Kongo independence, but wished for a federal Angolan state. J. MARCUM, *The anatomy of an explosion*, *op. cit.*: 63, 67, 72, 76, 88-90, 92-93; G. CLARENCE-SMITH, « Le problème ethnique... », *op. cit.*: 410.

35. R. PÉLISSIER, *Le naufrage des caravelles...*, *op. cit.*: 126.

36. Interview n° 5, with Mr. Francisco Tunga Alberto, Luanda, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2003; TT, PIDE, Del.A., P.Inf. 11.12.A.: 6: António Tomas to João Pedro Francisco, Nôqui, November 1960; There is much controversy about the events of 4<sup>th</sup> February 1961 in Luanda: J. B. LUKOMBO-NZATUZOLA, « "Le 4 février 1961": la remise en question et démystification d'un événement historique mal narré », *anais universitários, série ciências sociais e humanas*, 7, 1996: 365-379.

37. D.L. WHEELER & R. PÉLISSIER, *Angola*, *op. cit.*: 187, 194.

38. BMS Archives (Oxford), XI África, Shelf Set VIII, Shelf 6, Box A 79, « Angola-Miscellaneous »: Vera Harrison, « Notes for the record », Moerbeke, March 1964.

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For the people of Northern Angola, Léopoldville, not Luanda, was the nearest urban centre. There were lively trade relations. People living close to the border often had relatives on the other side. Despite the Portuguese language laws, the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) schools in Belgian Congo continued to attract Angolan pupils<sup>39</sup>. The ties across the border were such that in many ways the tags « foreign » and « national » did not apply.

Many of the refugees of 1961 stayed in Congo/Zaire from 1961 to 1975. In this period contact between Congo/Zaire and Angola was difficult: the border became an obstacle and national categorisation much more relevant than before. Within these 14 years, many Angolan immigrants, and their children, integrated into Zairian society. As Kikongo was considered a rural language, most learnt to speak Lingala, the regional *lingua franca*. Lingala was also used in Kinkuzu, FNLA's most important base in Zaire. Education was in French rather than Portuguese<sup>40</sup>. While MPLA regarded FNLA leadership as « uneducated » and « primitive » because they lacked any Portuguese-oriented education, in Zaire the values of language and cultural background were different. In the internal rivalry within FNLA, between Francophones and Lusophones, the latter were reportedly denounced as « morons »<sup>41</sup>.

In political sense, Zairianization also took place, undoubtedly. Many authors have stressed the integration of FNLA leadership into Zairian elite and some even classified UPA/FNLA as a Zairian rather than Angolan party<sup>42</sup>. From the onset, many of UPA's leadership were, although of Angolan descent, familiar with Congolese context. Some of them had never personally experienced Portuguese colonial rule; Holden Roberto of course being the clearest example: UPA/FNLA was firmly embedded in the Congolese political elite and Holden's power depended largely on his relations with Congolese politicians. He became a personal friend of Lumumba, was a football playmate of Adoula and married into Mobutu family<sup>43</sup>. In his speeches, he spoke of Mobutu as « the father of the Angolan revolution »<sup>44</sup>. In the 1970s there were even plans to integrate Northern Angola into the Zairian territory<sup>45</sup>.

39. SABAKINU KIVILU, « Quelques aspects de l'immigration angolaise au Bas-Zaïre », *Likundoli* (Lumumbashi), Série C, I (2), 1976 : 201-218 ; J. KOUALE-YABORO, *Problèmes posés au Zaïre par la guerre de libération nationale en Angola*, (Thèse de Mémoire, ULB (Brussels), 1974 : 32-33.

40. S.S. Rodriguez NETO, « A integração social... », *op. cit.* : 71-74 ; interview n° 1 ; D. Birmingham, « Language is Power : Regional Politics in Angola », in K. HART & J. LEWIS (eds), *Why Angola matters*, London, James Currey, 1995, : 91-95 ; B. Schubert, *Der Krieg und die Kirchen. Angola 1961-1991*, Luzern, Edition Exodus, 1997 : 90.

41. F.W. HEIMER, *Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola*, München, Weltforum-Verlag, 1979 : 179 ; interview with N'Zau Puna in J. DRUMOND & H. BARBER (eds), *Angola : depoimentos para a história recente, 1950-1976*, Lisbon, Rocha Artes, 1999 : 170-171.

42. F.W. HEIMER, *Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt...*, *op. cit.* : 94 ; R. PÉLISSIER, *Le naufrage des caravelles*, *op. cit.* : 110 ; F. ANDRESEN GUIMARÃES, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War. Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*, Basingstoke-New York, Macmillan, 1998 : 63.

43. Holden Roberto (born in 1923) left Angola when still a baby and grew up in Congo. He only visited Angola for one year in 1940-1941, three weeks in 1951 and, reportedly, ten days in 1956. See J. MARCUM, *The anatomy of an explosion...*, *op. cit.* : 64-65, 67 ; see also : J.B. LUKOMBO NZATUZOLA, « Eleições e multipartidarismo em Angola. Uma observação introspectiva e análise sociológica à volta da proliferação de grupos políticos sob a liderança de origem etnolinguística Kongo », *Africana*, XI (17), 1997 : 49.

44. TT, PIDE, Del.A., P.Inf. 11.23.B : 79 ; Nóqui, 14 September 1967 : speech by F. Gourgel in Matadi.

45. F.W. HEIMER, *Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola*, *op. cit.* : 94-95 ; R. PÉLISSIER, *Le naufrage des caravelles*, *op. cit.* : 110.

« *Bazombo* » in Congo/Zaire

The historical, cultural and linguistic links that exist between Northern Angola and Lower-Congo are often invoked to explain this degree of integration into Zairian society. The refugees did not enter an area in which they could easily be labelled as a separate group: linguistically and culturally, Northern Angola and Lower Congo are closely related. There is often an implied, rather than verified, assumption of solidarity between the Bakongo of Northern Angola and those of Congo/Zaire<sup>46</sup>. Yet, as we saw, John Lonsdale has shown that ethnicity and harmony are far from necessarily concurrent, and a recent article by Jan Bart Gewald argued that linguistic and ethnic ties do not preclude intense conflict amongst groups of refugees<sup>47</sup>. The refugees' tendency to integrate into Zairian society may have been little due to ethnic, linguistic or cultural ties. Many Angolan immigrants wished for a rapid integration into Zairian society because being regarded as « Angolan » was disadvantageous to them.

There are indications that relations between immigrants and hosts were not always smooth. Thus, incoming refugees were greeted with derisive songs and said to have holes in their lips, through which the Portuguese had stuck a lock to seal their mouths. All Angolans, from whatever origin, were labelled « *Bazombo* ». Both this term and the word for « refugee » were used as an insult in Kinshasa<sup>48</sup>. According to BMS missionary Bertha Fulbrook, the forests and rivers were jealously guarded by the locals, and refugees were not allowed to hunt rats. The refugees were only allowed access to land according to the *makonga* system: part of the harvest had to be given to the owner of the land. In some cases, this amounted to as much as half of the harvest, which of course led to tense relations between the host population and the refugees<sup>49</sup>.

