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## An Examination of the Instability and Exploitation in Congo From King Leopold II's Free State to the 2nd Congo War

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE INSTABILITY AND EXPLOITATION  
IN CONGO FROM KING LEOPOLD II'S FREE STATE TO THE 2<sup>ND</sup>  
CONGO WAR

by

BALDWIN J. BEAL

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in History  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
and in The Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Ezekiel Walker

## **Abstract**

This thesis will analyze the Congo from King Leopold II's Free State to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congo War. After a thorough investigation of the colonial period, this thesis will analyze the modern period. This thesis contends that the underdevelopment of the Congo, and its continuing warfare and poverty are the consequences of an exploitative colonial history. To be sure, King Leopold II of Belgium created the template for administering the Congo through the installation of concessionary companies that were more interested in harvesting huge profits than creating the conditions for a self-sustaining Congolese economy. Indeed, the policies implemented by King Leopold not only created the framework for the exploitation of the Congo after the cessation of the Free State, and set the stage for Congo's current state of instability of warfare.

## **Dedications**

I dedicate this to the people of Congo who have suffered at the hands of colonization.

## **Acknowledgements**

First off, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Ezekiel Walker, for pushing me to achieve the highest possible standard and continually inspiring me to do better. I would also like to thank Professor Anthony Major and Dr. Vibert White for joining my thesis committee. Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents and my friends Destiny, Rashieda, and Yoweri for their steadfast support.

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## **Introduction**

Various nations and multinational companies outside the African continent have devoured the “magnificent African cake<sup>1</sup>”. These entities have thoroughly consumed Congo since the colonial period and the beginning of King Leopold II of Belgium’s exploitation.<sup>2</sup> Yet this feast was not a mindless ravaging of the country’s resources, although it might appear to be so, it was the premeditated murder of a nation’s economy, political system, and people. Holding this to be true, the series of events that the Congolese people have continued to endure up through the Second Congo War will show that history has in fact repeated itself, powerful nations have chosen not to stand against this injustice, and King Leopold’s colonization was only the beginning of this systematic exploitation.<sup>3</sup>

Congo has always held more mineable riches than the European Union and the United States combined.<sup>4</sup> Before Europeans could fathom diamonds, gold or rubber the Congo controlled these resources, and more within its terrain.<sup>5</sup> However, this has been both a blessing and a curse as foreign leaders desire what their respective nation’s lack. First of whom was Leopold, a king from a northern European nation no bigger than the state of Maryland<sup>6</sup> yet decidedly chose to grab a country 76 times its own size; this begs the question of how? With no military might, no large population, and a majority view by the citizenry that was negative towards colonization, how could Leopold convert Congolese extractable resources into a profitable market for himself? Unlike other major nations in the colonization game, King Leopold did not have the backing of his government; as a result, a certain level of shrewdness

was required on his part. His ingenious plan to acquire wealth far beyond his previous assets would have a deleterious effect on the Congolese people and directly contribute to the most drastic annihilation of people in the history of the Congo, furthermore becoming one of the largest massacres in African History.<sup>7</sup>

This is generally where historians would state some type of statistic or estimation about the death toll to portray the sadness that comes from a large scale erasure of people. Whether the death toll exceeds 100 million Africans, or is as miniscule as 1,000, Leopold's worst crime was creating a colonial template to oppress the Congolese people. King Leopold's endeavors to get rich from gold, diamonds, rubber, and countless other extractive resources sent Congolese fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, little kids from down the street, rich kings, poor jesters, teachers, students, and everyone in-between to the brink of poverty or fatality. His crimes included, but are not limited to the following: (1) the imposition of forced labor<sup>8</sup> (a euphemism for slavery in which men and women were required to toil in the mines day and night, build transportation systems that held no significance other than the creation of the quickest means to steal natural resources from the country, and drain massive amounts of rubber devoted to future use as bicycle tires in Europe<sup>9</sup>); (2) the dismemberment of natives...hands were literally chopped off as punishment<sup>10</sup>; and (3) the burning of countless villages and cities where every individual who was found was killed.<sup>11</sup>

Those who did survive, along with their descendants, underwent conversion into more colonized or mentally enslaved people.<sup>12</sup> Later on in Chapter 2, I will explore this new mentality and its effect. The legacy of King Leopold's ghost has yet to cease its influence upon the people

of the Congo in a negative way. While Leopold's personal rule officially ended in 1908, the influence previously mentioned is present today as King Leopold willingly started, but never attempted to end, the cycle of exploitation in the Congo. The available historical evidence suggests that the major economic and political problems of the country find their roots in Leopold's legacy. To be sure, Leopold's legacy was sustained during the periods of Belgian colonialism and the military dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko. To this end, Chapter Three will analyze the roles of the Belgian government, other European nations, the United States of America, the multinational companies, and the totalitarian regime of Mobutu Sese Seko in the exploitation of the Congo. Needless to say, the ordinary men and women of the Congo have been the victims of the predatory policies of these various groups.

Various entities have exploited Congo to the point where it is no longer recognizable. To briefly reiterate the synopsis of Congolese exploitation before the imminent scrutiny, the colonization of Congo started with King Leopold, continued with Belgium colonial rule, and ironically became neocolonialism after the supposed decolonization of the nation under Mobutu Sese Seko. All three parties have controlled and renamed the Congo for their personal use; meanwhile, other assemblies such as the various European nations, the United States of America, and independent capitalist companies were covertly working towards their own means as well. According to *The History of Congo* by Ch. Didier Gondola, the colonization of the Congo started with King Leopold II of Belgium<sup>13</sup>, but the man has long since died. Why then is the Congo in an arguably worse position than it was in the late 1800s? In addition to the question of who brought such genocidal atrocities to the area, one must wonder who has cultivated the colonialism of the past into the systemic oppression that continually rears its head in present day

Congo. What is certain is that the legacy of exploitation and instability in the Congo is neither coincidence nor accident. Leopold, the Belgian government, and Mobutu Sese Seko all played instrumental roles in the exploitation of a nation.

This thesis will examine the legacy of exploitation and instability in the Congo from King Leopold II's Free State to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congo war. Additionally, throughout the chapters of this thesis I will strive to connect the history of Congo's past with that of today's present and argue that things have not changed since the colonial period, at least not for the betterment of the Congolese people. The underlying reason for this reality is the model of colonization which Leopold created and no one has destroyed. With this said, Chapter One: Historical Background goes in the depths of Congolese history to expose the growth and development of the area prior to colonization. Chapter Two: The Congo Free State highlights the destruction that Leopold's colonial era brought to peoples of the Congo and Chapter Three: Belgian Colonial Period, Independence, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congo War analyzes how the policies of King Leopold II of Belgium created the conditions for the present instability, civil war, and poverty in the Congo.

