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Church, State and Colonialism in Southeastern Congo, 1890–1962

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Chris Bayly

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Contents

1 Introduction: Church and State in Southeastern Congo 1

2 Pre-colonial Politics in Kongolo to 1890 31

3 The Halting Development of Catholic Power in Kongolo, 1891–1917 63

4 The Failure of 'Great' Chieftainships and the Consolidation of Catholic Authority, 1918–1932 119

5 Missionaries and the Formation of Colonial Chieftainship, 1933–1939 157

6 A Marriage of Convenience: Church and State in the Late Colonial Period, 1940–1956 189

7 Religion, Class and the Katangese Secession, 1957–1962 219

8 Conclusion 259

Correction to: Church, State and Colonialism in Southeastern Congo, 1890–1962 C1

Index 269

ABBREVIATIONS

AFAC	Association des Fonctionnaires et Agents Coloniaux
AIMO	Affairs Indigènes et du Main-d'œuvre
ANC	Armée Nationale Congolaise
ATCAR	Association Sociale et Culturelle des Tshokwe du Congo, de l'Angola et de la Rhodésie
Balubakat	Association des Baluba du Katanga
BJI	Bulletin des Juridictions Indigènes et du Droit Coutumier Congolais
BSAC	British South Africa Company
BSBEC	Bulletin de la Société Belge d'Etudes Coloniales
BTK	Bourse du Travail du Katanga
CA	Cercle d'Albert 1
CAF	Central African Federation
CAM	Central African Mission (formally the Congo Evangelistic Mission)
CAPS	Centre Agricole pour la Production des Semanciers
CEC	Centre Extra Coutumier
CEHC	Comité d'Etudes du Haut Congo
CEM	Congo Evangelistic Mission
CFL	Compagnie des Chemins de Fer des Grands Lacs Africains
CFS	Congo Free State
CIE	Conseil Indigène d'Entreprise
CK	Compagnie du Katanga
COLOMINES	Société Coloniale Minière en Abrégé
Colonat	European settlers
Conakat	Confédération des Associations Tribales du Katanga

CRA	Congo Reform Association
CSK	Comité Spécial du Katanga
CSSp	Congrégation des Pères du Saint–Esprit, Chevilly la Rue, Paris
DC	District Commissioner
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAP	Ecole d'Apprentissage Pédagogique
Febaceka	Fédération des Baluba Centraux du Katanga
Fédéka	Fédération des Associations des Ressortissants de la Province du Kasaï
FTYP	First Ten-Year Plan (1949–1959)
HAV	Hommes Adultes Valides
HGF	Holy Ghost Fathers and the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Spiritains)
IAA	Association Internationale pour l'Exploration et la Civilisation de l'Afrique Centrale
INEAC	Institut National pour l'Etude Agronomique du Congo Belge
Interfina	Société Commerciale et Financière du Congo Belge
Jebakat	Jeunes Baluba du Katanga
MAE	Mission Antiérosive
MNC	Mouvement National Congolais
MOI	Commission de la Main-D'œuvre Indigène
MPNC	Mouvement pour le Progrès National Congolais
PPK	Parti Progressiste Katangais
PSC	Parti Social-Chrétien
RJK	Revue Juridique du Katanga
SAL	Station d'Adaptation Locale
SBEC	Société Belge d'Etudes Coloniales
SCK	Syndicate Commercial du Katanga
SDA(s)	Seventh Day Adventist(s)
SEJK	Société d'Etudes Juridiques du Katanga
SF	Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, better known as the Scheut Fathers
SMA	Society of Missionaries of Africa (Société des Missionnaires de l'Afrique) (N.B. commonly known as the 'White Fathers')
SOC	Sisters of the Holy Cross
SOREKAT	Société de Recherches et d'Exploitations Aurifères au Katanga
STYP	Second Ten-Year Plan
TC	Territorial Council
Texaf	Compagnie des Textiles Africains
TYP	Ten-Year Plan
UMHK	Union Minière du Haut Katanga
UNO	United Nations Organisation