The Angolan Bakongo remained politically separate from Congolese Bakongo. The Angolan political parties were clearly distinct from the Congolese/Zairian parties. Despite its many ties within the Zairian elite, FNLA also formed a state within a state. Even the ABAKO, that had many Angolan supporters, in 1960 already created a separate Angolan branch, the Nto-BAKO<sup>50</sup>. Socially the Angolans tended to stay in contact with each other rather than with the people from Congo/Zaire. They remained a « close-knit » community, and after the war had started, special « seeker » groups

46. P.E. SCHUBERT, *Der Krieg und die Kirchen*, op. cit. : 90 ; J. GRENFELL, « History of ... », op. cit. : 255.

47. J. LONSDALE, « The Moral Economy of Mau Mau » ; J.-B. GEWALD, « "I Was Afraid of Samuel, Therefore I Came to Sekgoma": Herero Refugees and Patronage Politics in Ngamiland, Bechuana Protectorate, 1890-1914 », *Journal of African History* (Cambridge), XXXII (2), 2002 : 211-234.

48. Interview n° 5 ; L. Nascimento Nunes PEREIRA, « Os regressados na cidade de Luanda : um estudo sobre identidade étnica e nacional em Angola », Master thesis, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, 1999 : 41 ; J.-M. MABEKO-TALI, « Le Congo et la question angolaise de 1963 à 1976 - les méandres d'une solidarité », master thesis, Bordeaux, CEAN, 1987 : 18 ; D. KASSEMBE, *Angola. 20 ans de guerre civile. Une femme accusée*, Paris, L'Harmattan 1995 : 58.

49. BMS Archives, XI Africa, Shelf Set VIII, Shelf 6, Box A 79, « Angola crisis - correspondence with missionaries A-G », Bertha Fulbrook to Clifford Parsons, 28 Sept 1961 ; interview n° 5 ; NIZA, Angola Comité, Historisch Archief Angola, 1961-1976, Box I : David Grenfell, « The work amongst the Angolan refugees in the Lower Congo, Annual report for 1965 » ; also : *Ibid.* : Jim Grenfell, Notes 7/68 ; *Ibid.*, Box : Korrespondentie, 1961-1962 : « Wat is CVAAR ? »

50. Interview n° 1 ; J. MARCUM, *Exile politics and guerrilla warfare*, op.cit. : 132 ; Nto-BAKO, founded in 1960, formed part of ABAKO.

were created, the so-called *Avavi-Avivi*, which purpose was to locate Angolan immigrants<sup>51</sup>.

Despite the importance of French and Lingala in the refugee community, many Northerners continued to speak Kikongo at home. FNLA recognised the importance of languages used in Angola and tried to organise courses in Portuguese, so as not to end up « at the margins of society » after independence<sup>52</sup>. During the entire period of exile, the hope to return to an independent Angola remained very strong among the refugees. Church services often focused on Angolan history, life in exile and hopes to return. The refugees found solace in the Biblical narratives of the people of Israel who had stayed in Egypt and travelled through the desert so long before reaching the Promised Land. In literary genres, such as songs, the return to Angola features strongly<sup>53</sup>. In this sense, the concept of « Angola », much more than that of « Kongo » was central to the community of exiles.

### *Internal differences*

Most observers tend to think in terms of a « two-party insurgency », and after Unita had been founded a « three-party insurgency »<sup>54</sup>. Yet, for many Angolans, matters were not so clear-cut. In 1967 a total of 58 political movements and 26 socio-economic associations had been founded by Angolans. Many of these were active in Léopoldville/Kinshasa and many were started by Angolans from the North. Of course, MPLA and FNLA, and later Unita, were the largest organisations, that managed to garner much international support and UPA/FNLA did attempt to achieve a political monopoly amongst Angolans in the Zairian capital. There were always people, however, who joined other political groups or remained unattached. The political landscape amongst Angolan exiles in Congo/Zaire was far more diverse than an equation UPA/Bakongo allows for. Some authors were at a loss with this political diversity : René Pélissier on the one hand stressed the tribal nature of UPA, but on the other hand lamented the internal fragmentation of Angolan political landscape in Léopoldville<sup>55</sup>.

Ethnic differences certainly played a role in these cleavages. During the events of March 1961, many Southerners, working on the European farms in the North, did not join the rebels and rather a number of these « Bailundo », stamped « loyal » by the Portuguese, were killed. In February 1962, João Batista Traves Pereira, a Southerner who was a UPA General in the Bembe region, died. Soon after, the chief of staff of the Army for National Liberation of Angola (ELNA), Marcos Kassanga issued a press conference, in which he alleged that Batista had been killed « only because he did not agree with the

51. J. GRENFELL, « History of... », *op.cit.* : 20, 258-259.

52. NIZA, Angola Comité, Historisch Archief Angola, 1961-1976, Box 4 : ALNA brochure (received : 9-10-1967) : 18-25.

53. Interview n° 6, with Rev. Daniel Ntoni-Nzinga, Luanda, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2002 ; interview n° 7, with Rev. J. Disila, Brussels, 22<sup>th</sup> July 2002 (Lead singer : O ntangua ofinamene wau ee (bis), Se tu kuenda kueto, Kuna Angola kimpuanza. All : O ntangua ofinamene wau ee mama, O ntangua ofinamene wau ee, Se tu kuenda kueto, Kuna Angola tuatuka. Traduction : Lead singer : The time is close now, eh ee (bis), We want to return to our place, When Angola is independent, All : The time is close now, eh ee mama, The time is close now, eh ee, We want to return to our place, Angola, where we come from) ; see also : E. MAKÉLÉ, *Long sera le chemin du retour*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1993.

54. J. MARCUM, *Exile politics and guerrilla warfare*, *op. cit.* : 46.

55. D.L. WHEELER & R. PÉLISSIER, *Angola*, *op. cit.* : 220.

extermination of Angolans, because he did not speak « Kikongo », because he did not originate from São Salvador, and because he was not Protestant »<sup>56</sup>. These accusations included ethnicity in a wider range of differences. Also when Jonas Savimbi split from FNLA in 1964, he did not only refer to tribalism in FNLA, but also accused Holden Roberto of embezzling funds and refusing to allow the struggle for Angolan liberation expand in other regions than his home area. Such break-aways further narrowed rather than diversified FNLA's base<sup>57</sup>.

FNLA was composed of two strands of northern nationalism. UPNA had started after the succession conflict over the throne of Kongo in the mid-1950s. PDA had very different roots. In 1956 a group of Zombo Tokoists in Léopoldville decided to organise themselves in a self-help movement with the main aim of providing financial and educational facilities for its members. By 1962 this self-help movement had been transformed into a political party and in the same year a front was formed with UPA, FNLA<sup>58</sup>. Internal relations, however, never became smooth. PDA leaders, such as Emmanuel Kunzika, regularly acted against Holden Roberto's orders. There were frequent complaints of Bazombo FNLA members that FNLA was dominated by Holden Roberto's Basansala entourage. After the Kinkuzu mutiny of 1972, Holden Roberto dismissed the most important PDA leaders. After he dissolved PDA in 1973, he only acknowledged the existence of FNLA<sup>59</sup>.

Apart from these regional and ethnic differences, there were also differences in religion among the refugees. Baptists were accepted most easily into the state of the Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile (GRAE), within the Congo/ Zairian state. Projects by other Protestant groups were only allowed if approved of and supervised by the GRAE. Angolan Catholics had an exceedingly difficult position. It was even rumoured that FNLA had two statutes: one that called for equality and another that discriminated against Roman Catholics and Kimbanguists<sup>60</sup>.