## Chapter One: Historical Background

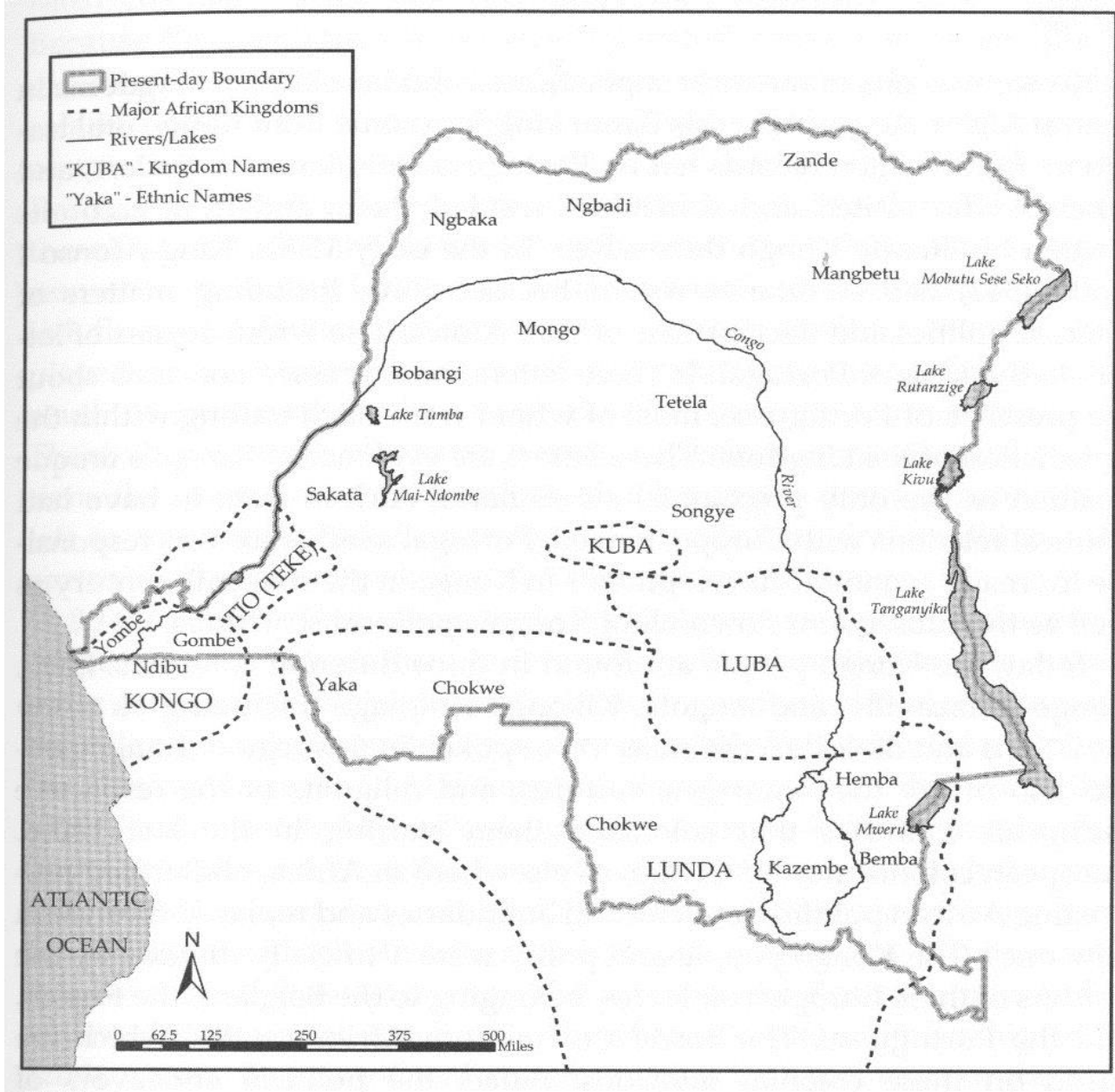
The ancient and/or the precolonial era of the Congo existed as a diverse society, one in which Bantu speakers along with Gbandi, Ngbaka, Zande, Mangbetsu, Nilotic, Sudanic peoples and the native pygmies lived and thrived.<sup>14</sup> The borders differed greatly from the boundary lines of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; a postcolonial/neocolonial map of the Congo would display fewer borders that are more encompassing. Ironically, however, the various boundaries of the five major kingdoms in the precolonial period did not equate to an intense restriction on movement. The expansion of agricultural development because of the introduction iron technology throughout the Congo Basin not only confirms the movement of the Bantu peoples within Central Africa, but sheds light on the vast agricultural development that Africa was undertaking. Developments that would allow indigenous foods such as millet, sorghum, palm trees and vegetables to grow in excess; a primary means for an increase in trade. In addition to the technological advances brought by the Bantu, migrant groups from the East later brought with them their advancements in cereal cultivation and new crops such as bananas and taro.

Of the five major Central African kingdoms located in the Congo Basin the Bantu kingdom of Kongo is arguably one of the most historic. Its history dates back to one of the largest and longest movements in human history, the Bantu migration, starting from West Africa in around 1000 BCE.<sup>15</sup> The ancient territory lines created by the Kongo Kingdom leave the descendants of the Kongo fragmented between three present-day countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, and Angola. The kingdom was located south of a major

waterway known as the Congo River and east of the Kasai which, from a transportation, economic and militaristic point of view was a very advantageous area. In truth, it was this location that was the commanding reason for the kingdom's rise to prominence. Besides the access to water (the Congo and the Kasai River) and apparent fertile soil that would exist in such a region, there was an abundance of plant life and various animals that resided in the area as well.<sup>16</sup> Add to this, the agricultural development that was ongoing in the Congo Basin during the precolonial era, the introduction of iron technology and the utilization of copper smelting and the Kingdom of Kongo had a recipe for political, economic and socio-cultural success. Regrettably, an exact record of the detailed undertakings that the Kongo instigated to take full advantage of their environmental surroundings is unavailable as a written history of the time period has failed to surface or become a triumphant topic for archeological rediscovery. Therefore, much of the kingdom's early years as a budding political power and civilization are subject to speculation with foundations rooted in oral history.

This thriving empire, of origins shrouded slightly in mystery, known as the Kongo Kingdom rose to the forefront of equatorial Africa at least two centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese and set the precedent for political organization and development in their region.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the political structure of the Kongo held the kingdom together despite later Portuguese influence and did not meet a great decline until after the European explorers had been in contact with the kingdom for at least a century after their first arrival in the 1480s.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 1 – Map of Congo



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Above is a map of present Congo boundary lines with the precolonial kingdoms appearing in dotted lines for a visual idea of the geographical area.

The fact that the Kongo managed to delay, to some extent, their future oppressors is assuredly an achievement in the history of African resistance. Such a high level of resistance, therefore, must be somewhat rooted in the strength and/or quality of the political organization, or political structure, of the African peoples. The political structure of the Kongo Kingdom was systematic and orderly, with a level of authority flowing from local to national heads. On the local level, the Kongo had six major states, or parishes, (Mbama, Mpemba, Soyo, Mbata, Nsundi, and Mpangu) which were each, respectively, headed by their own governor.<sup>20</sup> These governors were the arms of the King of Kongo. In other words, I suggest that, the king was the single unifying piece to the African kingdom and the governors were his extremities, who he utilized as he pleased. The king bestowed the governors' powers over the economy, administration and armed forces of their individual regions, although this authority came with accountability. The governors presided over several duties including, but not limited to, maintaining a justice system, preserving the road infrastructure, and supplying an army for war times. With the efforts of the Kongo governors the King's army grew to 80,000 people by the end of the fifteenth century, a powerful defense for a population around 3 million strong.<sup>21</sup>

The king's extremities were imperative to the kingdom's survival, yet the king himself was even more essential. The king of the Kongo, like many other African kings before the commencement of colonialism, was the lifeblood of the people. More than a metaphoric phrase, this accurately describes the heartbeat of an African kingdom. The Mani Kongo, or the Kongo King, ruled absolute over his kingdom creating and enforcing laws, though that was only a fraction of his role to the Kongo people. The Mani Kongo was also a political commander and spiritual leader, there were even myths that he even held relationships with the spirits. In the eyes



of the Kongo people, the Mani Kongo embodied the unification of the spirit world and the human world.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, he became a sacred entity who garnered pride and respect in the people of the Kongo.