List of Figures

Fig. 1.1 The Tanganyika Province and its neighbours in the African and international context, present borders 3
Fig. 1.2 Administrative divisions in the present Tanganyika Province 11
Fig. 2.1 Photo of Kongolo Island by Author (3 August 2015) 42
Fig. 3.1 Victor Roelens (centre left), Auguste-Léopold Huys (centre right) and Stefano Kaoze (centre, second row) in 1931 (Royal Museum of Central Africa, AP.0.2.10246, Photo 1) 67
Fig. 3.2 Administrative, trader and mission boundaries in Southeastern Congo, 1885–1910 70
Fig. 3.3 The Great Lakes Company and the Lower Congo Railway Company's lines in the Congo 81
Fig. 3.4 Interior of the church at Lubunda, Kongolo, 1926 (Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren, AP.0.2.12875-2, Photo 1) 83
Fig. 3.5 The tax office in Kongolo, 1913 (Royal Museum of Central Africa, AP.0.0.29990, Photo 1) 99
Fig. 4.1 Territories and districts in southeastern Congo 124
Fig. 4.2 Bùki's 'great' chieftainship in southern Kongolo 129
Fig. 4.3 The White Fathers' Church at the Sola out-station, 2015 143
Fig. 4.4 The CFL camp in Kongolo, 1930 (Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren, AP.0.2.10323, Photo 1) 146
Fig. 5.1 Administrative map of Kongolo, 1932–1940 159

Glossary

By referring to these words by using the languages of the peoples that originated them, such Hêmbá, I do not mean to suggest that other social groups do not use them. Many of these terms are shared between many linguistic groups. For ease of reference, though, I have alluded to them according to the language that they are most associated with. Secondly, when I write 'Luba' I mean KiLuba, as spoken in the former Katanga province, as opposed to TshiLuba, as spoken in Kasai.

Agulu-Abuti (Hêmbá) 'Prediction mound,' where a number of *Kibangile* witch-trials took place.

Hêmbá (Hêmbá) The social group that inhabits much of eastern Kongolo. The word *Hêmbá* is sometimes translated as 'east' as in the 'eastern Luba.'

Bena (Swahili) 'People of,' e.g. the Bena Mambwe are 'people of Mambwe.'

Bilolo (Luba) A vassal of a Luba king, or *Ngoy*, or sacred ruler, *Mulopwe*.

Bula Matari (Kongo) 'Breaker of rocks.' The term was used to describe Henry Morton Stanley's attempts to build roads using dynamite in the 1870s and was then appropriated by the territorial service to mean the colonial state itself. The phrase also is used to indicate a port in Lower Congo by some social groups there.

Les Blue(s) (French) 'Fresher(s),' a reference to the colonial officials who came to the Congo after the Second World War.

Bruges-Saint-Donat (Belgian) The White Fathers' mission outstation in Sola, named after the patron Saint of Bruges.

Bulamba (Hêmbá) A dance that had been part of the Báhêmbá tradition before the incursion of European missionaries in 1909.

Chabo (Hêmbá) A Báhêmbá age-set.

Chicote (French) The hippopotamus-hide whip used widely across the Belgian Congo.

Dawa ya Mvita (Swahili) War medicine used by a number of African communities. Protestant missionaries associated this with Luba groups during decolonization.

Elisabethville The current province of Katanga during the Great Depression (it was changed back to Katanga in 1947). This is also the name given to the city that is currently Lubumbashi (1971–).

Hata(s) (Songye) Sacred groves in which the *Sultani Ya Miti* reside.

Kibangile (Hêmbá) A witch-finding movement Katore and Sindano adopted.

Kibangule (Swahili) The (possible) town in which *Kibangile* originated in Maniema/Manyema.

Kongolo (Luba) The name of the territory in which the chieftainships of Bena Mambwe and Bena Nyembo were situated. Kongolo is named after one of the founders of the Luba ethnic group, *Nkongolo*, the 'drunken king.'

L'intérieur (French) The internal Congolese hinterland, which signifies remoteness to urban centres.

Lisala (Luba) A Luba king.

Lozi/mlozi (Hêmbá) 'Evil.' *Mlozi* means a witch.

Maniema/Manyema (Swahili) The province in which *Kibangule* is situated, whose etymology derives from a word for 'slave.'

Mkubwa (Swahili) A local power broker.

Mucheza wa tambour (Hêmbá) A tambourine dance that was popularised in Kíhêmbá-speaking regions of Kongolo, probably by missionaries at the turn of the twentieth century.

Mudiavita (Songye) A chief of war or war advisor.

Mulopwe (Luba) A title for a sacred Luba ruler.

Mulopwe wa Mudilo (Luba) 'Fire king' or someone given the ashes of a Luba monarch as a signifier of their noble status.

Mungeni (Luba) A word for foreigner.

Muti (Hêmbá) A term meaning 'medicine' in Bemba and that Catholic missionaries ascribed to Báhêmbá as well.

Mwavi (Hêmbá) The concoction likely drunk by suspected witches under the *Kibangile* witch-finding regime.

Mwana (Hêmbá) A term used widely across cultures in Kongolo for the head of a lineage group.

Mzee (Swahili) A respected (male) elder used as another Swahili term for a local big man.