Intersecting with these divisions, political allegiance played a role in the refugee community. FNLA attempted to dominate the Angolan nationalist scene in Congo and did not allow any party to rival with it. Thus MPLA troops in Northern Angola were annihilated, and it was under influence of FNLA that the Congolese government decided in 1963 to forbid MPLA to develop any further activity on its territory<sup>61</sup>. The attempts to achieve an FNLA monopoly also had consequences for the average Angolan immigrant. The Baptist refugee aid services were closely related to UPA structures. Thus refugees without a GRAE pass, did not receive any assistance. Consequently those refugees who did not wish to become an UPA member could not ask for food, money or clothing; often badly needed as many of the refugees

56. TT, PIDE, Del. A., P.Inf. 11.16.C, p. 481 : Press Conference by Marcos Kassanga, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1962 (in French); also : J. MARCUM, *The anatomy of an explosion...*, op. cit. : 236-243 (MARCUM stressed the ethnic component of Kassanga's accusations).

57. J. MARCUM, *Exile politics and guerrilla warfare*, op. cit. : 106, 113, 134-138.

58. J. MARCUM, *The anatomy of an explosion...*, op. cit. : 82-85, 88-89, 235-236, 245-246.

59. P.e. TT, PIDE, Del. A., P.Inf. 11.23.B, p. 335 : 4<sup>th</sup> June 1969; *ibid.*, SC, PR 1641/60 : 32, 40-41 : 28 March 1972, 17<sup>th</sup> February 1972; *ibid.*, SC, PR 882/61 : 410-411 : 19, 24<sup>th</sup> October 1963; J. MARCUM, *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare*, op. cit. : 151-156, 185, 188 (Basansala : those of São Salvador).

60. Interview n° 8, with Rev. Pedro Barnabé and Rev. António Pedro Malungo, Luanda, 7<sup>th</sup> August 2002; TT, PIDE, Del. A., P.Inf. 11.23.B : 348 : Maquela do Zombo, 21<sup>st</sup> April 1964.

61. J. MARCUM, *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare*, op. cit. : 121-122.

arrived in Congo devastated and underfed. At times, non-UPA refugees were threatened and intimidated by UPA militias<sup>62</sup>.

Nor the shared experience of flight, neither the shared linguistic and cultural background of the refugees created a strong sense of unity. Internally the refugee community remained deeply divided. The fact that FNLA tried to exert full control over the refugee community, does not diminish these divisions. Despite these internal cleavages, Angolans were classified as a group by the host population. As this categorisation often worked to the detriment of the Angolan immigrants, many actively sought integration into Zairian society. At the same time, however, they continued to remain separate in political and social terms. They kept the memory of Angola alive. The refugee community thus continued to oscillate between integration and nostalgia : they felt they were Angolan, but also knew they had become « Congolan »<sup>63</sup>.

#### « *Zairenses* » and « *Kalus* »

After the cease-fire of 1974, the dream of many Angolan refugees came true : they could return to their motherland. A large number of refugees returned to the North, only to find that Angola had changed beyond recognition. Many *regressados* (returnees) stayed in refugee camps under FNLA control. Yet, 10.000s returned to the place where they lived before the war. They found their houses and fields destroyed or occupied by people brought in from elsewhere by the Portuguese<sup>64</sup>.

Many returnees expected FNLA to rule after independence. In Zaire, FNLA had wielded power and influence : « 'Whether you like it or not, it is FNLA here », a popular saying went<sup>65</sup>. FNLA entered Luanda with great pomp. FNLA leadership, however, had no contacts within the Luandan political community and soon their display of wealth and luxury became a source of suspicion and resentment<sup>66</sup>. FNLA was the strongest Angolan movement in military terms, « God rules in heaven, Holden rules on earth », pamphlets dropped over Luanda stated<sup>67</sup>. A series of military losses, however, turned the tide. As the war spread into northern regions, many people who had just returned, once more went into exile in Zaire. The shame of having lost the war, the frustration of only having stayed in the Lost Paradise for such a short time, the chilly reception by most Zairians were a source of indignation among the exiles<sup>68</sup>.

In 1978 the Angolan government and Zaire closed accords and a pardon was offered to FNLA-members<sup>69</sup>. For some this was too much : they felt that

62. BMS, XI Africa, Shelf Set VIII, Shelf 6, Box A 79, « Angola-Miscellaneous » : David Grenfell, letter April 1964 ; TT, PIDE, Del A, 11.12.B : 162, 550 : Léopoldville, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1961, Luanda, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1961.

63. J. MARCUM, *The anatomy of an explosio...*, *op. cit.* : 139.

64. W.-F. HEIMER, *Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola...*, *op. cit.* : 176-177.

65. P. SCHUBERT, *Der Krieg und die Kirchen*, *op. cit.* : 192-194 ; Saying well-known within the exile community that could be quoted in Kikongo or Lingala (interview n° 8 ; interview n° 9, with Rev. M'Panzu René Oliveira, Luanda, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2002).

66. W.-F. HEIMER, *Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola...*, *op.cit.* : 152-153, 170 ; D. KASSEMBE, *Angola, 20 ans...* *op. cit.* : 105.

67. R. KAPUSCINSKY, *Nog één dag*, Amsterdam, Arbeiderspers, 1988 :142.

68. J. MARCUM, *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare*, *op. cit.* : 274 ; interview with João César Correia, in J. DRUMOND & H. BARBER, *Angola : depoimentos...* *op. cit.* : 164 ; interview n° 10, with Rev. Alvaro Rodriguez, Luanda, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

69. C. MESSIANT, « De la guerre à la paix », *op. cit.* : 175.

after having fought for independence for fourteen years, they had no need to ask for a pardon from anyone<sup>70</sup>. Yet, many exiles did make use of the offer and returned once more to Angola. Most of these returnees went straight to Luanda, as the situation in Northern Angola was insecure. The returnees quickly resumed using the skills they had learnt while in Zaire. As access to land had been difficult, many had become petty traders and artisans in Kinshasa.

While the returnees thought of themselves as Angolans, they had become Zairese in the eyes of other Angolans. They were considered foreigners and soon the tag « Zairenses » (Zairese) was used to denounce them. In a rash equation, all returnees were classified as Bakongo, Zairese and FNLA. These labels were used in a negative sense and related to criminality. The returnees' involvement in black market trade made them suspicious in the eyes of many Luandans. The old Portuguese association between Congo and disorder still held some currency in Luanda: Congo stood for noise, delinquency and disturbance. Furthermore, people from Northern Angola and Congo/Zaire had a longstanding reputation of cannibalism and witchcraft<sup>71</sup>. In any case, Luandans tended to look down upon people who fled to the capital because of the war: the word « Bantu » with which they were designated was used in a derogatory manner<sup>72</sup>.

Government propaganda also did much to reinforce such stereotypes. After the MPLA came into power in 1975, it had more means than the other parties to disseminate its views. The Angolan government stressed national identity and presented all « enemies » as « foreigners ». FNLA was especially stamped as an external force. As we saw, the demonisation of other movements, included in FNLA case references to tribalism, racism, and foreignness. Accusations of cannibalist atrocities by FNLA troops further harmed the image of the returnees<sup>73</sup>.

The derogatory « Zairenses », attributed to the returnees and any person from North Angola, was often placed in opposition to the positive self-designation of « Kalus » (Luandans). The latter category was equated with Angola. For many Luandans it was difficult to imagine life outside the capital. This was already the case in the 1960s. Carlos Belli Belo grew up in Luanda and left for Matadi in 1960, where he met with the northern leadership. It was only then that he « discovered that Angola was not Luanda. I thought that Angola was Luanda, that everything revolved around Luanda... »<sup>74</sup>. After the civil war had started, this tendency to equate Luanda and Angola became even stronger. So many areas outside Luanda became inaccessible. So many people from the countryside fled to the capital, that it indeed seemed as if Angola consisted of Luanda only.