With such influence the Mani Kongo looked to a select few for advice and direction and these esteemed individuals he identified as the council of elders. The power contained within this small group, including the Mani Kongo, could easily improve or destroy the entirety of the ancient kingdom. The latter would prove likely in the sixteenth century when the council experienced a power shift to a foreign entity, the Portuguese, which would lead the kingdom astray.<sup>23</sup> As the Mani Kongo became increasingly attentive to the advice of the Portuguese, the Kongo slowly started to lose its ability to represent itself in its own homeland which can only negatively affect the kingdom in an African perspective.

In 1491, less than a decade after the Portuguese first landed, the Mediterranean Europeans played another destructive move against the kingdom. This would set a vicious sequence of events in motion that no African kingdom could stop single handedly. The event that commenced in 1491 was the missionary expedition, sent by King João II of Portugal. This voyage was to include not only priests of multiple backgrounds (Franciscan and Dominican) but armed military men, crafts workers and women<sup>24</sup>; not to mention Portuguese peasants who were of no quantitative value to the Kongo economy. The expedition's purpose was twofold: (1) to convert the "savages" of the "dark continent" into Christians and (2) to open up trade routes advantageous to the nation of Portugal.<sup>25</sup> I would suggest that the latter was of vital importance to the Portuguese as their actions followed along that path. According to Georges Balandier, the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries embodied a “false marriage”, one where the Portuguese cunningly swayed the Kongo, more specifically the aristocracy, to the side of Christianity.<sup>26</sup>

The conversion of the Kongo aristocracy to the Christian religion created a relationship where the Kongolose were dependent on their European counterpart. Dependence, as is well known, is nothing but counterproductive to the African. While the aristocracy became infatuated with Christianity and Euro-centricity, the lower classes continued to devote themselves to the upliftment of traditional Kongo religions and beliefs creating an even greater rift between the classes. In 1491, the very year that Portugal’s King João II sent his missionary expedition to Central Africa, the King of Kongo (Nzinga a Nkuwa) himself was baptized and took on a new name, the name of his sovereign commander, João I<sup>27</sup>. The Queen of Kongo was later baptized, destined to follow in João I’s footsteps, and took the name of the Queen of Portugal as her own, Eleanor. This baptismal cycle continued with quite a few members of the Kongo nobility, including Nzinga Mbemba the then governor, but future king, later known by his Catholic name Afonso I.

King Afonso I sought the throne, and with Portuguese assistance, he managed to acquire it after King João I’s death in 1506.<sup>28</sup> However, this acquisition came with the forfeiture of any African development that could have continued to take place in the Kongo Kingdom. King Afonso advanced missionary schools that did not teach African values, legally declared the Kongo a Catholic state, allowed unrestricted access of the Kongo to Portuguese merchants and religious figures, and ultimately permitted a foreign market to take control over the Kongo’s economics to the point where the national economy was not, and could not be, dependent upon

itself for advancement.<sup>29</sup> This foreign market, based on funds sourced in European banks, drastically changed a once prosperous kingdom into the depravity of a European slave warehouse located in Central Africa.

A brief pause may be necessary to address a common historical view used, in some regards, to validate slavery by arguing that slavery existed in Africa before the arrival of the European. While this concept may be true in some regards, the growth from slavery as a marginal factor to a dominant economic activity is due to the demands of the European Slave Trade<sup>30</sup>. This notion of slavery in the Kongo is particularly relevant to the economic history of the kingdom.

Although the Portuguese achieved their goal in obtaining human cargo, it is rarely mentioned that the Portuguese slave trade was not an instant affair. In opposition, King Afonso, the same man who gained the crown with Portuguese help in 1491, attempted to gain full control of the kingdom. Portugal's ability to pit one side of the Kongo against the other proved successful in throwing the kingdom into the pits of the European Slave Trade.<sup>31</sup> Despite the efforts of King Afonso, the Portuguese were unresponsive to his endeavors: at one point in time he even proposed a mutually beneficial trade of Kongo peoples for European.<sup>32</sup> However, that concept never came to fruition and still forced the king to partake in the procuring of enslaved persons for transfer to Sao Tome and later Brazil.

The Portuguese changed a Kongo economy based on service into an economy centered on chattel slavery and profits. Historians agree that “the hunting down of men – justified in the name of economic necessity, sanctified, practiced one way or another by all the ‘foreigners’ and

their native agents, was one factor in the destruction of the old Kongo. It perverted social relations... [I]t wounded the population of the Kongo in its very substance.”<sup>33</sup>

The slave trade reached such a point that the King of the Kongo Empire, Afonso I, wrote King João II of Portugal in the early 1500s to plea for a cease to the slave trade as it was destroying Kongolese society.

King Afonso I’s July 1526 letter to the King of Portugal:

“We ask grace of Your Highness not to believe the evil said about us by those who have no concern but to sell what they have unjustly acquired, who, by their slave trade, are ruining our kingdom and the Christianity which has been established here for so many years and which cost your predecessors so many sacrifices. Catholic kings and princes like Your Highness are working to provide this great blessing of faith for new peoples. We are anxious to preserve it for those who have acquired it. But this is difficult to do here where European goods exert such a fascination over the simple and ignorant that they leave God in order to obtain them. The remedy is the suppression of these goods which are a snare of the devil for sellers and buyers alike. The lure of profit and greed lead the people of the land to rob their compatriots, including members of their own families and of ours, without considering whether they are Christians or not. They capture them, sell them, barter them. This abuse is so great that we cannot correct it without striking hard and harder.”<sup>34</sup>

Yet, despite King Afonso’s efforts, Portugal continued down the path towards greater exploitive means regarding the Kongo. Then Afonso, the most notable of the Catholic kings in

the Kongo, fell to the fate of humanity and died in 1542.<sup>35</sup> With the death of this monumental figure, later kings would find it difficult to follow in his footsteps to nourish and protect the kingdom. Meanwhile, the Portuguese consistently fueled the flames of devastation and the kingdom, consequently, became engulfed in a sea of destruction in less than two centuries, completely ceasing to exist.

Taking an expansive look outside of the Kongo Kingdom into the greater Congo Basin, the Luba and Lunda kindoms, also, had a similar richness in history throughout the precolonial era. However, similarly to the Kongo kingdom, Luba and Lunda failed to survive past the mid-1800s due to foreign domination. Newly made international trade, managed by Arab slave merchants from the east, removed the rulers of Luba and Lunda from their dominating positions to the place of a bystander, fated to watch as they slowly lost control of their kingdoms and respective governments.<sup>36</sup> The Leopoldian expeditions of the late 1880s and early 1890s would never lay eye on the spectacles that deemed respect as Central African kingdoms.