Ngoy (Luba) A title for a Luba noble, slightly less senior than *Mulopwe* (see note on Mulopwe above).

North Katanga/Lualaba Province The quasi-autonomous states that conferred its loyalty to the Lumumbist administration in Leopoldville rather than to the separatist Elisabethville administration.

Ntambwe Bwanga (Luba) This was a closed association of Luba who mobilized to fight Conakat during ‘decolonization.

Politique indigène (French) ‘Native’ politics, this was, in colonial parlance, Belgian rule as it referred to Africans. Often *politique indigène* was associated with rural government in particular though there were exceptions to this trend.

Population Flottante (French) Africans who clandestinely resided in urban areas without a job.

Shauri (Swahili) A council for local nobles associated with the East African slave trade but incorporated into local governance in the early years of the Belgian Congo.

Sola, Bena Nkuvu (Hêmbá) The headquarters (*chef-lieu*) of Bena Nkuvu wherein the White Fathers’ out-station was situated (*Nkuvu* is a Kíhêmbá word for tortoise).

Sultani Ya Miti (Songye) ‘Tree sultans,’ these were rulers of the Songye before the Swahili invasions who survived by hiding in forested groves subsequently known as *hatas.*

Tambwe (Hêmbá) ‘Lion,’ also forms a part of a number of Báhêmbá peoples’ names, particularly those in authority.

Twite (Songye) A chief’s second-in-command, the head of the local judiciary and the president of the chief’s council.

Ukanga (Tetela) ‘Charm’ and also adopted as the name for an iteration of a closed association of hierarchical merchants selling these charms to peoples across eastern Congo.

Vilinyambi (Hêmbá) Word for God.

Wali (Swahili) Governor, a title granted to Tippu Tip by the Congo Free State in the 1890s.

Wanyampara (Swahili) A courtier.

Yamina (Swahili) A mound in Bena Nkuvu that Europeans called Mount Dhanis.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Church and State in Southeastern Congo

Scholars have traditionally assumed that the Catholic Church had an *exceptionally* close and collaborative relationship with the colonial administration of the Belgian Congo. Crawford Young, writing in his influential book *Politics in Congo*, argued that, along with business enterprises, the Church formed part of a ‘seamless web’ in tandem with colonial officialdom.[1] Wamu Oyatambwe reached a similar conclusion in his book *Eglise Catholique et Pouvoir Politique au Congo-Zaire* in that he argued that the Latin phrase *do ut des* (‘I give so that you will give’) essentially captured the essence of the Church–state relationship in the Congo.[2] These authors are representative of the wider literature on the Church–state relationship in the Belgian Congo in that they see an *unusually* collaborative relationship between the state and missionaries. Scholars working in other imperial contexts have not emphasized such a close relationship between Church and state. Hugo Hinfelaar, writing on Catholic missionary activity in Zambia, was careful to elucidate the significant struggles between the interests of the state and those of the Church.[3] And Andrew Porter did not even suggest that the Anglican Church, part and parcel of the British state, had such a hand-in-glove relationship with British imperialism.[4]

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This study challenges the idea that the Church had an exceptionally close relationship with the colonial state in the context of the Belgian Congo. To do so, it examines the history of southeastern Congo. Specifically, this book looks at the Church–state relationship in the Congolese territory of Kongolo, in what is now the Tanganyika province, which has largely been ignored by authors hitherto. Kongolo was of vital importance to the Catholic Church in southeastern Congo and to two mission orders in particular: the Spiritans and the White Fathers. It played host to a vital Spiritan out-station in the north of the territory, for example, which became so famous for its educational facilities that Africans walked from many, many miles away to attend classes there. Kongolo town centre also hosted a major seminary meaning that Catholics not only from the Tanganyika province but across the Belgian Congo as a whole deemed it to be an extremely important site. Kongolo was important not just as a Catholic centre in and of itself but also as a bulwark against the Protestant expansion that had occurred during the early phase of Leopoldian rule. American Presbyterians, for example, had been working tirelessly in Kasai since the 1891 and so Catholic missionaries wanted a strong Catholic presence to counter what one Catholic missionary referred to as the incoming Protestant 'invasion.'[5] While Kongolo was not the only place that developed a significant mission infrastructure, few other territories in rural southeastern Congo boasted the same intense Catholic mission presence.

