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# Football, colonialism, and migration: What can we learn about the relations between Belgium and Africa by looking at football?

**Indicative age: 17-18**

**Duration: 50 minutes - 1 hour and 30 minutes**

This collection of resources has been developed to help students aged 14-18 learn about migration, with a special focus on the topics of: race, ethnicity and (de)colonization, culture and sport. In particular, it focuses on migration in the European-African context, looking at the relationship between Congo and Belgium from the establishment of the Congo Free State (1885) until Congolese Independence (1960) as an example. The sources and narratives collected here are not exhaustive, but highlight specific moments that can help discuss migration and injustice.

**Football** is used as a tool to make the connection between migration and society, and the topic of migration, more accessible to students.

To promote **multiperspectivity**, we have tried to use sources from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and from individuals that have different profiles.

We advise you to use this collection as part of a broader lesson on history, colonialism, and/or migration, and to divide your students in groups to tackle the sources. Throughout the collection, you will find several questions and thinking points that you can use to discuss the topic with your students. At the end of the collection, you will find generic questions, as well as a bibliography.

This collection of sources and narratives has been developed by Christopher Heim within the framework of the Football Makes History project, which is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union as part of the Football History for Inclusion project.

The Royal Central African Museum was visited on June 26<sup>th</sup> 2020 to obtain more information on migration and Central Africa.

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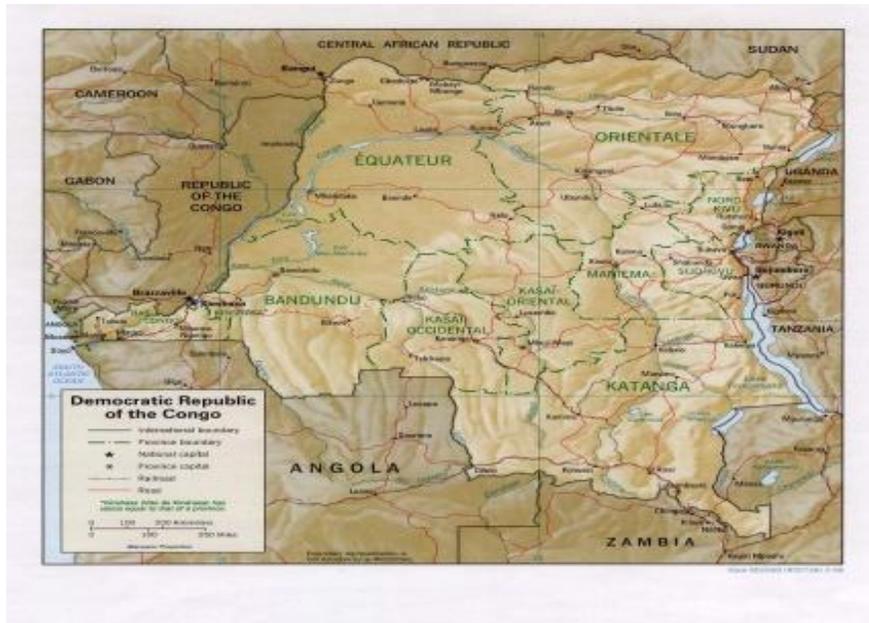
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# The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): A Diverse Land and People



*Image by: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas Libraries (Public Domain)*

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), as it is known today, is the second biggest country in Africa, covering 2,300,000 square kilometers (900,000 square miles)<sup>1</sup>. It is about the size of Western Europe, and it is the only country in Africa to lie in two time zones. In fact, two-thirds of the country is covered by dense equatorial forest, with its 1.45 million square km (565,500 miles). It is the largest tropical rainforest outside the Amazon basin. It is estimated that the Congolese rainforest is 3 times larger than Spain. Entrenched within this rich and fertile territory is an abundance of natural resources. For instance, cobalt and copper, tin and coltan, gold and diamonds, coffee and tea, however, these resources and the biodiversity have been and are currently being threatened and eliminated through the process of deforestation and exploited by (the corruption of local and foreign) investors.