The official version of history in many ways stressed the importance of Luanda. Luanda was presented as the cradle of Angolan nationalism. The events of the 4<sup>th</sup> February in Luanda were launched as the beginnings of

70. Interview with João César Correia, in J. DRUMOND & H. BARBER, *Angola : depoimentos...* op. cit. : 164.

71. L. Nascimento Nunes PEREIRA, « Os regressados... », op. cit. : 108 ; TT, PIDE, Del. A., P.Inf 11.32.I : 138-146 : 31t January 1964 ; D. KASSEMBE, *Angola, 20 ans...* op. cit. : 33, 185.

72. D. BIRMINGHAM, *Frontline Nationalism in Angola and Mozambique*, London-Trenton, James Currey-Africa World Press, 1992 : 99.

73. J.B. LUKOMBO-NZATUZOLA, « "Le 4 février 1961"... », op. cit. : 372 ; C. MESSIANT, « "Chez nous" ... », op. cit. ; interview with Holden Roberto in J. DRUMOND & H. BARBER, *Angola : depoimentos...* op. cit. : 28.

74. Interview in J. DRUMOND & H. BARBER, *Angola : depoimentos...* op. cit. : 119.

MPLA's struggle for independence. MPLA's policies were also focused on Luanda : the countryside was completely neglected. The government's focus on Luanda has made many people extremely suspicious of « the nation ». If Angola only means Luanda, then is it not more fruitful to create or renew ethnic networks ? As Jean-Michel Mabeko-Tali has pointed out, many regional elites, such as those from Lunda/Cokwe, Bakongo and Cabinda, are complaining about the greed of the « Luandan ogre » and call for a more equal distribution of Angola's wealth<sup>75</sup>.

Of course, the labels used by Luandans were contested by Kikongo speakers. Many returnees had joined MPLA ; an indication that ethnicity did not play as large a role in party allegiance as was assumed<sup>76</sup>. Few exiles had not at all been involved in FNLA. Also during the elections of 1992, FNLA had not received a majority of the votes from the Northerners. The equation Bakongo = FNLA thus did not hold water. Furthermore, also in Luanda, people from Northern Angola remained divided. The rivalries were not the same as in Zaire : such an assumption would erase forty years of history. All the same, during the elections over a dozen parties had been founded by Bakongo, some of which with clear reference to the parties that were active in the 1960s in Léopoldville/Kinshasa. Apart from this political fragmentation, differences between Bazombo and Basansala continue to play a role. Socially, there are differences between elders who have spent part of their life in Angola and youngsters who grew up in Congo/Zaire. Many youngsters hardly know any Kikongo and they tend to be drawn by the quickly growing Pentecostal churches, while the elderly opt for the older Protestant churches, such as the Baptist, Evangelist, Kimbanguist and Tokoist denominations. Finally, there is a considerable group of Bakongo residents in Luanda, who are not returnees at all : they migrated directly from the northern countryside. Such internal differences render it hard to accept one stigmatised label<sup>77</sup>.

According to many Bakongo, the « people from the Centre » simply dismiss all people from other regions, South or North. While Luandans tend to harbour stereotypes about « Zairenses », many *regressados* also have strong opinions about Luandans. « Kalus » are, however, not equated with Mbundu : usually reference is made to « Kalus », « people of the Centre », or *mestiços*. They are considered arrogant, inconsiderate and un-african, speaking a European language and wearing European dress. The *regressados* take pride in their culture and stress that they, unlike Luandans, uphold African norms and values. They tend to stress their *Africanité* and authenticity, opposing this to the « colonial-styled » Luandans. The aggressivity with which Luandans denounce ethnic identity, ethnic history, African dress, African customs and African languages is seen as an evidence of Luandans' veneration for European-colonial culture. So still, while « Kalus » framed the antagonism in ethnic-national terms, most Bakongo tended to reason in terms of race<sup>78</sup>.

75. J.M. MABEKO-TALI, « La "chasse aux Zaïrois"... », *op. cit.* : 82.

76. G. CLARENCE-SMITH, « Le problème ethnique... », *op. cit.* : 410.

77. J.M. MABEKO-TALI, « La "chasse aux Zaïrois"... », *op. cit.* : 79-80, 82 ; L. Nascimento Nunes PEREIRA, « Os regressados... », *op. cit.* : 106, 117 ; Lukombo, « Eleições... », *op. cit.* : 47-57 ; « Entretien avec le président Lucas Benghy Ngonda », *Liberdade e Terra Diplomática* (Paris), 1999, <<http://www.fnla-angola.org>>.

78. J.M. MABEKO-TALI, « La "chasse aux Zaïrois"... », *op. cit.* : 74-76, 83 ; L. Nascimento Nunes PEREIRA, « Os regressados... », *op. cit.* : 12, 104.

On 22<sup>d</sup> January 1993, some days after the publication of rumours about Zairians planning to kill the President and Zairian troops supporting Unita, « Zairenses » were attacked in Luanda. Churches, schools, and houses were destroyed, women were raped, numerous people were wounded and killed. People who dressed like « Zairenses » were stopped and had to pass the « rice » test : all those who were thought to pronounce the word *arroz* in the « wrong » manner were categorised as « foreign »<sup>79</sup>. These events, known as « Bloody Friday », did much to sharpen the division between Bakongo and Luandans. In tracts and pamphlets, the Bakongo elite reacted to the events : once again it was a discourse full of references to Kongo identity, culture and history. The most radical Bakongo called for a restoration of the kingdom of Kongo and called for « a struggle for self-determination of the lands of Kongo that were annexed by Angola for colonial gains ». Others wished for a federal state, reasoning that only this solution would stop the process of « Lusotropicalism » and guarantee that the Bakongo would be accepted as citizens in their own country. And yet others wished for full acceptance in the Angolan nation, irrespective of ethnic background<sup>80</sup>. Once again, references to Kongo identity provided arguments in the debate, rather than unanimity.

In this case, the ethnic discourse became intermingled with nationality and locality. In the first place there was a shift from ethnic categorisation to national identities. Those people who formerly were designated as « Bakongo », were in Zaire called « Bazombo ». Back in Angola, they were labelled « Zairese ». In other words, while the *regressados* saw themselves as Angolans, they were regarded as foreigners by the Luandan population. Even if many Northerners were involved in MPLA, in popular imagination they were associated with FNLA. Thus a chain of equations, all evaluated in negative sense, was set up : Northerner = Kongo = FNLA = foreigner/ Zairese. The category of « Zairenses » was placed in opposition to « Angolans » or « Kalus » : Luanda and Angola were equated. This process of narrowing the nation into one town had started in colonial times, but became stronger during the postcolonial period.

### Town, country and bush in the South-East

A very different example comes from the South-East of Angola. When discussing the war with refugees from this region resident in Rundu (Namibia), none of the explanations hitherto given for the war was given much attention. Instead the accounts focussed on an opposition between « people from town » and « people from bush ». Many interviewees had been independent farmers, but had been obliged to give up village life during the anti-colonial war. Some were taken to town, others to the bush. Many of them had only recently moved to Namibia ; some directly from Angola, others had first lived in Zambia for considerable time. These

79. J.M. MABEKO-TALI, « La "chasse aux Zaïrois"... », *op. cit.* : 71 ; Women using African cloth were in any case suspect, yet Luandans insist that men using specific hairstyles, belts and shoes can also be recognised as « Zairenses » (L. Nascimento Nunes PEREIRA, « Os regressados... », *op. cit.* : 102-103).