Acknowledging the many thriving African kingdoms is paramount to the creation of a historically accurate argument. Yet, African Kingdoms did not make up the entirety of present day Congo; ancient Central African kingdoms were not the status quo. “Today, some 450 ethnic groups, approximately 12 million people, live in the rainforest of equatorial Africa, interspersed throughout its various habitats.”<sup>37</sup> These peoples are the pygmies, though such an all-encompassing label is not capable of accurately describing them. The various groups of pygmies can be completely perpendicular to one another in culture and civility depending on their location, proximity to waterways, and residential elevation. Along with the pygmies, Bantu and

Sudanic farmers resided in close vicinity to the rainforest, constantly adding to the culture of the rainforest people in, but not limited to, the areas of social structure, political structure, the economy, and language. Today, the foundations of all three groups find themselves linked to each of these areas. Further examination of said foundations display an emphasis on the village as “the basic unit of settlement and the place where social and political institutions were implemented.”<sup>38</sup> These nations<sup>39</sup>, of a smaller scale, provided the basic necessities for their people, including the building of rectangular wooden houses and the providing of food for bodily nutrition, while trading with other villages for the things that they did not or could not acquire.

The harsh environment in which the pygmies and farmers lived created in them a response. The determination to live, to thrive, allowed for the construction of complex village systems which resembled small nations in the intricacy of their social and political organizations. While it is easier to readily acknowledge kingdoms for their role in the development of the Congo Basin, it should not, in any way, take away from the contributions that the large population of pygmies and farmers gave to the same location before they became a kingdom themselves, the Kuba Kingdom which lasted until the 1900s<sup>40</sup>. All in all the Congo thrived, because a collective of multiple kingdoms and peoples, later recognized as the Congolese, have developed it.

Before long, however, Africa could no longer continue as the “white man’s grave,”<sup>41</sup> and as a result it became another’s tomb – the Black man’s mass grave. The European’s discovery of quinine shortly added to the constructed demise of Central African kingdoms. Quinine, an anti-malarial drug and medical breakthrough which reduced the likelihood of European death from

over 90% to roughly 60%, allowed conquerors to travel past Africa's coastlines, remove African middlemen and rape the land for anything and everything, especially nonrenewable minerals.<sup>42</sup> This innovation was momentous as the Congo has a miniscule 23 miles of coastline but 905,355 square miles of interior land<sup>43</sup> and, respectively, the Congo is the 11<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world.<sup>44</sup> Conceivably, one of the greatest defenses against King Leopold slowly became less of a threat, disease was now laughable; a new side story in the adventure of exploration. With Leopold's focus applied to more profitable areas, regions that could produce the maximum profit fully received a high level of strategic planning. The desired profits could only become a reality if King Leopold controlled every aspect of the Congo Free State including the economy, political system, people, and land. Though it is more than reasonable to presume that the Congolese peoples had no desire to live under the authoritarian rule of foreign royalty, measures, take previously, accounted for much of the African opposition and rebellions.

The preplanning on Leopold's part was thoroughly extensive to say the least. Though he did not become sovereign over the Congo until 1885, Leopold was setting up his chess game in the early 1870s and commissioning renowned explorers by 1879.<sup>45</sup> While driven by profit this man embodied patience, as a king he understood the art of war in its various elements and knew what was necessary to manipulate a war in his favor. Most importantly, however, was King Leopold's ability to utilize propaganda and successfully manage a campaign of divide and conquer tactics upon the Congo Basin.

Leopold's divide and conquer approach was an aspect of colonialism that cannot be overlooked, as it accurately displays the ingenuity necessary to maintain colonization. The

Belgian king crafted a strategy to partition known Congolese combatants by emphasizing tribal allegiances and thusly pushing potential revolutionary fighters into conflict with each other. Though Leopold's tactics continued further and actually resulted in a separation of the Congo people from their history and culture. The ultimate end product was the creation of a class of forced laborers to remove profitable resources from the Congo Basin and into lucrative markets. The similarities between the conditions that Leopold's forced laborers and the enslaved persons of the European Slave Trade endured are too close for comfort, and as such, I would argue that King Leopold deliberately established an environment conducive to slavery years after its global abolition. The king would have only pursued this if the ends were satisfying the means, and as it turns out they were; mass profits were lining the pockets of the capitalist white man named King Leopold II of Belgium.

A necessary aspect of war is deception of one's enemy meaning that the deception of the Africans on part of the European was not a coincidence. There are multiple scenarios where European colonizers throughout the continent played upon tribal differences and pitting ethnic groups against one another. In the case of Congo, King Leopold's Force Publique, a repressive army that used Congolese men to exploit other Congolese men, identified the regional and ethnic differences then enhanced them. But before further examination, I must first take a look at how King Leopold came to control this nation.

In accordance with the results of king's colonization, I must conclude that Leopold was well versed in manipulation and strategy, but despite this he never manned the frontlines with his men. Moreover, Leopold was sovereign over the country, yet could not distinguish it.<sup>46</sup> In fact,



this sovereign ruler couldn't visibly tell the difference between the Congo and Angola even though he named his colonized state in 1885, reestablishing it as the Free State of Congo.<sup>47</sup> Lacking the motivation to do his own dirty work forced King Leopold to recruit others, one of whom was the famous Welsh explorer Henry Stanley. Stanley would be the one to convince Congolese Chiefs into signing their land away and raising a new flag, a blue flag with a gold star in the middle to represent new rule under the International African Association (IAA).<sup>48</sup> The IAA's establishment supposedly equated to the betterment of Congo and the entirety of Africa, and this could have been possible asset to the people if the organization wasn't a front for King Leopold's exploitative plans. Under the guise of bringing civilization to this region of the so-called Dark Continent, Leopold created a new labor class, one utilized to build the many railways and transportation routes and employed at no cost to Leopold. This class, and I am using the term class in the loosest of senses, was the enslaved Congolese people.

In order to understand the mass exploitation of the Congo, both the lowest class, enslaved persons, and the highest class, European aristocracy and/or businessmen, require examination and placement in their proper global context. The likelihood that King Leopold created an entire system based off of widespread exploitation by himself is doubtful, so who did he model? A westward look toward the leader of Europe, Great Britain, will reveal the answer. Britain capitalized on the enslavement of various African peoples to become the one of the wealthiest nations in the world, in addition to becoming the creator of the industrial revolution.<sup>49</sup> It is hard to ignore the similarities between enslavement imposed by the British and the one imposed by Leopold.

Forced labor was the crucial aspect which brought King Leopold II a vast amount of incoming wealth. From 1885 to 1908 the king had complete control over the Congo Free State, but this did not come with ease. Throughout his reign Leopold specialized in propaganda tactics that would play on European myths of the white man's burden and bringing civilization to the savages which, consequently, made European nations comfortable with a small country such as Belgium holding a stake in the magnificent African cake. With this continual feast upon the Congo, it is hard to imagine why Leopold, or Belgium, would willingly allow the Congo to become a prosperous nation in its own right. Congolese freedom would equate to loss of profits and an additional competitor in the global market. To preemptively combat this possibility the King of Belgium instilled an infrastructure that would continually oppress past his death. Inevitably, the Congolese people were set up to fail and ultimately become a self-fulfilling prophecy to the Europeans: The African is the White Man's Burden.<sup>50</sup>

## Chapter Two: The Congo Free State

One man held The Congo Free State captive under the pretext of African liberation, yet it only resulted in exploitation.<sup>51</sup> However, Congo is but one of the many scenarios where greed, used unjustifiably, is a means to colonize and annihilate large populations of civilized people only to fabricate the view of Africa as “the wretched of the earth.”<sup>52</sup> Despite this fact, public unrest regarding the hypocrisy of the Congo Free State did not occur until 1903.<sup>53</sup> The few who did see the Free State for what it was in reality met Leopold’s quick use of propaganda, which made them irrelevant; the question is why? The answer is simply that profits outweighed the necessity for humanitarian justice, creating an environment where the loss of human lives became collateral damage to the overall scheme.