The DRC is bordered by nine countries: The Central African Republic, South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia, Angola (proper), the Angolan exclave of Cabinda, and Congo-Brazzaville.<sup>2</sup> Within this massive country there are said to be 84 million people, an estimated 12 million of which are living in the capital, Kinshasa. Twentieth century ethnographers distinguished some 300-400 ethnic groups in the interior, each of them a society with its own customs, social structure, artistic traditions, and often its own language or dialect. Concerning the latter, French is the language of higher education and government and there are four national languages: Lingala, Kikongo, Tshiluba, and (Ki)Swahili.

This short story explores how such a rich and diverse land has evolved into what it is today...

Source: Van Reybrouck, 2014

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<sup>1</sup> The DRC is the biggest country in sub-Saharan Africa. Algeria is the biggest in all of Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Only Russia, China and Brazil have more bordering countries

# The Ancient Congo and the First European Encounters



*Katanda Harpoon Point - Image by: Chip Clark, Smithsonian Institution, Acquired from: <https://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/behavior/getting-food/katanda-bone-harpoon-point>*

Thousands of years of history preceded the arrival of Europeans in Central Africa. The Semliki harpoon<sup>3</sup>, which was discovered at an archaeological site on the Semliki River in the Congo, dates back approximately 90,000 years. It was not until the year 1000 AD/CE when the entire region of the Congo and beyond had been settled.

In the era of the Kongo Empire (circa 1380), in the year 1482, coastal inhabitants of the Congo encountered Europeans for one of the first times. They were Portuguese sailors led by Diogo Cão. At the time, while the practice of slavery was said to be an indigenous phenomenon throughout Africa, it was these Portuguese, along with the British, French and Dutch who orchestrated The Atlantic Slave Trade (1500-1850), an epoch that tormented and plagued the region of Western and Central Africa and its people. Regions were torn apart, lives destroyed, horizons shifted' (Van Reybrouk, pp. 25). The entire west coast of Africa was the setting of the Atlantic Slave Trade, but the 250-kilometer coastline of the Congo was the most intense of all locations. An estimated four million people, which is roughly a third of the entire slave trade, were forced to leave their land to

either end up in Brazil, the Caribbean, or what is now referred to as the United States of America. During this journey native Africans faced the barbaric treatment of the slave drivers.

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<sup>3</sup> It is also known as the Katanda harpoon. It refers to a group of complex barbed harpoon heads carved from bone

# Belgium: A Multinational and a Polyethnic State



Image by: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas Libraries (Public Domain)  
<http://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/belgium.html>

In 1830, major national powers concurred that a new country would be formed. Belgium (30,689 square kilometers), as that mini-state was called, had declared its independence from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this relatively new land was only familiar to the flows of internal migration with the exception of foreign workers from neighboring countries as the age of industrialization gained momentum in the southern region of Wallonia. However, intermittently throughout the second half the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the country of Belgium faced various waves of migration, which significantly altered its socio-demographic make-up. This was particularly the case when Italians, Greeks, Spanish and Portuguese, to name a few, migrated to Belgium mostly as a result of oppression and dictatorship in their native countries and for working opportunities abroad. People of Eastern Europe, especially those from Romania and Poland, along with people from the Middle East and Africa are the countries whose number of nationals has increased most rapidly in Belgium over the last two decades.

All in all, Because of a rich history of international migration, Belgium epitomizes a state whose current status has been formed by ethnic cross-pollination, and is shaped by the everyday interactions between native Flemish and Walloon people and both persons with a distinct nationality and individuals of foreign origin(s). Belgium's cultural diversity is highlighted by the fact that 1,327,776 (estimated 11.5%) of the 11,492,641-total population (as of January 2020) are foreign nationals, i.e. having a non-Belgian passport. Additionally, 991,031 (8.8%) are of foreign nationality at birth, but have meanwhile acquired the Belgian nationality (Federal Migration Centre, 2019).

Flanders, the northern Dutch-speaking region, is the most populous region with 6,552,967 inhabitants, 548,910 of which are foreign nationals (Flemish Government/Statistics Department, 2017). Furthermore, the southern French-speaking region known as Wallonia is a society consisting of 3,624,377 inhabitants, with roughly 358,190

of Walloon residents being foreign nationals (Walloon Institute of Evaluation, Forecasting & Statistics, 2018). Lastly, the Brussels-Capital Region is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. Illustrating this is the fact that 71.4% of the estimated 1.2 million inhabitants of the Brussels-Capital Region are of foreign origin, which in this context implies that either the current or first nationality of the person is non-Belgian or the first nationality of the father or mother is not Belgian (BRUZZ, 2018).