Not only did Kongolo develop an impressive mission infrastructure, but the history of Tanganyika (see Fig. 1.1) as a whole is pertinent for a number of reasons. First, the leader of the White Fathers, Cardinal Lavigerie, wanted to establish a Christian kingdom in Central Africa and he believed that what is now the Tanganyika province could be that polity. Lavigerie's desire for a theocratic polity to emerge in southeastern Congo, coupled with the state's initial neglect of it, meant that there was a substantive Church presence in the region. The Church in Tanganyika therefore developed relatively independently from the colonial state and so it is a good litmus for what missionaries did when they had more leeway to disagree with the Belgian administration. Secondly, that Tanganyika was a centre for the Spiritans as well as the White Fathers means that this is one of the first studies of a Spiritan mission encounter in the Belgian Congo. Unlike the White Fathers, the Spiritans were initially prohibited from working in the Congo by the Belgian king, Léopold II, because he believed that they could be a fifth column for French imperial interests given they were a French order. The Spiritans, therefore, perhaps exemplify this book's thesis that a close, collaborative

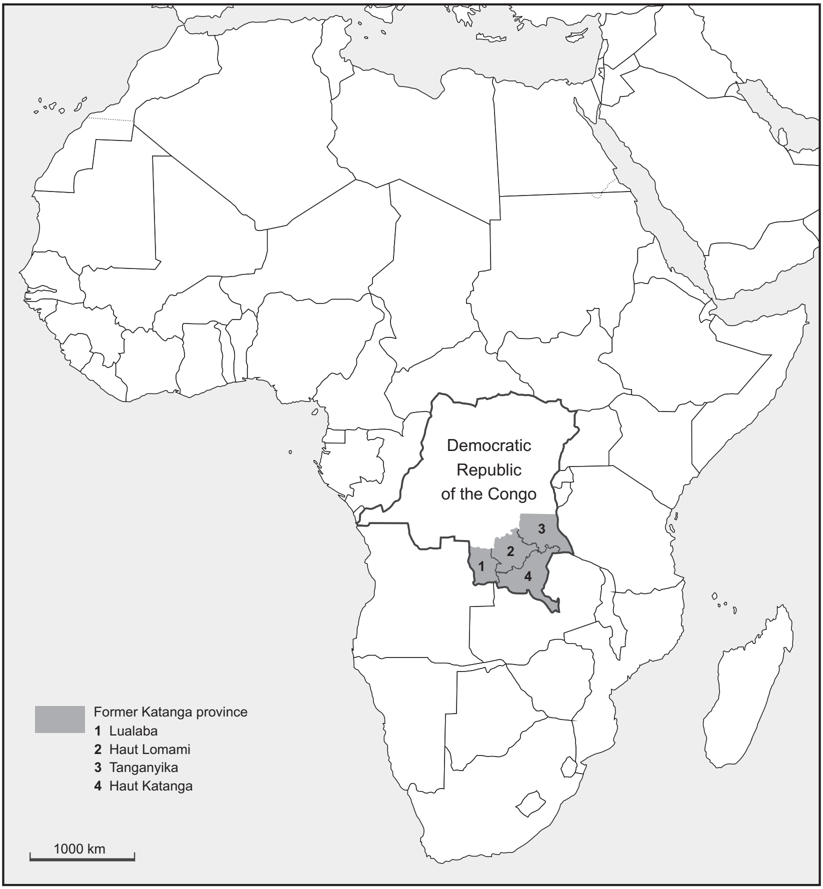
Democratic Republic of the Congo
1
2
3
4
▨ Former Katanga province
1 Lualaba
2 Haut Lomami
3 Tanganyika
4 Haut Katanga
1000 km

Fig. 1.1 The Tanganyika Province and its neighbours in the African and international context, present borders

relationship between the Church and the state was not the inevitable product of Belgian colonialism. Rather than enjoying a consistently cordial and co-dependent relationship with the state, there were a number of occasions in which missionaries clashed with colonial officials working in Kongolo. So, while surveying the times when the Church did facilitate the colonial state's work, and vice versa, this study focuses more on the episodes in which the two institutions clashed. Instead of allies working seamlessly with each other, this study suggests the Church and state were in fact *competitive* collaborators. That is to say that while they did collaborate on a number of occasions they retained demonstrably different agendas and these often clashed with each other.