This thesis examines the Congo Free State for what it was, from beginning (1885) to end (1908), and how its growth has a continuing effect on Central Africa and, more importantly, the Congo presently. Simply put, Leopold of Belgium’s primary reason for colonizing roughly one million square miles in Central Africa was greed. Looking a step further, Leopold’s monarchical greed separates into two aspects: (1) financial wants and (2) power. While Leopold was the King of Belgium his authority was inferior to that of the constitution, he therefore sought to control an alternative land to make himself feel superior.

The philanthropic vision of Leopold led him to the “Dark Continent”, where the “inferiority” of the people and the resources of the land were the perfect concoction for the birth

of colonial rule. From 1885 to about 1889, European explorers under the commission of Leopold charted the Congo thoroughly, including over 10,000 miles of rivers.<sup>54</sup> These waters primed the Congo for European penetration...steamboats could access the entire country, nearly, with the exception of the Katanga region which was not readily accessible by water. But, what this region lacked in water it made up for in mineral wealth, leading it to distinction and thereby focused on by European powers; the effects of such a fixation are visible in the present political development of the Katanga.<sup>55</sup>

*Table 1-Significant Events in the Congo Free State Timeline*

**Significant Events in the Congo Free State Timeline**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Event</b>
1891	Vacant Lands Policy Secret Decree (leads to a monopoly on ivory and rubber)
1892	Leopold opens the Free State of Congo as a free trade zone
1895 - 1900	Switch from diamonds, ivory, and other nonrenewable resources, to rubber as the main export

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Storyline aside, Leopold massacred an estimated 10 to 13 million people within a 20 year rule.<sup>57</sup> Compound this with the ridiculous, immeasurable amount of mutilated Africans created in the process of cultivating the “free state” and the beginnings of a poorly-lit tragedy arise.

This psychological oppression could arguably leave more of a lasting effect than numbers would imply. One can make the argument that the colonizers were, to an extent, psychologically oppressed as well by referencing Charles Liebrechts, an advocate for forced labor who said “some people say those who employ this system are barbarous, and load them with anathemas. But alas, in the greater part of Central Africa, this is the only means of transport, and to give it up would mean renouncing development of civilization. Such a renunciation would engender evils as great as those of the portage system. There could be nothing worse for Africans at present than to lost European influence, for they would fall into a state of anarchy which would lead to the extermination of the race.”<sup>58</sup>

A report given by a British representative about his firsthand experience captures very vividly the daily oppression of the people of the Congo Free State.

In 1899, a British vice consul reported a case involving the Force Publique, the army composed of a majority of East Africans and children from the Upper Congo, and their commanding Belgian officer. “The soldiers arrived in a village and began looting it in retaliation for the villagers’ refusal to carry out orders. The soldiers then attacked the villagers and seized their women, whom they declared as hostages until the chief could bring in the required quotas of rubber. Most of these women were repeatedly raped while their men went to collect rubber. To add insult to injury, after loading the buckets of rubber into their canoes, the soldiers sold the women back to their families for the price of a couple of goats apiece. Sometimes hostages, including women, children, and elders, were kept inside wooden enclosures in horrid conditions without enough food or water;

many died. At some villages, rubber squads forced men at gunpoint to rape their own mothers and sisters because they refused to provide rubber. If villagers failed to collect required quotas or, in some cases, if the quality of rubber collected was poor, soldiers customarily wiped out whole villages and brought the right hands of their victims to the white commissioner.”<sup>59</sup>

*Figure 2 – Congolese Man Staring at Daughter's Mutilated Limbs*



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Right hands, in those days, became equivalent to a form of currency in the Congo.<sup>61</sup> Though in many ways they were more than just money, as there are several cases where officers of the Force Publique smoked hands. In the photograph above, taken in 1904, a father stares, in a trance-like state, at his daughter's mutilated hand and foot<sup>62</sup> – punishment for not satisfying the quota of rubber collection.

Overcoming the dominant view that profits mean more than human lives would become a whistle blower's hardest challenge. Many people did not readily stand against King Leopold's colonization, and it's easy to see why as Congolese exploitation was beneficial to the entire continent of Europe. Consequently, the outcome of one of the first campaigns led by a man named William Sheppard, an African –American and one of the first whistle blowers, was unfavorable as it already had the odds stacked against it.<sup>63</sup>

The next man to take on the challenge was a known Black historian identified as George Washington Williams; an American man who stood up and spoke out about the Congolese injustice to anyone who would care to listen, and those who could care less, one of whom was King Leopold himself.<sup>64</sup> In 1890, Williams wrote an Open Letter requesting change from the man who could, perhaps, amend the exploitation in the quickest manner possible, yet he made one mistake...he asked without having the ability to enforce repercussions, in essence he had no control over Leopold. Although major newspapers did act and publish the letter, Williams' lack of authority allowed for the Congo Free State to run unscathed until 1908 when it finally met its demise, 18 years after Williams addressed the Open Letter to King Leopold.

Despite Sheppard and Williams' failure to destroy King Leopold and his system of exploitation they did manage to pave the way for two men to thrive. These two would later become inextricably linked with the downfall of the Congo Free State and make their names, E.D. Morel and Roger Casement, known throughout Europe. The former would lead a colossal assault against King Leopold and Congolese exploitation from his home country Great Britain while the latter would work in the Congo Free State as an informant. Casement's discoveries



were numerous and ultimately led to an actualized achievement, something only dreamed of by Sheppard and Williams. With Casement's firsthand investigation into the Congo<sup>65</sup>, dubbed the Casement Report, Morel had the ultimate weapon to combat Leopold, his propaganda tactics, and Congolese exploitation. Nevertheless, Morel and Casement were still European men of their time and their relentless attack upon King Leopold was in no way synonymous with an attack upon all European colonialism; they sustained the ideology of the "white man's burden."<sup>66</sup>

These campaigns against the cruel exploitation in the Congo Basin proved that the Congo Free State existed as two distinct entities. One made by hacked limbs and burned villages, and the other, supposedly existing as a utopia in the interior of Africa. The historical evidence suggests that one of these two failed to exist. Acknowledging Leopold's propagandist view as a falsification, the Congo Free State, as seen by Sheppard, Williams, Casement and all of the ordinary Congolese people existed as a nightmare.<sup>67</sup>

