

Introduction

A photograph presents the bourgeois family idyll in Léopoldville. The father, sitting in an armchair in the foreground, dominates the living room scene. He is wearing a white shirt and tie, polished leather shoes and trousers with a crease in them. His elbows resting on the arms of the chair, he is engrossed in the *Voix du Congolais*, a newspaper for the vernacular elite published by the Belgian Congo's General Government from 1945 onwards. In the centre of the picture but in the background, his wife, wearing a dress, is holding a baby in her arms. In front of her to the left there are two children: their daughter is standing with her face turned away from the camera, and their older son is also reading. The living room is equipped with a radio and a fan, while the tables are decorated with flowers and crocheted tablecloths. A tea service sits on the coffee table, around which the family members are arranged.

This photograph, commissioned by the General Government's Press and Propaganda Department in 1952 and titled "A Family of Congolese *Évolués* in Léopoldville" reveals what the Belgian colonial state viewed as exemplary and civilized family life within the framework of its elite-making. This is just one example of the countless photographs and articles relating to the model *évolué* that circulated after the Second World War in the colonial public sphere. The so-called *évolués* were a small but elite group of educated Congolese,¹ consisting of graduates of mission secondary schools and holders of subaltern posts in the colonial working world. They had made their voices heard and articulated their first demands to the colonial state shortly before the end of the war, calling for a special legal status, improved living conditions, a greater say and recognition. "What will be our place in the world of tomorrow?"² – this is how Paul Lomami-Tshibamba's article summed up the question of their position in the future colonial order, with as much apprehension as expectation, in March 1945.³ Dur-

1 In this study I use the – less than optimal – terms "Congolese" and "Congolese people." With reference to the elite, I alternate between the terms "vernacular elite" and "Congolese elite." I speak of Africans and Europeans when, as in the legal debate, this reflects the terminology in the sources. On the problems entailed in using groups and identities as analytical units, see R. Brubaker and F. Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000).

2 P. Lomami-Tshibamba, "Quelle sera notre place dans le monde de demain?," *Voix du Congolais* no. 2 (March-April 1945). All quotations from foreign-language literature and sources were translated into English by Alex Skinner.

3 By colonial order I mean a specific form of social order. In very general terms, an order may be understood as the situatedness of people in "organizations, institutions and systems, as well as through institutionalized expectations, traditions, customs and traditions." See J. Baberowski,

ing this period, the colonial state found itself compelled, for the first time, to set about forming a so-called African elite, and it defined this group's desirable features. What emerged was a highly idealized set of discourses and images steered by the colonial state, from which the *évolués* had to take their lead if they were to be viewed as legitimate representatives of the elite. The colonial public sphere, particularly periodicals such as the *Voix du Congolais*, portrayed this new elite as much as they staged and guided it.

But upon closer inspection, the bourgeois idyll in the photograph turns out to be deceptive. At the left edge of the photograph, the body of one family member is cut off by the camera angle in such a way that all we see of this individual is an uncovered leg and bare feet. This disruption to the visual composition of the ideal family scene may reflect the photographer's technical incompetence. For strait-laced European contemporaries, however, nakedness was one of the key criteria by which they affirmed their own civilizational superiority and colonized societies' "primitiveness and savagery."⁴ In a figurative sense, this element of the imperfect typifies a discourse of colonial distinction in which the *évolués*, despite all the bourgeois culture on display, were interpreted as "unfinished products" of the civilizing mission – and thus as unworthy of an improved legal status.

Regardless of all the rhetoric, the emergence of an educated Congolese elite was the last thing the Belgian colonial state wanted. As in other parts of colonial Africa, the inhabitants of the Belgian Congo were to be denied social participation, a political say, legal equality and positions of responsibility for as long as possible. "No elite, no worries": this motto was a common thread running through European rule in Africa. But that contemporaries associated this principle with Belgian colonial policy reflects the euphemistic character of "elite formation" in the Congo. What it actually meant was denying people access to universities, in both metropole and colony, and the right to political participation, for far longer than in British and French territories. In the colonial state, such forms of social discrimination were backed by a legal system that institutionalized injustice. First and foremost, "Africans" and "Europeans" represented juridical classifications that corresponded with separate legal systems. It was thus legal to systematically impose repressive punishments and forced labour on Af-

"Was sind Repräsentationen sozialer Ordnungen im Wandel? Anmerkungen zu einer Geschichte interkultureller Begegnungen," in *Arbeit an der Geschichte: Wie viel Theorie braucht die Geschichtswissenschaft?*, ed. J. Baberowski (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010), 11–12.

⁴ See P. Levine, "States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination," *Victorian Studies* 50, no. 2 (2008); P. Levine, "Naked Truths: Bodies, Knowledge, and the Erotics of Colonial Power," *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 1 (2013).

ricans, subject them to violence and deny them freedoms and participation. As this legal segregation was in turn legitimized by supposedly differing levels of civilization, it is unsurprising that the Congolese elite sought to obtain a special status by highlighting their development. Those who wished, for example, to claim the legal privileges of elite status had, among other things, to demonstrate a blameless family life, as evident in the previously mentioned photograph. Yet within a racist colonial ideology, such upwardly mobile boundary-crossing within the colonial social order was a theoretical possibility at best. In the Belgian Congo, such social ascent was denied even to the elites due to their alleged inadequacies. In colonial Africa, elite formation was meant to prevent the formation of an elite.

That which was cut off only visually in the family photograph – the bare feet – evokes other images associated with the earlier reign of terror in the colonial Congo. The shocking photographs of the severed hands of Congolese who had failed to fulfil their quota of forced labour during the rubber harvest were the iconographic epitome of the exploitative and murderous Congo Free State, the private possession of Belgian King Leopold II between 1885 and 1908. An international campaign against the atrocities in the Congo, run mainly by missionaries, focused on the media dissemination of photographs of human suffering, ultimately triggering the transfer of the colonial territory to the Belgian state in 1908.⁵ As the heir to a colony that had seen such savagery, henceforth Belgium felt compelled to reassure the global public sphere of the exemplary character of its colonial policies.⁶ While its propaganda foregrounded the development of modern residential districts, hospitals and primary schools, it failed to mention labour regimes and instruments of domination that stood in continuity with the Free State. And though the *évolués* were extolled as perfect residents of the model colony after 1945, the violence, disenfranchisement and racist discrimination inherent in colonial rule continued to shine through here and there in staged photographs. We can no more separate the image of the *évolué* family in the living room from this reality than we can the capital city of Léopoldville from the man it was named after. Both lead into the same darkroom of colonialism.

5 S. Sliwinski, “The Childhood of Human Rights: The Kodak on the Congo,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 3 (2006), doi:10.1177/1470412906070514; K. Grant, “Christian Critics of Empire: Missionaries, Lantern Lectures, and the Congo Reform Campaign in Britain,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 29, no. 2 (2008), doi:10.1080/03086530108583118.