### **Glossary**

**Foreign nationals:** Individuals who have a certain passport as their country of usual residence and who are citizens of another country. i.e. living in Belgium but having a non-Belgian passport.

**Foreign origin:** A person with foreign origins is one who has a different ethnic background or roots than the country one is living in, for example, in this context implies that either the current or first nationality of the person is non-Belgian or the first nationality of the father or mother is not Belgian.

# The Initial European Explorations of the Interior of Africa



*Kalulu and Stanley in 1872 - Image credit: Russell E. Train Africana Collection, Smithsonian Libraries (Public Domain) <https://library.si.edu/image-gallery/105978>*



*Doctor Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley going from Ujiji to the Ruzizi River - Image credit: The Royal Museum for Central Africa (Public Domain) [https://www.africamuseum.be/en/discover/focus\\_collections/display\\_object?objectid=32488](https://www.africamuseum.be/en/discover/focus_collections/display_object?objectid=32488);*

The interior of the Congo was not explored by Europeans until the late 19th century. Henry Morton Stanley, who was commissioned by the newspapers the New York Herald and the Telegraph of London, and accompanied by names such as Tippo Tip, Disasi Makulo and Ndugu M'Hali aka Kalulu, crossed Central Africa from east to west (1874 to 1877), following the Congo River from the Nile to the mouth of the Atlantic Ocean. And out of the 224 people on the expedition 92 survived.

Meanwhile in 1876, King Leopold II of Belgium formed the International African Association (IAA) consisting of geographers, explorers and cartographers. Their mission: to obtain African land. He claimed the intention was to thwart Afro-Arab slave trade and to facilitate free trade, but those closest to him say he had become obsessed with owning a piece of Africa for himself. At this moment, and generally throughout the second half of the 19th century, the desire to colonize Africa intensified. This appears to be a by-product of the fusion of industrialization and the excessive national pride for European nation States, and the rivalries that created.

Upon Stanley's return to Europe, with no interest from the British, he accepts an invitation to join Leopold II in his palace. On the expense of Leopold II Stanley returned to the Congo, and this time it would be from west to east beginning at the mouth of the Atlantic (1879-1884).

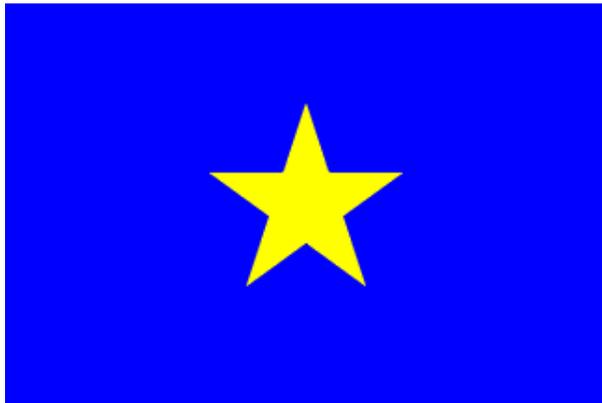
**Classroom Discussion:** According to historians, Stanley is often criticized as an arch-racist, a reputation he owes to his hyperbolic writing style and his association with King Leopold II. However, other historians tend to point more to his benevolent side, as historical accounts document his profound relationship and care for Africans, and vice versa.

**Thinking points:**

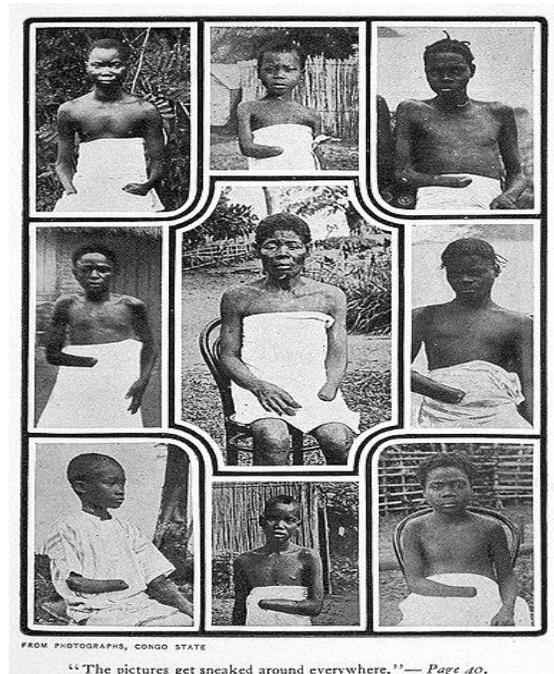
- How does the exposure to different historical accounts determine and alter our perceptions of other (historical) figures?
- How do our own histories and everyday interactions influence how we perceive people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds?