Some authors have already drawn attention to Church-state conflicts in the context of the Belgian Congo. Marvin Markowitz is the most notable of such scholars. He examined the Church's relationship with the colonial state in a lucid, sustained and detailed way. But, in his book *Cross and Sword*, he tended to approach the Church–state relationship in the Belgian Congo very much from a 'top down' as opposed to a 'bottom-up' perspective.[6] In a similar vein, Jean-Pacifique Balaamo Mokelwa, in a book about the influence of the Church on the formation of Congolese law, focused on the state–Church relationship from a metropolitan vantage point.[7] In his comprehensive and masterful account of the White Fathers' operations in the Belgian Congo, as well as those of other Catholic missionaries, Marchal/Delathuy took a similar approach.[8] He pointed to a number of clashes between the state and the White Fathers in a local context, for example over their use of their own currency: the *pesa*.[9] In a similar vein, Bruce Fetter, in his book *The Creation of Elisabethville*, notes that 'In Elisabethville… [the] colonial trinity was not solidified into its final form until the 1930s.'[10] Yet this book differs from Fetter's and Marchal/Delathuy's, as well as Mokelwa and Young's, in two key respects. First, as already noted, it focuses on the local, territorial scene more than the above-mentioned authors who adopted a largely metropolitan perspective. And, secondly, it brings African intermediaries, such as chiefs and nobles, much more meaningfully into its analysis of the Church–state relationship.

To bring Africans into the story of Church–state relations in the Belgian Congo, this book examines the Church–state relationship largely through the individual mission stations themselves as well as through the prism of *chieftainship*. Chieftainship, or the rule of a geographically defined territory by a single chief, was the lowest level of colonial administration. Such polities constituted territories, such as Kongolo, that in turn constituted provinces, such as Katanga. Catholic missionaries tended to have significant influence on the colonial construction of chieftainship and sometimes even more than that of the colonial administration. The Belgian versions of chieftainship were generally weak in Kongolo due to its initial neglect by the colonial state, local revolts against chiefs, and depopulation from disease and colonial recruitment. So, missionaries exerted a great deal of influence over colonial government there. It used its greater staff, defined as its affiliated missionaries and African converts, as well as its built infrastructure, to shape societies in the territory and often in ways that contradicted state policy. For example, Chapter 4 discusses, in part, how one missionary believed that he could impose his own version of canon law even outside his out-stations and in a manner that directly contradicted state policy. Similarly, Chapter 5 deals with a witch-finding movement in which the White Fathers successfully petitioned the state to put two of its most trusted African intermediaries on trial. The Church, then, exercised a great deal of control over the politics of the Katangese hinterland.

Although it could and often did help to shape local societies in the Belgian Congo, this book stops short of suggesting that the Church's influence was *hegemonic*. European Catholic missionaries may have developed strict codes of conduct for those who came to and stayed in their out-stations, which they enforced obsessively at times, but Victor Roelens, who led the White Fathers in Tanganyika, and his followers in Kongolo, such as Joseph Van den Tillaert and Louis Verstraete, frequently could not control nor even fully convert many of the peoples living in villages outside of these out-stations. If conversion, or the process of changing someone's spirituality from one theology to another, is defined along Catholic lines and so involves the complete rejection of other forms of ritual then the missionaries were only partly successful. Rather than a culturally hegemonic force, the Church experienced many struggles. And Roelens and his missionaries frequently expressed concern in their writings about the depth of the piety and devotion of its followers.[11] Even as they *claimed* to amass hundreds of followers—and mission statistics are hardly unknown to exaggerate—Roelens and Emilio Callewaert, who led the Spiritans in Kongolo, always worried that their African converts would go 'back' to following the old ways of their pre-existing traditions that the next chapter outlines. For all their infrastructural achievements, and much as Nicholas Creary observed in Zimbabwe, Catholic missionaries did not gain cultural hegemony in Kongolo.[12]

This is not to say that Catholic missionaries did not strive for cultural supremacy in the Congolese bush. In their attempts to create pristine Catholic communities, and in so doing to thwart Protestant advances, Roelens and Callewaert's approach to proselytizing was more dogmatic than that of Placide Tempels, for example, who worked primarily in southern Katanga.[13] Tempels, also a Catholic missionary, became so frustrated by what he saw as the Church's inability to inspire devotion among its followers that he created what he called the *Jamaa* or 'family' movement in Katanga in 1953.[14] Jamaa, broadly speaking, sought to create Christian fellowships in the context of groups that largely eschewed hierarchies and pursued Christ-centric forms of worship—yet it never made it as far as Kongolo however close it came to the territory.[15] Rather than attempting to dialogue with African expressive cultures, Catholic missionaries in Kongolo tended to learn local languages and about African cultures oftentimes solely as a means of imposing their own worldview on local societies. As Valentine Mudimbe has observed, Victor Roelens wanted to destroy what he described as paganism in his 'republic.'[16] Correspondingly, Allen Roberts argued that: 'The portrait [Roelens] drew of the black man… is particularly negative.'[17] So, although Roelens was keen to inspire and facilitate the creation of an African clergy, he did not want, and neither did the Propaganda Fide, who oversaw 'missionary activity throughout the world with the territories where there is no established hierarchy,' any innovations on the liturgy or the credo.[18]

