

Modern Congolese Iconography of Patrice Lumumba in *A Congo Chronicle*

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on the traveling exhibition *A Congo Chronicle: Patrice Lumumba in Urban Art*, mounted by The Museum of African Art, in New York, NY in 1999. The art in the show portrayed Patrice Lumumba (1925-1961) as an enduring heroic figure, who has now taken on religious significance since his death. Lumumba is cemented in the political discourse of an independent Africa, as such he is portrayed in *A Congo Chronicle*, as a symbol of national unity, political freedom and human rights; a cult of personality has arisen around Patrice Lumumba which can be seen through the continued use of his image as a political rallying point. This thesis examines the role art has played in solidifying Lumumba as a symbolic figure in the Congolese political landscape and the significance of popular paintings in the Congo. This thesis also explores how *A Congo Chronicle* is demonstrative of the importance of religious iconography in Congolese culture with imagery such as origin stories, Mami Wata and the representation of Lumumba as Christ. It further contends that in the Congo popular paintings focus not only on aesthetics but just as fundamentally on social discourse. By considering the examples of the origins of popular paintings, their place Congolese culture, the portrayal of Lumumba as a Christ-figure and the continued use of his image in political discourse it becomes apparent that the memory of Lumumba has taken on mythic proportions.

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In truth this thesis began with a trip to the Great Lakes Region of Africa in 2003. That trip shaped the course of my life, developing in me a passion for history, for the transformative power of education and most of all for the beauty of Africa.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1999, the Museum for African Art in New York, NY mounted *A Congo Chronicle: Patrice Lumumba in Urban Art*, an exhibition showcasing representations of Patrice Émery Lumumba (1925-1961), the first democratically elected prime minister of a newly independent Congo. Featuring twenty seven urban Congolese artists, the exhibition was guest curated by Dr. Bogumil Jewsiewicki¹ of Laval University, Québec, QC. The art in the show portrayed Lumumba as an enduring heroic figure, as a symbol of national unity, political freedom and human rights cemented in the political discourse of an independent Africa. *A Congo Chronicle* was designed and first staged by the Museum for African Art before going on to tour eight different museums in the United States and one in Antwerp, Belgium between the years of 1999 and 2009.² The exhibition displayed 110 works, primarily in the style of Congolese popular paintings, created by 27 different artists. Of the twenty-seven artists represented, thirteen had only a single work exhibited, the others contributing two or more works to the exhibit. Yet the majority of the show—39% of all the artworks—was contributed by just two artists, Burozi and Tshibumba Kanda Matulu.³

Following the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961, his image became cemented in both the public and academic discourse that surrounds Congolese popular paintings. This thesis examines the images of Lumumba included in *A Congo Chronicle* in terms of aesthetics, social and political discourse, public memory and religious iconography. Significantly, this thesis explores how *A Congo Chronicle* demonstrates the importance of religious iconography in Congolese culture, by considering the examples of the origins of popular paintings—particularly the portrayal of Lumumba as a Christ-figure—in the context of other spiritual imagery such as origin stories and Mami Wata. In

¹ Two scholars, Johannes Fabian and Bogumil Jewsiewicki, make up the vast majority of archival records on popular painting in the Congo. While other academics build upon their work, at this time the depth of field is lacking, likely due in part to the Congo's tumultuous history in the last century.

² Carol Braide, e-mail message to author, May 15, 2018.

³ In the early 1970s, President Mobutu outlawed the use of Christian first names, requiring citizens instead to add one or more ancestral names (also known as the post-name) to the family name. For example Mobutu himself was born, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu and changed his name to Mobutu Sese Seko. Many Congolese chose to go by their family name alone such as in the case of Burozi. While Tshibumba whose post name is Kanda Matulu, sometimes went by Tshibumba Kanda Matulu or Tshibumba K.M. but most commonly as Tshibumba. Thus I will be using this most common form of his name - Tshibumba.

this thesis I argue that through the continued use of Lumumba's image in political discourse, it is apparent that the memory of Lumumba has taken on mythic proportions. Similarly, it is fundamental to examine why this shift, from political figure to Christ-like figure, has taken place. Drawing on the work of scholars who address memory and trauma, identity politics, and the complex history of the Congo⁴ to form a robust understanding of the politician's place in Congolese culture, this thesis argues that the images of Patrice Lumumba embody the modern religious iconography of the Congo and its break with the traditional, as political power has superseded tribal powers.

A Congo Chronicle indicates how Lumumba is portrayed a cult of personality arose around Lumumba from the continued use of his image as a political rallying point. This thesis examines the role that art has played in solidifying Lumumba as a symbolic figure in the Congolese political landscape. The popular painters featured in this exhibition create dynamic images that tell the story of Lumumba, often with accompanying phrases that highlight this discourse. Due to the work of artists such as Burozi and Tshibumba, Lumumba's legacy has expanded far beyond the continent of Africa.

As Congo's first democratically-elected prime minister, Lumumba came to represent freedom from colonial oppression. He was in power for less than a year before the country fell under the control of military leader Joseph Mobutu during a coup, known as the First Mobutu Coup (September 1960). Lumumba was captured, beaten, and killed due to the direct influence of the CIA and its Belgian subsidiaries⁵ who worked to remove Lumumba from power as he refused to allow foreign powers to continue to control Congolese natural resources, such as copper, gold, diamonds, cobalt, uranium, coltan and oil.⁶ Lumumba's death sparked international outrage and continues to provoke further negotiations on

⁴ The country that is currently known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo has also been known as the Congo, the Belgian Congo and Zaire. For simplicity throughout the paper I have referred to the nation as the Congo, except for direct quotations or where discussing name changes.

⁵ Key players in the international community include the UN Secretary General Hammarskjöld, CIA station chief in the Congo, Lawrence Devlin, director of the CIA, Allen Dulles, Belgian officer Captain Julien Gat, Commander of the Force Publique, Belgian Lieutenant-General Émile Janssens, and the Eisenhower administration who sent the CIA into the Congo.

⁶ Susan Williams, "Congolese uranium and the Cold War." *New African* no. 568 (January 2017): 27, accessed September 24, 2017, <http://0-search.ebscohost.com/mercury.concordia.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=120831559&site=eds-live>.

foreign relations within Africa and pan-African independence.⁷ This socio-political dialogue has been fuelled in part by artists who have used Patrice Lumumba's image and legacy to keep the political discourse for which he stood for in a place of prominence.

The importance of Lumumba in Congolese culture stretches beyond political leadership. He represents the ideals of independence, national unity, democracy, and freedom from colonial oppression. The political art featured in *A Congo Chronicle* should be considered as both typifying political art and distinct as it represents the impact of Lumumba and the cult of personality that continues to exist around his memory.

Firsthand knowledge of the formative 1960s political period in Africa is detached from the lived experience of many Congolese today, and now survives through links constructed by art and academic knowledge.⁸ While the knowledge constructed by and contained within the academy - primarily outside of the Congo - remains beyond the reach of the majority of Congolese citizens, popular paintings provide access to historic accounts. *A Congo Chronicle* curator Jewsiewicki—a leading scholar on French Africa and Congolese popular culture— describes the lack of scholarship within the Congo, “Through government censorship and cruel repression, Lumumba become taboo in all intellectual and cultural arenas, Extensive rigorous studies of the MNC leader are rare among Zairian scholars, intellectuals and activists; when they appeared, they were generally published abroad and late.”⁹ However, the existing local narratives reconfigure the past by shaping knowledge to make it consistent with the current political situation.¹⁰ Popular paintings in the Congo are used as memory pieces by their owners sparking dialogue, discussion and the retelling of the narrative presented in the image. Though these narratives can be distorted by time and political associations. According to Jewsiewicki, Lumumba was, “a founding hero of a new political order in the Congo, in Africa and we may even say among all the ‘oppressed of the earth.’”¹¹ Social actors and artists in particular recount their experiences and conception of politics in relation to Lumumba as he has been constructed

⁷ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle: Patrice Lumumba in Urban Art* (New York, NY: Museum for African Art, 1999), 56.

⁸ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 10.

⁹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 55.

¹⁰ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 10.

¹¹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 10.

in the current political landscape.¹² In fact, memories of Lumumba have taken on various forms and has been idealized and at times banned by the political leaders that have followed him. Nonetheless, Lumumba is remembered by Congolese as the basis on which they affirm their right to dignity and ability to speak up for human rights.¹³

History and Politics of Congo in Patrice Lumumba's time

Ghanaian journalist Cameron Duodu argues that Lumumba was assassinated not as a person but as an idea representing a fully independent Congo committed to African unity not aligned with any foreign powers.¹⁴ This was a significant concern to the international community, and especially the Congo's colonizers, Belgium, because of the rich natural resources, such as copper, gold, diamonds, cobalt, uranium, coltan and oil, in the region that it had been freely exploiting for nearly a century by that time. During the Cold War the Congolese mine Shinkolobwe produced the richest ore in the world with an average of 65% uranium oxide compared to 1% ore found in mines in Canada or the US.¹⁵ The US had an invested interest in making sure that Russia did not gain access to Congolese ores. A year before Independence Patrice Lumumba was asked while in New York if the United States would still have access to Uranium as when Belgian ran the country and his reply was "Belgium doesn't produce any uranium, it would be to the advantage of both our countries if the Congo and United States worked out their own agreements in the future."¹⁶

Unwilling to give up total control, Belgian academics and officials, rather than Congolese politicians, largely wrote the Independence Constitution themselves.¹⁷ Unlike colonial powers, in other African states, the Belgians had made no practical arrangements for an Independent Congo, and no Congolese had previously taken part in government or

¹² Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 11.

¹³ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 11.

¹⁴ Cameron Duodu, "Patrice Lumumba from a Mere Man to a Lasting Symbol." *New African* no. 505 (April 2011): 44. accessed September 24, 2017, <http://0-search.ebscohost.com/mercury.concordia.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=59897956&site=eds-live>.

¹⁵ Susan Williams, "Congolese uranium and the Cold War," 25.

¹⁶ Susan Williams, 27.

¹⁷ Cameron Duodu, "Mere Man to a Lasting Symbol (2)," 78.

public administration at any level.¹⁸ While it was Lumumba who won the popular vote, Belgium asked Joseph Kasavubu, leader of the opposition party ABAKO, who they saw as a more favourable candidate, to form the government. Kasavubu was unable to do so. It was Lumumba who was able to form the government by bringing a coalition together and convincing them that the opposition leader Kasavubu should be the President and he, Lumumba, the Prime Minister.¹⁹ This gave Lumumba primary control of the day-to-day operation of the government, but Kasavubu had the power as President to dismiss the Lumumba as the Prime Minister and call for new elections. This distribution of power was done in part to end Kasavubu's call for the secession of his province of Katanga and the neighbouring province of South Kasai.²⁰ The coalition partners agreed and the deal was announced June 24, 1960.²¹ At this time, the new Prime Minister Lumumba also appointed his friend and supporter Mobutu (born Joseph-Désiré Mobutu) as Secretary of State for National Defense.²²

Lumumba was a polarizing figure and a truly great orator. Lumumba's speech on Independence Day, June 30, 1960, was highly controversial in the international community, particularly to the US and Belgium, because it focused on centered on Congo nationalism and the denouncement of colonialism. He openly voiced anger and preached patriotism to his fellow citizens.²³ Lumumba's speech was seen, by the international community, as his first major political error; the speech broke the traditional rules of decency and diplomacy with two major oversights. First, it was given in the presence of the Belgian King Baudoin (1930-1993 r. 1951-1993) and other internationals, and second, that it was given on the day Independence was symbolically declared by King Baudoin as he relinquished control.²⁴ "We have seen that the law was not the same for a white and a black; accommodating for the first, cruel and inhumane for the other [...] We are no longer your monkeys," he

¹⁸ Brian Urquhart, "The Tragedy of Lumumba." *The New York Review*, (October 2, 2001 - September 2006):4. accessed August 25, 2017. <http://faculty.virginia.edu/usdiphis/readings/Urquhart,%20Lumumba.pdf>.

¹⁹ Cameron Duodu, "Mere Man to Lasting Symbol," 46.

²⁰ While space does not allow for a comprehensive discussion of the Katanga and South Kasai secession several authors have written extensively on the subject including Jules Gérard-Libois (1966), Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo (1988) and René Lemarchand (1962).

²¹ Cameron Duodu, 46.

²² Cameron Duodu, 46.

²³ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 48.

²⁴ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 48.

declared, while gesturing to the Belgian dignitaries.²⁵ In spite of their political standing, even many anti-Lumumba activists recognized the truth of his speech. He spoke words that the Congolese longed to hear and the Belgians feared.

Though disdained by some European countries and the United States, Lumumba's Independence Day speech has become a common image in the lexicon of popular paintings. Tshibumba's famous *Le 30 Juin 1960, Zaire Indépendant* (c. 1970-1980)²⁶ (figure 1) depicts Lumumba standing in the centre before a microphone, with his right arm raised, index finger pointing and his left hand holding a globe. Standing immediately behind Lumumba, the Belgian King Baudouin surveys the scene. The crowd is jubilant in this painting, in contrast to Tshibumba's *Le 30 Juin 1960* (c. 1970-1980) (Figure 2) which illustrates the tension more likely marking the day with armed silhouettes in the background surrounding national monuments, state buildings and the crowd of onlookers. Burozi takes the drama of the historic scene further, in *Lumumba's Speech Causes Panic* (c. 1960-1990) (Figure 3). Lumumba is again portrayed speaking into a microphone pointing with his right hand, but in Burozi's work, the only crowd depicted is a group of six foreigners fleeing in terror. In *A Congo Chronicle*, the exhibition contains two other examples by Burozi both titled *Panique du discours de Mr. Lumumba, M.N.C* (c. 1960-1990) (Figures 4 and 5), (but signed by Tshibumba) that depict the panic caused by his speech. In these, listeners are removed from the event, instead hearing the speech via the radio. In one image (Figure 4) a white woman pulls at her hair while in the other (Figure 5) a white man drop-kicks the radio. The diverse range of images that illustrate Lumumba's Independence speech and the multitude of reactions to it are demonstration of the strong reaction the international community had to his continued push for economic independence. As Lumumba knew, political independence was meaningless without economic independence.²⁷ June 30, 1960

²⁵ Cameron Duodu, "Mere Man to Lasting Symbol (2)," 80.

²⁶ Images in this exhibition are difficult to date exactly due to the mass scale of production by many of the artists, the frequency of image repetition and the way they were collected. For example, Léon Verbeek and Bogumil Jewsiewicki bought 3000 works from local owners - not direct from the artists - between 1993 and 1997, making the date of production an estimate by the author, as other sources do not give estimated dates when none is known. Date ranges are estimated based on the period between the historic event depicted and the collectors last known contact with the artist.

²⁷ Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart: The Land the World Forgot* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2006), 2.

is remembered and celebrated by Congolese they were once again declared free citizens of a sovereign nation.