Theoretically, Morel and Casement greatly contributed to the end of Leopold's era, but did anything change for the ordinary Congolese people - no. Little change occurred in reality because Leopold successfully created a colonial template for Congo.<sup>68</sup> This model was detrimental to Congo as it meant Leopold, removed or not, would not adversely affect European profits or African colonization: the organization did not need a head. However, with Leopold's commanding grasp beginning to loosen, he commenced negotiations with the Belgian government to profit off of the transfer of power. After two years of talks and deliberations a deal finalized, one which was more than advantageous to Leopold. In return for Belgian control over the Congo, Leopold received forgiveness for Fr 110 million worth of debt, a government

agreement to complete national projects estimating Fr 45 million, and Fr 50 million for merely leaving Congo.<sup>69</sup> In essence, Leopold sold a house that was not his own and got paid. No European nation, including Belgium, imposed any court cases, fines, or demotions of title upon the king for his crimes against Congo and after two decades of exploitation Leopold progressed from a miniscule monarch to the richest king in the entire European continent.<sup>70</sup>

## Chapter Three: Belgian Colonial Period, Independence, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congo

### War

Every kingdom, no matter how great, must one day fall: King Leopold's Free State of the Congo appeared to fall in 1908.<sup>71</sup> Believing this to be a success, however, would be inaccurate, as this was an empty victory for the Congolese. King Leopold was no more, but his army, the Force Publique, and his inhumane methods manifested in the political and economic system of the country to far outlive a human lifespan; his colonial template lived on.<sup>72</sup> Though Morel and Casement chopped the metaphorical head off, the roots and the colonial template still lingered, and these entities would usher in a new age, euphemistically called the Belgian Congo.<sup>73</sup>

Unearthing the roots of the Belgian Congo is instrumental to the comprehension of Congolese exploitation. Whether the head was Leopold or another, the depths in which multinational companies went to excavate riches did not change with the coming of a new boss because the model that was followed, the workers who were paid, and the ideologies that existed remained the same. There will always be a legacy of exploitation and instability in Congo until some entity removes the systematic means of inhumane capitalization from laws, processes, and mentalities.<sup>74</sup> Sadly, it appears that the Belgians did not succeed or even aim to accomplish this.<sup>75</sup> With a lack of significant revolution from the Congo Free State to the Belgian Congo era, I question the underlying motive in renaming the country. Politically the major differences between the two were two: (1) the ending of forced labor and (2) the transfer of ownership from an individual (the king) to his government. Yet, the termination of forced labor merely brought

about a modern version of job exploitation known as indentured labor.<sup>76</sup> Hence the question, what quantifiably changed from Congo's point of view?

Belgium acquired Congo for economic reasons and these reasons alone determined how the European colonizer pursued its goals. Belgium ultimately found that it benefited them to follow Leopold's model and allow powerful companies and missionaries to rule areas within the Congo. Companies such as Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK), Compagnie du chemin de fer du bas-Congo au Katanga (BCK), and Forminiere exemplify autocratic businesses and their models of establishing Congo as an asset, not a liability, which has played a significant role in colonial policy and administration.

*Table 2-A Sample of Big Companies in the Colonial Trinity and Their Products*

**A Sample of Big Companies in the Colonial Trinity and Their Products**

<b>Company</b>	<b>Product</b>
Compagnie du Chemin de fer du bas-Congo au Katanga (BCK)	Railways
Forminiere	Diamonds
Huileries du Congo Belge (HCB) (a subsidiary of Unilever)	Palm Oil
Kilo-Moto	Gold
Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK)	Copper

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During the times of the “colonial trinity” (state, big companies, and missionaries), companies had free reign in their bought domains. They pursued capital and new investments as expected of any business, but they also created schools and hospitals, built roads, and policed the Congolese civilians.<sup>78</sup> However, the Belgian Congo mandated all this for a purpose fixated on Belgian economic growth, not raising the standard of living for the local people.

To briefly exemplify an ordinary company, Huileries du Congo Belge (HCB) exemplifies the economic policies of the Belgian government as of 1911. The European nation granted HCB a domain large enough to contain five concessions of palm trees with a diameter of 74 miles each;<sup>79</sup> that’s 21,504 square miles of arable land removed from local hands and placed in the palms of a foreign investor. In comparison, HCB’s domain was the size of West Virginia in the United States of America, which needless to say, is vast area for profitable palm oil cultivation.<sup>80</sup>

Although HCB was required to develop paved roads, a postal and telegraph service, hospitals and schools, the overall result of these infrastructures was a higher rate of impoverishment. What many statistics and tables have failed to demonstrate is the preposterous price paid for progress. The table below illustrates the unwanted results of advancement.

*Table 3-Outcome of the Relationship between HCB and the Congolese People*

**Outcome of the Relationship between HCB and the Congolese People**

<b>What HCB brought to the Congo</b>	<b>What the Congolese came out with from HCB-Congo relationship</b>
15 Hospitals	A grand class of made up of thousands of Congolese who owned no lands, no foods, and no freedoms
5 Schools	
650 Miles of paved roads	
50 Miles of railroads	
Etc.	

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The third entity of the colonial trinity, working in cohorts with big businesses, was the Catholic missionaries. Each one of the missionaries received a salary from the state and every mission station received .77 square miles of land to do with as they please. First appearances aside, when tallying the 261 Catholic mission posts and the 168 protestant posts<sup>82</sup> the total equates to 330 square miles of land. In addition to exploiting the Congo's resources the missionaries focused intensely on civilization through education. Although, a colonial and catholic goal motivated this education system created by the missionaries, as opposed to one of enlightenment. Indoctrination and creation of an inferior class of Congolese people, where locals would support their own colonial government, was highly prioritized by the education system. And as a result, by 1946 Catholic missions alone created 18,000 schools with over 800,000 students.<sup>83</sup> If even a fraction of these students fully bought into the ideology spewed by

missionaries a significant portion of the Congo's economy and political activity would fail to develop in the near future.

The purpose in examining the full grasp of the colonial trinity is not to reflect upon the vilest colonial history, but to paint the Congo as a nation of potential, haunted by King Leopold's Ghost. In fact, entire volumes of manuscripts exist with the different scenarios that have plagued Congo, in addition to the ones given, that do not deviate from this story of an African holocaust.

In an effort to further contextualize the systemic exploitation here are some facts: (1) by the 1930s Congo was the third largest producer of copper in the world and (2) by the same year they produced 2.5 million carats in diamond production.<sup>84</sup> This production and growth is astounding as ten years prior these industries were miniscule and forty years before that they did not exist. Yet, the profits made from these endeavors continue to exist, solely, in the hands of foreigners.

Presently, the outgrowth from the colonial base is prevalent and the agents of colonialism are still thriving. Although Congo officially became independent on June 30, 1960, it has yet to become economically and politically independent.<sup>85</sup> Foreign companies still control the country's vast amounts of nonrenewable resources. Excavated minerals such as copper, diamonds, and even columbite-tantalite (a mineral ore commonly known as coltan which, when refined, becomes extremely heat resistant and holds electric charges; due to its high utility it is used in laptops, cellphones, cameras and much more<sup>86</sup>) have played significant roles in how the Congo is managed, which leads to my next example:

In the late 1990s/early 2000s, several companies have held steadfast to their coltan supplies in the Congo without setting foot anywhere near the vicinity. By capitalizing off of the warring state of Congo, neighboring armies from Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda have been able to loot on a massive scale.<sup>87</sup> Everything from minerals to livestock have illegally<sup>88</sup> come into the possession of these groups, with an emphasis placed on the illegality of the measures taken. Between November 1998 and April 1999 Rwandan forces acquired, and unlawfully removed, between 1,000 and 1,500 tons of coltan from Société Minière et Industrielle du Kivu (SOMINIKI) among other resources.<sup>89</sup> With every kilo of coltan estimating around \$200 between 1999 and 2000<sup>90</sup> it is clear that neighboring countries, armies and multinational companies have a vested interest in the continued upheaval of the Congolese nation. The Rwandan President Kagame has even professed the conflict in the Congo to be a “self-financing war”<sup>91</sup> and it is hard to disagree with this notion, as estimations show that the Rwandan army made roughly 250 million dollars from the sale of coltan in a year and a half<sup>92</sup>.