80. L. Nascimento Nunes PEREIRA, « Os regressados... », *op. cit.* : 140-143 ; J.M. MABEKO-TALI, « La "chasse aux Zaïrois"... », *op. cit.* : 81-84.



immigrants stressed the changes in the realm of mobility during the war, from the anti-colonial struggle to the post-independence civil war. In this context then, it becomes important to study the relations between violence, identity and landscape. According to the informants, this concerned a process of categories becoming ever more rigid : while in pre-colonial and even colonial times categories were employed to allude to a wide range of affairs, during the war a rigid dual opposition came into being.

In pre-colonial times the political organisation of South-Eastern Angola was characterised by extreme decentralisation<sup>81</sup>. The dispersed homesteads formed political entities that were autonomous in many respects. A family would clear a portion of the bush and start cultivating. Although the chief's place constituted a political centre with relatively fixed residence, the chief had little to say over bush and farm. Prospective farmers did not need chiefly permission. The bush was not seen as an undifferentiated whole : there was the bush suitable for agricultural purposes and *musenge wa mbambi* (« the bush of the duiker ») ; a bush far away from homesteads, full of wild animals. There were plains, river bends, bush growing between plains and forest : all residing under the category *musenge* (« bush »). All uncleared places were considered dangerous and, although hunting, gathering and fishing were important activities, the bush was feared. As women's fear was thought to be greater than men's, the dissociation of women and bush was even stronger than that of men and bush<sup>82</sup>.

These categories altered under the influence of colonialism. When discussing colonial change, many informants stressed the fact that prior to colonialism there were no towns or roads<sup>83</sup>. The building of towns turned village and bush into relative concepts. For town dwellers anybody living outside town was « in the bush » : no differentiation was made between village and bush. All people living out there were called *vakamembo* (« those from the villages ») ; dual opposition between town and country developed amongst people living in the South-Eastern towns<sup>84</sup>. Villagers rather stuck to a tripartite division : town, village and bush. They did not consider themselves to live « in the bush » ; the place where they lived had a name<sup>85</sup>. Yet, the new division, between *vakamembo* and *vakambongi*, started to replace the layers of identity used in the area. The dualism between town dwellers and villagers reduced the diversity with which people and localities were denoted before colonialism<sup>86</sup>. People from the countryside could go to town and barter their surplus agricultural products for items such as salt, soap, blankets, sugar, and clothes. In retrospect the differences between townspeople and villagers seemed trivial to refugees who have experienced

81. J. C. MILLER, « The paradoxes of impoverishment in the Atlantic zone », in D. BIRMINGHAM & P.M. MARTIN (eds), *History of Central Africa*, London-New York, Longman, 1983 : 125 ; W.G. CLARENCE-SMITH, *Slaves, Peasants and Capitalists in Southern Angola, 1840-1926*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979 : 64.

82. For example, interview n° 11, with a man born in Cuito Cuanavale in 1968, Kehemu, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1997 ; see A. VON OPPEN, « "Endogene Agrarrevolution" im vorkolonialen Afrika ? Eine Fallstudie », *Paideuma* (Frankfurt am Main), 38, 1992 : 24-25.

83. For example, interview n° 11 ; interview n° 12, with a man born near Cuito Cuanavale in 1919 or 1911, Kaisosi, 25<sup>th</sup> June 1997.

84. B. DAVIDSON, *In the eye of...*, *op. cit.* : 149.

85. Interview n° 11.

86. See also A. VON OPPEN, « Village studies. Zur Geschichte eines Genres der Sozialforschung im südlichen und östlichen Afrika », *Paideuma* (Frankfurt-am-Main), 42, 1996 : 17-36.

the war : « at that time we were one country »<sup>87</sup>. And yet, many informants maintained that the foundation of towns had created the context in which the long Angolan war could develop. Had there been no towns, no such thing could ever have happened.

### *When the war started*

When the MPLA started operations in the Kuando-Kubango province from 1966 onwards, MPLA coercion as well as Portuguese retaliation made many people leave their farms. The guerrillas attempted to control as many civilians as possible. They led local people from their farms into the bush, often using force to make people follow them and threatening them not to flee to town<sup>88</sup>. It became a war to acquire « people, not territory »<sup>89</sup>. The bush was a dangerous place to live in. The Portuguese were known to combine indiscriminate killing of civilians with forced migration to town of the survivors<sup>90</sup>. Those brought to town were often hoarded into camps fenced off with barbed wire and security guards preventing contact between guerrillas and civilians. Anyone attempting to return to the countryside to grow crops, would face the death penalty as these people were assumed to feed the guerrilla forces.

With helicopters roaring over the bush and fearing the gruesome lot of starvation, many former villagers preferred to flee to town rather than run from one place to another in the bush. Before the war, the majority of the people had continued to live as villagers. During the war the population of the regional towns swelled and the number of people who came to see themselves as *vakambongi* vastly increased. Independent farming was reduced and village life ended with the destruction of the homesteads. The warring parties soon imagined an opposition between bush bandits and town traitors. The categories with which to denote identity changed in two respects at least. Firstly, the old division between town and countryside was replaced by a far more rigid opposition between town and bush. The category of *vakamembo* ceased to exist and a new division, between *vakambongi* and *vakamusenge* (« those of the bush ») came into being. The latter was an entirely new category directly related to the war. Furthermore this new dichotomy came to be connected with violence : a visit to town by MPLA soldiers would be interpreted as betrayal, while Portuguese soldiers regarded anybody staying outside town as MPLA supporter.

### *Decolonisation*

After the cease-fire in 1974, the three nationalist movements moved into the now empty offices of the South-Eastern towns : « They wanted to be the

87. Interview n°13, with a group of people, Vungu Vungu, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1997. This quote is from a man born in 1959, in Cuito Cuanavale.

88. Interview n° 14, with an elderly woman born in Mavinga, Kaisosi, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1997 ; interview n° 15, with a woman older than 50 years, born in Namono, Kehemu, 21<sup>th</sup> June 1996 in Kehemu ; interview n° 16, with a woman born near Ninda in 1942, Kaisosi, 5<sup>th</sup> September 1996 in Kaisosi.

89. B. DAVIDSON, *In the eye of*, *op. cit.* : 27.

90. Interview n° 17, with a woman, born in 1950 in a village by the Kuieio river, Kehemu, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1996.

next *vakambongi* »<sup>91</sup>. For a brief spell decolonisation was hoped to bring peace. People started leaving bush and town to resume living in villages. Soon, however, the nationalist movements started to fight in the streets and with the backing of their international allies, they went to war. After some time Unita was chased « out of town » and although for considerable time Unita controlled Mavinga, MPLA mostly occupied the towns in South-Eastern Angola, while Unita held more sway over the country-side. Notwithstanding Unita's occupation of Mavinga, the association of Unita with the bush and of MPLA with town forms a nodal point in the refugees' interpretation of the war. With most FNLA/Chipenda fighters in the South African army, a dualism between bush-Unita and town-MPLA developed. The nationalist war in south-east Angola had altered the older division between town and countryside into a division between town and bush, which became connected with violence. These new dimensions were reinforced after decolonisation. Whereas the war before decolonisation could still be said to have been fought between black and white, the war after decolonisation definitively opposed *vakambongi* and *vakamusenge*<sup>92</sup>.