News of Patrice Lumumba's Independence Day speech spread throughout Leopoldville²⁸ and beyond, filling the Congolese public with a sense of euphoria. General Janssens of Belgium responded with opposition and announced to the *Force Publique*²⁹ under his control that all would be the same as before Independence, effectively telling them Belgium would continue to rule the country and that there would be no move to Africanize the exclusively white officer corps. Within hours of his statement the Congolese troops in the *Force Publique* mutinied.³⁰ More Congolese units were brought in to restore order from other parts of the country, but they too joined the mutiny, attacking white officers and their families. In response, Belgium flew in more military to evacuate their nationals, swelling their force from 3,800 to 10,000 troops.³¹ This looked suspiciously like a colonialist coup to Lumumba and the Congolese army.³² In response, Lumumba appointed Mobutu as the army chief of staff, who then persuaded the Congolese troops to return to the barracks during the mutiny.³³ Although Mobutu was once a friend of Lumumba, he was to become a key player in all the deceit and betrayal that followed Independence.³⁴ Unbeknownst to Lumumba, Lawrens Devlin, the CIA station chief in the Congo, had developed a peculiarly close relationship with Mobutu.³⁵

Lumumba urged Congolese to resist moves by Belgian troops and appealed to independent African countries to help expel Belgian troops. The Ghanaian army came to the Congo's aid but Belgium, playing on the United States' Cold War fears, claimed that white officers were Russian communists infiltrating the country; in reality, they were British.³⁶ Because this occurred at the height of the Cold War, this accusation caused

²⁸ The capital of the Belgian Congo now renamed as Kinshasa.

²⁹ The Force Publique was the gendarmerie under the Belgian Colonialists, it was made up of an exclusively white officer corps and Congolese Non-Commissioned Members. After Independence the Force Publique was renamed to the Congolese National Army or the ANC.

³⁰ Cameron Duodu, "Mere Man to Lasting Symbol (2)," 81.

³¹ Cameron Duodu, "Mere Man to Lasting Symbol (2)," 81.

³² Cameron Duodu, 81.

³³ Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart*, 4.

³⁴ Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart*, 1.

³⁵ Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart*, 4.

³⁶ Cameron Duodu, "Mere Man to Lasting Symbol (2)," 81.

concern from the US and bolstered their hostility towards Lumumba, who had appealed to Ghana for aid. Allen Dulles, then Director of the CIA, writes in a message to the Leopoldville CIA office,

In high quarters here it is the clear-cut conclusion that if [Lumumba] continues to hold high office, the inevitable result will [be] disastrous consequences ... for the interests of the free world generally. Consequently, we conclude that his removal must be an urgent and prime objective.³⁷

The CIA and Belgium wanted Kasavubu to force a vote on non-confidence against Lumumba.³⁸ Two days before the vote was to take place, Kasavubu used powers given to him as the President by the Belgians in the Congolese constitution to fire Lumumba as the Prime Minister. In retaliation, Lumumba fired Kasavubu, which was not constitutional, but senators sided with him, as did the lower House of Parliament.³⁹ On September 5, 1960, Lumumba gave a speech to the Congolese parliament expounding on his actions, stating,

How can a person who commands a minority of votes in this House sack the one who has the majority? It is not done anywhere there is a parliamentary system. It cannot be done in Belgium! Why must it be allowed to be done here?⁴⁰

Congo CIA station chief Devlin, financed Mobutu's efforts and was informed of Mobutu's capture of Lumumba and his plan to hand him over to South Kasai. The South Kasai leader, Albert Kalonji, wanted to murder Lumumba, in retaliation for civilian massacres in South Kasai enacted by the ANC who had been called in by Lumumba to stop the succession immediately following independence.⁴¹ There is no indication that Devlin voiced opposition; according to Weissman, this permissive stance was likely a factor in the decision to move Lumumba.⁴² Devlin also deliberately kept Washington out of the loop. If they had have been fully informed, Weissman has further argued, they likely would have

³⁷ Cameron Duodu, 83.

³⁸ Stephen R. Weissman. "What Really Happened in Congo," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 4 (July 2014): 16, accessed September 24, 2017, <http://0-www.jstor.org/mercury.concordia.ca/stable/24483553>.

³⁹ Cameron Duodu, "Mere Man to Lasting Symbol (2)," 82.

⁴⁰ Cameron Duodu, 82.

⁴¹ Stephen R. Weissman, "What Really Happened in Congo," 17.

⁴² Stephen R. Weissman, 17.

slowed or paused the operation, as a new administration under US President John F. Kennedy was coming into office at this time.⁴³

Patrice Lumumba was guarded in his official residence by UN troops. . Hammarskjöld - who was in charge of the UN mission in the Congo - refused to allow for Lumumba's arrest, which the US ambassador, Wilton Wendell Blancké, had been urging.⁴⁴ However, according to a memo written by Brian Urquhart, former Undersecretary-General to the UN "In accordance with UN policy of noninterference in internal affairs, the chief of the UN operation, Rajeshwar Dayal gave orders that UN troops across the country should not interfere with Lumumba's movements or those of his pursuers."⁴⁵ Upon leaving his residence on September 14, 1960, Lumumba was captured by Congolese troops in Lodja and imprisoned in Thysville until he was moved to Elisabethville on January 17, 1961.⁴⁶ This arrest at Lodja is captured by Tshibumba in the painting *Arrestation à Lodja* (c. 1970-1980) (Figure 6). Tshibumba pictures Lumumba giving himself up freely in order to free his young son, who appears in the bottom right corner of the painting.

While Lumumba was arrested by Congolese soldiers, De Witte contends, Belgians conceived the plan to execute Lumumba and Belgian officers and officials were present throughout his last hours.⁴⁷ Indeed there was a Belgian plot to kill Lumumba nicknamed 'Operation Barracuda,' run by the Belgian minister for African Affairs Count d'Aspremont Lynden.⁴⁸ Lumumba was taken to Elisabethville, from Lodja, where he was then taken to an empty home in the bush where a Belgian officer Captain Julien Gat took charge of Lumumba's final hours.⁴⁹

Patrice Lumumba as Political Hero and Crusader

Popular memory in the Congo, particularly among his own tribe, the Tetela people, embraces Lumumba's traits that most align him as a cultural hero. Jean Omasombo Tshonda, a Congolese historian, records,

⁴³ Stephen R. Weissman, 17.

⁴⁴ Brian Urquhart, "The Tragedy of Lumumba," 5.

⁴⁵ Brian Urquhart, 5.

⁴⁶ Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart*, 1.

⁴⁷ Ludo de Witte, *The assassination of Lumumba*, (New York, NY: Verso, 2001), 117-127.

⁴⁸ Cameron Duodu, "Mere Man to Lasting Symbol (2)," 83.

⁴⁹ Brian Urquhart, "The Tragedy of Lumumba," 6.

According to Lumumba's mother, Julienne Amato (interviewed in Kinshasa in 1993), and to Antoine Omatuku, the chief of Lumumba's native village, Onalua, since 1944, the birth of the boy was preceded by extraordinary natural phenomena: a shooting star, the growth of a six-crowned palm tree, an earthquake.⁵⁰

Moreover, Lumumba is believed to have been invulnerable to bullets, and he is also credited with predicting and indeed choosing the time and place of his own death.⁵¹ Hero worship, like that of the Congolese people, and particularly the Tetela, toward Lumumba, can be described as a yearning for an experience where one becomes like the hero. As noted sociologist Orrin Edgar Klapp demonstrates, heroes that exist as a group "superself" occur primarily in times of crisis.⁵² This is particularly common in modernizing societies, who often go through a "strong man" era when emerging leaders symbolize a national identity which forms as tribal and ethnic identities weaken.⁵³ In the case of the Congo, Lumumba superseded his own ethnic origins to embody the struggle for national independence and economic freedom as a national identity emerged. Jewsiewicki explains,

Heroes older than or contemporary with the historical Lumumba enable these different groups to appropriate the national hero. Lumpungu II, Kabongo and Sendwe, for example historicize and localize (ethnicize) regional strands of memory concerning the national hero - who, in the 1970s was also a universal hero.⁵⁴

In this manner, Lumumba was able to unite often disparate tribal groups under the banner of a Congolese national identity, as he embodied the nation as a whole and not only his tribal origins as many leaders of the time still did, such as Tshombe and Kalonji.

Similarly, the function of the hero is to supply a vicarious voyage - an exciting movement or change of status - through their actions; heroes realize dreams for people that they cannot realize for themselves.⁵⁵ Klapp further elucidates on this point, "Societies use heroes as a character-building force to establish traits that help a person play expected

⁵⁰ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 29.

⁵¹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 78.

⁵² Orrin Edgar Klapp, *Collective Search for Identity* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969), 211-212.

⁵³ Orrin Edgar Klapp, *Collective Search for Identity*, 212.

⁵⁴ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 27.

⁵⁵ Orrin Edgar Klapp, *Collective Search for Identity*, 214.

or admired roles.”⁵⁶ Furthermore, the role the hero plays is more important than their personality, so one can idolize a hero while still disliking certain traits.⁵⁷ Heroes often go through a transcendent experience, creating a new persona with a fresh point of view, who now appears to the people as superior to their forefathers and peers.⁵⁸ In the exhibition catalogue for *A Congo Chronicle*, Jewsiewicki describes Lumumba's rise to herodism in these terms: “orally transmitted memory, especially Tetela memory, imagines Lumumba as a prodigy come out of nowhere, born of poor parents, in some versions of slaves. From a thousand ordeals he emerges victorious and great.”⁵⁹

Klapp describes three stages of liberation through the role of the hero: awakening to new values, alienation from the perspective of the old group, and identity dislocation.⁶⁰ Alienation from the perspective of the old group makes it so the hero cannot go home again, so drastically has their perspective changed. Similarly, identity dislocation relates to the development of an identity that does not fit into the old role structure. The life of Lumumba closely follows this narrative. From 1950-1956 he wrote many articles for indigenous newspapers and magazines that were conciliatory and focused on colonialism in a positive light.⁶¹ Lumumba's book *Congo My Country* (1962)⁶² - written while in prison⁶³ - develops a typical colonialist discourse believing that it is humanitarian in principle. In 1958, however, Lumumba attended the Pan-African Conference in Accra where he met Kwame Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Gamal Abdel Nasser and Frantz Fanon, and this encounter significantly changed his political leanings.⁶⁴ Lumumba was inspired by the Pan-Africanism of Ghana's Nkrumah in particular. At the conference, Lumumba upheld the ideals of unconditional and immediate emancipation, creating a harsh break from his earlier

⁵⁶ Orrin Edgar Klapp, 220.

⁵⁷ Orrin Edgar Klapp, 221.

⁵⁸ Orrin Edgar Klapp, 229.

⁵⁹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 78.

⁶⁰ Orrin Edgar Klapp, *Collective Search for Identity*, 230-233.

⁶¹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 46.

⁶² Patrice Lumumba's book was published posthumously.

⁶³ Prior to becoming Prime Minister, Lumumba, was arrested July 6, 1956 for embezzling funds while working for the postal service. He was sentenced to 2 years in jail which was reduced to 1 year. For further information on Lumumba's early years see Thomas R. Kanza (1977), Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja (2014) and Leo Zeilig (2015).

⁶⁴ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 46.

writings.⁶⁵ From this point onwards, Lumumba was a strict Pan-Africanist, he openly voiced anger, denounced colonial rule and preached patriotism to his fellow citizens.⁶⁶

Any crowd that shares the same enthusiasm for a hero creates a sense of fellowship that strengthens the hero worship.⁶⁷ Moreover, for a hero to enter into cultic status there must be opportunities for psychic contact with the hero, symbolic devices that enable devotees to identify with him closely and information used for inspirational purposes.⁶⁸ In the case of Lumumba, devotees engage with his memory and the ideals he stood for through popular paintings.

According to Klapp, heroes are different from crusaders: Whereas heroes take people on vicarious journeys, crusaders take them on real ones.⁶⁹ According to Klapp, a crusade is a type of movement that causes one to rise above ordinary life and commit earnestly to something in which one believes. It is capable of producing powerful effects on society and one's conception of the self.⁷⁰ Crusade mentality is often seen as righteous. Similarly, its power derives from its ability to mobilize, to change people and its courage or presumption to change society.⁷¹ A crusader's sense of wrong to be righted requires them to picture evil in terms that seem vivid, overheated and absolute.⁷² Klapp's research expands upon several types of heroes⁷³: censorial, rights and welfare, revolutionary, evangelistic and reactionary.⁷⁴

In the case of Lumumba, his crusade against colonial powers falls into the category of both rights and welfare as well as revolutionary. Though Lumumba was a devout Catholic, it was not part of his political stance; evangelistic appeals were made only after his death and were never by Lumumba himself. His primary crusading fight was for the rights of Congolese people as an independent nation without interference from foreign

⁶⁵ Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart*, 3.

⁶⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 48.

⁶⁷ Orrin Edgar Klapp, *Collective Search for Identity*, 239.

⁶⁸ Orrin Edgar Klapp, 239.

⁶⁹ Orrin Edgar Klapp, 257.

⁷⁰ Orrin Edgar Klapp, 257.

⁷¹ Orrin Edgar Klapp, 259.

⁷² Orrin Edgar Klapp, 262.

⁷³ Censorial crusaders are seen to suppress vice or expel evil. Rights and welfare crusaders primarily fight to improve the status of the underprivileged. Evangelistic crusaders attempt to save the world through spirituality and religion. Revolutionary crusaders seek to overthrow the political status quo while reactionist are counter crusaders who view crusaders as villains.

⁷⁴ Orrin Edgar Klapp, *Collective Search for Identity*, 263.

powers, in the most basic sense, to break the hold of Belgian colonials. Klapp argues that crusading overtures are only called for when the job is so difficult and extraordinary that heroic energies must be mobilized and there is a moral issue at stake.⁷⁵ The sense of right must be strong enough to withstand challenge and make the fighter unwilling to compromise.⁷⁶ Franz Fanon, the noted Algerian decolonial theorist, similarly describes Lumumba's faith in his life's work and his people as a "mission." "Lumumba believed in his mission. He had an exaggerated confidence in the people. The people for him, not only could not deceive themselves but could not be deceived."⁷⁷ Crusaders also tend to view half measures and concessions as treason.⁷⁸ Certainly in the case of Lumumba, there was no room for compromise or concessions when it came to negotiating for Congolese rights and freedoms - a fight so virtuous that he was willing to sacrifice his life. Indeed, his entire mission was founded on sacrifice. He once said, "I have sacrificed everything (my position, my family, my leisure), it is in order to serve our fatherland."⁷⁹

Undeniably, most political revolutions fall into the category of crusade. Crusades blend ritual and mystique of a cult with practical goals of work and struggle for something.⁸⁰ As Klapp explains, "a crusade leader refreshes identity; through him a mass can experience an uplift without personal contact, as is true of most symbolic leaders."⁸¹ Certainly, Lumumba can be typified as both hero and crusader. While he was alive he led his people on a political crusade for economic independence. After his death Patrice Lumumba has taken on larger than life ideations in the minds of Congolese, Africans and others fighting for independence from foreign oppressors. Lumumba is a hero to the oppressed the world over. His fervent fight to bring the end to colonial oppression and renewed Congolese independence firmly positioned him as a hero in the eyes of his people—and others across the world who have experienced similar histories of colonialism.

⁷⁵ Orrin Edgar Klapp, 267.

⁷⁶ Orrin Edgar Klapp, 272.

⁷⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 193.

⁷⁸ Orrin Edgar Klapp, *Collective Search for Identity*, 276.

⁷⁹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 49.

⁸⁰ Orrin Edgar Klapp, *Collective Search for Identity*, 293.

⁸¹ Orrin Edgar Klapp, *Collective Search for Identity*, 303.