The several companies from the example can be substituted with the names of many multinational companies, and their subsidiaries, who know the origins of coltan and the havoc that they are causing in the region.<sup>93</sup> Although majority of the world’s uninformed consumers have no suspicions of their newly acquired devices and the journey that certain coltan containing parts went through (extraction and shipment via roads, waterways and aircrafts)<sup>94</sup> they are not necessarily free from responsibility. According to the United Nations (UN), “the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo has become mainly about access to five key mineral resources: coltan, diamonds, copper, cobalt, and gold.”<sup>95</sup> And seeing as Congo contains 80% of the world’s coltan deposits and the use of coltan is ever increasing with the use of electronic devices, one can



only imagine the level of exploitation<sup>96</sup> that will commence in the future if the world does not recognize this drastic problem. Below are a sample of companies that have imported, or are currently importing, minerals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo via Rwanda and ultimately funding the continuation of war for profit. Notice the hand that Belgium still plays in the Congo.

Table 4-Sample of Companies Importing Minerals from the DRC via Rwanda

## Annex I

### Sample of companies importing minerals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo via Rwanda

<i>Company</i>	<i>Country of destination</i>	<i>Merchandise</i>
Cogem	Belgium	cassiterites
Muka-Enterprise	Belgium	cassiterites
Issa	Germany	cassiterites
Chpistopa Floss	Germany	cassiterites
Redemi	Rwanda	cassiterites
Banro-Resources Corp.	Malaysia	cassiterites, coltan
	Canada	cassiterites
Bharat	United Republic of Tanzania	cassiterites
Extano-Office	Rwanda	coltan
Coopimar	Rwanda	coltan
Geologistics Hannover	Germany	coltan
Rwasibo-Butera	Switzerland	coltan
Eagleswings	Netherlands	coltan
Veen	Netherlands	coltan
Soger	Belgium	coltan
Patel Warehouse	Netherlands	coltan
Afrimex	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	coltan
	Netherlands	cassiterites
Chimie Pharmacie	Netherlands	coltan
	Belgium	coltan

Sogem	Belgium	coltan, cassiterites, tin
Cogecom	Belgium	coltan, cassiterites
Cogea	Belgium	coltan
Panalpina	Kenya	coltan
Tradement	Belgium	coltan, cassiterites
Ventro Star	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	coltan
Raremet	India	coltan
Finconord	Pakistan	coltan
Finiming Ltd.	Belgium	coltan
Finconcorde	Russian Federation	cassiterites, coltan
Patel	India	cassiterites
Cicle International	Belgium	coltan
Masingiro	Germany	coltan
Union-Transport	Germany	coltan
Specialty Metal	Belgium	coltan
MDW	Belgium	cassiterites, coltan
Transintra	Belgium	cassiterites

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*Source:* The Rwandan Revenue Authority.

In addition of these companies there are many primary bilateral and multilateral donors to Rwanda and Uganda who support a variety of sectors. Among these bilateral donors are the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Denmark, and Germany<sup>98</sup> and the top multilateral donor is The World Bank.<sup>99</sup> Though the people of the Congo suffer, the prosperity of these nations and organizations has continued.

While the conditions of the Congolese are unknown to many outside of Africa, the situation on the ground has created an environment where the Congolese are unable to mystify themselves to the bleak reality forced upon them. As a result Congo continues to rebel against their oppressors; from the birth of the colonial period and throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congo war this has been a constant.<sup>100</sup> How many have died for the cause since sunrise and how many will not make it to sunset? When this question becomes a reality and when parents can no longer feed their families, out of despair, a revolutionary is born. On July 2, 1925 such a man was born, and his name was Patrice Lumumba.<sup>101</sup> His goal was to rise up against Belgian oppression and unite all of Congo under a nationalism they could be proud of. For a brief moment in history, Lumumba succeeded; he won the seat of prime minister in the first democratically held elections of Congo and started implementing drastic changes, but his vision did not fit in the plans of Congo's colonizers.

Auspiciously for Belgium, Europe, the United States and Asia, the U.S. and Belgium arranged Lumumba's assassination on January 17<sup>th</sup> of 1961 along with the killing and exiling of many other Congolese leaders. Then, a new man took office known as Joseph-Desiré Mobutu

who would later preside over a military dictatorship as Mobutu Sese Seko for over thirty years with Belgian backing.<sup>102</sup>

Today, various countries around the world continue to nurture the seeds of exploitation in the Congo. While forced labor has ceased to exist in name, this wealthy country is still forced to the bottom of the abyss. Therefore, it is an invalid justification to claim that the African, and more specifically the Congolese, cannot achieve global dominance when the world around them has combated their continent with such a high level of covert exploitation.

While the current section is titled “Chapter Three: Belgian Colonial Period, Independence, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congo War” I have not written significantly on the period of Congolese independence. The reasons for that are: (1) Mobutu Sese Seko led a coup d’état backed by Belgium and the United States that succeeded in overthrowing a democratically elected government.<sup>103</sup> When the foreign powers that be can determine who governs a country, the country in question is clearly not sovereign or independent. (2) Multinational companies still control the country’s resources and it is these foreign conglomerates that receive the profits and dispense the injustices.

All the previous statements derive from insight into the details of the colonial period, but despite this, Congo is not a hopeless cause. The history of Congo prior to the colonial period makes a case for the capability of the Congo. I have no doubt that Congo will liberate itself, but as of yet it has not experienced an extensive period of independence. It has, quite thoroughly, experienced a colonial state where people have died in the millions under Belgian colonialism, Mobutu’s rule, and the current president of Congo, Joseph Kabila.

Later oppressors enhanced the template which King Leopold cultivated in his 20 year rule and currently use them today. Congo's traitorous leaders have allowed multinational companies to hold the majority stake in their country because they benefit monetarily in many ways. As neocolonialism rears its ugly head, it is clear that the oppressors of Congo are black and white, they are individuals and companies, and they have no reason to cease their exploits. With public unrest the Belgian government removed Leopold in 1908, but colonialism adapted and became the Belgian Congo. With Congo's independence the Belgians were removed, but colonialism adapted and became neocolonialism under Mobutu Sese Seko. Then Mobutu Sese Seko died and Joseph Kabila, his son, took the reins, yet the atrocities continue. Clearly, multinational companies, oppressors and beneficiaries of colonialism are not going to be removed, that is the one constant. Unless, of course, the template that Leopold created is confronted with the urgency that it so deserves. Leopold's model of colonialism has not been taken on which is why Congo is in the position it is today. If not taken seriously, the man after Kabila will be much of the same, an individual controlled by the colonial template who will allow Congo to fall deeper into depravity under the appearance of prosperity.