6 For an analysis of the influence of violence and suffering in the Free State on Belgian colonial policy, see N. R. Hunt, *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).



Fig. 1: The staging of an *évolué* family in Léopoldville, 1952.

Vernacular elites and decolonization

The discrepancies between Belgian colonial propaganda and the lived experience of Congolese collided on 30 June 1960 before the eyes of a global public. At the Republic of the Congo's independence celebrations, King Baudouin was the first to give a speech, in which he glorified independence as the final, crowning achievement of Leopold II's brilliant plan and as an expression of his civilizing mission, a project tenaciously continued by the Belgian state. Newly elected prime minister Patrice Lumumba spoke next:

We have seen that the law was never the same, depending on whether one was white or black: accommodating for the former, cruel and inhumane for the latter. [...] We have seen that in the towns there were splendid houses for the whites and dilapidated huts for the blacks, that a black was refused entry to cinemas, restaurants and so-called European businesses, that a black travelled in the hold, at the feet of the whites in their luxury cabins. Who will ever forget the rifle fire in which so many of our brothers lost their lives,

the cells into which those unwilling to submit to a regime of oppression and exploitation were brutally thrown? All that, my brothers, we have endured.⁷

Lumumba's stark reckoning with Belgian colonial rule reflected his recent experience as an anti-colonial nationalist. A few months before, he had been arrested after calling for a "Congolese revolution" before a crowd of supporters of his party, the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC). But because his presence as a political heavyweight was essential at the negotiations on the colony's future, he was released from his prison cell and took a seat at the Table Ronde with torture-induced injuries. There, together with other Congolese negotiators, he fought for and won political independence. Five months later, Lumumba stood at the lectern as prime minister. King Baudouin, meanwhile, may well have been recalling his first visit to the Congo five years earlier, his "triumphant tour," when ecstatic crowds waved at him from the side of the road calling out *bwana kitoko* ('beautiful, noble man'). It was also the king who, with a paternalistic air, had first held out the prospect of independence – albeit tentatively – a few days into 1959. His goal was to contain the uprising of Congolese in Léopoldville, which had begun following a prohibited political gathering. He wished to see his subjects released carefully into independence and remain under the protection of the Belgian crown. In his speech, however, he explained away the fact that events were moving at such a rapid pace as the manifestation of a judicious colonial policy, one intended to prevent the kind of armed conflicts seen in Algeria or Kenya.

The contrary narratives advanced by Lumumba and Baudouin on Independence Day are reflected in two trends of historiography on the decolonization of Africa. The first focuses on the armed or peaceful anti-colonial struggle, variously involving nationalists, trades unions and armed resistance fighters, which succeeds in achieving independence. It takes account of the many sacrifices, struggles and privations undergone by the inhabitants of many countries in pursuit of freedom from colonial rule. The second approach, meanwhile, highlights the European architects of colonial policy, who purposefully implemented prudent plans for an orderly and peaceful transfer of power to moderate forces as the best means of releasing the population into independence.⁸

⁷ Speech by Patrice Lumumba on 30 June 1960.

⁸ The classic work of Ki-Zerbo being a prime example: J. Ki-Zerbo, *Histoire de l'Afrique noire* (Paris: Librairie Hatier, 1978). For a concise account of the historical processes of and schools of research on decolonization, see J. Osterhammel and J. C. Jansen, *Dekolonisation. Das Ende der Imperien* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2013). For an introductory text on elites and decolonization,

Neither of these narratives bears up against the complex happenings in the Congo – either before or after independence. In the first few months of the Lumumba government, a chaotic succession of violent events led to the so-called Congo Crisis. This included declarations of independence by individual provinces, deliberate delays to the transfer of power, mutinies and the putting down of uprisings, as well as the intervention of the Belgian armed forces and the dispatch of United Nations (UN) troops – all under the influence of the superpowers of the Soviet Union and United States. Under these circumstances, in hindsight Lumumba's celebrated speech marked the beginning of the deadly end of his premiership. Less than six months later, he was murdered in the breakaway province of Katanga, an event in which the Belgian secret service was involved. Since then, he has entered the history books as a global icon of the struggle for independence in Africa.⁹ Lumumba's life story, however, complicates the brief and idealized narrative of an anti-colonial fighter who fell on the frontlines of the Cold War. In a sense, the historical figure of Lumumba oscillates between the two seemingly opposing poles articulated in the independence-day speeches. Lumumba himself was a model *évolué* and as a young post office worker he had sung the praises of explorer Henry Morton Stanley and the Belgian civilizing mission in 1954.¹⁰ Yet he was by no means an opportunistic turncoat. His astonishing personal history says little about Lumumba as a person and much more about the heterogeneous social formation to which he belonged: the *évolués*. His metamorphosis is representative of a generation of Congolese elites for whom there was no contradiction in first serving the colonial state, as most of them did, then defeating and finally inheriting it.

The argument advanced in the present book sounds equally paradoxical, namely that the *évolués* undermined the foundations of the colonial order not despite but precisely because of their close collaboration with the colonial state. In the preface to a collection of writings by Patrice Lumumba published three years after his murder, French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre expressed

see J. Dülffer and M. Frey, "Introduction," in *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*, eds., J. Dülffer and M. Frey (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011).

⁹ See M. De Groof, "The Iconography of Patrice Emery Lumumba," in *Lumumba in the Arts*, ed. Matthias de Groof (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020); P. Monaville, "A History of Glory and Dignity: Patrice Lumumba in Historical Imagination and Postcolonial Genealogies," in *Lumumba in the Arts*, ed. Matthias de Groof (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020), 62–77; I. M. De Rezende, "Visuality and Colonialism in the Congo. From the 'Arab' to Patrice Lumumba, 1880s to 1961" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, Michigan, 2012).

¹⁰ This contrast is highlighted by J.-M. Mutamba Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba, correspondant de presse, 1948–1956* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005).

the view that Lumumba's efforts to adapt were only seemingly a matter of ingratiation.¹¹ The *évolués*, he contended, harboured an inherently subversive potential because they showed that Congolese could draw even with the supposedly superior Europeans.¹² When Jean-Pierre Dericoyard publicly acknowledged in the *Voix du Congolais* that the Belgians had civilized the elite in record time, he immediately went on to call for full civil rights. This was a highly subtle form of resistance, which did not amount to a radical anti-colonialism but nonetheless entailed a critique of colonialism. Appropriating colonial propaganda, the *évolués* turned hesitant announcements of reform into urgent demands. The colonial state may not have been disarmed, but the *évolués* noticed that the blunt end of empty promises had a sharply pointed counterpart.