# The Flag of the Congo Free State

‘The blue referred to the darkness in which they wandered, the yellow to the light of civilization that was now coming their way’ (in reference to the Flag of the Congo Free State (1885-1908))



Flag of the Congo Free State - Public Domain



FROM PHOTOGRAPHS, CONGO STATE  
“The pictures get sneaked around everywhere.”— Page 40.  
*Mutilated Children from Congo - Alice Harris, Daniel Danielson, others., Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MutilatedChildrenFromCongo\\_\(orig\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MutilatedChildrenFromCongo_(orig).jpg))*

In 1882, Leopold II grew impatient. The AIA was then transformed into a private trading company with international stakeholders known as the Comité d'études du Haut-Congo (CEHC). In this process, the king acquired rights to the ground, as he demanded that natives must relinquish their autonomy, freedom. The CEHC was then transformed into the International Association of the Congo (AIC), internationally recognized as holding sovereign authority of this massive land. The Berlin Conference (November 15, 1884 to February 26, 1885) consisted of a series of plenaries and negotiations, in which European states carved up Africa into colonial territories, and solidified Leopold's aspirations.

On June 1, 1885, the Congo Free State was founded as a personal colony of Belgian King Leopold II, the only African colony to be personally owned at the time. During Leopold's II reign of terror, he personally never made the four-week ship expedition. Nevertheless, his lack of physical presence in Central Africa did not prevent his regime from terrorizing the local population. From 1890-1898, 2,000 Congolese died due to conditions during the building of the railroad. Adding to the number of **internally displaced people (IDPs)**, in 1891, the first military draft forced Congolese from their local villages into the military for at least seven years. This military unit, 'the Force Publique', which was both the colonial police force and the Territorial Army, was once the biggest army Central Africa had ever seen when they attempted to claim southern Sudan in the 'Arab Campaigns' for the King. They died in en masse before reaching South Sudan.

While there is not an exact number of fatalities, historians and experts on the region estimate around 10 million casualties during the era of the Congo Free State. The exploitation of ivory and rubber led to heinous crimes. In 1897, 245 metric tons of ivory were exported to Europe, and used to build various homes and establishments in the Belgian capital of Brussels and the coastal city of Oostende. 'Red Rubber', as it is now referred to, was in high demand because of the invention of the inflatable rubber (bike and car) tire back in Europe<sup>4</sup>. Rubber could be found in abundance in the Congolese rainforests, and in 1901, the Congo was producing 6,000 metric tons of rubber, and with these revenues Leopold invested solely in his own Kingdom of Belgium.

### **Glossary**

**Internally displaced persons:** A person or groups of persons who has been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

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<sup>4</sup> The inflatable rubber tire was invented by Scottish veterinarian John Boyd Dunlop in 1888.

# Forced Migration

'From the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when trade with Europe got underway, the first sub-Saharan Africans migrated to Europe as servants, ambassadors and ordinary people. Circa 1600, Antwerp had, after Lisbon, the highest percentage of sub-Saharan Africans in Europe. But gradually, it became almost impossible for Africans to visit Belgium freely' (Royal Museum for Central Africa).