Unsurprisingly, given Roelens and Callewaert's theological and even racial views, no idiosyncratic African Catholicism emerged in Tanganyika as it did, say, in some parts of Ghana.[19] The influential debates about inculturation that took place within the wider Catholic Church certainly had an impact on Catholicism in Kongolo, of course, not least when the question of extra-European clergies arose and Benedict XV's *Maximum Illud* was published in 1919. And both Roelens and Callewaert accepted the idea of an African clergy with Roelens even sponsoring Stefano Kaoze's passage through seminary to become the first Congolese priest.[20] But Roelens and Callewaert's approach to their work nonetheless provided a stark contrast to that of Tempels. They worked within very hierarchical out-stations and placed a large emphasis on a universalizing Catholic culture that would, they hoped, eventually supersede practices such as ancestor worship, the veneration of elders and polygamy. Few authors in recent times have written about areas in which African thought was so marginal to Catholic thought during the mission encounter and this is another area in which this book innovates. Instead, the trend has overwhelmingly been to write about the ways in which African thought was incorporated into Catholic theological discourses.[21]

The debates surrounding the extent to which Africans adopted Catholicism in their own theological and epistemological frameworks are important and interesting—not least in foregrounding African agency within the colonial mission encounter. Unfortunately, however, they do not speak directly to the kind of uncompromising Catholicism Roelens, Callewaert and their successors, such as Urbain Morlion, proffered. Although unfashionable of late, Jean and John Comaroff's conception of the 'long conversation' in which the London Missionary Society and Wesleyan Methodists encountered the Tswana in South Africa is relevant to this study.[22] It is true that unlike the case in the Comaroff's work, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Roelens and Callewaert never succeeded in colonizing the consciousness of the African communities that surrounded their out-stations. But the crucial point was that that was what the Spiritans and the White Fathers *wanted* to do. Their attempt at the colonization of Congolese consciousness was made manifest in the strict surveillance of African thought on the part of the European missionaries in their out-stations. Some missionaries, such as the White Father Joseph Van Den Tillaert, would go to the villages outside their out-stations on a daily basis to administer sacraments such as the last rites.[23] At the same time, the stark moralistic intentions behind the White Fathers' neo-Gothic out-stations cannot be ignored.

By the time that they began to map out Kongolo for their own purposes, Belgian colonial administrators in Kongolo, such as René Wauthion, were faced with a strident Church that saw itself very much as having created its own polity replete with an imposing civic infrastructure. What is more, the Church's presence had evolved relatively separately from the state. To all intents and purposes, the Church *was* the state in the early twentieth century in Kongolo. What is more, given their considerable connections to their superiors in Europe, as well as to the Propaganda Fide, Roelens and Callewaert had significant political clout in the Belgian Congo. So, despite its failures, the Church successfully pushed back against certain key state policies—notably the permissibility of violence for its chiefs and the permitted limits of Church expansion. Before explaining *how* it did this, though, it is worth saying a little more about *why* the state struggled to dominate Tanganyika's hinterland during crucial initial phase of colonial rule given that scholars such as Young frequently allude to its transformative power.[24]

Where Was the Secular Administration?

While Belgian colonization of the Congo as a whole began with King Leopold's infamous Congo Free State (CFS) it is not at all clear that this administration exerted much influence in Kongolo. The CFS was founded in the midst of a brutal yet haphazard and unevenly spaced series of conquests.[25] It is possible that the Free State army, known as the *Force Publique*, may have *briefly* passed through what is now Kongolo in its attempt to annex eastern Congo. But again the scale of colonial violence in what would become the territory of Konglo was less than in places such as Kasongo in the north. Similarly, when the Katanga Company (KC) was formed in 1891 to prospect and exploit mineral resources, ivory and, occasionally, undertake agricultural work in south-eastern Congo, it did precious little administrative work in Kongolo.[26]

Given that the KC was predominantly interested in minerals, and Kongolo had very few of them, its presence in the region ended up being particularly sparse. Instead, it concentrated its resources on the central and the southern parts of the province wherein mineral resources were to be found. The lack of secular state coverage in Kongolo continued when the assets of the KC were transferred to its successor, the Special Committee for Katanga (CSK). Like the KC, the CSK concentrated mainly on the central and southern parts of Katanga in order to best exploit the mineral resources there. And, like the KC, the CSK enjoyed near autonomous status, first, within the Free State and, after 1908, within the Belgian Congo.[27] Even after the founding of the Free State and the incorporation of the CSK territory into the central administration of the Belgian Congo in 1910, the secular colonial *postes* in what was to become Kongolo and its neighbouring territories played a minor role in their history.