It is no coincidence that Congo's independence, as wrested by the *évolués*, has been described as the result of a "revolution that broke out not in the factories but in the offices."¹³ But this book reveals that the roots of Congolese independence also lie in the press, the associations, and the living rooms with which we began. Like Lumumba, other members of government in the post-colonial Congo had made a name for themselves as illustrious representatives of the vernacular elite. And, like him, many of them worked as assistants in the colonial administration, were active as association presidents and journalists, and had attained a special legal status through the demonstrative display of a bourgeois lifestyle. Ultimately, we can only understand Lumumba's anti-colonial struggle and the contradictory actions and views of other key protagonists in the fight for Congolese independence if we look more closely at their shared backstory. This reveals the *évolués*' subtle rebellions.¹⁴ The present book is not another history of Patrice Lumumba, a "great man" of decolonization, but rather the story of his generation – the Lumumba generation.

What can we say about the position, opportunities and constraints typical of the Congolese actors who were addressed as "*évolués*" and "the elite" from 1945

11 J.-P. Sartre, "Préface," in *La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba*, ed. J. Van Lierde (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963), i–xlv.

12 Ibid., xxxiii.

13 J. Stengers, *Congo, mythes et réalités* (Brussels: Racine, 2005), 265. Much the same applied in Tanzania, where most of the newly created political offices were also occupied by former bureaucrats. A. Eckert, *Herrschen und Verwalten. Afrikanische Bürokraten, staatliche Ordnung und Politik in Tanzania, 1920–1970* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007), 231–242.

14 Here I seek to honour the insight that the meta-narrative of anti-colonial resistance has downplayed other varieties of social struggle. See F. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society. The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6–9.

on? How and why did the *évolués* transform, within 15 years, from the cornerstones of the Belgian colonial system into its pallbearers?

This book scrutinizes decolonization and elite formation in Africa. Elite-making policy was among the many top-down measures pursued by the Belgian colonial state in an attempt to alter the colony's social order through "social engineering."¹⁵ But it would be to tell just one side of the story if this book were to remain limited to the visions and statements of European actors. Hence, I analyse elite-making in this study as a social and cultural process that mostly involved Congolese who were described as the elite or as *évolués* in their own accounts and in those of others. The fact that *évolués* are equated with the elite in the sources reveals a conceptual tension. In pursuing elite-making, the colonial state's goal was not to strengthen other elites typical of colonial Africa, such as merchants or chiefs. In order to prevent the emergence of political and economic competition for Europeans, the authorities made it difficult for Congolese to engage in independent economic activity, and just as systematically turned so-called traditional elites into underlings of the colonial state – by making them the representatives of the local administration.¹⁶ As a new educated elite, the *évolués* were the intermediaries of developmental colonialism – devoid of political and economic power but with plenty of symbolic capital.

While this study traces a temporal arc from the beginning of Belgian colonial rule in the Congo in 1908 to its political independence in 1960, it focuses on the colonial state's elite-making after 1945. This practice was pursued within the framework of Africa's "second colonial occupation,"¹⁷ when the authorities sought to reform but by no means to abolish colonialism. As the European powers, under pressure from the international community, attempted to re-legitimize their rule as "developmental colonialism,"¹⁸ they promised new opportunities for socio-political participation and raised hopes of a better future, especially for the vernacular elite. Until the mid-1950s, the march through the institutions of the colonial state's elite-making represented the best opportunity for advance-

¹⁵ First and foremost, the term "social engineering" describes attempts by states to change the social order. For a discussion of this concept, see T. Etzemüller, "Social Engineering," *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, accessed February 4, 2021, doi:10.14765/zzf.dok.2.1112.v2.

¹⁶ See D. Tödt, "L'État colonial et les élites africaines, une histoire de soumission?," in *Le Congo Colonial. Une histoire en questions*, eds., I. Goddeeris et al. (Waterloo: Renaissance du Livre, 2020); J. Vansina, *Being Colonized: The Kuba Experience in Rural Congo, 1880–1960* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010); R. A. Loffman, *Church, State and Colonialism in Southeastern Congo, 1890–1962* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2019).

¹⁷ Eckert, *Herrschen*, 97.

¹⁸ A. Eckert, "Spätkoloniale Herrschaft, Dekolonisation und internationale Ordnung. Einführende Bemerkungen," *AfS* 48 (2008): 6.

ment for educated Congolese. Their attempts to adapt and to change themselves within a colonial system undergoing major transformation reflected the lack of political alternatives in the Belgian Congo. It may be true of British and French colonies that the final phase of decolonization after the Second World War was characterized by a plethora of different political imaginaries and developmental trajectories,¹⁹ but this did not apply to the Belgian Congo. There colonialism went essentially unchallenged at least until the mid-1950s; all that various social and political actors discussed was what form it ought to take. Thus, the present study also aspires to sketch out the anachronistic features of Belgian developmental colonialism, which emerge through comparison with the colonial reforms undertaken by other European empires in Africa. The *évolués* were symptomatic of these contrasting approaches.

The formation of the Congolese elite is a history of disappointment. The deep disillusionment felt by the Lumumba generation at colonial reforms helps us understand the mood within society as well as illuminating individual experiential horizons, against the background of which independence was initially discussed and later attained. Research on decolonization in Africa often mentions the delayed political reforms and the discrepancy between discourse and practice that typified colonial reforms after 1945,²⁰ phenomena that increasingly frustrated and radicalized the vernacular elite.²¹ But the focus in these studies on political

19 F. Cooper, *Africa since 1940. The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 38. On British decolonization, see J. Darwin, "Decolonization and the End of Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 5: *Historiography*, ed. R. W. Winks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

20 Stengers, *Congo*, 36.

21 On the case of the Belgian Congo, see J. O. Tshonda and N. Delaleeuwe, "'Je veux la civilisation, mais le Blanc ne veut pas de moi' ou le drame du Congo belge au travers de son élite," in *Le manifeste "Conscience africaine" (1956). Élités congolaises et sociétés coloniales. Regards croisés*, ed. N. Tousignant (Brussels: Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis, 2009), 158–159; R. Anstey, "Belgian Rule in the Congo and the Aspirations of the 'Évolué' Class," in *Colonialism in Africa 1870–1960*, vol. 2, eds. P. Duignan and L. H. Gann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); C. Young, *Politics in the Congo. Decolonization and Independence* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), 73–87, 116; M. De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques de la décolonisation congolaise jusqu'à la veille de l'indépendance* (Louvain: Impr. M. & L. Symons, 1970), 129–159, 464; J.-M. Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge au Congo indépendant. Émergence des 'évolués' et genèse du nationalisme* (Kinshasa: Publications de l'Institut de formation et études politiques, 1998). Studies of other colonies also emphasize the connection between the pursuit of independence and disappointment with the colonial system. For example, it has been argued with respect to the Gold Coast that the African elite's demand for political power was a result of their disappointment at the refusal to grant them opportunities for social advancement; see D. Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana. The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism*,