These numbers began to increase shortly after King Leopold II seized and annexed the Congo. King Leopold II accommodated a British missionary at his palace who brought him nine African children, boys and girls of twelve or thirteen. They travelled from his new-colony and sported European attire: dress shoes, a beret and red gloves-- their nakedness had to be covered. In the northern region of Flanders, during the 1885 "Antwerp World's Fair it was possible to view the "Negro Village" consisting of 12 Congolese. In 1890, 60 to 70 Congolese boys and girls migrated with missionaries and explorers to the town of Gijzegem (33 km NW of Brussels). Moving forward, in 1894, there were a total of 144 Congolese in Belgium, and in 1897, 267 Congolese traveled to Tervuren (Brussels area) as "exotic features" in exhibitions. In the case of the 'human zoos'<sup>5</sup> in Tervuren in 1987, there were soldiers and police to keep these Congolese in the 'Negro village'. There was even a 'Don't Feed the Animals' sign at a zoo, saying, *the blacks are fed by the organizing committee*'.



*'Children of Gijzegem', Tervuren Park (1897), Image credit: Alphonse Gautier, Collection Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren*

## Glossary

**Forced Migration:** A migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes (e.g. movements of refugees and internally displaced persons as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine or development projects).

<sup>5</sup> Once referred to as ethnological exhibitions

# Stereotypes are born



C. 1916, Presbyterian missionary Sarah Valdes Stegall with two Congolese warriors. Sarah Valdes Stegall was married to Presbyterian Industrial Missionary Carroll R. Stegall., retrieved at: <https://www.phcmontreat.org/Stegall-Collection.htm>. Copyright details unknown.

compartmentalized individuals into clearly distinguishable blocs. Frequently, this data was used to facilitate the work of the colonizer, a means of triumph (triumphant racism), which is supported by the premise that the actor is reassuring his superiority over another race and culture, while making the victim feel inferior.

Belgian migration to the Congo was limited during the Congo Free State period. In 1900, of the 3,000 white individuals in the Congo 1,700 were Belgians. It is stated that most Belgians were seeking honor, fame and money. More specifically, from the urban perspective, many Belgians who migrated to the Congo during this period tended to be officers, diplomats, jurists and journalists. Many Belgians residing in the countryside and rural areas migrated to the Congo as soldiers, government agents, civil servants and missionaries. “These first Belgian missionaries to the Congo rejected African religious practices and destroyed objects they considered heathen. Missionaries who had lived in the colony for some time were often more understanding and showed a greater interest in Congolese languages and cultures” (Royal Museum for Central Africa)<sup>6</sup>.

Many Belgians also traveled to the Congo for ‘scientific’ research throughout 1907 to 1914. Their motive was to collect ethnological data. Belgian researchers returned with 400,000 bits of data and created the “Encyclopedia of the Black Races”. In this process, a cultural barrier was established, seen as universal and fixed. Overall, it

## Glossary

**Race:** In the 16th century, according to its etymological origins, the word race denoted kinship and group affiliation. It was not until the 17-18th century, during the Age of Enlightenment, when the word race acquired alternative connotations. Throughout this period and into the 19th-20th centuries, European biologists and philosophers who were keen to classify human beings created the process of racial categorization. This refers to a taxonomy-based system where skin colour, amongst other phenotypic features, was used as the key biological marker to stratify human beings. In many cases, this process has been interpreted and manipulated as an organizing principle that has resulted in hierarchical societies, stereotyping and racism. Scientific consensus is that the social phenomenon of race does not exist as a biological category among humans and has no genetic basis.

<sup>6</sup> The earliest missionaries came to Africa around 1880. The number of missionaries in Belgium, in 1908, is 500

## Forced to go nowhere

Under pressure from other European powers, the Belgian government took control of the territory on November 15, 1908. Nevertheless, strict authority over the people and companies did not cease<sup>7</sup>. Once the Belgian government established dominance the local movement curtailed. The native Congolese often needed a document to leave the village led by chieftain<sup>8</sup>, if not a hefty fine was given. Administration also fell in the hands of colonial officials, and this translated to the presence of an extremely hierarchical society. Throughout the following decades, many Congolese were forced into horrific working conditions within the mining, railroad and forestry industries, particularly the men, who were forced into working in camps while women and children stayed in the village. Physicians in the Congo also operated under strict colonial rules. Under this system doctors also decided who could go where, and they could also force treatments on them and even punish them<sup>9</sup>.

People were also internally displaced because of their faith. The religion of Kimbanguism, having roots in Christianity, was not tolerated by the Belgians. Consequently, 37,000 houses and a total of 150,000 individuals were internally displaced.