Both parties took to abducting people and leading them into either town or bush. Visits between town and bush became virtually impossible. Life in the bush was considered very hard and dangerous. It was assumed that captured townspeople had immense difficulties in adjusting to a life without soap, clothes and salt. Bush dwellers taken to town by MPLA also needed time to adapt to their new environment. Yet, in general, this change was seen as far less problematic than a move into the bush. Town life was not only regarded as easier than life in the bush ; it was also perceived of as safer. Although bombing was a problem and Unita soldiers sometimes ventured into town locations, townspeople considered themselves to be less exposed to violence than people in bush.

### *Agriculture under threat*

As Unita employed all means to sabotage economic activities, farming became even more dangerous than during the last phase of the colonial era. Aircraft with food and medicine were shot down ; road transports were raided and destroyed. These developments made dearth and famine a growing problem in the urban areas. Because less and less food came to the towns, many town dwellers were forced to attempt cultivating fields in the neighbourhood of the towns. Yet, hardly ever was it possible to harvest crops as Unita often placed mines on the paths leading to the fields. Apart from this, townspeople feared being detected by Unita soldiers.

People living in Unita's bush were under constant threat of MPLA attacks. As they were supposed to feed Unita troops, their fields and crops were regarded as war targets by MPLA<sup>93</sup>. Often, the fighting was so heavy that they had to flee from one place to another or risk being captured by MPLA. Many Unita civilians had experienced periods in which they lived

91. Interview n°18, with a woman born in 1969 in Cuito Cuanavale, Kehemu, 13<sup>rd</sup> September 1997.

92. For example, interview n° 19, with two men, one born in 1950 in Njamba, the other in 1920 near Cuito Cuanavale, Kaisosi, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1997.

93. Interview n° 20, with a woman born in Menongue, 38 years ago, Kaisosi, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1996 ; Interview n° 13 : this part of the discussion was led by a 38-year-old woman, who had lived under Unita control.

from what they could gather in the bush. Those who continued farming had to face heavy demands by the Unita army: many civilians under Unita control were left with only a fraction of their farming products<sup>94</sup>.

The near-to disappearance of independent farming was a source of great resentment and resulted in a strong tension between the fighting parties and their civilians. The armies expected their civilians to provide the soldiers with food. Civilians did not object as such, but only as long as the parties would provide them with land and were able to protect them so that they could grow their crops in safety. As both requirements could not be fulfilled, civilians counted on the armies to feed them. These mutually unfulfilled expectations strained relations between the armies and their civilians. This tension between civilians and armies was connected with gender divisions. Although both sexes participated in the agricultural process, farming was largely seen as a female domain. Both town and bush, to the contrary, were in general associated with men. Warfare and fighting were similarly regarded as men's affair: whilst most adult men were soldiers, most civilians were women and children. Although the fighting parties sought to increase the number of civilians under their control, civilians were at the same time a burden: « Women could not do anything but sit. During the war there was no farming ». Farming had become so dangerous that women could not go to their fields without the company of men<sup>95</sup>. At the same time, however, wives were held responsible for their husbands' deeds as they were expected to « feed him »<sup>96</sup>. This combination rendered women especially vulnerable in the realm of acts of atrocity surrounding the bush-town opposition.

#### *Unita and town dwellers ; MPLA and bush people*

Unita soldiers would catch anybody whom they suspected to come from town. Sometimes they would lead these people away into the bush. A dramatic change would then occur :

« Then we climbed and we arrived on top of the mountain Kuatili. We looked at the town, we saw the vehicles passing and we felt sick in our hearts. Then they said : "Do you see the town ?" "Yes, we see it". "What is passing there ?" "Cars". "Today is your last day. You will not return there. Let us go into the bush". And then we went into the bush »<sup>97</sup>.

At other times captives were subjected to torture and then put to death :

« In 1977, when the people wanted to go to their fields, they would catch them. Some died because of the mines, but those who tried to run off were caught. And they would be told to shit salt. Maybe first they would ask you : "How many MPLA do you know in town ? How many Cubans are there in town ?" Maybe the civilians do not know what is going on there in the camps. So they say : "We do not know". Then they say : "No, tell us ! How many Cubans are there ?" If you say : "Please, I don't know !", then they say : "Shit the salt now". When you say : "Please, nobody can shit salt". they say : "You

94. Interview n° 21, with a woman born in Mavinga, some 55 years old, Kaisosi, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1996 ; interview n° 22, with the woman of interview n° 14, Kaisosi, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1997.

95. Interview n° 23, Kaisosi, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1997 ; interview n° 24, Kaisosi, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1997 : both interviews with the man of interview n° 12.

96. Interview n° 25, with the man mentioned under note 92 (interview n° 13), Kehemu, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1996.

97. Interview n° 26, with a woman born in Cuito Cuanavale, 28 years, Kehemu, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1996.

have to shit !" Then they would take the axes that the civilians carried. First they would cut on stones, so as to make the axes blunt. Then they would start cutting them. They would say : "When we say : 'Here are the axes', you have to respond : 'Yes, let them come'. Then they would kill them all »<sup>98</sup>.

In more than ten other interviews during the fieldwork informants told similar narratives, in which Unita soldiers would demand people to shit salt or other products associated with town life, such as soap, sugar, oil, tins of condensed milk, rice, and tarmac. These accounts were highly standardised : they resembled each other strongly. Both the ways in which violence was perpetrated and the process of remembrance may have led to such standardisation<sup>99</sup>. The narratives about Unita violence can, however, not be connected with a mythico-history, as in the refugee camp that formed the fieldwork context of a study undertaken by Liisa Malkki. The narratives told in Rundu did not function in the production of identity, but rather formed a ground to condemn the injustice of enforced identity. Whereas the relationship between « body maps » and « necrographic maps » in Malkki's study was caught in ethnic terms<sup>100</sup>, according to the refugees in Rundu, identity issues in the civil war in south-east Angola centred around the opposition between town and bush. Both categories, however, were much resented by civilians, who all expressed their preference for a life as *vakamembo*.

MPLA regarded all people in the bush as Unita supporters and accused of wanton violence and destruction by some informants. Civilians living in Unita area told about atrocities committed by MPLA soldiers. Yet, there was no mention of patterned, ritualistic elements when MPLA actions in the bush were discussed and the narratives about MPLA violence were not standardised. Mostly, it was said, MPLA would capture people from the bush and take them to town. Although their transformation into townspeople was seen as a process, which needed « education » and « counselling », it was not nearly as traumatic as the adaptation of townspeople to bush life. MPLA was said to know that many people had been coerced to stay with Unita in the bush, and to show patience with their captives from the bush<sup>101</sup>.

### *Violence, tradition and modernity*

Several reasons were cited for Unita's violence toward *vakambongi*. Their residence in the bush was one of the factors : it was maintained that MPLA did not do « such things », because they were in town<sup>102</sup>. Secondly, Unita's supposed aim was to « enter town », and one way to reach this was by eliminating all town inhabitants<sup>103</sup>. Jealousy was often mentioned when

98. Interview n° 27, quote from the man mentioned under note 92, interview n° 13, Kehemu, 31<sup>st</sup> July 1996.

99. K. WILSON, « Cults of Violence and Counter-Violence in Mozambique », *Journal of Southern African Studies* (Abingdon), XVIII (3), 1992 : 533 ; L. MALKKI, *Purity and Exile. Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press, 1995 : 90, 94-95 ; See also I. BRINKMAN, « Ways of Death : Accounts of Terror from Angolan Refugees in Namibia », *Africa* (Edinburgh), LXX (1), 2000 : 1-24.