SECTION 2

POPULAR PAINTING IN THE CONGO

In Africa, where the authority of the modern state has been inherited from colonists, reactions from the average citizen are often difficult to detect.⁸² Nonetheless, Jewsiewicki argues that the study of self-representations is essential to the diachronic analysis of the dynamics and history of social movements.⁸³ Popular painting is an art form in which local knowledge and practices are used to counter state power through the mobilization of collective memory and imagination. In its earliest form, at the beginning of the 20th century, popular painting was derived from rural street art, seen on the outer walls of village huts.⁸⁴ Similar to its rural origins, popular painting draws on images and modes of expression based in traditional knowledge.⁸⁵ The images actively participate in the reproduction of identity and the popular consciousness within the community. The gathering around a village mural gives rise to social memory recognizing, negotiating and confirming belonging; all within its presence.⁸⁶ Painters draw on the village origins of popular painting by using a set of processes of traditional thinking to break into the arena of contemporary politics.⁸⁷ Likewise, a confrontation is established between the images which exist as a concept and discourse on society, and the concrete form the painter gives it.⁸⁸ In contrast, Congolese painters who attend the local colonial art schools often think of themselves as artists in the Western sense and do not produce popular paintings.

In the Congo there were and continue to be two main centers of culture, Kinshasa and Lubumbashi; both known for their distinct contexts. Lumumba himself was born in the province of Kasai but later moved to the capital, Kinshasa, known as Leopoldville at the time. Since the 1920's, Kinshasa has thrived as the seat of political power and the centre of

⁸² T. K. Biaya, "La Peinture Populaire comme Mode d'Expression Politique des Classes Dominées au Zaïre, 1960-1989," *Contemporary French Civilization* 14, no. 2 (1990): 334, accessed May 12, 2018, <http://0-search.ebscohost.com/mercury.concordia.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hia&AN=46698763&site=eds-live>.

⁸³ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Une Société Urbaine "Moderne" et ses Représentations: La Peinture Populaire à Kinshasa (Congo) (1960-2000)," *Le Mouvement Social*, no. 204 (July -September 2003):131, accessed May 15, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3779940>.

⁸⁴ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Une Société Urbaine "Moderne," 135.

⁸⁵ T. K. Biaya, "La Peinture Populaire," 342.

⁸⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Une Société Urbaine "Moderne," 132.

⁸⁷ T. K. Biaya, "La Peinture Populaire," 344.

⁸⁸ T. K. Biaya, 343.

commerce and administration.⁸⁹ Kinshasa is typified as a place where big financial risks can be paid off by equally big rewards while Lubumbashi is known for hard work, perseverance and continuity.⁹⁰ In the Congo the official state language is French⁹¹ Kinshasa the primary language is Lingala—the language of the administration, commerce, and the former colonial army—while in Lubumbashi, Kingwana, a dialect of Swahili, is the dominant language.⁹² Despite their differences, there are historical icons shared by both centres of Congolese culture: images of the mermaid Mami Wata and the suffering under Belgian colonization.⁹³ These primary icons form the basis on which the popular painting genre developed, yet they are expressed differently in the two main cultural centres. In Kinshasa, artists use bright colours, explosive renderings, and a willingness to push the boundaries on both aesthetic and moral levels, as seen in the work of Chéri-Benga⁹⁴ - a popular painter of some renown with works in the collections of both the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Lubumbashi's artists, in contrast, such as Tshibumba, are known for their greater concern with dialogue. The Lubumbashi artists address their viewer with descriptive writing across the paintings and dialogue between the parties depicted in the image. In the Lubumbashi context, a painting is valued for its capacity to remind the viewer of past events and present predicaments.⁹⁵

Popular painting in its current form developed in southern Congo in the mid-twentieth century for an urban petite bourgeoisie.⁹⁶ This shift took place as the colonial administration attempted to form a group of 'évolués' -- educated, Europeanized Africans - encouraging them to maintain an urban house organized around the living room, where popular paintings would be hung on the walls.⁹⁷ During the 1970s the emphasis shifted from regional to national - amongst a population haunted by colonial brutalities and

⁸⁹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 13.

⁹⁰ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 13.

⁹¹ Approximately 47% of the population of the Congo can speak, read and write in French, in the capital, Kinshasa, this percentage goes up to 67,

⁹² Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 13.

⁹³ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 14.

⁹⁴ Born Benga Nzau, the artist now calls himself Chéri-Benga sometimes appearing without hyphenation.

⁹⁵ Johannes Fabian, *Memory Against Culture*, 74.

⁹⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 94.

⁹⁷ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Une Société Urbaine "Moderne," 135.

secessionist violence - which was seen with the rise of imagery of Lumumba - a national hero.⁹⁸

Primarily by self-taught artists, Congolese popular paintings are made with locally-available materials and sold locally for little profit. The problems of art supply availability, or the lack thereof, informs many painters' colour choices as they have a limited palette based on what is available to them. Ethnographer Johannes Fabian once witnessed Tshibumba cutting open a ballpoint pen to mix the ink with white latex paint to create the colour of the sky - traces of the ink are visible in blue smudges on the finished painting.⁹⁹ Similarly to palette limitations, popular painters work within a sphere of limited stylistic conventions. They use the same conventional techniques over and over when painting background imagery, most notably with a repeated use of stippling the foliage of trees and working up from a ground that takes the shape of a highly blended landscape. There is also a clear hierarchy in the manner that people are depicted within the genre; people are given attention in accordance with their importance in the event being portrayed and their place on the canvas. The people appearing in the foreground of the image - usually a protagonist - show close attention to detail with careful rendering. This is evidenced by the use of shading and highlighting to depict the planes of the face, whereas in the middle ground of the image, faces are often painted simply as flat planes of colour, and in the background, most faces are reduced to gestural black lines with points of colour to denote clothing.¹⁰⁰ The style of popular painting is always figurative, not given to the mildly abstract generalizations that are typical of other African colonial art schools.¹⁰¹

Congolese popular painters' chief aim is to sell their work.¹⁰² Thus, most painters in the Congo view their artistic practices in regard to their salability. In order to sell their work, most paintings are usually small so they are inexpensive enough to easily find a buyer. As a rule, artists who create popular paintings have to paint and sell one work a day

⁹⁸ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 94.

⁹⁹ Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 242.

¹⁰⁰ Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, 244.

¹⁰¹ Johannes Fabian, 195.

¹⁰² Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 21.

to be able to make a modest living.¹⁰³ They generally find their customers in places of commerce and entertainment. Primarily, their clientele are those who desire to be part of the petit bourgeoisie, which can be expressed in the way that they decorate their homes or workspaces.¹⁰⁴ In social and economic terms, genre paintings¹⁰⁵ are therefore considered part of the process of ‘embourgeoisement.’¹⁰⁶

Genre painting was the most common between 1966-1976, which were years of relative calm and affluence in the Congo, but still continues to a lesser degree in the Congo of today.¹⁰⁷ On the local market it is extremely unlikely for a painter to find a single customer able to buy more than 2-3 pieces, nor would the customer have the space to display more paintings than that, yet at the height of its popularity, estimates for Lubumbashi alone puts the volume of production and consumption at 10,000 paintings sold per year.¹⁰⁸ As a testament to its local popularity, at this time this vast production and consumption was primarily confined to townships where tourists almost never ventured, keeping the genre circulating within the local context even without a foreign market for these works. Today, with an increasing international presence in the form of aid workers and foreign investors, this is no longer the case; occasionally, the paintings are displayed in markets or roadside exhibitions, allowing for the possibility of interacting with the foreign market, where artists can sell directly to buyers.¹⁰⁹

Moreover, in this local context, popular painting is viewed as a craft and not a vocation. This is closely linked to the fact that the ‘authorship of a painting is also viewed quite differently in the Congo. According to Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, an art historian and curator of African art, “Training, or the lack of it, deeply affects attitudes towards originality or its opposite, emulation. In an apprenticeship there is a pre-existing set of models which the aspiring practitioner must learn to emulate.”¹¹⁰ A painting’s author is

¹⁰³ Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom: Anthropology and Popular Culture* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1998) 50.

¹⁰⁴ Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom*, 50.

¹⁰⁵ The term genre painting is used interchangeably with the term popular painting in the discourse of this variety of art in the Congo.

¹⁰⁶ Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, 194.

¹⁰⁷ Johannes Fabian, 196.

¹⁰⁸ Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom*, 50-51.

¹⁰⁹ Johannes Fabian, 58.

¹¹⁰ Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art* (London: Thames et Hudson, 2014), 195.

understood as the person who has established a relationship with the client and negotiated the deal. A painter may negotiate a deal for a specific piece and then commission another artist to make it, but sign it themselves. The signature on the painting is a sign of intellectual property rather than a maker's mark.¹¹¹ There are several examples of this type of authorship appearing in *A Congo Chronicle* such as both versions of *Panique du discours de Mr. Lumumba, M.N.C.* (Figures 4 and 5) which were painted by Burozi but signed by Tshibumba this signified that Tshibumba was the artist to negotiate their creation with the client.

Throughout a popular painting's journey, the customer is always in mind. An artist only creates an image that they know will sell; they also keep the image small so that it is affordable and accessible. Artists may even incorporate something of personal significance for their buyers. Paintings depicting the struggle for independence, Katanga secession or Belgian colonization were often customized with a symbol of the customer's personal memories - colonial buildings may be inscribed with the buyer's birthplace, for example, or a train may be shown at a familiar train station, or other scenes from a specific town may be depicted.¹¹² However, these paintings are not sentimental possessions for their owners; rather, the paintings are readily replaced or discarded should an artwork deteriorate or be damaged.¹¹³ Instead, paintings are kept to provoke remembrance, to act as conversation pieces and not to be resold or given away.¹¹⁴

Congolese Colonialism and Collective Memory in Art

Congolese popular paintings hold a unique place in the art world and the African art market. The paintings are primarily viewed within the context of their social commentary rather than their aesthetic value. They mobilise memory of historic events to create a discourse on the present. In this fashion, popular paintings have a pragmatic as well as a semiotic function; every genre picture is capable of evoking 'the whole story.'¹¹⁵ This idea is described by Congolese with the term *ukumbusho* which roughly translates to 'a quality

¹¹¹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 21.

¹¹² Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, 209.

¹¹³ Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom*, 51.

¹¹⁴ Johannes Fabian, 51.

¹¹⁵ Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom*, 52-53.

capable of triggering memories'.¹¹⁶ According to Fabian, "Popular painting not only produced images of power, it created, within the overall practice of popular culture, a space of freedom from control by government or by the special interests pursued by large employers and the missions."¹¹⁷ Thus, popular painting is a form of resistance to colonial symbolic power and an assertion of postcolonial independence.¹¹⁸ It is because the images express and evoke memories, make statements about colonial history, and present predicaments, that they are loved and embraced by urban Congolese.¹¹⁹ More than just represent, at the time of their emergence, popular paintings give voice to history.

The colonialism experienced by the Congo was among the worst - if not the worst - on the continent. Hugh McCullam, a journalist and author who worked extensively in the troubled Great Lakes Region of Africa, usefully describes the legacy Belgium left in the Congo,

In 1910 the Congo became the Belgian Congo until 1960 when independence was granted. While the country's atrocities generally remain unknown and the legacy of 10 million deaths is horrible enough, the impact of Belgium's takeover of the Congo created a tragic example of governance, essentially teaching that authority confers the power to steal, to brutalize, to oppress and to murder, rape and pillage with impunity. And the practical corollary to this lesson was that the bigger the title, the bigger the theft.¹²⁰

The trauma experienced by the nation under the Belgians and particularly King Leopold was very present in the society in which Lumumba was raised and rose to power. Cathy Caruth, a leading scholar of trauma and the modes in which it is perceived and conceptualized, describes trauma as encompassing a social dimension, which was certainly the case in the Congo during the colonial era. However, she argues, shared trauma can also act as a source of commonality, and collective estrangement can become the basis for community.¹²¹ As Caruth describes, "collective trauma works its way slowly and even

¹¹⁶ Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, 195.

¹¹⁷ Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom*, 53.

¹¹⁸ Johannes Fabian, 60.

¹¹⁹ Johannes Fabian, 64.

¹²⁰ Hugh McCullam, *Africa's Broken Heart*, xiii.

¹²¹ Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 185.

insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with trauma.”¹²² Thus, traumatic experiences can become the prevailing mood of a community, but can unite it as well.¹²³

The artists in *A Congo Chronicle* deal with the communal trauma of Congolese colonialism in popular paintings. The depiction of colonialism appears frequently in the multiple images titled *The Belgian Colony* or *The Whip*.¹²⁴ The exhibition includes examples by Tshibumba, Angali and Nkulu wa Nkulu. Jewsiewicki describes how these images are used in popular memory as,

Under cover of the colonial past, the “Belgian colony” icon deals with relations between the state and its subjects, between power and those over whom power is exercised. It clearly indicates that the dominant form of the political tie is violence; and it shows that the political field is reserved for men. Men exercise power, and submit to it; when women are in the picture, they are only there to express the people’s suffering.

According to Simone Weil, violence turns anyone subjected to it into a thing.¹²⁵ Fabian also describes this phenomenon stating, “As far as human Africa was concerned, exploration depended on forgetting as denial of recognition.”¹²⁶ Certainly for the Belgians, the Congolese on whom they were imposing a reign of terror were not considered human. Congolese artists work against this by presenting in a vivid manner how colonialism was not passively endured but suffered and resisted by individuals, communities, and the nation.

In a similar mode, Susan Sontag, who has written extensively on photography, culture and trauma, discusses how the memories of war are primarily local. Popular painters address these localized memories by incorporating an element of familiarity for their clients into the standard images of the genre. For example, painters may inscribe the territory their client was originally from on an administration building, or a train station,

¹²² Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 187.

¹²³ Cathy Caruth, 190.

¹²⁴ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 18.

¹²⁵ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 12.

¹²⁶ Johannes Fabian, *Memory Against Culture*, 69.

often located prominently in the background of the image.¹²⁷ Sontag interprets the iconography of suffering worthy of representation as products of wrath, divine or human.¹²⁸ The wrath felt and depicted by the Congolese people was nearly always at the hands of humans. Sontag further argues,

Photographs of the victims of war are themselves a species of rhetoric. They reiterate. They simplify. They agitate. They create the illusion of consensus.... The photographs are a means of making 'real' (or making "more real") matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore.¹²⁹

In the case of popular paintings this is only partially true. The violence portrayed in images such as *The Belgian Colony* and *The Whip* are created by and intended for the community that experienced the trauma. Thus there is no need to 'make real' the images and experiences are all too real to those who experienced them firsthand. Instead, popular paintings are intended to be a form of rhetoric, provoking thought and inciting conversation as a form of collective memory.

Jewsiewicki describes, "collective memory as scholarly history is in part a product of political institutions which justify and legitimate themselves through discourses on the past."¹³⁰ Likewise, Sontag describes how collective memory is not remembering but stipulating, becoming a political act in itself.¹³¹ Institutional discourse on the past functions as much to highlight certain facts as it does to remove others.¹³² As Marvin Minsky expresses, "So we shall view memories as entities that predispose the mind to deal with new situations in old, remembered ways."¹³³ Jewsiewicki contends that in the Congo, every regional collective was as much taught in school as imposed through the exercise of justice practice and the power of native chiefs.¹³⁴ State power—as a bureaucratic and military

¹²⁷ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 18.

¹²⁸ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 40.

¹²⁹ Susan Sontag, 6-7.

¹³⁰ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Collective Memory," 196.

¹³¹ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 86.

¹³² Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Collective Memory," 198.

¹³³ Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 170.

¹³⁴ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Collective Memory," 213-214.

apparatus with vast display of instruments of constraint—leads civilians to believe they may flee, avoid or corrupt state power but cannot combat it politically.¹³⁵

Tshibumba - An Example of a Congolese Popular Painter

While many works in the exhibition were created primarily by two artists, Burozi and his former apprentice Tshibumba, the vast majority of the archival record is on Tshibumba because of his unique relationship with the ethnographer, Fabian. Tshibumba provides an interesting example of a popular painter who worked within the local Congolese context during the height of its popularity and production. In many ways his work is typical of the genre in its aesthetic, but Tshibumba's work is unique in its progressive specialization in historical themes.¹³⁶ While the work he produced fits within the domain of genre painting, Tshibumba himself is exceptional for his part in the publication of the book - *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (1996) - that came out of his relationship with Fabian.