events often leads them to discern an abrupt break in the elite's relationship with the colonial state. The present book, by contrast, foregrounds the preceding fissures. Unlike much of the existing research, I delve into the expectations of the Congolese elite, as aroused by Belgian colonialism through the reforms announced after 1945, while also bringing out their experiences against this background. Above all, disappointments lay bare conflicts. The colonial state and the African elite long shared the view that the future of the Belgian Congo lay in a reformed colonialism. But their expectations diverged on when this future would dawn. This book thus examines the African elite's disappointment at the slow pace of colonial development. Their frustrated hopes did not lead directly to independence but did make it seem more appealing as an option for the future. By also attending to a "past future" of the elite that failed to eventuate,²² this study breaks with the teleological narrative of liberation from colonial rule.²³ Akin to Michael O. West's analysis of Rhodesia, here the elite's struggle to break away from colonialism is the second act in a "play" centred on their efforts to attain an enhanced place within the colonial order. This adds another chapter to the history of decolonization, one that tells of the gruelling struggle of a culturally bourgeoisified elite for equality, recognition and a say within the colonial system.

In light of their later political careers, the *évolués* have an established place in the historiography of the Belgian Congo.²⁴ Jean-Marie Mutamba-Makombo's comprehensive study was the first to describe in detail the *évolués'* many forms of interpenetration with the colonial state and decolonization.²⁵ Many studies, however, have focussed on their role in the independence movement to the extent that they often lose sight of those aspects that did not have imme-

1850–1928 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). Again, with reference to the Gold Coast, R. Finsterhölzl, *Kommerzielle Werbung im kolonialen Afrika. Die Werbebranche und der politische Wandel in Ghana 1930–1970* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015), extends this argument to the frustration felt by the elite at the discrepancy between advertised consumer goods and de facto purchasing power.

22 R. Koselleck, "Erfahrungsraum und Erwartungshorizont. Zwei historische Kategorien," in *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, ed. R. Koselleck (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989).

23 For a paradigmatic example of this approach, see Cooper, *Decolonization*, 6–9.

24 Anstey, "Belgian Rule," 220–223; Young, *Politics*, 203; De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 63–75; I. Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire générale du Congo. De l'héritage ancien à la République Démocratique* (Paris: Duculot, 1998), 251–263; Stengers, *Congo*, 274; D. Van Reybrouck, *Congo. Een geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2010), 315.

25 Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*.

diate political consequences in a narrow sense.²⁶ The few studies on the *évolués*' lifeworlds concentrate on the associations, which are viewed as forerunners of the political parties that were permitted only in 1958,²⁷ but so far there have been no in-depth examinations of associational sociability and the embedding of the associational landscape in the colonial state's elite-making policy.²⁸ The small number of biographies on representatives of the Congolese elite foreground those who became political leaders in the post-colonial era. In particular, the biography of Patrice Lumumba has been traced in detail, but less is known about other members of his generation.²⁹

26 Through excursions in social and cultural history, exceptions can be found here and there in the study by Congolese historian Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge, 188–194*; this also applies to J.-M. Mutamba-Makombo, "Im Salon eines kongolesischen Évolué in den vierziger und fünfziger Jahren," in *An-Sichten. Malerei aus dem Kongo, 1990–2000*, eds. J. Bogumil and B. Plankensteiner (Vienna: Springer, 2001). American historian Nancy Rose Hunt adopted an essentially cultural historical approach in the early 1990s with research on gender roles, family models and doctor's assistants as an occupational group. N. R. Hunt, "Noise over Camouflaged Polygamy. Colonial Morality Taxation, and a Woman-Naming Crisis in Belgian Africa," *Journal of African History* 32 (1991); N. R. Hunt, "Letter-Writing, Nursing Men and Bicycles in the Belgian Congo. Notes Towards the Social Identity of a Colonial Category," in *Paths Toward the Past. African Historical Essays in Honor of Jan Vansina*, eds. R. W. Harms and J. Vansina (Atlanta: 1994); N. R. Hunt, "Le Bébé en Brousse. European Women, African Birth Spacing and Colonial Intervention in Breast Feeding in the Belgian Congo," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 21 (1998); N. R. Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); see also G. Mianda, "Colonialism, Education and Gender Relations in the Belgian Congo. The Évolué Case," in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, eds. J. M. Allman et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

27 The transition from association to political party is emphasized by T. B. Bakajika, *Partis et société civile au Congo-Zaïre. La démocratie en crise: 1956–1965 & 1990–1997* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004); R. Lemarchand, *Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 175–184; B. Verhaegen, *Les premiers manifestes politiques à Léopoldville* (Brussels: CEDAF/ASDOC, 1971).

28 A schematic overview of the associational landscape is provided by B. Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises à Léopoldville et dans le Bas-Congo avant 1960," *Cahiers économiques et sociaux* 8 (1970); C. Tshimanga, *Jeunesse, formation et société au Congo/Kinshasa 1890–1960* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001). The *évolué* association in Stanleyville was the subject of one study because Lumumba served as its president; B. Verhaegen, *L'Association des Évolués de Stanleyville et les débuts politiques de Patrice Lumumba (1944–1958)* (Brussels: CEDAF/ASDOC, 1982).

29 See, for example, the two-volume work on Lumumba's life by J. O. Tshonda and B. Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba: Jeunesse et apprentissage politique, 1925–1956* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998); J. O. Tshonda and B. Verhaegen, *Patrice Lumumba: Acteur politique. De la prison aux portes du pouvoir, juillet 1956-février 1960* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005). On Joseph Kasa-Vubu, the first president of Congo, see C.-A. Gilis, *Kasa-Vubu au coeur du drame congolais* (Brussels: Editions

Particularly after the Second World War, colonial ideologues were not alone in regarding the vernacular elite as the harbinger of social renewal and as drivers of cultural change. In the 1950s and 1960s, social scientific research, bolstered by the discourse of progress and modernization, also interpreted “westernized Africans”³⁰ as an *avant-garde*. Especially influential was the definition of a “social elite”³¹ first advanced by Africanist and anthropologist Siegfried Frederick Nadel, a student of Bronisław Malinowski. In an anthology published by UNESCO in 1956, Nadel defined the elite as a “standard-setting group [that] stands for the ideal achievements and aspirations of the people and their culture.”³² In light of the role ascribed to them as the vanguard of political transformation, scholarly interest in the elite intensified in the early 1960s.³³ High offices of state in the independent nations of Africa were occupied by virtually unknown individuals, arousing the international community’s interest in their biographies and social background. While the authors of an anthology titled *The New Elites of Tropical Africa* rhapsodized about what they saw as an “almost virgin field,”³⁴ subsequently the scholarly interest in the elite largely subsided.³⁵ In par-

Europe-Afrique, 1964). For short biographies of the politicians of independent Congo, see P. Arctique, *Qui sont les leaders africains* (Brussels: Editions Europe-Afrique, 1961).