## Chapter Four: A Temporary Closing

Has the enduring system of exploitation in the Congo become more covert than ever or are we, as a global society, closing our eyes to this human injustice just as our predecessors once did? Either way, the examination of the legacy of exploitation and instability in the Congo throughout its various periods will only continue until the exploit of the Congolese has ceased. As time has not resolved this tyranny, revolutionaries like Sheppard, Williams, Morel, Casement, and Lumumba became indispensable assets in the strife towards progress, but without the support of the people they have all inevitably fallen.<sup>104</sup> Assuredly, if this is to be a conclusion then we have failed our brothers in the interior of Africa, but if it is a temporary closing then perhaps exploitation will, one day cease in Congo.

By way of recapitulation, Congo, before being designated with that particular moniker, held countless kingdoms within its domain. Names such as the Kongo, while not readily known, exemplify what the central African peoples have accomplished and what they have the potential to achieve. Prior to the colonial period the Kongo, was assuredly a civilization created by the Africans of the Congo Basin. In terms of development, the Kongo utilized its geographical area to set itself apart from other kingdoms and peoples. A kingdom, which in fact, took full advantage of its two waterways (the Congo River and the Kasai River) in more ways than one – militaristic ventures, transportation, and economic growth found themselves linked to these rivers. In addition to, and as a result of, the waterways fertile soils were a casual occurrence in the region which led to a wide variety of flora and fauna for the kingdom's people to consume.

Although, this region was a brimming source of prosperity, a great land should not detract from the physical and mental efforts the Kongo people have implemented to develop and cultivate an environment to fit their culture and economic system. In an effort to recognize the Kongo Kingdom's developments I would inevitably fall short as information is scarce due to the absence of a written history of the time period. However, what history has recorded about the era and area is progressive, to say the least. Agricultural developments such as the introduction of iron technology and copper smelting vastly assisted the area's expansion into what we now know as the Kongo kingdom.

Every empire must come to an end and, thusly, so too did the Kongo. Yet, the end, so to speak, was not an affair caused exclusively by the rulers of the Kongo. Portuguese hands (the monarchy, missionaries, military, crafts workers, women, and peasants alike) were ever present in the destruction and within two centuries a kingdom was completely gone. Memories and ruins were all that remained after the Portuguese brought a religion which they used to denigrate rather than elevate and an economic system where people were converted into the highest currency, to be bought, sold and bartered as their oppressors saw fit.

Unfortunately, this cycle has repeated itself time and again with other Central African Kingdoms. Luba and Lunda both maintained economic development in their respective domains and, despite this, foreign powers brought them to their knees in a similar fashion to that of the Kongo Kingdom. While the pygmies and farmers did escape persecution for a longer period of time, they too met the end of an era at the hands of outside powers and their domain, the Kuba



kingdom, is but a memory and a model for what Africans can and will achieve when left to their own accords.

Though the narrative of the fall of Central African kingdoms and peoples can be rather bleak at times, all the Africans in the Congo Basin were not victims. There were Africans who profited from the enslavement of other peoples and there were rebellious people who resisted in every step of the way. Even though the narrative of resistance falls short of a prevalent outlook and, is often left out as an opposing story to that of the “helpless” African and the “white man’s” burden, overlooking the element of rebellion would remove an essential part of Congolese history. Although, I have focused on Leopold’s colonial era and, the subsequent, Belgian colonial trinity and its effects, these were merely some of the major players in exploitation. Congo exists, in post-European contact, as a civilization where the stories of ordinary people are largely unknown and oppressors, both foreign and domestic, have dictated the conversation of the country. Stagnation has ensued and although Congo is rich in mineral wealth, it has set standards for poverty that not exist in a land where multinational companies collectively make billions of dollars in profit a year.

The second and third chapters examined how these oppressors have exploited the lands for their wealth. Men such as King Leopold II of Belgium used the Congo as a means to an end (money and power), resulting in 10 to 13 million deaths in the 20 year period in which Leopold controlled the country. Inevitably, the rate of death and profit were dictated by Leopold through his foot soldiers, the Force Publique, and although their methods brought results, death was but one of the consequences. Soldiers told of the atrocities during rubber collection where they held

entire villages hostage to force the village men into servitude. The order was to gather a designated amount of rubber from the rainforest in which to trade for their village's freedom. Simple enough, but while this timely collection was undertaken the people of the village were held, many times without food or water, in wretched confinements and the women were raped on a continuous basis. By the time the men returned, the village itself was to never be the same and the life of the village and its people were completely in the hands of Force Publique. The arrival of the collected rubber did not equate to freedom, if the soldiers did not feel the rubber was adequate in any way they had the king's blessing to erase the villagers from existence; save for the right hands used reminiscence and verify death.

Eventually, the public's eyes saw the lengths Leopold took to secure a steady line of profit as crimes against humanity. Yet, Belgium's king received no jail time, in fact, he was actually paid Fr 50 million to leave the Congo and all his past debts were wiped clean. Surely, the next foreign entity to control the Congo would exploit it in a like manner as punishments were, somehow, nonexistent and the chances of coming out with a profit were practically inevitable.

In accordance with this reality, Belgium started exploiting their central African country in 1908. The Belgian Congo, which was essentially the Congo Free State under a new name with a few changes, came into being without much complication. Much of the public was ready to see Leopold removed from Africa, yet majority of Leopold's establishments (cities, the Force Publique, officials, laws, etc.) remained intact after his departure. Without so much as a hiccup the Congo continued down the path of immense colonialism as the Belgians' innovated old

tactics into updated means of oppression. In order to do so, this small European nation partnered with two large entities (foreign companies and missionaries) to bring “civilization” to the “darkest” region of the world. In some regards, it could appear that they instilled progress as hospitals, schools, roads and railways began to fill the Congo’s countryside, but this growth in infrastructure came at an exorbitant price to the natives, the seizure of their lands and freedoms.

Unfortunately the Congolese people are still paying a ridiculous price for the appearance of development. Although, independence occurred in June of 1960, at present the Congo is still not economically, or politically, independent. Multinational companies and outside countries continue to excavate countless nonrenewable resources which results in a continuous supply of funds to their armies and bank accounts. This, in addition to the vast local mismanagement of the government, has drastically hindered the potential for a strong and thriving nation.

While examining the legacy of exploitation and instability in Congo from King Leopold II’s Free State to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congo War, the historical evidence has shown that the system in Congo is rooted in King Leopold’s colonial template. Essentially, Congo’s current problems, as discussed in Chapter Three, are rooted in Leopold’s model. The template Leopold designed emphasized profits over human development and brought forced labor and a large scale massacre, totaling 13 million people, to the country. As Leopold allowed multinational corporations to establish self-controlled domains in Congo, the oppression and exploitation of the Congolese became evident. Profit was the main goal of Leopold’s model and he achieved it through violence and the creation of a colonial political system. The king utilized the Force Publique, multinational companies, and religion to achieve monetary funds beyond his reach

outside of Africa. After Leopold's negotiated removal in 1908, the Belgian government went on to continue and expand upon the archetype created by Leopold to gain profits of their own. With the supposed removal of Belgian influence in the 1960s, Mobutu Sese Seko continued the cycle of utilizing Leopold's template to gain unimaginable profits. Today, the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Joseph Kabila, has continued the preservation of Leopold's legacy.

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