In the early 1970s Tshibumba worked for local African clients, where his paintings served as part of an urban collective memory rather than historical knowledge of artisanry.¹³⁷ When Tshibumba met ethnographer, Johannes Fabian, in a chance encounter on the side of the road, he found a customer whose interests were not limited to pictures, but in the exploration of Congolese socio-political history as well.¹³⁸ Tshibumba sees himself as more than an artist, as he consciously and explicitly qualifies his work as that of a historian.¹³⁹ This is demonstrated both through the transcribed dialogue that accompanies each image in Fabian's *Remembering the Present* (1996), and by Tshibumba's own 'Vocabulaire' which he describes as "a history of colonization written by the colonized for the colonized."¹⁴⁰ The relationship that developed allowed Tshibumba to expand

¹³⁵ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, 219.

¹³⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Collective Memory and the Stakes of Power. A Reading of Popular Zairian Historical Discourses." *History in Africa* 13 (1986): 199, accessed July 5, 2017, doi:10.2307/3171542.

¹³⁷ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Collective Memory," 200.

¹³⁸ Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, 220.

¹³⁹ Johannes Fabian, *Anthropology with an Attitude: Critical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 92.

¹⁴⁰ Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom*, 116.

beyond the usual range of genre paintings to paint a project in which he aimed to present the history of the Congo in 101 paintings - a significant number of which were included in *A Congo Chronicle*.¹⁴¹ Fabian describes how his sponsorship allowed Tshibumba to create this project,

In later conversations he talked about feeling confined by the generic canon of subjects that had emerged in Shaba and defined the local market. He thought of himself as a historian and an educator of his people. But he knew that his local customers would never offer him the opportunity to make the comprehensive statement he wanted to make. For his voice to be heard, in images and words, Tshibumba needed the sponsorship of someone like this expatriate anthropologist who, he suspected, might take an interest in his story.¹⁴²

In fact, Tshibumba's work is unequalled for its scope and depth within Congolese art.¹⁴³

Meetings are the subject of about a quarter of Tshibumba's 101 paintings about the history of the Congo.¹⁴⁴ Encounters or meetings play an important role as they structure history as a sequence of events. Tshibumba views the history of the Congo as a succession of encounters gone fatefully wrong. According to Fabian, Tshibumba's use of juxtapositions entitles one to qualify his approach to thought and artistic creation as dialectical.¹⁴⁵ Eileen Moyer, a scholar who studies Eastern Africa, characterizes Tshibumba's historical paintings thusly, "Tshibumba's history is a popular one that is at times idiosyncratic and at times in line with shared popular understandings, and there are numerous instances where it digresses from official historical timelines, both state-sponsored propaganda and academic accounts."¹⁴⁶ Fabian and Moyer agree that many of Tshibumba's departures from official histories are intentional, intended to make us think, or use juxtapositions to invoke irony

¹⁴¹ Tshibumba also wrote an 11-part, 93 handwritten page text "Histoire du Zaire" in 1980, in French sourced from his own experiences.

¹⁴² Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, ix-x.

¹⁴³ Johannes Fabian, *Anthropology with an Attitude*, 187.

¹⁴⁴ Johannes Fabian, *Memory Against Culture: Arguments and Reminders* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 149.

¹⁴⁵ Johannes Fabian, *Anthropology with an Attitude*, 93.

¹⁴⁶ Eileen Moyer. "Congo in Cartoons: 102 Paintings by Tshibumba," *African Arts* no. 4 (2004): 81, accessed May 10, 2018, <http://0-search.ebscohost.com/mercury.concordia.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsglr&AN=edsgcl.132678809&site=eds-live>.

encouraging discussion.¹⁴⁷ “Tshibumba affirmed the fundamental premise of his work: Thought is the source of artistic creation in general, and of this particular project of a history of his country. On many occasions he insisted that his intent was to critically confront other official versions of the history of Zaire.”¹⁴⁸ Indeed, the provocation of cultural memory is a key characteristic of Congolese popular paintings as the artists understand that their viewers are familiar with the history depicted and are able to critically engage with it.

In its capacity to organize resistance to abusive or intrusive power, popular culture draws on or invents genres of representation and performance.¹⁴⁹ In regards to Mobutu’s portrayal in popular paintings, were understood - by both the general population and the government - as gestures of submission which were rehearsed in all colonial times and found in all forms of expressions of Congolese popular culture.¹⁵⁰ Authorities have an interest in controlling the subversive potential of popular memory, which became particularly apparent when Mobutu banned Lumumba’s image from the public sphere. Nonetheless, it was during this time that Tshibumba found or created a demand for certain imagery of Patrice Lumumba—the signing of the golden book,¹⁵¹ his famous independence speech—and after *African Calvary* (c. 1970-1980) (Figure 7), other painters even began offering their own takes on these scenes.¹⁵² Paintings are created to be sold first and foremost, which means they often prioritized gestures of political compliance over historical accuracy. For example, in the image of Lumumba signing the golden book, the painting contains a list of the provinces as they were during Mobutu’s regime, rather than the names of the provinces at the time of Independence, when the golden book was actually signed.¹⁵³ Tshibumba insists that despite these historical inaccuracies, the essence of his work was to think, to express ideas rather than simply to recount or depict.¹⁵⁴ There are three distinct symbolic tropes in regards to how Lumumba is most often represented in

¹⁴⁷ Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, xiii.

¹⁴⁸ Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom*, 119.

¹⁴⁹ Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom*, 41.

¹⁵⁰ Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, xiii.

¹⁵¹ Images known as the signing the golden book depict Lumumba signing the Congolese Declaration of Independence, often in the presence of the Belgian King Baudouin.

¹⁵² Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, 216.

¹⁵³ Johannes Fabian, 217.

¹⁵⁴ Johannes Fabian, *Memory Against Culture*, 74.

popular paintings: as a cultural hero, as Moses, and as Christ.¹⁵⁵ Images of Lumumba made by Tshibumba and other popular painters under the Mobutu era display the Congolese desire to reassert themselves into the political discourse. Congolese popular paintings depict a contested history of the Congo, often a chimerical version of historical events.¹⁵⁶ Fanon expresses the importance of Congolese reassertion into their political discourse:

The oppressed peoples know today that national liberation is part of the process of historic development but they also know that this liberation must be the work of the oppressed people. It is the colonial peoples who must liberate themselves from colonialist domination. True liberation is not that pseudo-independence in which ministers having a limited responsibility hobnob with an economy dominated by the colonial pact. Liberation is the total destruction of the colonial system, from the pre-eminence of the language of the oppressor and “departmentalization,” to the customs union that meshes of the culture, of the fashion, and of the images of the colonialist.¹⁵⁷

Popular paintings are one such way that Congolese claim their rights as an independent people, by confronting the horrors of colonialism and creating a discourse around their own localised politics and history.

Expressions of Mami Wata (the mermaid) in Popular Painting

Indigenous hierarchy has been experienced in a sense of magic and sorcery, whereas education is used to escape these arbitrary powers.¹⁵⁸ One such source of indigenous spiritual power enveloped in magic and sorcery is that of Mami Wata. Mami Wata is represented as a beautiful, voluptuous, light-skinned mermaid with long flowing hair; she holds significant sway along the western coast of Africa.¹⁵⁹ Mami Wata is seen to have foreign origins by Africans and which is demonstrated in her name and skin

¹⁵⁵ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 73.

¹⁵⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 73.

¹⁵⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 105.

¹⁵⁸ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, 219.

¹⁵⁹ Regional differences in her name exist on both sides of the Atlantic where Afrocentric cultures have survived.

pigmentation.¹⁶⁰ Her name, literally meaning mother water denotes her sexual identity and dominion over water which is considered to be the entrance to a spiritual realm. It is derived from Pidgin English - a trading language developed from contact with foreigners - which is appropriate as she is known as a spirit whose primary gift to her devotees is money.¹⁶¹ In fact, the earliest African documented example of a mermaid, juxtaposes her with a crocodile and dates back to 1748.¹⁶²

Mami Wata represents a free unencumbered spirit of nature detached from any social bonds.¹⁶³ She is known to appear to men in dreams as a mermaid and seduce them to live with her. A man who dreams of Mami Wata may feel he has entered into a contract with a living spirit and may be tempted by her known ability to give wealth to her human lovers.¹⁶⁴ It is accepted that Mami Wata cannot have children but is thought to demand the life of a child in exchange for money. In this way, Mami Wata articulates the spirit of the slave trade; children are taken by the other never to return and those involved in the bloody business grow wealthy. In the same manner, any brave man with a stroke of luck can have his own Mami Wata. It is understood that one can accede to the power of modernity by paying a price through the figure of Mami Wata.¹⁶⁵ In fact, Congolese are convinced that Mobutu drew his political strength through his own personal Mami Wata. In fact, one of the first official holidays he declared was the feast day of the fish, which was thought to be dedicated to her.¹⁶⁶

Mami Wata is one of the most popular images along the coastal regions of Africa, inspiring ritual worship and churches dedicated to her. The belief that water contains the entrance to the spirit world is widespread throughout the coastal areas of West and Central Africa, even spreading into Southern Africa.¹⁶⁷ Mami Wata's link to slavery along the coasts of the Atlantic mean that any large acquisition of wealth that is assumed to involve her

¹⁶⁰ Henry John Drewal, "Performing the Other: Mami Wata Worship in Africa." *TDR: The Drama Review* 32, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 160. accessed March 1, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1145857>.

¹⁶¹ Henry John Drewal, "Performing the Other," 161.

¹⁶² Henry John Drewal, 161.

¹⁶³ Henry John Drewal, 161.

¹⁶⁴ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 122.

¹⁶⁵ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 17.

¹⁶⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 18.

¹⁶⁷ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power*, 52.

power.¹⁶⁸ Mermaids have formed new meaning and function through intercultural contact in the colonial world. They are symbols of foreign travel and new iconography has developed during the years of exploration, discovery and conquest.

Mami Wata is frequently portrayed with a mirror which is central to the beliefs and ritual practice that surround her veneration. The mirror is considered to be one of her most prized possessions. The surface of the mirror is similar to the surface of water which symbolizes the boundary between cosmic realms of land and water. This is also considered to be the permeable threshold crossed by Mami Wata when she enters people, causing them to enter a state of trance. This is also the threshold crossed by dreamers who are haunted by Mami Wata.¹⁶⁹ The mirror also symbolizes the allure of her beauty and vanity. Dreams hold universal significance to Mami Wata as a means for devotees to travel to her realm, and she to theirs, causing such a possession trance.¹⁷⁰

Mermaids are the totalizing symbol of urban existence, representing the rise of an urban elite that often has close ties to 'the other' most often in the form of foreign economics, investment and education. Mermaids are the most ancient and widespread of symbols in Africa and the foremost image of African culture on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁷¹ As Henry Drewal reports, "In Zaire, paintings of the mermaid by Samba are frequently covered with texts describing the artist's conversations with the spirit."¹⁷² Similarly, in Shaba, mermaids are always depicted with a snake, which we see in the image, *I Love Mami-Wata* (1994) (Figure 8) by Cheri-Benga.¹⁷³ In Cheri-Benga's self-portrait with Mami Wata her tail coils around him in a snake-like manner. This seems to allude to the most widely circulated images of Mami Wata where she is depicted as a snake charmer, which derives from a chromolithograph of European origin from c.1885. The artist has broken through the symbolic plane of the water where one crosses between earthly and spiritual realms, standing in both at once. Cheri-Benga has represented himself with three

¹⁶⁸ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power*, 121.

¹⁶⁹ Henry John Drewal, "Performing the other," 165.

¹⁷⁰ Henry John Drewal, 166.

¹⁷¹ Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, 197.

¹⁷² Henry John Drewal, "Performing the other," 181.

¹⁷³ Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, 198.

paintbrushes in his right hand - symbols of his trade - and a stack of money in his left - a symbol of the riches bestowed upon anyone who enters into a relationship with her.

Stephen Ellis and Gerrie Ter Harr write about the irrefutable link between spirituality and power in Africa in their book, *Worlds of Power*, which is devoted to exploring this connection. They describe the complexity of traditional spirituality and myths in the history of the Congo and how that relates to memory.

Furthermore, Congo is one of several places where there is no consensus regarding the history of the country or of specific communities. Like Angola, it has been riven by conflict for decades to the extent that different groups of people have such divergent versions of their history that they seem to be hardly talking about the same place. When people in these circumstances recall the past deliberately, they are obliged to do so in their own ways, including through theater, painting and songs, and also by analogy with religious myths. Myths, although not identical to history, may indeed allow 'access to the processes which constitute history at the level of the here-and-the-now'. But versions of the past brought to mind through religion are not organised in precise chronological terms in the same way as versions produced by bureaucracies with archives or by academic historians. When religion measures time, it does not do so by reference to homogeneous units, but rather by providing the passage of time with a rhythm. According to one African intellectual, Africans tend to consider time as 'an event and not something that is pursued like setting a time for board meeting, where every member is guarded by the company laws'. Leading African philosophers agree that there is a widespread tendency in African societies to organize time by references to events, rather than in terms of even and precisely measured units, and that historical memory is structured in this way."¹⁷⁴ In this manner, Congolese have constructed histories of Mami Wata to engage with the difficult history of the slave trade much as they have constructed social memory that now hails Lumumba as the Congolese redeemer.

Representations of Lumumba as Christ

¹⁷⁴ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power*, 185.

Popular imagination in the Congo has come to be dominated by the comparison between Patrice Lumumba and Christ. In a country that is more than fifty percent Catholic, representing the largest Roman Catholic country in Africa, this is a significant factor.¹⁷⁵ This comparison to Christ makes it possible for Congolese to exempt themselves from responsibility for his death; because like Christ, Lumumba freely sacrificed himself for his people.¹⁷⁶

Recognisant of Christ's arrival in Jerusalem, Lumumba's arrival in Elisabethville has been represented by a multitude of artists in in strikingly similar ways. There are more than 100 examples of 'station of the cross' imagery of Lumumba arriving at Elisabethville (Lubumbashi).¹⁷⁷ These images point culpability at Katangese through the depiction of a group of businessmen and Mobutu in the image of the plane.¹⁷⁸ In the painting *Calvaire d'Afrique* by Tshibumba, (c. 1970-1980) (Figure 7) Lumumba is represented in the forefront of the image with three soldiers whose uniforms mark them as military police for the province of Katanga. In the upper right corner is the airport and the plane he has just arrived on clearly marked SABENA, which was the Belgian national airline. In the lower right corner are three businessmen wearing hats and suits which along with the airport firmly place Elisabethville within the sphere of modernity. Even the clothes that Lumumba is portrayed in are highly symbolic. As Jewsiewicki explains,

Lumumba himself wears a simple undergarment, a singlet, which signifies both that he is Christ carrying the cross and that he is an equal of ordinary Congolese.

Lumumba belongs to the people. Meanwhile his striped pants, which evoke the coat-and-tails evening dress of which they are a part, denotes his elegance.¹⁷⁹

Even the press noted upon Lumumba's elegant dress as he was in custody.¹⁸⁰ Lumumba's arrival in Elisabethville represents his personal *Via Dolorosa*.

Patrice Lumumba declared, "For the people I have no past, no parents, no family. I am an idea."¹⁸¹ Fanon once said, "If Lumumba is in the way, Lumumba disappears."¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart*, 56.

¹⁷⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 64.

¹⁷⁷ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 87.

¹⁷⁸ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 88.