Rather than transmitters of a crushingly powerful and transformative administration, encapsulated by the term Bula Matari ('Breaker of Rocks' in Kikongo), the few existing bureaucratic posts struggled to collect taxes and co-opt African leaders and their subjects. The lack of a strong state presence in Kongolo left plenty of room for the Church to build a large number of out-stations and other facilities with little concern about what their secular counterparts' plans were. The administration became more significant once the railway, which had brought most Catholic missionaries to Kongolo, was installed in territory's town centre in 1909. The arrival of the railway also meant that a workers' camp was built to house those who worked for the firm that built it: the Great Lakes Railway Company (CFL). It was from the workers' camp, and the economic demands of the workers there, that a thriving town centre—also called 'Kongolo'—emerged in the eponymous territory. Yet despite the smattering of workers and the emerging market in the town centre, the secular state still only consisted of a handful of buildings with very few Belgian staff housed in them. Although even this small staff was able to venture out into rural Kongolo and organize some polities along colonial lines, the costs of occupying the territory were not recouped in taxes before the First World War. Indeed, relatively few Africans in the territory were actually paying anything at all to the Belgian administration during the interwar period.

After the War ended in 1918, Belgian officials redoubled their efforts to map out the hinterland and co-opt African leaders in Kongolo. However, these efforts largely failed. Few of the state's African allies were looked upon with the kind of unthinking respect that colonial officials believed Africans had always reserved for their chiefs. Although the *poste* in Kongolo did eventually become the main colonial headquarters of the Tanganyika district, this was not really saying very much given the sparse amount of Belgian infrastructure in the region as a whole. The Great Depression only served to reinforce the state's skeletal nature. The lack of administrative funds meant that the gospel of indirect rule, in which Africans were promoted to positions of power within the colonial administration, was important during this time. Even if some Belgian officials disagreed with the *theory* of indirect rule, and even if indirect rule took on a more 'direct' nature if the administration believed that allies without pre-colonial claims to legitimacy were more loyal to it, colonial finances were such that they had to agree with governing through African intermediaries in *practice*. In short, the skeletal Belgian presence in Kongolo was a feature of the colonial regime until the end of the Second World War and this presented Catholic missionaries with more than enough opportunity to develop and expand their infrastructure.

The period after the Second World War was one in which the state expanded for the first time since the turn of the century and had arguably as much presence, both in terms of staff and resources, as the Church. Yet the administration grew in such a way as to coincide with some of the Church's most important plans. First, the state expanded its agricultural programmes in order to boost its profitability but retained the mobility controls on its subjects it had imposed during the Depression to prevent rural–urban migration. That rural enclaves were protected from depopulation meant that the pristine communities that Roelens and Callewaert had initially envisaged were still possible to engineer. Much like the state, though for different reasons, the Church wanted to survey the hinterland of the Belgian Congo. The state feared revolts of the kind that Kitawala adepts had inspired during the Depression and so frequently relied on Church information about rural Congo. For its part, the Church feared reversions to pre-existing traditions. Indeed, the only major competitor to the Church, at least in its own view, was what Jan Vansina called the Equatorial African tradition.

The tradition refers to the ways in which African societies were organized previous to European colonialism. This book argues that the pre-colonial Equatorial political tradition remained—distorted in places but largely intact—due to the emphasis the colonial state places on indirect rule and its corresponding dependency on local potentates. Congolese societies, for example, were organized hierarchically. As the next chapter will explain, the lowest unit was the 'house,' which was constituted of an extended family together with their slaves. Polygamy was central to amassing enough followers to constitute a viable 'house.' Houses could ally with each other to form villages which in turn could ally with each other to form districts. Many of the alliances were held together through a shared veneration of ancestors and food taboos, both of which missionaries regarded as 'pagan' practices. In most respects, and contrary to Vansina's claims, missionaries never entirely broke down these traditions during the colonial period.[28] Rather, they in fact often colluded in localism by attempting to preserve rural community life not least in their attempts to convert chiefs and in their lobbying against urban migration and the wealth workers gained from it. Likewise, because there were different iterations of the tradition, the Church was never faced with unified opposition from people who understood themselves as being part of a monolithic and shared culture. Instead, it was faced with people with local loyalties and split between social dividing lines, such as gender and generation, as well as a number of cultural ones, not least ethnicity.