Even though the mobility of locals was restricted in their everyday lives, Congolese were forced to mobilize after they were attacked by Germans on the Congolese side of Lake Tanganyika. The scope of war on the Congolese frontiers widened and was ultimately fought on three fronts: Cameroon (1914; 600 local soldiers and a handful of Belgian soldiers), Rhodesia (1915; 283 Congolese soldiers and seven Belgian soldiers) and German East Africa (Ruanda-Urundi and Tanzania)<sup>10</sup>. Ultimately, Ruanda-Burundi was given to Belgium in 1919 and then ratified in 1923 by the League of Nations, however, Belgium did not want local inhabitants to come to Belgium permanently or temporarily. The only Africans that were able to come at these times were mostly Congolese sailors who plied the sea route between Matadi and Antwerp.



*Uniformed soldiers in the Congo area (ca. 1910-1925) - Tropenmuseum, part of the National Museum of World Cultures, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons. Available at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:COLLECTIE\\_TROPENMUSEUM\\_Soldaten\\_in\\_uniform\\_met\\_geweren\\_met\\_bajonetten\\_T\\_Mnr\\_60032115.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:COLLECTIE_TROPENMUSEUM_Soldaten_in_uniform_met_geweren_met_bajonetten_T_Mnr_60032115.jpg).*

### Glossary

**Displacement:** The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.

<sup>7</sup> In 1908, the first wave of industrialization, proletarianization and monetization transpires in the Congo

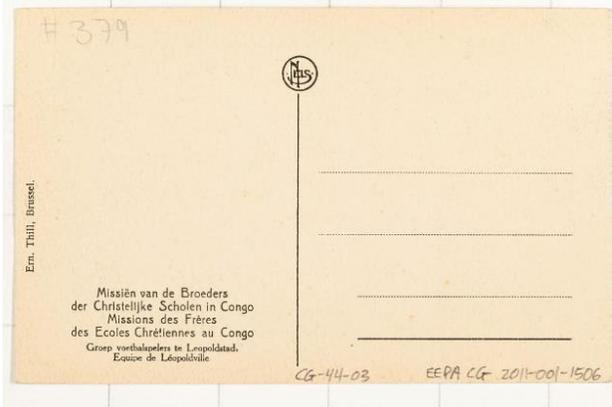
<sup>8</sup> A 1910 decree stated that all natives fell under a specific 'chefferie' or sous-chefferie (territory administered by a chief or a smaller unit).

<sup>9</sup> In the 1920s there were a few thousand colonials, in 1920 there were 70 physicians and 1 dentist

<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, during the 4 year war 260,000 native as soldiers of a 10 million population perished and many others suffered due to the terrible conditions

# Football as a form of discipline

‘In addition to an exuberant game, football was a form of discipline’



*Congo Belge (CG), African Postcard Collection, National Museum of African Art, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, Copyright Details Unknown.*

Pembe) was one of the first football clubs in Congo. All in all, the city of Leopoldville alone had fifty-three teams and six divisions. The playing field and atmosphere was said to be very unique, as there were teams with shoes and barefoot teams; thousands of supporters behind them. At the beginning of World War II, there were 815 players registered on 53 youth teams. However, Congolese football teams were prohibited from competing against the European ones.

The game of football was delivered by the Belgian missionaries<sup>11</sup> in the Congo. It was common to see children and locals playing with handmade balls and grapefruit. The sport of football was introduced originally to quell social unrest and to foster ethical, efficient, orderly, healthy and vigorous African workers. Natives were required to attend training sessions, develop skills, control one's reflexes, and obey rules and listen to the arbiter.

After World War I and throughout the 1920s' -30's<sup>12</sup> and -40's more and more Congolese migrated away from their villages to work for an employer. During the beginning of this time-period, the first cities arose in the Congo. With cities growing, a new type of lifestyle and culture began to flourish as vibrant music and clothing radiated throughout the streets. Sunday was the day of the week when this was the most evident. In particular, in Elizabethville many of the miners went to watch the white man's football teams<sup>13</sup>, which further reinforced racism and segregation throughout the cities.

The first football teams of Léopoldville (present day Kinshasa) were Étoile and League and Prince Charles and Prince Leopoldville in Elizabethville (present day Lubumbashi). Adding to the rise of football, Falcon Daring (now Daring Club Motema

<sup>11</sup> 1,500 missionaries by 1920

<sup>12</sup> The Belgian population in Congo gradually increased to about 17,000 in 1930.