¹⁷⁹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 87.

¹⁸⁰ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 87.

¹⁸¹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 43.

Lumumba was aware of his position as a hero and also of the possibility that he may become a martyr before unification could be achieved. Patrice Lumumba is known as the sacrifice that was paid to unite the nation.¹⁸³ Lumumba once prophetically stated, "If I die tomorrow, it will be because a foreigner has armed a Congolese."¹⁸⁴ Despite the very real threats that Lumumba was facing he remained steadfast to the cause in which he so fervently believed. In his last letter to his wife, Pauline, written while imprisoned, Patrice affirms his convictions,

Neither brutal assaults, nor cruel mistreatment, nor torture have ever led me to beg for mercy, for I prefer to die with my head held high, unshakable faith, and the greatest confidence in the destiny of my country rather than live in slavery and contempt for sacred principles. History will one day have its say; it will not be the history taught in the United Nations, Washington, Paris, or Brussels, however, but the history taught in the countries that have rid themselves of colonialism and its puppets. Africa will write its own history and both north and south of the Sahara it will be a history full of glory and dignity.¹⁸⁵

Lumumba's trial never took place. He died alongside two other political prisoners Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito in Elisabethville on the night they arrived there, January 17, 1961.¹⁸⁶ The bodies were mysteriously destroyed for two strategic reasons, one to cover their tracks, forestalling any investigation and two in order to prevent pilgrimages or reprisals.¹⁸⁷ These fears came true as reprisals began after Lumumba's death was announced that included humiliation, beatings, rape, killings, expulsions of Europeans, pillaging and vandalism.¹⁸⁸ After Lumumba's assassination, demonstrations and acts of vandalism targeted the US, UN, and Belgian consulates and embassies all around the world including in Montreal.¹⁸⁹ Yoka describes the sacrificed leader as being the incarnated the aspirations of a whole continent and race as the symbol of an "Africa always in search of

¹⁸² Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 51.

¹⁸³ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 45.

¹⁸⁴ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 51.

¹⁸⁵ Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, 185.

¹⁸⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 51.

¹⁸⁷ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 51.

¹⁸⁸ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 54.

¹⁸⁹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 56.

new heroism.”¹⁹⁰ Fanon characterizes Lumumba as expressing, “Congolese patriotism and African nationalism in their most rigorous and noblest sense.”¹⁹¹ Lumumba is believed to have accepted his death at the hands of Belgian commandos in order to save his people.¹⁹² As Ghanaian journalist Cameron Duodu describes,

Lumumba is next only to Nelson Mandela in terms of being the all-time unblemished figure who most readily comes to mind when Africa is discussed in relation to struggle. Even Mandela had lesser enemies to contend with: Lumumba was chased around by both the CIA and its Belgian subsidiary, with whom it cooperated through Nato.¹⁹³

In the image *Bodies of Lumumba, Mpolo and Okito* (c. 1960-1990) by Burozi (Figure 9) the three men lie in a row between two trees with a soldier sitting watch. Lumumba is strategically placed between his political compatriots, just as Christ hung on a cross between two criminals. While a subtle allegory, this is Burozi’s intended reading. He expects his viewers to be familiar with Lumumba and his place in Congolese iconography. Tshibumba has also taken on the image of Lumumba’s death in *La mort historique de Lumumba, Mpolo et Okito le 17 Janvier 1961* (c. 1970-1980), (Figure 10) which is also inscribed along the bottom of the image. Here the artist does not allude but loudly proclaims that Lumumba is the Congolese redeemer. In the background on the right side of the image there are three crosses, just as on the hill of Golgotha. Tshibumba has even painted a spear wound on Lumumba’s side to further cement the comparison with Christ. In another image by Tshibumba, not included in this exhibition, the blood trailing from Lumumba’s side spells out *Unité* on the ground beside him. Tshibumba, comments on his image saying, “You see that I made three crosses back there. The meaning of this picture, I am saying that Lumumba died, I, in my opinion, I see that Lumumba was like the Lord Jesus of Zaire.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 57.

¹⁹¹ Frantz Fanon, *Towards an African Revolution*, 193.

¹⁹² Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 62.

¹⁹³ Cameron Duodu, "Patrice Lumumba from a Mere Man to a Lasting Symbol." *New African* no. 505 (April 2011): 43. Accessed September 24, 2017, <http://0-search.ebscohost.com/mercury.concordia.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=59897956&site=eds-live>.

¹⁹⁴ Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*, 267.

While both artists represent the scene differently they maintain key details. The three men are present in both images. It is also clear that the painters have given the most care and attention to the representation of Lumumba's face. It is important that they paint a strong likeness. Lumumba is also represented in the singlet and formal pants as in the images of his arrival in Elisabethville, represented in the elegant dress that he wore on that same night when he was killed.

Congolese portraits are never painted live, even more so in the death imagery of Lumumba where no images or descriptions of the scene exist. Lumumba is the only public figure in *A Congo Chronicle* whose face is represented with obvious concern for likeness; this is apparent in both Tshibumba's and Burozi's paintings. His face is often reproduced from photographs, in some cases there are even traces of a grid on the canvas. Having your portrait painted in Congolese culture is a symbol of your power and place within modernity; particularly politically significant as only Lumumba's imagery was seen as true portraiture.

Lumumba metaphorically fills the space between the idea of the great man and the son of God, becoming the man to save the Congo from the chains of slavery.¹⁹⁵ Lumumba gives Africans access to political action and sacred space. He gives them dignity and respect, making them value their origins.¹⁹⁶ Tshibumba describes the narrative metaphor that converges in his Christ figure image of Lumumba as creating a memory of Lumumba as a martyr and his free consent to die making him an ideal hero.¹⁹⁷

Just as Christ left behind an empty grave so too did Lumumba, through the strategic erasure perpetrated by the culprits. After the assassination Belgium began to concoct an elaborate cover plan; they decided the bodies must disappear.¹⁹⁸ Not only disappear, but be completely eradicated.

Two Belgians and their African assistants in a truck carrying demijohns of sulphuric acid, an empty two hundred litre barrel, and a hacksaw dug up the corpses, cut them into pieces and threw them into the barrel of sulphuric acid. When the supply of acid ran out, they tried burning the remains. The skulls were ground up and the bones

¹⁹⁵ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Corps Interdits," 128.

¹⁹⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, 128.

¹⁹⁷ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, 123.

¹⁹⁸ Brian Urquhart, "The Tragedy of Lumumba," 6.

and teeth scattered during the return journey. The task proved so disgusting and so arduous that both Belgians had to get drunk in order to complete it, but in the end no trace was left of Patrice Lumumba and his companions.¹⁹⁹

Belgian police commissioner Gerard Soete and his brother admitted to destroying Patrice Lumumba's body, in an interview with Belgian tv, years later; Soete displayed a bullet and two teeth he saved from Lumumba's body.²⁰⁰ Despite the well-known interference from the international community, Belgium and the United States had claimed for forty years they had no part in the assassination. It was not until 2001, two years after *A Congo Chronicle* was first mounted, that Belgian parliament forced to conduct an inquiry and publicly debate Patrice Lumumba's assassination.²⁰¹ Belgium finally admitted to an official inquiry and acknowledged their part in Lumumba's assassination.²⁰²

The erasure of Lumumba's body has become a significant part in his deification. Many people believe he is not dead but will return to his people just as in the Biblical story of Christ.²⁰³ There is even a church in Kitawala that reveres Lumumba as the black Christ.²⁰⁴ Similarly, the followers of the Kabukulu Church²⁰⁵ in the village of Kabungie invoke the spirit of Lumumba and consider all martyrs of Independence to be saints.²⁰⁶ The comparison between Lumumba and Christ is not solely a Congolese phenomenon. As Nyunda ya Rubango, a Congolese historian describes,

The first notable victim of Western imperialism, Lumumba has entered the mythical tower of the "fathers of African independence." He is the precursor of a long list of African and Third World heroes and martyrs. While visiting a favela in Rio de Janeiro in 1987, the Congolese scholar and writer Lye Mudaba Yoka was pleasantly surprised and edified to discover images of Lumumba and Jesus next to each other on the altar of sanctuary.²⁰⁷

¹⁹⁹ Brian Urquhart, 6.

²⁰⁰ Cameron Duodu, "Mere Man to Lasting Symbol (2)," 83.

²⁰¹ Johannes Fabian, *Memory Against Culture*, 65.

²⁰² Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart*, 6.

²⁰³ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 64.

²⁰⁴ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 64.

²⁰⁵ Meaning church of the ancestors.

²⁰⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 65.

²⁰⁷ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 56.

Thus, Lumumba's position as a leader of Independence in the face of adversity has heightened his significance to mythic proportions.

Stephen Ellis and Gerrie Ter Harr describe how particularly in illegitimate political regimes there exists a need to reinforce their power source in the spiritual world.

At various levels, an inescapable connection arises between illegitimate political regimes, whatever the precise technical means they use to come to power, and the type of spiritual power on which they are believed to repose. Power is usually defined as the ability of a person to induce others to act in a desired manner. Many great minds have expressed the conviction that the possession of great power tempts its holders to immorality, or at the very least confronts them with dilemmas that demand profound choices concerning good and evil, normally considered the prerogative of gods. Nietzsche notes that 'every high degree of power always involves a corresponding degree of freedom from good and evil'.²⁰⁸

Indeed, when religious beliefs motivate people to act, the relationship between religion and politics becomes the most evident.²⁰⁹ Likewise, African politicians typically pay great regard to the spirit world as a source of power.²¹⁰ Some of the best documented cases of politicians cultivating spiritual power are in the Congo.²¹¹

In 2009, the data analysis company Afrobarometer reported that 90% of Africans surveyed in 19 countries said religion was somewhat or very important (80% responded very important).²¹² Religious organizations are the most popular civil society organization in which Africans participate.²¹³ Similarly the weakness of state and other civil society groups lead many to turn to religion to solve problems.²¹⁴ Most Africans do not perceive a distinction between the spiritual and material worlds.²¹⁵ Amy S. Patterson, a scholar of

²⁰⁸ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power*, 154.

²⁰⁹ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, 3.

²¹⁰ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, 3.

²¹¹ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, 68.

²¹² Amy S. Patterson, "Religion and the Rise of Africa." *Brown Journal Of World Affairs* 21, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2014 2014): 183. accessed March 1, 2018, <http://0-search.ebscohost.com/mercury.concordia.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=poh&AN=100868755&site=eds-live>.

²¹³ Amy S. Patterson, "Religion and the Rise of Africa," 183.

²¹⁴ Amy S. Patterson, 183.

²¹⁵ Amy S. Patterson, 184.

African political science, describes how spirituality in Africa is not waning with development and modernization,

Modernization theory, the dominant paradigm from the 1950s until the 1980s, had posited that as Western education and capitalism grew in non-Western societies, these societies would become more secular. Power would be centered on a legal-rational, bureaucratic state not traditional or religious authorities. These assumptions were not met: non-state actors in Africa remain crucial centers of power, and cultural beliefs and practices continue to influence development outcomes.²¹⁶

Rather than waning with the growth of modernism and the influx of education and development, religion and spirituality hold just as much power in the minds and hearts of Africans as ever. Rather, as Patterson further describes, “The unseen world of belief and spiritual forces influences actions in the seen world, while material conditions such as poverty and disease affect how individuals interact with spiritual powers and the religious community.”²¹⁷

Cultural Memory and Identity Formation

Art in general - but even more significantly in the case of popular paintings - mediates between the parties to a traumatizing scene and the reader or viewer.²¹⁸ Recipients of the account perform an act of memory that contains the potential for healing as it calls for political and cultural solidarity in recognizing the trauma represented.²¹⁹ Similarly, nostalgia can be empowering and productive if critically tempered and historically informed.²²⁰ In countermourning, political subjects are defined by loss but not subjugated to it.²²¹ Mieke Bal describes the profound effects of countermourning, “Without justice and redeemed honour those who died and those who survived remained in loss.”²²² Countermemory and official memory at any given moment are in a struggle for position in

²¹⁶ Amy S. Patterson, 188.

²¹⁷ Amy S. Patterson, 184.

²¹⁸ Mieke Bal, *Acts of Memory Cultural Recall*, x.

²¹⁹ Mieke Bal, x.

²²⁰ Mieke Bal, xi.

²²¹ Mieke Bal, 116.

²²² Mieke Bal, 109.

the formal political system.²²³ Certainly countermemory and countermourning are a large part of the idealization that surrounds Lumumba. In the years of turmoil that followed his assassination Lumumba became a counterpoint to cling to, especially as his image was erased from the public sphere.

Bal further describes how cultural memory signifies memory understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual or social one.²²⁴ Cultural memorization is the activity of the present in which the past is continually modified and redescribed as it continues to shape the future, while, cultural recall is an act you perform, consciously and wilfully.²²⁵ Thus, narrative memories are effectively coloured and surrounded by an emotional aura that makes them more memorable.²²⁶ These effects can clearly be seen in the ways in which Lumumba is remembered as a larger than life saviour who continues to give hope to his people. Lumumba is viewed as the redeemer of Congolese modernity.²²⁷ Lumumba is the only historic hero that unites the Congo in that all Congolese either adore or fear him.²²⁸ It is considered as necessary for Christ to die to give his life greater value; he erased his humanity and now was able to take on a far greater significance.²²⁹ So too has Lumumba undergone a transformation of his passion into memoire as a promised but non-existent liberation.²³⁰ Cameron Duodu asserts,

“Lumumba lives. No African with a brain in his head will ever forget that it was because he *only* tried to preserve the interests of his people and his continent that he was murdered. We have been forewarned that this can happen to all African leaders. And to be forewarned is to be forearmed.”²³¹

²²³ Mieke Bal, 114.

²²⁴ Mieke Bal, vii.

²²⁵ Mieke Bal, vii.

²²⁶ Mieke Bal, viii.

²²⁷ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Corps Interdits," 116.

²²⁸ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, 117.

²²⁹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, 117.

²³⁰ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, 119.

²³¹ Cameron Duodu, "Mere Man to Lasting Symbol," 83.

SECTION 3

POPULAR CULTURE POST LUMUMBA, UNDER MOBUTU

After Lumumba's assassination the Congo fell into a series of civil wars. More than a million Congolese died in the 1964 rebellion, in 1965 Mobutu again stepped in as army commander, suspended all political activity, and assumed the presidency for himself for the next 32 years.²³² Mobutu titled himself, "The All-Conquering Warrior Who Because of His Endurance and Inflexible Will to Win will Go from Conquest to Conquest Leaving Fire in His Wake."²³³ He further called himself the Messiah, the Sun President, and the Guide; he even attempted to have his name substituted for God in Christian hymns, with some success.²³⁴ Mobutu's unelected ascension to power initiated an era of corruption and plunder unequalled in Africa.²³⁵ After Mobutu's 1965 coup d'etat his powers grew as Lumumba fell into disgrace and his memory faded as his followers went into exile.²³⁶

Mobutu is known to have cultivated spiritual sources of power throughout his career.²³⁷ The importance of rumours in towns and cities around Africa is seen in the phenomenon of modern urban discussion of matters of public interest; known as *radio trottoir* in the Congo.²³⁸ However, *radio trottoir* is known for more than just rumours, it also conveys information, news, entertainment and is a collective form of talk therapy.²³⁹ As Mobutu was a journalist before he entered the political sphere; he openly acknowledged the importance of *radio trottoir* in his country and used it to build his reputation.²⁴⁰ Stories abounded in the *radio trottoir* that Mobutu surrounded himself with marabouts and magicians who conferred miraculous powers on him.²⁴¹ There was a widespread

²³² Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart*, 7.