30 To cite one common *topos* in research on the African elite during the 1950s. K. Little, “The African Elite in British West Africa,” in *Race relations in World Perspective*, ed. A. W. Lind (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1955), 271.

31 S. F. Nadel, “The Concept of Social Elites,” *International Social Science Bulletin* 8 (1956): 422. The associated anthology includes studies of the African elite in Ivory Coast, South Africa, Senegal, the Belgian Congo, the Portuguese colonies and Nigeria. Several studies on the elite in colonial Africa later drew on Nadel’s definition. See for example K. A. Busia, “The Present Situation and Aspirations of Elites in the Gold Coast,” *International Social Science Bulletin* 8 (1956); Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 138; A. W. Southall, “The Concept of Elites and their Formation in Uganda,” in *The New Elites of Tropical Africa*, ed. P. C. Lloyd (London: Routledge, 1966).

32 Nadel, “The Concept,” 422.

33 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 22.

34 The authors examined cultural values, the formation of social classes, the relationship between elite and the masses, occupations and lifestyles, underlining the differences between the regions of Africa. P. C. Lloyd, “Introduction,” in *The New Elites of Tropical Africa*, ed. P. C. Lloyd (London: Routledge, 1966), 50–55.

35 The 1980s saw the publication, for example, of A. Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); K. Mann, *Marrying Well. Marriage, Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Of recent research, I would highlight Eckert, *Herrschen*; M. O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898–1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); J. Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence, Cultural Authenticity and the Limitations of Mimicry in French-Ruled West Africa, 1914–1956* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); A. Keese, *Living with Ambiguity. In-*

allel to this, studies on decolonization in the 1960s and 1970s began to refer to these elite middlemen as collaborators with the colonial state, a conceptual pairing that suggests similarities with French collaboration with Nazi Germany during the Second World War.³⁶ Historians and authors contributing to the national historiography of post-colonial African states have also been interested chiefly in moments of open resistance to the colonial regime.

Over the last 20 years, however, studies on subject formation in colonial Africa have tackled the state's efforts to turn people into cogs in the machine of colonial rule.³⁷ Their authors have sought to show how the colonial state created the African pillars of its rule.³⁸ Only in the last two decades, then, have historians with a solid grounding in the social and cultural sciences studied the room for manoeuvre of the middlemen who exercised a crucial influence on Africa's colonial history.³⁹ Recent studies tend to understand collaboration in a value-neutral way – as cooperation – and seek to uncover what incentives the (predominantly

tegrating an African Elite in French and Portuguese Africa (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2007); S. Newell, "Entering the Territory of Elites. Literary Activity in Colonial Ghana," in *Readings in African Popular Culture*, ed. K. Barber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). For a critical classification of research on the African elite, see C. Lentz, "Elites or Middle Classes? Lessons from Transnational Research for the Study of Social Stratification in Africa," *Working Papers of the Department of Anthropology and African Studies* no. 161 (2015).

36 B. N. Lawrance, "Introduction," in *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks. African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*, eds. B. N. Lawrance et al. (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 6.

37 For a discussion of the concept of colonial subject-making, see A. Wirz, "Einleitung: Körper, Raum und Zeit der Herrschaft," in *"Alles unter Kontrolle." Disziplinierungsprozesse im kolonialen Tansania (1850–1960)*, eds. A. Wirz et al. (Cologne: Köppe, 2003), 9; M. Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika. Expedition, Militär und Verwaltung seit 1880* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005), 26. For similar research perspectives in the anglophone world, see Lawrance, "Introduction," 7.

38 On policemen in colonial Togo, see J. Glasman, *Les corps habillés au Togo. Genèse des métiers de police* (Paris: Karthala, 2015). On bureaucrats in Tanganyika, see Eckert, *Herrschen*. On teachers in colonial Senegal, see J.-H. Jézéquel, "'Les mangeurs de craies.' Socio-histoire d'une catégorie socio-professionnelle en situation coloniale. Les instituteurs diplômés de l'école normale William-Ponty (1900–1960)," (PhD diss., École des hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 2002). On soldiers in Tanganyika, see Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft*. On African workers in the Belgian Congo, see J. Seibert, *In die globale Wirtschaft gezwungen. Arbeit und kolonialer Kapitalismus im Kongo (1885–1960)* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2016). On the role of consumption and advertising in the creation of a middle class in the Gold Coast, see Finsterhölzl, *Werbung*. On the creation of girls in the context of developmental colonialism, see A. George, *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood, Labor, and Social Development in 20th-Century Colonial Lagos* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014).

39 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 19–22.

male) African “intermediaries”⁴⁰ saw in cooperation with the colonial state. They have tried to respond to the calls, which had previously fallen on deaf ears, for an analysis of the specific opportunities and tensions, negotiations and constraints, entailed in colonial subjects’ cooperation with the colonial state.⁴¹

But the emergence of an educated elite who took their lead culturally from European models was not unique to the Belgian Congo but rather a general feature of colonialism in Africa. The equivalents of the francophone colonies’ *évolués* or *lettrés* were the ‘educated Africans’ of the British colonies and the *assimilados* or *civilizados* in the Portuguese colonies.⁴² How colonial policy approached this group differed among the imperial powers and changed over time, though we can certainly reconstruct similar varieties of political rule, racist discrimination and inter-imperial knowledge transfer.⁴³ The European colonial powers all shared a sceptical attitude towards educated Africans as a group, imputing to them a particular susceptibility to anti-colonial ideas. During the inter-war period especially, the colonial powers thus increasingly relied on traditional elites as intermediaries.⁴⁴ With its programmes of modernization after 1945, however, developmental colonialism required new collaborative elites who could cope with the new challenges of administration and possessed key forms of tech-

40 On this term, see M. Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches. Ostafrika im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010), 29–30, 312; Lawrance, “Introduction,” 5–8. The term “middlemen” is often used synonymously; see A. Eckert, *Grundbesitz, Landkonflikte und kolonialer Wandel. Douala 1880–1960* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999).

41 See R. Robinson, “Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration,” in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialisms*, eds. R. Owen and B. Sutcliffe (London: Longman, 1972), 123–124. Located within this research tradition is Lawrence, “Introduction.”

42 Key texts on the British case are Eckert, *Herrschen*; S. Newell, “How to Play the Game of Life.” *Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); P. S. Zacher-nuk, *Colonial Subjects. An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000). On the case of the Portuguese colonies, see Keese, *Living*; D. L. Wheeler, “Origins of African Nationalism in Angola. Assimilado Protest Writings 1859–1929,” in *Protest and Resistance in Angola and Brazil. Comparative Studies*, ed. R. H. Chilcote (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

43 A comparative study of the elite-making policies of France and Portugal in Africa, which brings out the manifold transfers between these two colonial powers and the learning processes involved is provided by Keese, *Living*, 102–109.