<sup>13</sup> It is said the first game was in 1911 on the missionaries' grounds

# The football pitch as location of popular protests

‘The football pitch, the place meant to teach the masses the virtues of discipline, now became the site of popular protest and bloody repression’ (David Van Reybrouck, pp 192).

From a Belgian sub-Saharan African historical perspective, ‘the pace at which football has developed in Africa, both as a European venture and a locally organized pastime, was centrally linked to the nature of Belgian colonial doctrine in the Congo’ (p. 15), with football ironically proving to be an instrument for protest against colonial rule (Darby, 2013). This was the case in December 1941, in the city of Elizabethville (present day Lubumbashi), which lies in the mineral rich state of Katanga. The workers and miners working for ‘Union Minière du Haut Katanga’ formed a protest to contest wages and their rights on the town’s football pitch. At this point, trade unions for natives were strictly forbidden. This was the first, open expression of urban protest<sup>14</sup>. The soldiers responded by opening fire on the workers: at least 60 people were killed and 100 wounded.

In 1953, professional Belgian football clubs such as Beerschot and Anderlecht were invited to a few matches by the colonial powers to play against what usually consisted of mixed teams of Belgian and Congolese. In a landmark event, with 60,000 spectators packed inside Stade Roi Baudouin on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1957, F.C. Leopold hosted Union Saint-Gilloise (USG)<sup>15</sup>. It was the first time a team made up of entirely Congolese players would play against a Belgian team in the Congo. Union, one of the most historic teams in Belgian football history, would win the game 4-2, but not without controversy. The referee was a Belgian army officer. He called off two Congolese goals for offside violations, which caused the Congolese spectators to believe the match was fixed. Local gangs, workers, the unemployed, and many others voiced their distaste. Stones hailed down on the cars of the white colonials. Ultimately, this evening ended with 40 people wounded. ‘It is the first rebellion whose impact goes beyond football. It will be said that this “Congo-Union” affair started the “war of independence”’ (USG). This tension spilled over into the following years.

In 1958, 300 Congolese elite and soldiers traveled to Brussels for an Expo for a few months' stay. This was the first time such stakeholders could come to Belgium, and consequently return with political ideas. For the first time there was a native political entity that viewed Congo as an entity (NCM: National Congolese movement)<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> 60-70 said to be killed

<sup>15</sup> The Union Saint-Gilles are currently in the 2<sup>nd</sup> division of professional Belgian football

<sup>16</sup> In 1960, 17 African countries gained independence. Ghana was the first sub-Saharan country to declare independence in 1957.

# “Football is Gunpowder”

‘In 1830 Belgium became independent after an opera performance; in 1959 Congo demanded independence after a football match...football is gunpowder’. – David Van Reybrouck

By the end of World War II there were 36,080 white people in the Congo, however, the government did not allow Congolese, Ruandans and Urundians to come work as guest workers in Belgium. Only towards the end of the colonial era did the first wave of Congolese and Ruandan and Urudian visitors, athletes, and students arrived (Royal Museum for Central Africa). From 1946 to 1956<sup>17</sup>, there is said to be a relative calmness throughout the Congo, nevertheless little changes for the daily lives of Congolese, and chaos still ensued within the country. In 1952, there were 69,204 white people living in Congo, more than ever before.

At this time, there was a massive abandonment of the country-side, as the Post-war era was marked by migration to cities<sup>18</sup>. With the evolution of cities more and more social (and sport) clubs and associations developed. Within these groups, the most well-known were the évolués. They were usually born in the cities between wars, attended mission schools and higher education institutes, worked for European business, wore European fashion and could obtain a registration card as of 1952, thus allegedly giving them the same rights as Europeans<sup>19</sup>. Many of these évolués and other intellectuals then wrote the ‘Conscience African’, a 1956 manifesto striving for political emancipation, gradual change and to end discrimination.