²³³ Hugh McCullum, 8.

²³⁴ Hugh McCullum, 8.

²³⁵ Hugh McCullum, 8.

²³⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 63.

²³⁷ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power*, 4.

²³⁸ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, 28.

²³⁹ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, 29-30.

²⁴⁰ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, 29.

²⁴¹ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, 105-106.

supposition that Mobutu wielded power that was evil by nature and would consistently be used for perverted and selfish purposes.²⁴²

During Mobutu's political domination as president of the Congo his relationship to Lumumba digressed from one of honour to eventually banishing his memory from the public sphere. In the early days of Mobutu's reign, he attempted to reinforce his power by capitalizing off of Lumumba's popularity and charisma. This was demonstrated on the sixth anniversary of Independence, when Mobutu proclaimed Lumumba as a national hero and announced the construction of a monument to his memory. Likewise, on the first anniversary of Mobutu's rise to power he supported a publication of a book on the hero's 'last fifty days,' encouraging investigation into the murder and promised to make the site of his murder into a museum.²⁴³ He later reneged on this commitment, banning the book and seizing it once it reached the Congo. Mobutu also appropriated Lumumba's ideas without referencing them or their origins.²⁴⁴ He further tried to pass himself off as Lumumba's political heir to give himself the legitimacy he needed to hold a summit for the Organization of African Unity. However, once the summit was over, Mobutu reduced Patrice Lumumba to nothing; banishing his memory from political life and his image from the public eye.²⁴⁵ Before the summit Mobutu had even issued bank notes with Lumumba on them, but after the summit images of Lumumba—especially reproductions of old press photos—were all strictly controlled by the state.²⁴⁶ Lumumbists were outlawed nationwide and the official calendar omitted all events in which Lumumba was honoured.²⁴⁷ Charles K. Djungu-Simba comments on Mobutu's strategic removal of Lumumba from the public sphere, "Lumumba is remarkably absent from, or timidly evoked in, Congolese/Zairian literature."²⁴⁸ Mobutu even went so far as to change the name of the country in 1971 to Zaire in an attempt to try and erase Lumumba's enduring legacy.²⁴⁹ This act began a crusade of Zairianization where Mobutu revolutionized the country changing names across the country, expelling foreign

²⁴² Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, 109.

²⁴³ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 54.

²⁴⁴ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 54.

²⁴⁵ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 26.

²⁴⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Corps Interdits," 134.

²⁴⁷ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 55.

²⁴⁸ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 55.

²⁴⁹ Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart*, 16.

merchants and expropriating foreign assets. Ironically in these acts he held up the Lumumbist ideal of economic autonomy being a requirement for political independence.

Mobutu's policy of authenticity and conflict with the Church caused him to attempt to aesthetically align himself as the incarnation of a chief, the father of the tribe or God himself.²⁵⁰ This was seen in the nightly images on tv of Mobutu descending from the clouds. As Mobutu took over the national economy and began to embezzle mining revenues the public constructed a social memory of Lumumba that could stand in opposition to Mobutu.²⁵¹ This opposition was validated by public knowledge of Mobutu's complicity with Lumumba's assassination. During this time, Mobutu, was opposed by the social memory of Lumumba. It was in this context, that Tshibumba in the first half of the 1970's built with his clients a Christlike representation of Lumumba.²⁵² Social memory became historiography in Tshibumba's paintings of a saint imprinting an iconography for Lumumba borrowing from his customers.²⁵³

As Bal, Caruth and Jewsiewicki's arguments discuss regarding collective memory, memory can change with time and be affected by the political climate. Jewsiewicki contends, though genre empowers it may also overpower, enable and/or constrain.²⁵⁴ Similarly, Congolese scholar T.K. Biaya asserts,

Under the guise of using the methods and traditional means of expression to reflect the current reality, criticism and opposition to the existing institutional political system are distilled in the whole of society. And when this hoax is discovered the power reacts vigorously with discrete censorship. So buying or owning a popular painting (of the five themes presented here) is an act of political affirmation.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Corps Interdits," 134.

²⁵¹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 26.

²⁵² Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Corps Interdits," 135.

²⁵³ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, 136.

²⁵⁴ Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom*, 41.

²⁵⁵ Translated from the French, "Sous le couvert de recours aux procédés et aux moyens traditionnels d'expression pour traduire la réalité actuelle, la critique et l'opposition au système politique institutionnel en place se distillent dans la société tout entière. Et l'on voit, lorsque cette supercherie est découverte, le pouvoir réagir vigoureusement par une censure discrète. C'est donc qu'acheter ou posséder une peinture populaire relevant des cinq thèmes présentés ici est un acte d'affirmation politique." T. K. Biaya, "La Peinture Populaire," 344.

Fabian further argues that in the case of popular painting the adjective 'popular' denotes a contrast with academic history.²⁵⁶ Thus, Congolese use the images of the genre to enact a form of remembering that is critical, contestatory and subversive.²⁵⁷

Moreover, the rhetorical strategy of opposing popular culture employed by popular painters like Tshibumba allows us to recognize the specificity of the negation of culture in the form of resistance that occurs within the Congolese context. It is a matter of survival under historical conditions that would not exist without oppression and deprivation.²⁵⁸ Resistance to colonial or postcolonial oppression is not a distinct feature of popular culture as that would defeat the purpose. Rather, the purpose is to challenge the concept of culture itself.²⁵⁹ As colonised people the redressing or challenging of culture becomes even more critical in the face of the deculturation perpetrated by colonialists. Fabian expounds, "The enterprise of deculturation turns out to be the negative of a more gigantic work of economic, and even biological, enslavement."²⁶⁰ Furthermore,

This culture, abandoned, sloughed off, rejected, despised, becomes for the inferiorized an object of passionate attachment. There is a very marked kind of overvaluation that is psychologically closely linked to the craving for forgiveness. [...] Yet the oppressed goes into ecstasies over each rediscovery. The wonder is permanent. Having formerly emigrated from his culture, the native today explores it with ardor. It is a continual honeymoon. Formerly inferiorized, he is now in a state of grace.²⁶¹

Popular paintings show this drama being played out on their canvases, with images rejecting colonialism and the venerating both traditional society and the fathers of independence - with Lumumba as the most beloved icon - who fought against colonial powers.

Congolese Political Leaders as Heirs to Lumumba's Legacy

²⁵⁶ Johannes Fabian, *Memory Against Culture*, 77.

²⁵⁷ Johannes Fabian, 78.

²⁵⁸ Johannes Fabian, *Anthropology with an Attitude*, 95.

²⁵⁹ Johannes Fabian, 96.

²⁶⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 31.

²⁶¹ Frantz Fanon, 41.

In the 1970's there emerged a concept of Lumumba as the true father of Independence despite the fact that Mobutu was attempting to claim this position for himself.²⁶² As the 70's progressed opposition to Mobutu grew from all sides, which gave new life to the memory and iconography of Lumumba. Patrice Lumumba became the only figure to embody the struggles for dignity, modernity and national unity. His memory stands in stark opposition to Tshombe - who symbolized secession and a divided Congo - and Mobutu. In 1990, there was a wave of democratization that hit the Congo and from April 1990 onwards Lumumbist parties were once again allowed.²⁶³ This occurred as Mobutu's dictatorship ended though his presidency continued.²⁶⁴ Mobutu was brought down as much by cancer as by his enemies in 1997.²⁶⁵

By 1997, all of Eastern Congo was occupied by rebels led by Uganda and Rwanda heading for Kinshasa.²⁶⁶ In an attempt to come to a diplomatic solution, Joseph Kabila and Mobutu met on a South African navy ship moored on the Atlantic coast but the talks came to no agreement. Kabila, with the military might of the neighbouring countries on his side, refused to allow Mobutu a gradual exit with dignity, as he was well aware that the president was famous for his procrastination. Mobutu was left with no choice and fled the country, only to die four months later, exiled in Morocco.²⁶⁷ Kabila was sworn in as the president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on May 17, 1997, and his first act as president was to restore the name of the country.²⁶⁸

Kabila is known as a miracle story in that he was a small time bandit chief and smuggler who played a minor role in the Congolese civil war of the 1960s only to drop out of international view and suddenly re-emerge to become the president in 1997.²⁶⁹ With an emergence from the sidelines Kabila felt the need to portray himself as the true successor of Patrice Lumumba - a Pan-Africanist dedicated to freedom for the Congo - in attempt to

²⁶² Johannes Fabian, *Anthropology with Attitude*, 27.

²⁶³ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 55.

²⁶⁴ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 66.

²⁶⁵ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power*, 103.

²⁶⁶ Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart*, 14.

²⁶⁷ Hugh McCullum, 14.

²⁶⁸ Hugh McCullum, 15-16.

²⁶⁹ Stephen Ellis, and Gerrie Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power*, 45.

prove his political merit.²⁷⁰ Moreover, Kabila honoured Patrice Lumumba in his first speech to the nation on June 30, 1997 and even appointed Lumumba's daughter Juliana to his cabinet.²⁷¹ This date - June 30th - is highly significant in the minds of the Congolese who had been slaves of the white man; they now saw themselves proclaimed citizens of a sovereign state.²⁷² It was Kabila's desire to bring the rebirth of a modern nation from the ashes of Mobutism.²⁷³ The people of the Congo saw Kabila's rise power as a break from the politics of dominance and control that were seen under King Leopold, the Belgians and Mobutu. Finally, the nation saw themselves as free citizens.

Much like Mobutu, Kabila also claimed to be both the companion and ancestor to all the fathers of Independence.²⁷⁴ A.B.C. Banza portrayed Mzee²⁷⁵ Kabila in 1998, alongside Lumumba, Kasavubu and Tshombe.²⁷⁶ This painting, *Patrice Emery Lumumba, Mzee Kabila, Moïse Tshombe, Kasa-Vubu*, (1998) (Figure 11) depicts the four leaders on two axes, placing Lumumba and Kasavubu across from one another horizontally as the two leaders representing Congo as a nation, and Tshombe and Kabila, the two Katangese, across from each other on the vertical axis. This painting is seen to back up the claim that Kabila is both compatriot and heir to the country's first leaders post-independence. Similarly, Zairian TV represented Mobutu as the supreme guide in a cloud, A.B.C. Banza has reappropriate this imagery in, *Patrice Emery Lumumba, son esprit incarné dans Mzee Libérateur. Mzee Laurent Désiré Kabila, Le libérateur de la R.D.C.* (1998) (Figure 12) placing Lumumba in the clouds as the divine spirit. While Kabila emerges from an outline of the Congo, a place that in the past was reserved for Lumumba, which can be seen in Tshombe's image *Patrice Emery Lumumba* (c. 1970-1980) (Figure 13).²⁷⁷ Banza makes his meaning clear as he has written the title across the image. Not only is Kabila the true and rightful heir of the fathers of independence but he is the embodiment of the spirit of Lumumba.

²⁷⁰ Hugh McCullum, *Africa's Broken Heart*, 22.

²⁷¹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 56.

²⁷² Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 82.

²⁷³ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 85.

²⁷⁴ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 91.

²⁷⁵ An honourific term.

²⁷⁶ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 92.

²⁷⁷ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 91.

In Katangese popular painting Patrice Lumumba is presented as the incarnation of two promises: breaking the chains of slavery and helping the Congolese to become human beings whose right to justice is recognized.²⁷⁸ Tshibumba represented Lumumba in *Le martyrs de l'indépendance, 4 Janvier 1959* (c. 1970 -1980) (Figure 14) literally breaking chains as he marches through with flag held high. A group of four men are seen to be looking on as buildings burn in the background. Here Tshibumba has placed Lumumba at the head of the Leopoldville riots - a significant moment in the Congolese Independence movement - though he was not directly involved.²⁷⁹ Kabila is now represented in the same manner to show his spiritual tie to Lumumba as his rightful political heir. Artist, A.B.C. Jaz has portrayed Kabila breaking chains in full military uniform in *Mzee anakata munyororo ya utumwa*²⁸⁰ (1998) (Figure 15) an image that is meant to invoke those of Lumumba.²⁸¹ Again, Kabila used imagery associated with Lumumba to create an enduring iconography that linked the two Congolese leaders.

Leaders who develop cults of personality typically are those who have the longest tenures.²⁸² Xavier Márquez, a political theorist, defines a cult of personality -in his PhD dissertation on the same subject - as a set of interactional rituals, linked in chains, whose focal symbols related to a particular leader, and which occupy a considerable fraction of or even saturate the public space of a community.²⁸³ Márquez goes on to further describe different rituals linked to these 'chains' where leader-symbols acquire value and circulate through the country at mass gatherings and regular small scale rituals. In these instances, images or sayings from the leader become the focus of attention. The production of leader symbols and private secondary rituals does not necessarily involve a group but also invoke symbols and sayings - usually unobservable to others.²⁸⁴ In all examples these rituals act as instruments of emotional amplification. The leader-related objects must have become a

²⁷⁸ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 85.

²⁷⁹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., 25.

²⁸⁰ Mzee (Kabila) is breaking the chains of suffering.

²⁸¹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 24.

²⁸² Xavier Márquez, "A Model of Cults of Personality." *Conference Papers -- American Political Science Association* (January 2010): 3, accessed July 31, 2017, <http://0-search.ebscohost.com/mercury.concordia.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=poh&AN=94851336&site=eds-live>

²⁸³ Xavier Márquez, "Model of Cults of Personality," 4.

²⁸⁴ Xavier Márquez, 5.

focal part of interactional rituals.²⁸⁵ In emerging cults enthusiasts and the value they place on a symbol depends on a leader's ability to draw on pre-existing charged symbols of identity to construct narratives that increase emotional energy of participants.²⁸⁶ Márquez describes the influence of enigmatic political leaders, "Mass meetings of electoral campaigns are well-suited to producing charged symbols of identity, especially in the hands of a skilled practitioner like Chávez, who was routinely described as 'charismatic.'"²⁸⁷ A description that was often applied to Patrice Lumumba as well; he was well known for being a great orator. As Jewsiewicki describes Lumumba,

"He found it easy to make social, ethnic, and professional contacts. Although he came to a tragic end, he was a fine tactician who during his ascent skillfully handled the electorate, including all the Congolese and European ethnic groups. His party's rapid success demonstrates his managerial skills and political instinct. He was also an impressive orator, able to hypnotize, captivate, and conquer large crowds, to be "seductive" and "charming" and to develop a special physical and emotional rapport. He is said to have impressed those around him by his exceptional capacity for intellectual work."²⁸⁸

After the death of Chávez, the new leaders in Venezuela could not command a following as he did. Instead they appealed to maintain support of grassroots and prevent public divisions with Chávez symbols.²⁸⁹ Just as Kabila has done in the Congo, by using popular paintings that strategically link him to Lumumba through politics and spirituality.

²⁸⁵ Xavier Márquez, 6.

²⁸⁶ Xavier Márquez, 7.

²⁸⁷ Xavier Márquez, 26.

²⁸⁸ Bogumil Jewsiewicki et al., *A Congo Chronicle*, 52.

²⁸⁹ Xavier Márquez, "Model of Cults of Personality," 29.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary art in Africa has been built through bricolage upon already existing structures and scenarios on which older colonial and pre-colonial genres have been formed.²⁹⁰ Collectors and patrons of both African and Western art are still primarily Westerners. Bogumil Jewsiewicki argues that we must re-examine the critical discourse on art—particularly the idea that it must be one of a kind—and that it is not a commodity.²⁹¹ In these modes African and especially Congolese popular paintings do not follow with the Western discourse. According to this mentality, African work only takes on ‘art’ status when it becomes part of Western institutional collections.²⁹² In contrast to western art ideals, flour sack paintings²⁹³ from the Congo, for example, were originally made for their peers and intended for a local audience.²⁹⁴ Nevertheless, as tourists began buying these popular paintings a few artists gradually developed international clientele, such as Cheri Samba - who was shown internationally in Paris.²⁹⁵ Popular themes in the Congo during the 70s and 80s were inequalities of power under the colonial regime and postcolonial era.²⁹⁶ This has been primarily expressed through the narratives popular painters created for their clientele.