100. L. MALKKI, *Purity and exile...*, *op. cit.* : 79-80, 86-92.

101. Interview n° 13, the Unita civilian mentioned under note 98 ; interview n° 20.

102. Interview n° 28, with a woman of about 50 years old, Kehemu, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1996 ; interview n° 29, with a woman of 30 years old, born in Menongue, Kaisosi, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1996.

103. Interview n° 30, with a man born in Cuito Cuanavale in 1951, Kehemu, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1996.

discussing Unita's employment of cultic violence toward townspeople. One man explained : « We do not know why they did this. They used to tell our people : "You are staying in town, you live in nice houses, you eat nice food, while we are suffering in the bush" »<sup>104</sup>. The bush was mostly defined in the negative : it was the place without shops, clothes, salt, soap, bread, oil, potatoes, sugar, money, hospitals etc. : with « only roots »<sup>105</sup>. Time and again, the lack of salt in the bush was emphasised. MPLA was reported to have told civilians : « Don't go to Savimbi. Where Savimbi stays, there are no clothes. Where Savimbi stays there is no salt. Where Savimbi is, there is nothing to help the civilians »<sup>106</sup>.

As life in the bush was so difficult, it was assumed that people would always attempt fleeing to town. Unita anxiously tested the loyalties of its own civilians. They would dress up as MPLA soldiers and then attempt luring people into talking bad about life in bush. Uttering the word « town » was said to result in immediate death sentence in Unita camps. Being silent could form the reason for accusations of treachery : « You are thinking of salt ! »<sup>107</sup> Civilians tried to avoid any association with town life. Children were dressed in rags and animal skins for fear of being seen as traitors.

Life in the bush was considered both « primitive » and « traditional », as opposed to a « modern » life in town. In Unita's bush women walked around bare-breasted, soldiers had to carry their equipment on their head (or make civilians carry the materials for them), and people used animal skins for clothing. In town, vehicles, radio and electricity rendered life « modern »<sup>108</sup>. MPLA stressed formal education and scientific socialism<sup>109</sup>, while Unita was associated with « traditional medicine ». It was held that after MPLA had entered town, their usage of traditional medicine decreased and took on a different character ; both MPLA presidents, Agostinho Neto and Eduardo dos Santos could change into a pen<sup>110</sup>.

### *Constructing categories*

Civilians became separated into two groups. It was held that townspeople could not lie about their background : they looked fundamentally different from people from the bush<sup>111</sup>. These differences were assumed to show in many respects. Language remained an important criterion for establishing one's residence. Thus in the bush all would speak Umbundu, « because the president of the bush is Ocimbundu ». In town the *lingua franca* was Portuguese<sup>112</sup>. Language and ethnicity were rather seen as properties within the opposition between town and bush, than as the cause of the fighting. Language was used to establish whether one belonged to either the *vakamusenge* or to the *vakambongi*. Specific greetings and gestures

104. *Ibid.* Also, interview n° 11 ; interview n° 26.

105. Interview n° 31, with a woman born in 1921 in Mavinga, Kehemu 30<sup>th</sup> June 1997. Also, interview n° 12.

106. Interview n° 13, the younger woman told this.

107. Interview n° 32, with a woman born in Mavinga in 1964, Kehemu, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1996.

108. Interview n° 25 ; interview n° 26 ; interview n° 30 ; interview n° 32 ; interview n° 33, with a woman of about 25 years old, born in Mavinga, Kehemu, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1996.

109. B. DAVIDSON, *In the eye of the storm, op. cit.* : 28-31, 279.

110. Interview n° 30 ; interview n° 34, remark made by a 17-year old daughter of the informant (particulars : interview n° 12), Kaisosi, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1996.

111. For example : interview n° 11 ; interview n° 19 ; interview n° 30.

112. Interview n° 11 ; also interview n° 19.

were connected with this : in town, MPLA people would shake hands, while in Unita's bush, people would clap on each other's hands and then knock clenched fists together<sup>113</sup>.

Furthermore dress was crucial in categorising civilians. Townspeople had access to Western-style clothes and shoes, while in the bush people used animal skins and bark cloth to dress. Clothes could not be donned without major consequences. My suggestion that townspeople would wear skin cloth in order to pass as people from the bush, was met with utter consternation : « They were not used to it ! »<sup>114</sup> Not only did clothes have consequences for the body (bushpeople, in contrast to shod townspeople, had cracked soles)<sup>115</sup>, but status and standards of civilisation were too closely connected with dress to allow for sudden change. In town, people had opportunity to choose and display : « The boys had different hairstyles »<sup>116</sup>. In contrast, it was hard to keep up even the basic rules of decency in bush. Women in the bush often did not have enough pieces of cloth to walk and sit down in any appropriate manner<sup>117</sup>. People slept « like animals » : without blankets<sup>118</sup>. Without soap, vaseline and washing powder, people in the bush were regarded as dirty and unclean. One could smell the difference between townspeople and bush people : *vakambongi* smelled of salt, *vakamusenge* of water<sup>119</sup>. The Western stereotype of hectic town-life and the natural rhythm of the bush was reversed. In the bush, people had to be wary and on guard continuously. Meals were taken hurriedly, women slept with their babies on the back so as to be able to flee with them instantly, and one could tell *vakamusenge* by their walking-style : a brisk, nearly hasty step. In town people walked slowly and leisurely<sup>120</sup>. These differences rendered the boundary between *vakambongi* and *vakamusenge* fixed and rigid : only long experience could alter people's identity category. The essentialisation did not only have consequences on a conceptual level, but it literally became a matter of life and death.

### ***Forced essentialisation***

Townspeople who tried to flee to neighbouring countries often encountered civilians living in the bush. One man remembered how he and his fellow townsmen were helped by people who stayed in the bush when they were on their way to Namibia. They had said : « you, people from the town, and we, people who stay in the bush, we are all suffering »<sup>121</sup>. The deepening gap between town and bush during the war was seen as enforced : it was described as a consequence of army politics. Civilians had not wished for this division, but were caught in a spiral of violence in which this division was increasingly important. Most civilians only expressed casual loyalty for the party to which they belonged. They had had no choice : residence determined which party one belonged to : « we were in

113. Interview n° 11 ; interview n° 14 ; interview n° 19.

114. Interview n° 19. Also interview n° 11.

115. Interview n° 18.

116. Interview n° 14. Also interview n° 18.

117. Interview n° 22 ; interview n° 35, with a woman born by the Kuieio river, about 60 years ago, Kaisosi, 21<sup>st</sup> August 1997.

118. Interview n° 12.

119. Especially interview n° 14.

120. interview n° 22.

121. interview n° 30.

MPLA, because we were in town »<sup>122</sup>. If the rival party took over the area, the civilians' membership automatically shifted. Ideological differences, ethnic loyalties, and regional rivalries hardly inspired civilians' accounts of the war.

The growing dichotomy between town and bush during the war was much resented by civilians. Firstly because it was the result of the destruction of village life and agriculture by the fighting parties. For many it became impossible to have their own farms: this lost independence filled the accounts with intense nostalgia and dreams of a peaceful future: « we used to have nice food, nice porridge. We knew no language of suffering »<sup>123</sup>. The civilians were greatly concerned about changes in the realms of mobility. Flight and abduction were abhorred, while at the same time the armies' attempts to keep people under their control caused great anger. Townspeople felt trapped as mines had been placed on all roads and paths surrounding the town and Unita soldiers were waiting for them at their fields. Many people had relatives living in town as well as in the bush, but they were unable to visit each other. This stood in sharp contrast with the situation before the war, when traffic between town and countryside had been frequent. Peace was strongly associated with the possibility of farming: « you can plant crops, no need to fear again »<sup>124</sup>. And peace included the possibility to move freely and then stay in the place of one's own choosing<sup>125</sup>.