44 This was typical of indirect rule in the inter-war period. On indirect rule and on the fact that not just the British but the French too adopted elements of this governance strategy, see Eckert, *Herrschen*, 41; C. Marx, *Geschichte Afrikas. Von 1800 bis zur Gegenwart* (Paderborn: UTB, 2004), 250.

nical knowledge.⁴⁵ This ambivalence of colonial rule, in which the authorities were dependent on intermediaries but would have much preferred to do without them, is traced in the present volume with reference to the *évolués* of the Belgian Congo.

Évolués, African bourgeoisie and colonial distinction

Within the framework of the colonial state's elite formation in the Belgian Congo after 1945, the terms *évolués* and "elite" were used synonymously. As a term in francophone colonial sources, from the inter-war period onwards it appeared in French and Belgian texts.⁴⁶ In general, the term referred to the group of intermediaries typical of colonial Africa who had completed secondary education, oriented themselves towards European culture and mostly worked in the administrative system as office assistants. It first appeared in the French possessions in West Africa. Particularly in Senegal, which had enjoyed a special status among France's overseas territories since 1848, the terms *évolués* and *lettrés* took hold for educated and French-speaking Africans who sought to embrace values and lifestyles propagated as French.⁴⁷

It is key to the heuristic framework informing the present study that the term *évolués* can be placed at the intersection of colonial elite-making, the civilizing mission and bourgeois culture – and thus brings together disparate strands of research on the colonial history of Africa and global social history.

The roots of the term *évolués*, the 'developed,' lie in a racist semantics of progress that construed African societies as civilizationally backward according to European standards, though a liberal variant of this idea proposed that this gap could be closed over the long term on an individual basis, through cultural assimilation.⁴⁸ The word reflected the dominance of theories of sociocultural

45 Ibid.; A. Eckert, *Kolonialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2006), 75.

46 A handful of studies have been produced on *évolués* in the francophone colony. On the case of Senegal, see Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence*; on Gabon, see L. M. Nnang Ndong, *L'effort de guerre de l'Afrique. Le Gabon dans la deuxième guerre mondiale* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011); on Dahomey, see S. Anignikin, "Les élites africaines et l'indépendance. Le cas des 'évolués' du Dahomey (Benin)," *Outre-mers, Revue d'histoire* 98 (2010). But the term *évolués* was not used solely with reference to sub-Saharan Africa. The administration and press in Algeria used it for the assimilated, educated Muslim elite in the 1910s. See O. Carlier, *Images du Maghreb, Images au Maghreb* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010), 20.

47 See Keese, *Living*, 94–101.

48 In French colonialism, assimilation was a concept key to the politics of the civilizing mission. Understood as the adoption of European values, lifestyles and behavioural norms, assim-

evolution that rose to prominence in the nineteenth century and assumed universally valid stages of cultural development. At the top was the highly developed and civilized bourgeois culture of Europeans, at the bottom the supposedly primitive and savage culture of African societies.⁴⁹ Europe's sense of superiority over other continents intensified in the mid-nineteenth century, when evolutionism entered into a fatal alliance with social Darwinism and racial theories; colonial conquests and claims to power were legitimized with reference to the civilizing mission, which was seen as a global responsibility. In the colonial order, in light of their "state of development," Africans were regarded as politically subservient and civilizationally inferior. In line with the logic of a global process of civilizational progress, the *évolués* were those subjects who were climbing the ladder of cultural development and for whom every additional step promised advancement within colonial society. Though this has gone unrecognized by historians so far, elite formation in the Belgian Congo thus points beyond the boundaries of the African continent. While they were not referred to as such, the *évolués* were an African bourgeoisie in the making.⁵⁰

Hence, the book also probes the place of colonial Africa in the history of the global bourgeoisie, breaking new ground by neither walling the *évolués* up, heu-

ilation promised colonial subjects access to French citizenship. While in European countries the concept of assimilation means the cultural adaptation of immigrants or minorities to the dominant majority society, in the colonies this relationship was reversed. There, the Europeans embodied the dominant culture, to which the colonized society had to adapt. On this and on the ambivalent assimilation policy pursued by France in both the metropole and in the colonies after 1945, see F. Cooper, "From Imperial Inclusion to Republican Exclusion? France's Ambiguous Postwar Trajectory," in *Frenchness and the African Diaspora. Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France*, eds. C. Tshimanga et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

⁴⁹ For a general account, see C. Dejung, "From Global Civilizing Missions to Racial Warfare: Class Conflicts and the Representation of the Colonial World in European Middle Class Thought," in *The Global Bourgeoisie. The Rise of the Middle Classes in the Age of Empire*, eds. C. Dejung et al. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019), 254–255; C. Dejung et al., "Worlds of the Bourgeoisie," *ibid.*, 16–17; E. Saada, "Entre 'assimilation' et 'décivilisation.' L'imitation et le projet colonial républicain," *Terrain. Revue d'ethnologie de l'Europe* 44 (2005); U. Frevert and M. Pernau, "Europa ist eine Frau: jung und aus Kleinasien. Beitrag zum Themenschwerpunkt 'Europäische Geschichte – Geschlechtergeschichte,'" *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* 2009, www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/artikel-3548 (1 July 2016). On the Congolese case, see J.-M. Mutamba-Makombo, "Les évolués. Situation au Congo Belge," in *Le manifeste "Conscience africaine" (1956). Élités congolaises et société coloniale. Regards croisés*, ed. N. Tousignant (Brussels: Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis), 84; Verhaegen, "L'Association des Évolués," 5–8; Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire générale*, 451–452.

⁵⁰ On differing and alternative terminologies of bourgeois culture in global perspective, see Dejung, "From Global Civilizing Missions to Racial Warfare," 265.

ristically, within the territorial boundaries of the Belgian Congo nor overemphasizing particularistic traits. There are several historiographic reasons for this novel approach. Michael O. West has rightly pointed out that educated Africans as a group have “variously [been] called elite, petty bourgeois, or middle class” by historical actors.⁵¹ His outstanding study of the middle class in colonial Zimbabwe also alternates between the use of these terms.⁵² Yet a terminology derived from European social history was often applied too blithely to the African or colonial context.⁵³ The aforementioned studies produced in the 1950s and 1960s referred to colonial middlemen and post-colonial politicians almost arbitrarily as “elites” or “bourgeoisie.”⁵⁴ Only Frantz Fanon was more explicit: in his Marxist reading, the “African bourgeoisie,” wearing its “white masks,” had betrayed oppressed peoples striving for freedom. Since the 2010s, meanwhile, Africa’s “middle class” has been trending in anthropological studies that have sought to shed light on the lifeworld of globally networked and economically ascendent groups in countries such as Angola, South Africa, Kenya and Botswana.⁵⁵ Actor-centred studies are providing an important corrective to definitions of the new “middle class” based solely on economic data and have sketched out ways of placing Africa in global perspective. Carola Lentz, for example, sees “middle class” as “a multidimensional concept that refers to a socio-eco-

51 M. O. West, “‘Equal Rights for all Civilized Men’: Elite Africans and the Quest for ‘European’ Liquor in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1924–1961,” *International Review of Social History* 37 (1992), 376–397.