On January 4th 1959, the scorching sun hovered over a large crowd of 20,000 people that filled Stade Roi Baudouin for a major football match. Meanwhile a major political meeting scheduled across the street at the YMCA was canceled. As the match ended, the football supporters joined in with the disappointed political activists. After a confrontation between a native and a European bus driver, cars were set on fire, stones hailed down on the police and the police retaliated with the use of guns. The chaos would cover a 10-12km zone and would last 3-4 days<sup>20</sup>. The official records state that 47 died and 241 Congolese were wounded, yet eyewitnesses say about 200 or 300 died. After these events, the fight for independence intensified, and the political missions to Belgium continued

On January 20<sup>th</sup> 1960, 90 Congolese and 60 Belgians met at the palace of congress...the Congo would become independent 6 months later...

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<sup>17</sup> In 1949, more and more highways were being built.

<sup>18</sup> In 1940, Kinshasa has a population of 50,000; 300,000 in 1955

<sup>19</sup> Only 217 registration cards given in 1958

<sup>20</sup> Léopoldville at that moment had 400,000 inhabitants, 25,000 of whom were Europeans. There were only 1,380 officers in the city during this evening.

# Pioneers of Football

According to Henri de la Kethille de Ryhove, a Jesuit of noble origin, his uncle priest Raphael de Kethulle (from Bruges) was perhaps the most famous missionary and the greatest promoter of sports including swimming track and field and gymnastics. He spent his life in Kinshasa teaching people to play football, and was the Founder of the Association Sportive Congolese (1919), Congo's first sporting club, which became the Royal Congolese Sports Association in 1939. He was the driving force behind sports infrastructure in Leopoldville: 3 football stadiums, tennis courts and 3 Olympic swimming pools. 'Given the Belgian governments unwillingness to fund African education and social welfare, his network of missionaries was a vital role in developing sport at this time of history. In sports, he mixed people of various backgrounds. He organized inter-Congolese matches, even the first international soccer match.

Born in Luzuna in 1928, and later departing for Kinshasa at age 17, Login Ngwadi, also known as 'Elastique' (The Rubber Band), played as a forward for four years at club Daring, now called Daring club Motema Pembe. Outside of football, he was a manservant/houseboy to Pétillon, the next-to-last governor general of the Belgian Congo in 1952. He worked for the general for 4 years, and Login recalls, 'he called me 'mon fils' (my son). Through his work he was able to even travel to Belgium in 1958.

Some of the earliest Congolese to migrate to Belgium were football players. Léon "Trouet" Motombo Mokuna is a former Congolese footballer who played for Club Sporting Lisbon of Portugal (1953-1955), and later KAA Gent and SV Waregem in Belgium. He is said to be the first African footballer in the Belgian competition, in 1957. Two years after entering professional Belgian football, Mokuna was crowned top scorer of the Belgian league with nineteen goals. He returned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he became national head coach from 1968 to 1970.

Another notable athlete and citizen was Paul Bonga Bonga, one of the first Congolese players in the Belgian football competition. After beginning his career as a barefoot player in the Congo, he played for Standard de Liège (Standard Liège) and R. Charleroi S.C. (Royal Charleroi Sporting Club). Bonga retired and became a player-coach for a regional team called FC Tubize. He returned to the Congo and settled in Kinshasa to be named the national team's technical director, proving to be a trailblazer for Congolese players that would later migrate to Belgium, notably Dimitri M'Buyu who became the first player of African descent to represent Belgium in a FIFA completion in 1987.

Today, Paul Beloy, one of the first black players to feature in the Belgian league, has been an ambassador for the fight against racism. In his co-authored work alongside Frank Van Laeken, entitled 'Vuile zwarte' (Dirty black), the various types of racist incidents are investigated, from the highest division to youth football, with the intention of transforming this awareness into action and concrete policies.

# Questions to promote Classroom Discussion

When did migration commence within a Belgium-Congo context?

What are the root causes of migration within this context? Why did certain people travel to foreign lands and continents? What were their motivations and intentions? In other words, what are some of the 'push and pull' factors of migration?

What have been the consequences of the various forms of migration? What is the impact of migration on both African and Belgian society and culture?

How did the sport of football initially become interwoven and embedded within Congolese society? Who was responsible? For what reasons, their intentions?

How did football (stadiums and atmospheres) evolve over time in both the Congo and Belgium? For what reasons has football (environments) been used beyond playing a sport? (How) Can football help explain the topics of race, ethnicity and racism in both sport and society throughout the last centuries?

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