The Geographical Setting

The Church's encounter with local peoples in Kongolo was facilitated in no small measure by the territory's geography. European Catholic contacts with African societies in Kongolo took place in a large territory even if it was not uncommonly so in the context of the Belgian Congo (see Fig. 1.2). Kongolo's geography challenged historical actors and societies

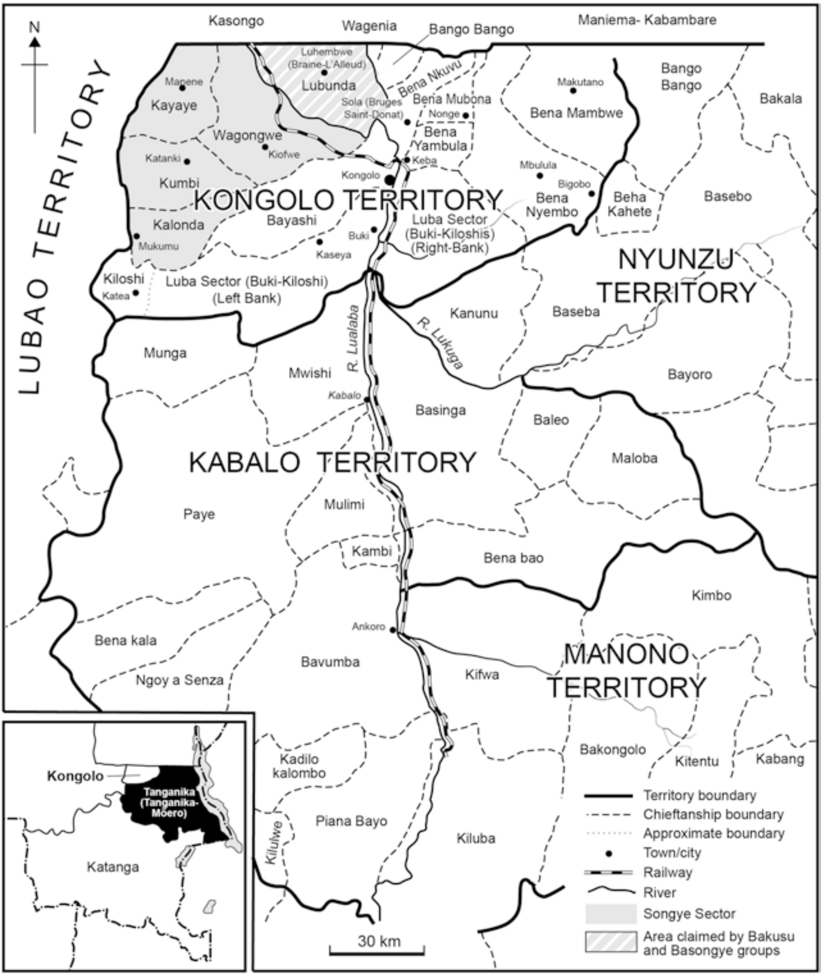
N
LUBAO TERRITORY
Kasongo
Wagenia
Bango Bango
Maniema- Kabambare
Luhembwe
(Braine-L'Alleud)
Lubunda
Sola (Bruges
Saint-Donat)
Bena Nkuvu
Bena Mubona
Nonge
Bena
Yambula
Keba
Magene
Kayaye
Wagongwe
Kiofwe
Katanki
Kumbi
Kongolo
KONGOLO TERRITORY
Kalonda
Mukumu
Bayashi
Buki
Kaseya
Luba Sector
(Buki-Kiloshis)
(Right-Bank)
Kiloshi
Katea
Luba Sector (Buki-Kiloshi)
(Left Bank)
Makutano
Bena Mambwe
Mbulula
Bigobo
Bena
Nyembo
Beha
Kahete
Bango
Bango
Bakala
Basebo
NYUNZU
TERRITORY
Kanunu
Baseba
R. Lukuga
R. Lualaba
Munga
Mwishi
Kabalo
Basinga
Baleo
Bayoro
Maloba
KABALO TERRITORY
Paye
Mulimi
Kambi
Bena bao
Kimbo
Ankoro
Bena kala
Bavumba
Ngoy a Senza
Kifwa
MANONO
TERRITORY
Bakongolo
Kitentu
Kabang
Kadilo
kalombo
Piana Bayo
Kilulwe
Kiluba
30 km
Kongolo
Tanganika
(Tanganika-
Moero)
Katanga
Territory boundary
Chieftanship boundary
Approximate boundary
Town/city
Railway
River
Songye Sector
Area claimed by Bakusu
and Basongye groups

Fig. 1.2 Administrative divisions in the present Tanganyika Province

in this part of the colony but, contrary to a range of general misconceptions about Central Africa, it also gave them opportunities. The Congo's environment has often been stereotyped, particularly by Victorian authors, as one of dark, foreboding jungles shrouding the sunlight and enveloping the whole territory in darkness.[29] Although Kongolo could indeed be