Artists in Africa are both driven and limited by their clientele.²⁹⁷ Since 1900 art has been increasingly produced for far away patrons.²⁹⁸ Some art has been made strictly as a colonial derived export genre. However, this is not true of most popular paintings (with the exception of Tshibumba’s 101 painting project to depict the history of the Congo, reproduced in Fabian’s *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire*). Emergence of new African art on world stage in the 1950s and 60s seems to have been a major act of cultural brokerage by a small number of European supporters.²⁹⁹ Popular

²⁹⁰ Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art* (London: Thames et Hudson, 2014), 9.

²⁹¹ Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, 22.

²⁹² Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, 22.

²⁹³ Popular paintings are sometimes referred to as ‘flour sack paintings’ due to the fact that the artists use any available fabric for their canvas which is most often on the back of flour sacks.

²⁹⁴ Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art*, 23.

²⁹⁵ Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, 24.

²⁹⁶ Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, 28.

²⁹⁷ Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, 31.

²⁹⁸ Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, 64.

²⁹⁹ Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, 65.

paintings were not originally intended to be collected. To render them collectible meant removing them from the original context and practices of memory and conservation.³⁰⁰

Following the assassination of Patrice Lumumba his image became cemented in the discourse of Congolese popular paintings. As demonstrated in *A Congo Chronicle* religious iconography in a variety of forms has long been an important part of Congolese culture. The work of popular painters has fused these overarching narratives from traditional spirituality, colonialism, origin stories, to representing Lumumba as Christ and Congolese leaders using the image of Lumumba to reinforce their power base and structures. In the Congo, popular paintings focused not only on aesthetics but just as fundamentally on social discourse. The imagery showcased in *A Congo Chronicle* highlights the mnemonic ways in which the images are used within the local Congolese context. They are intended to be used as memory cues, bringing to mind the historical and political events that all Congolese are familiar with. Moreover, the images are profoundly imbued with symbolism that speaks to the greater Congolese narrative in opposition to colonialism and the despotism of Mobutu. Thus, the images of Patrice Lumumba embody the modern religious iconography of the Congo and its break with the traditional. This occurred not only as political power superseded tribal powers but also as a counterpoint that Lumumba provided as the hero and redeemer of an independent Congo to the state of suffering under the Belgians and Mobutu.

³⁰⁰ Johannes Fabian, *Memory Against Culture*, 100.



Figure 1

Tshibumba M., *Le 30 Juin 1960, Zaire Indépendant*, c. 1970-1980, oil on fabric, 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 24 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. Bol Collection.

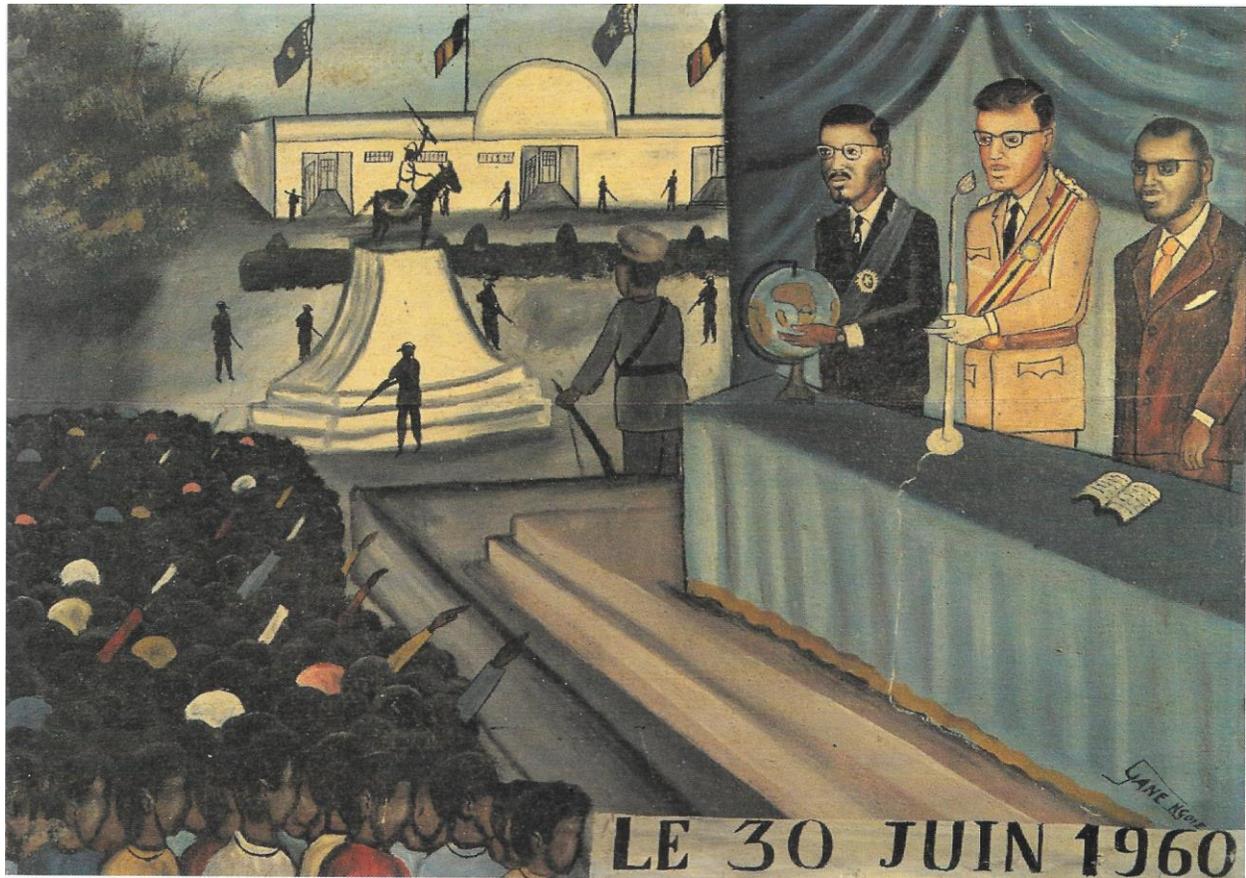


Figure 2

Tshibumba, *Le 30 Juin 1960*, c. 1970-1980, oil on fabric, 19 ½ x 27 in. Verbeek Collection.



Figure 3

Burozi, *Lumumba's Speech Causes Panic*, c. 1960-1990, oil on fabric, 15 x 19 ¼ in.

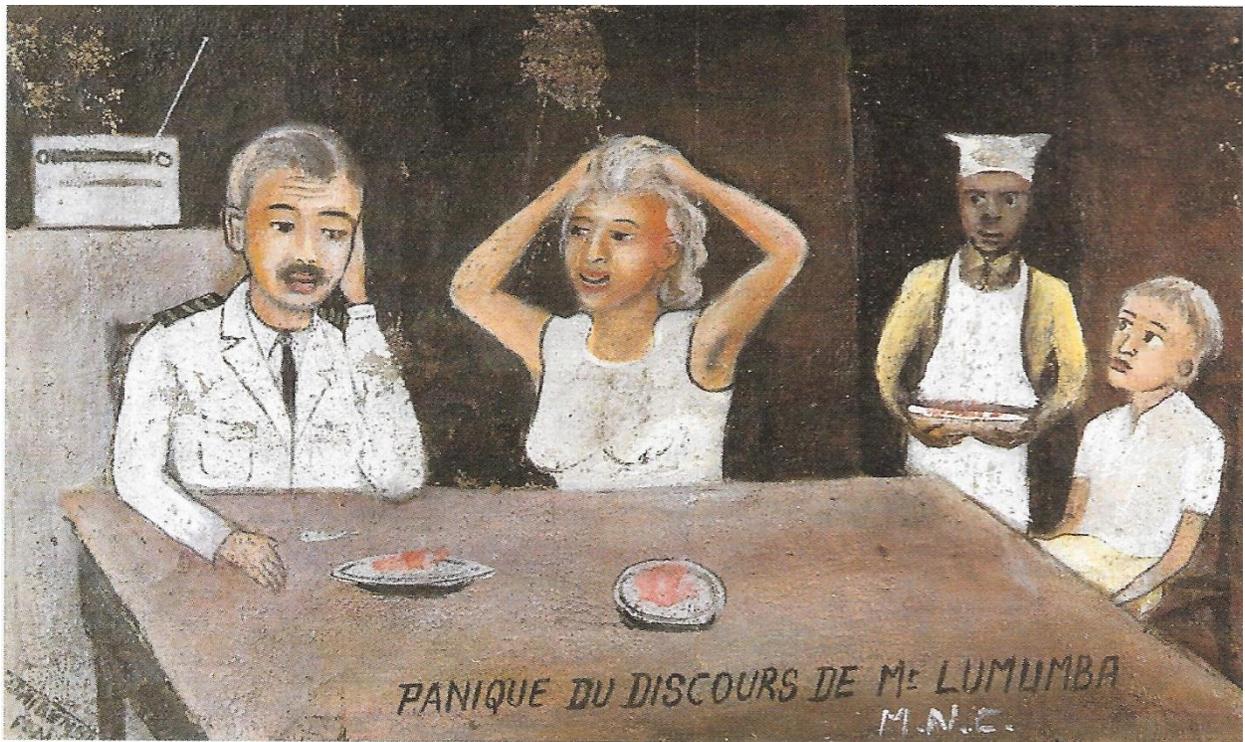


Figure 4

Burozi, signed Tshibumba, *Panique du discours de Mr. Lumumba, M.N.C.*, c.1970-1980, oil on canvas, 13 x 23 in.



Figure 5

Burozi, signed Tshibumba, *Panique du discours de Mr. Lumumba, M.N.C.*, c. 1970-1980, oil on fabric, 15 x 22 ½ in.

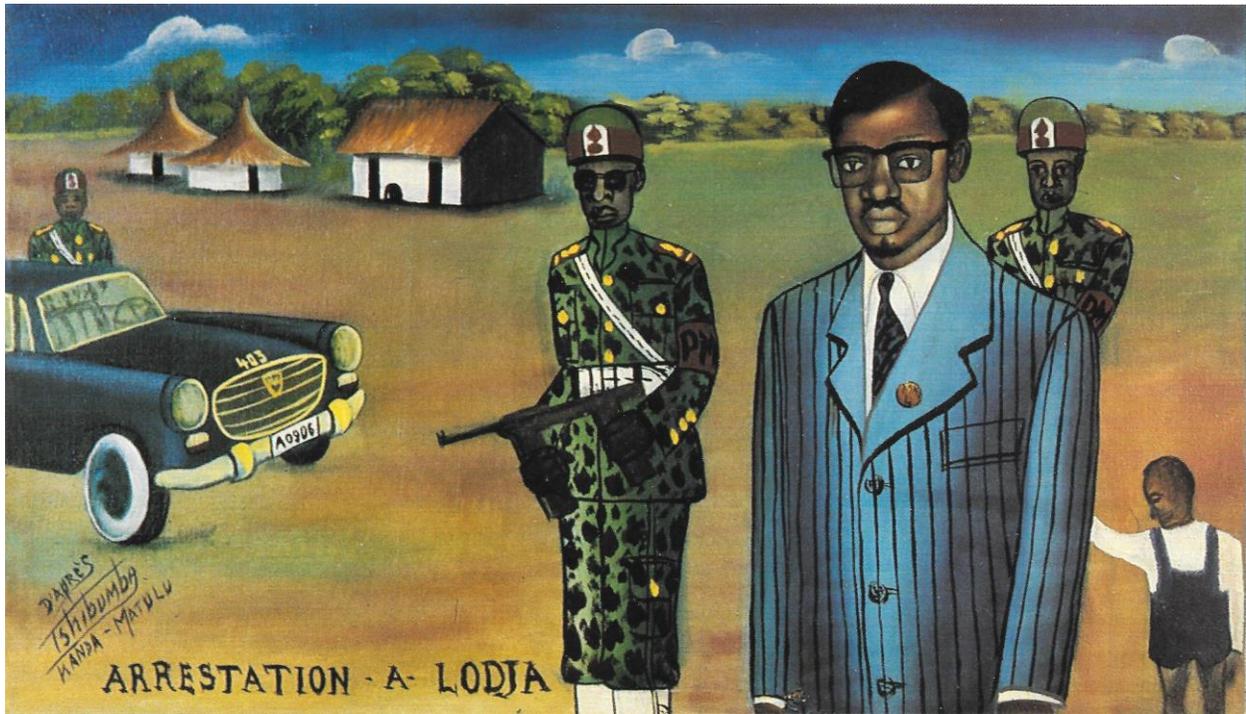


Figure 6

Tshibumba Kanda-Matulu, *Arrestation à Lodja*, c. 1970-1980, oil on fabric, 15 ½ x 25 ½ in. Bol Collection.

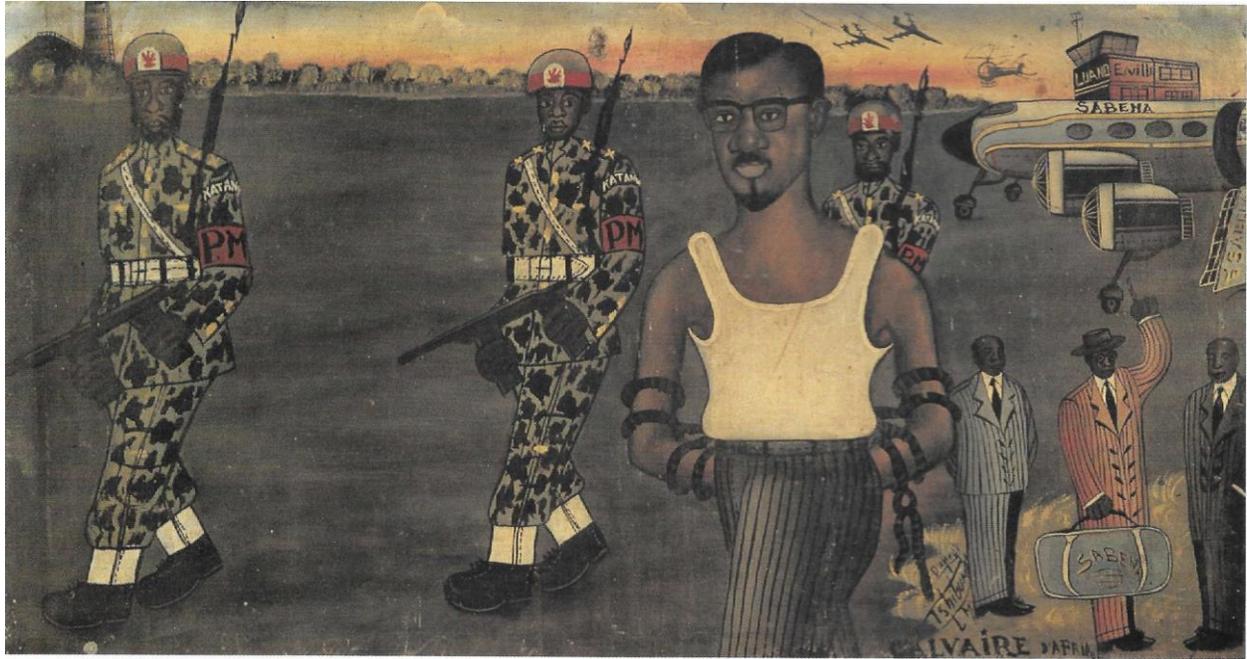


Figure 7

Tshibumba, *Calvaire d'Afrique*. (also called *National Hero and Prophet of Our Liberation*), c. 1970-1980, oil on fabric, 18 ½ x 35 in. Verbeek Collection.