52 West, *Rise*, 240.

53 For an illuminating account, see C. Dejung, “Auf dem Weg zu einer globalen Sozialgeschichte? Neuere Ansätze zu einer Globalgeschichte des Bürgertums,” *Neue Politische Literatur. Berichte über das internationale Schrifttum* 59 (2004); C. Dejung, “Transregional Study of Class, Social Groups, and Milieus,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, ed. M. Middell (New York: Routledge, 2019); Lentz, “Elites.”

54 L. Kuper, *African Bourgeoisie. Race, Class, and Politics in South Africa* (Bloomsbury: Yale University Press, 1965).

55 For introductory and paradigmatic accounts, see Lentz, “Elites”; C. Lentz, “Doing Being Middle-Class in the Global South: Comparative Perspectives and Conceptual Challenges,” *Africa* 90, no. 3 (2020); A. Behrends and J. Pauli, “Zwischen Charisma und Korruption. Kontinuitäten und Brüche in der Auseinandersetzung mit Eliten in Afrika,” in *Kontinuitäten und Brüche. Fünfzig Jahre Unabhängigkeit in Afrika*, eds. T. Bierschenk and E. Spiess (Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe, 2012), 305–309; H. Melber, *The Rise of Africa’s Middle Class: Myths, Realities and Critical Engagements* (London: Zed Books, 2016); Kroeker, L., D. O’Kane, and T. Scharrer. *Middle Classes in Africa. Changing Lives and Conceptual Challenges* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). C. Mercer and C. Lemanski, “Introduction,” *Africa* 90, no. 3 (2020). On South Africa, see D. James, *Money from Nothing. Indebtedness and Aspiration in South Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

nomic category, a cultural world and a political discourse.”⁵⁶ She calls for an analysis of normative discourses and practices that amount to a “‘doing being middle-class.’”⁵⁷ The present-focus of anthropological research, however, makes it easy to lose sight of forerunners in colonial history.

The new global-historical research on the bourgeoisie provides additional points of departure for the history of colonial Africa. Research on the bourgeoisie initially focussed mainly on specific European countries, though several scholars then produced comparative studies. With few exceptions, however, they did not look beyond Europe.⁵⁸ That bourgeois culture and the bourgeoisie in the imperial age can by no means be regarded as an exclusively European phenomenon is the finding of recent studies on the nineteenth century.⁵⁹ Though just a small number of bourgeois milieus, such as those of merchants and academics, operated on the international stage, these studies show that the European bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century had a global perspective via consumer goods and specific realms of knowledge.⁶⁰ One major way in which the European bourgeoisie was connected with the world was through its self-image as the spearhead of worldwide development and civilizational progress.⁶¹ As the “social class upholding imperialism,”⁶² its members reassured themselves of their sophistication through their encounter with other societies that they perceived as primitive,

⁵⁶ Lentz, “Doing Being Middle-Class in the Global South,” 461.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 459.

⁵⁸ For an overview of the extensive research on the bourgeoisie, see T. Mergel, “Die Bürger-tumsforschung nach 15 Jahren,” *AfS* 41 (2001); A. Schulz, *Lebenswelt und Kultur des Bürgertums im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: De Gruyter, 2005). The cultural-historical aspects are emphasized by M. Hettling, *Bürgerlichkeit als kulturelles System* (Halle: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2010). The way to a European comparative perspective in research on the bourgeoisie was paved by the anthologies edited by J. Kocka, *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich; eine Auswahl* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995). For studies on Belgium, see S. Jaumain and G. Kurgan van Hentenryk, *Aux frontières des classes moyennes: la petite bourgeoisie belge avant 1914* (Brussels: Université de Bruxelles, 1992); G. Kurgan van Hentenryk, “Permanence et recomposition des élites,” in *Les classes sociales en Belgique. Deux siècles d’histoire*, ed. G. Vanthemse (Brussels: CRISP, 2017). Only recently was the negligible research and the lack of attempts at synthesis in Belgian social history criticized in G. Vanthemse, “Introduction,” in *Les classes sociales en Belgique. Deux siècles d’histoire*, ed. G. Vanthemse (Brussels: CRISP, 2017), 51.

⁵⁹ See C. Dejung, D. Motadel and J. Osterhammel, *The Global Bourgeoisie. The Rise of the Middle Classes in the Age of Empire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019).

⁶⁰ Dejung et al., “Worlds of the Bourgeoisie,” 17.

⁶¹ Dejung, “From Global Civilizing Missions to Racial Warfare,” 255.

⁶² B. C. Schär, *Tropenliebe: Schweizer Naturforscher und niederländischer Imperialismus in Südostasien um 1900* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2015), 23.

whether in the context of armchair reading or their own visits to the colonies, at ethnological expositions or in metropolitan museums.⁶³ The “precarious unity,” maintained by a shared bourgeois culture and way of life, of the white European bourgeoisie – whose heterogeneity is evident in different terminologies and research traditions⁶⁴ – became consolidated through a shared view of the non-European peoples. As a continent supposedly without history, Africa furnished historical actors with an important medium of contrast that lent contour to the stereotype of a bourgeois subject understood as European, white and male: “Africa [...] was a *camera obscura* of [...] civilisation, a virtual portrait of all that bourgeois refinement was not.”⁶⁵ Like a silhouette, the white bourgeoisie stood out against a black substrate.

And yet the “men (and women) in the middle of an ever-expanding set of connections” – who made up the emerging global bourgeoisie in the early nineteenth century – included those “middlemen” in the coastal regions of Africa and Asia where economic and political forms of European imperialism had made themselves felt at an early stage.⁶⁶ In port cities of the African Atlantic coast such as Freetown, St. Louis and Lagos, transregionally linked groups of traders – more than a few of them former slave traders or freed slaves – forged important networks with Europeans by adopting standardized bourgeois modes of behaviour, seeking social and economic advancement in the wake of the abolition of slavery through “legitimate trade.”⁶⁷ But even Africans with a classical

63 For a general account, see F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony. Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3. On the staging of this contrast at colonial exhibitions in Belgium, see M. G. Stanard, *Selling the Congo. A History of European Pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2012), 58.

64 J. Kocka, “Das europäische Muster und der deutsche Fall,” in *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, ed. J. Kocka (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995). The anthologies edited by Jürgen Kocka discuss, among other things, the different and mutable social formations of the French bourgeoisie, British citizens and the German *Bürgertum*. See Kocka, *Bürgertum*.