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Since 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, religious identity has been at the forefront of interpretations of world conflict. At the same time, wars in Africa often continue to be analysed in terms of ethnic rivalry. The growing importance of identity as an explanatory device for warfare renders it all the more urgent to refine our usage of this concept. Rather than abandon the concept of identity altogether, some have stressed the multiplicity of identities<sup>126</sup>. Such an approach counters the myth of identity as a monolithic given. In this article the emphasis is on change: all too often, identity is not only conceived of as monolithic, but also as static. Furthermore, in many studies on identity, a number of fixed criteria for establishing identity are cited: language, region, ethnicity, and religion are among the classic components. This article has shown that new criteria and new categories of belonging may come to be used to describe others or one-self. Identities are multiple, malleable and subject to change.

The processes by which people designate themselves and those by which they are described by others do not necessarily coincide. Especially in a war context, such divergence may acquire enormous proportions. Identity

122. Interview n° 36, with a woman born 38 years ago by the Sobi river, Kehemu, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1996.

123. Interview n° 25. See also, interview n° 13 ; interview n° 14.

124. Interview n° 37, with a woman born in Mukuatili, some 60 years old, Kehemu, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1996.

125. Interview n° 13 ; interview n° 14 ; interview n° 25.

126. R. WERBNER, « Introduction. Multiple Identities, Plural Arenas », in R. WERBNER & T. RANGER (eds), *Postcolonial identities in Africa*, London-New Jersey, Zed Books, 1996: 1-25.



politics in such instances form both cause and consequence of the war. People may be caught in a spiral of violence in which the enemy is ascribed ever more grotesque and horrific characteristics. Through the inflation of monstrosity, « we » become more and more different from « them ». In the complex ensemble of politics of belonging « foreignness » is one of the most damaging of all identity categories : foreigners do not belong here. Much war propaganda thus revolves around concepts like « external » and « foreign ». MPLA, for example, labelled FNLA « foreign » because of its ties with Zaire, while FNLA saw MPLA as an « un-African » party promoting « foreign » Portuguese manners.

Both case-studies showed the complexity of identity strategies. The first case-study made clear that ethnic identity has relevance when discussing conflict in Angola. Yet, an interpretation that views the war in Angola as a consequence of tribal cleavages is much too facile. Firstly, it was made clear that references to ethnic identity in many cases rather form arguments in debate than unanimity and agreement. The concept « Kongo » formed at once a source of pride and a point of reference around which to argue. Albeit in very different ways, this conclusion holds true during the king's palaver of the 1950s just as much as in the 1990s among Bakongo *regressados* in Luanda. Furthermore, it became clear that ethnic, local and national identities have become intertwined. In Luandan popular imagination an opposition has been created between Luandan Angolan and Bakongo Zairian. These in turn have been connected with political oppositions, such as MPLA versus « the enemy » (in this case, especially FNLA, but as the immediate cause of Bloody Friday showed, also Unita), and with race, whereby *mestiços* are opposed to « Africans ».

In Africanist research there has been much attention for the stifling of identities in the ethnic realm. The second case-study made clear that such processes of essentialisation are not necessarily related to ethnic identity. As has already been suggested by Didier Péclard, the civil war in Angola is much less connected to ethnic identities than has hitherto often been proposed. As an alternative, Péclard proposes to link the various religious missions in Angola to the opposition between town and country. This article suggests a categorisation based on more secular criteria. In South-East Angola, landscape and mobility turned out to be pivotal to an understanding of identity. Many civilians in South-East Angola were forced to move and subsequently forced to stay put. A division between *vakamusenge* and *vakambongi* came into being, that was increasingly related to violence, torture and mutilation. In this process, bush and town were moulded into absolute categories of identity by the fighting parties : *vakamusenge* and *vakambongi* were attributed specific characteristics that made them easily distinguishable.

In some works on Angola, the post-colonial period has been interpreted independently of the colonial era. However, as much of what happened during the post-colonial war had its origins in the anti-colonial war, the colonial past cannot be limited to a few lines that function as a sketchy background. This article has once again showed the relevance of taking into account the late colonial period when studying Angola's civil war. Not only because the history of the liberation struggle forms a central argument in current political debate in Angola, but also because it can be argued that the civil war did not start during the independence period : long before,

Angolans were fighting over rights and legitimacy<sup>127</sup>. People from South-East Angola likewise interpret the post-independence cleavage between town and bush as having its origin in the anti-colonial war.

The war had an anti-colonial character, but the violence that occurred between 1961 and 1974 also involved rivalries between various Angolan elites and local power struggles. Of course, the war for independence altered the context of these struggles and the changing conditions after independence again rendered these conflicts and tensions different from before<sup>128</sup>. Yet, in order to understand current identity politics in Angola, we may well have to look into the nationalist war. Such interpretation entails more than a facile opposition between resisters and collaborators, or a presentation in terms of a revolutionary struggle against colonialism. If we wish to study Angola's present, its past will also have to include the struggles within, the popular imaginations, and the local discourses of power. As Stephen Ellis wrote : « Just as Europe's own tortured history can be better seen as "a story of narrow squeaks and unexpected twists, not inevitable victories and forward marches", so might it be profitable to see the last fifty years of African political history other than as the triumphal progress of liberation from colonial rule and of nationalism »<sup>129</sup>.

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### Abbreviations

ABAKO : Association pour le maintien, l'unité et l'expansion de la langue Kikongo

ALIAZO : Aliazo (Alliance des ressortissants de Zombo)

AREC : Association des ressortissants de l'enclave de Cabinda

BMS : Baptist Missionary Society.

ELNA : Exército de libertação nacional de Angola.

FNLA : Frente nacional de libertação de Angola.

GRAE : Govêrno revolucionário de Angola no exílio.

MPLA : Movimento popular de libertação de Angola.

127. See J. LONSDALE & E.S. ATIENO-ODHIAMBO, « Introduction », in R. WERBNER & T. RANGER (eds), *Mau Mau and nationhood. Arms, authority and narration*, Oxford, James Currey/Nairobi, EAEP/Athens, Ohio University Press, 2003 : 1-4.

128. See N. KRIGER, *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War. Peasant Voices*, Cambridge-Harare, Cambridge University Press, 1992 ; J. MCGREGOR, « Containing Violence. Poisoning and Guerrilla/Civilian Relations in Memories of Zimbabwe's Liberation War », in K. LACEY ROGERS, S. LEYDESDORFF & G. DAWSON (eds), *Trauma and Life Stories : International Perspectives*, London-New York, Routledge, 1999 : 131-159 ; S. ELLIS, « Africa's Wars of Liberation. Some Historiographical Reflections », in P. KONINGS, W. VAN BINSBERGEN & GERTI HESSELING (eds), *Trajectoires de libération en Afrique contemporaine*, Leiden-Paris, Karthala, 2000 : 69-91 ; J. ABBINK, M. DE BRUIJN & K. VAN WALRAVEN (eds), *Rethinking Resistance. Revolt and Violence in African History*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2003.

129. M. Mazower, quoted by S. ELLIS, « Africa's Wars of Liberation... », *op. cit.* : 89.

NIZA : Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa

PDA : Partido democrático de Angola

PIDE : Polícia internacional e defesa de Estado

Unita : União nacional para a independência total de Angola

UPA : União das populações de Angola

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