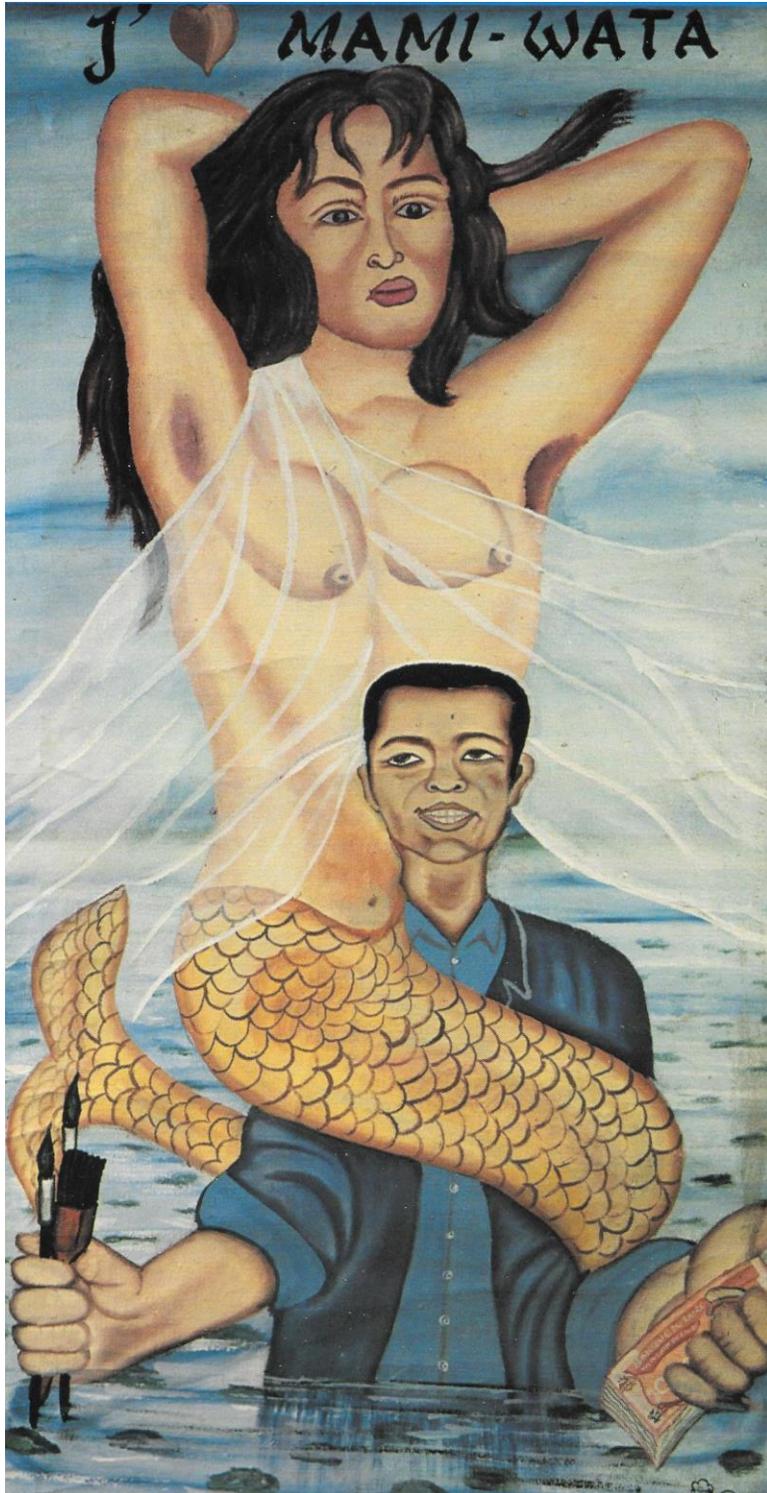


Figure 8
Chéri-Benga, *I Love Mami-Wata*, 1993, oil on fabric. 35 1/8 x 16 1/2 in.



Figure 9

Burozi, *Bodies of Lumumba, Mpolo and Okito*, c. 1960-1990, oil on fabric, 15 ¼ x 19 ½ in.

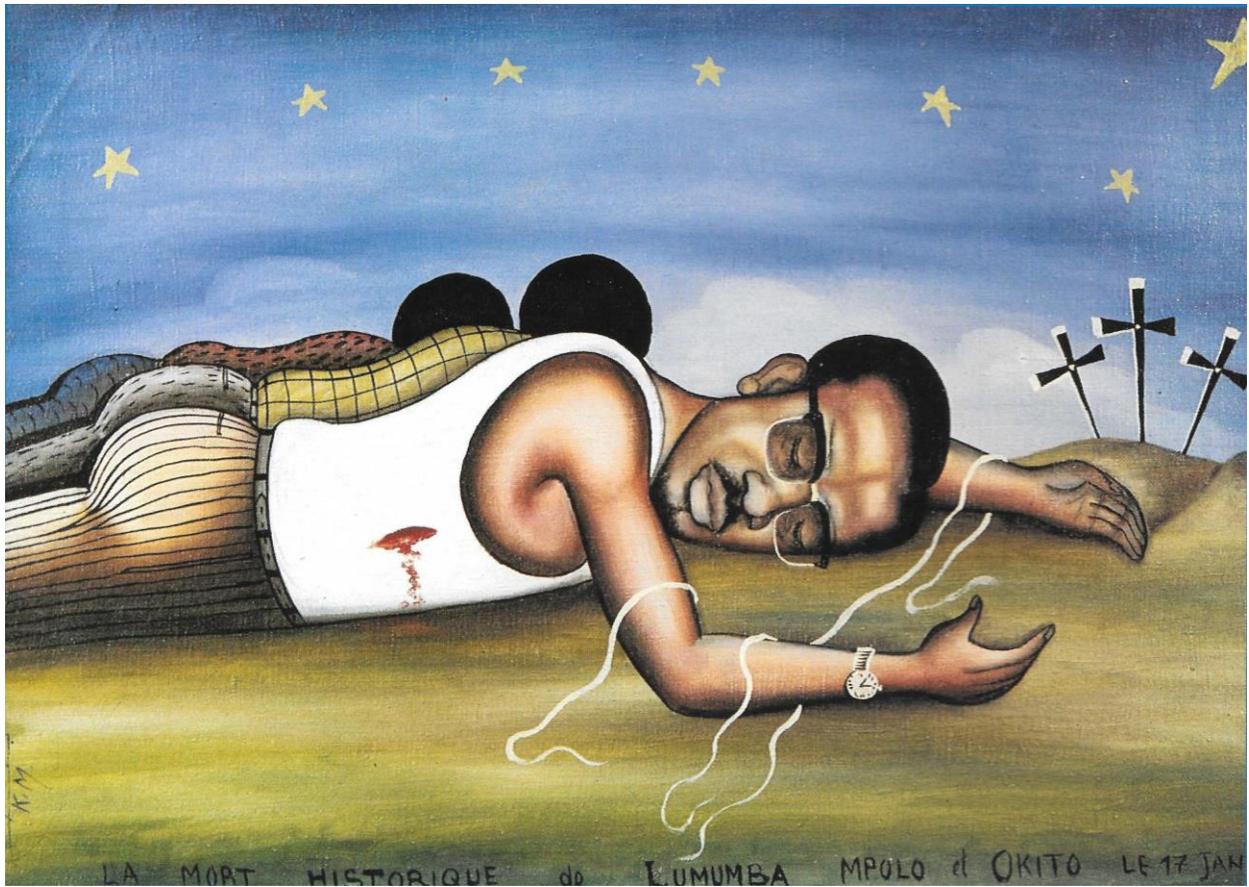


Figure 10

Tshibumba, K.M., *La mort historique de Lumumba, Mpolo et Okito le 17 Janv. 1961*, c. 1970-1980, oil on fabric, 14 ½ x 22 in.



Figure 11

A.B.C. Banza, *Patrice Emery Lumumba, Mzee Kabila, Moïse Tshombe, Kasa-Vubu*, 1998, oil on fabric, 27 x 42 ½ in.



Figure 12

A.B.C. Banza, *Patrice Emery Lumumba, son esprit incarné dans Mze Libérateur. Mzee Laurent Désiré Kabila, Le libérateur de la R.D.C.*, 1998, oil on fabric, 33 x 24 in.



Figure 13

Tshibumba, *Patrice Emery Lumumba*, c. 1970-1980, oil on fabric, 26 ¼ x 19 ¼ in.

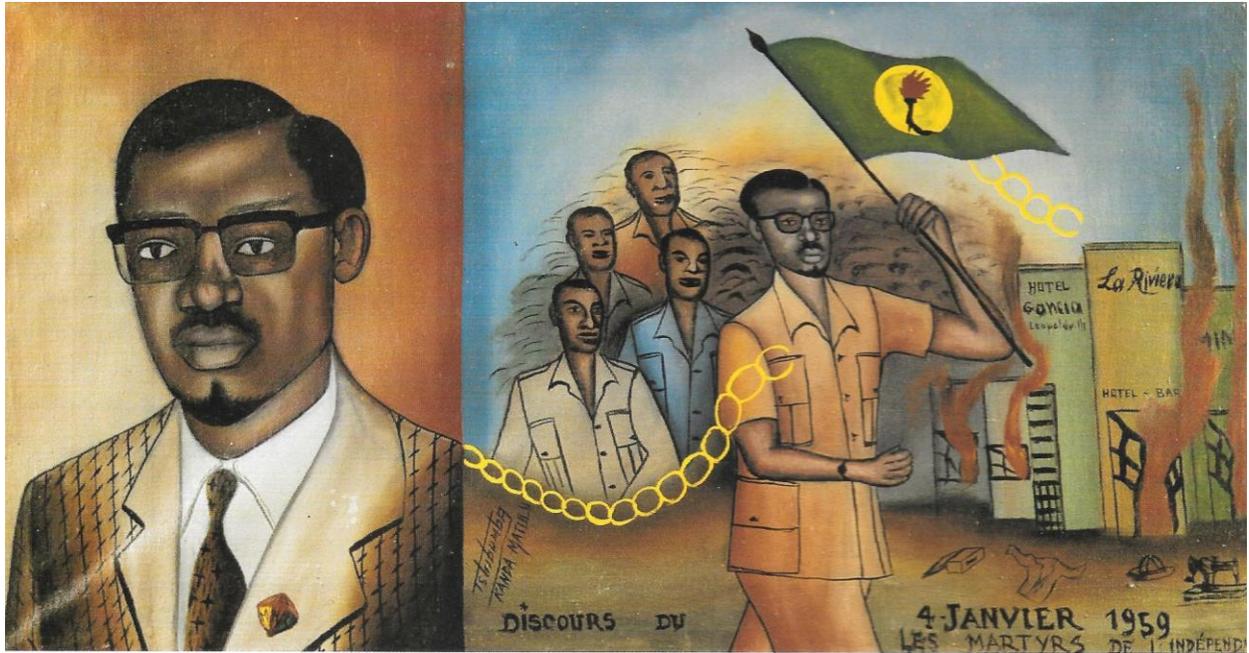


Figure 14

Tshibumba, *Le martyrs de l'indépendance, 4 Janvier 1959*, c. 1970-1980, oil on fabric, 15 ½ x 28 ¾ in.

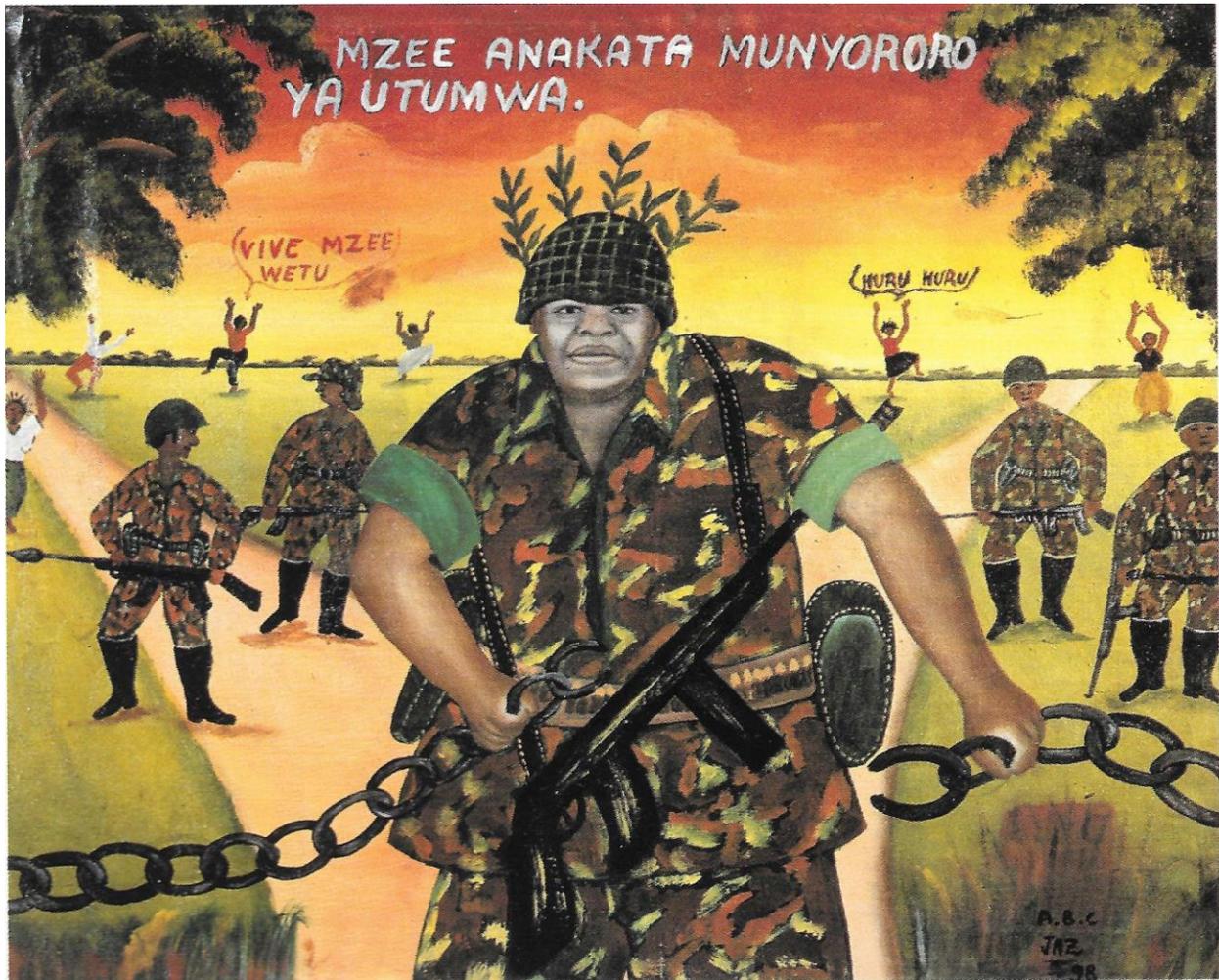


Figure 15

A.B.C. Jaz, *Mzee ankata munyororo ya utumwa*. (Mzee [Kabila] is breaking the chains of suffering), 1998, oil on fabric, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 24 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.

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