65 J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff, “Home-Made Hegemony: Modernity, Domesticity, and Colonialism in South Africa,” in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, ed. K. T. Hansen (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 64.

66 R. Drayton, “Race, Culture, and Class: European Hegemony and Global Class Formation, Circa 1800 – 1950,” in *The Global Bourgeoisie. The Rise of the Middle Classes in the Age of Empire*, eds. C. Dejung et al. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019), 341 and 345.

67 For example: M. Lynn, “Technology, Trade and ‘A Race of Native Capitalists’: The Krio Diaspora of West African and the Steamship, 1852–95,” *Journal of African History* 33 (1992); J. F. Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce. The Senegal River Valley, 1700–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); R. A. Austen and J. Derrick, *Middlemen of the Came-*

education and dressed in the finest clothes by no means unsettled the arrogant self-image of the European bourgeoisie, whose members not only believed they enjoyed a monopoly on civility but saw themselves as a shining yet unachievable example to the world.

It was above all through the colonial civilizing mission in Africa, beginning in the 1880s, that the “hegemony of bourgeois culture” found expression in the imperial age.⁶⁸ It was believed that “normative globalization”⁶⁹ would raise the supposedly backward and barbarous peoples to a higher cultural level.⁷⁰ Despite differing motives, state and missionary actors pushed values, cultural techniques and modes of behaviour on the colonized population that were viewed as European or civilized culture.⁷¹ When British missionaries in South Africa converted locals to the Christian faith or colonial schools in Senegal educated the future middlemen of French West Africa, they were effectively instructing them in bourgeois culture, the work ethic, intimacy, domesticity, gendered orders and the notion of the monogamous family.⁷² Whether the cultural models, as in the British empire, were imparted by Protestant missionaries of an evangelical cast relatively independent of the colonial state or through close cooperation between state and church as in the French empire:⁷³ the colonial civilizing mission was an engine of the “global spread of bourgeois standards.”⁷⁴

rooms Rivers. *The Duala and their Hinterland, 1600–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); R. Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

68 Cooper and Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony,” 30. With respect to the late nineteenth century, they also refer to the “bourgeoisification of imperialism.” See also A. L. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire. Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 10.

69 J. Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World. A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 827.

70 For a nuanced of the civilizing mission, see B. Barth and J. Osterhammel, eds., *Zivilisierungsmissionen. Imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert* (Konstanz: UVK, 2005); on the French civilizing mission, see A. L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize. The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

71 C. Egger and M. Gugglberger, “Editorial,” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 24, no. 2 (2013).

72 Comaroff and Comaroff, “Home-Made,” 38–45; J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution. The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 274–322. On the pupils of the École normale William Ponty in Dakar, see Jézéquel, “Les mangeurs de craies,” 158–173.

73 Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 830–831.

74 Dejung et al., “Worlds of the Bourgeoisie,” 15. Similar arguments are advanced by Cooper and Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony” 30–31; M. Pernau, “Transkulturelle Geschichte

A global perspective on the civilizing mission has underlined the crucial role played by the ideals of contemporary actors who as “high-minded bourgeois reformers found themselves in the midst of ‘uncivilized’ majorities.”⁷⁵ This civilizing mission encompassed not just the territories outside Europe, but also the European underclasses.⁷⁶ Mainly in the cities, this “internal mission” sought to inculcate the norms of a “civilized” culture in groups perceived as deviant and dangerous, such as the working class, the homeless and the poor.⁷⁷ But while the deviance of slum dwellers in Europe was viewed as a consequence of urbanization, deviance in Africa was explained in light of its low level of development.⁷⁸ Social reformers in Victorian London, missionaries in Freetown and educated Africans in Cape Coast all discussed the differences and commonalities of bourgeois culture in different parts of the world.

The pioneers of a global history of the bourgeoisie also took a comparative approach, the cultural turn in German historical research on bourgeois culture furnishing them with a template in this regard.⁷⁹ The shift from a socio-economic definition of the bourgeoisie towards lifestyles and values also facilitated the identification of bourgeois culture in the age of European imperialism in all its interconnected complexity. Authors have discerned a range of indicators of the emergence of a “bourgeois existence outside Europe”⁸⁰ in the context of complex processes of appropriation: upward social mobility through one’s own efforts, doing highly skilled jobs, a sense of superiority, the struggle for respecta-

und das Problem der universalen Begriffe. Muslime Bürger im Delhi des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in *Area Studies und die Welt. Weltregionen und neue Globalgeschichte*, ed. B. Schäßler (Vienna: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2007), 146.

75 Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 834.

76 Recent studies, however, have revealed “direct connections between both projects of ‘elevation,’ which influenced one another.” S. Conrad, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2008), 94. See also Conrad’s case study of the workers’ settlements in East Westphalia and German East Africa: S. Conrad, *Globalisierung und Nation im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2006), 74–117.

77 See, for example, R. Lindner, *Walks on the Wild Side. Eine Geschichte der Stadtforschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2004). On the case of Berlin, see J. Wietschorke, *Arbeiterfreunde. Soziale Mission im dunklen Berlin 1911–1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013).

78 Dejung, “From Global Civilizing Missions to Racial Warfare,” 260.

79 On the cultural approach, see Kocka, *Bürgertum*; H. Bausinger, “Bürgerlichkeit und Kultur,” in *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. J. Kocka (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987); W. Kaschuba, “Deutsche Bürgerlichkeit nach 1800 – Kultur als symbolische Praxis,” in *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. 3, ed. J. Kocka (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987); Hettling, *Bürgerlichkeit als kulturelles System*. For a critical assessment of this research approach, see Mergel, “Bürgertumsforschung,” 523–525.

80 Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 766.

bility, domesticity, a greater proximity to the state than typical of Europe, associations as a pre-political form of civil society, gender relations and family models, self-perfecting and a faith in progress, habits of consumption and styles of dress.⁸¹ The first empirical case studies have explored settings in Asia, the Arab world and South America,⁸² though increasing attention has been paid above all to India under British rule.⁸³ On the basis of similar characteristics in occupational groups and in light of social and cultural practices of distinction, Margrit Pernau has shown convincingly that Muslims in colonial Delhi can certainly be interpreted as bourgeois subjects – even if they wore a turban rather than a top hat.⁸⁴

Research on the bourgeoisie that seeks to integrate a global history perspective has as yet scarcely considered Africa.⁸⁵ This seems to have something to do

81 Ibid., 772, 774, 775, 777; see Dejung, “Auf dem Weg,” 232.

82 An initial overview of this research is provided by R. A. López and B. Weinstein, eds., *The Making of the Middle Class. Toward a Transnational History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Dejung, “Auf dem Weg.” For a comparative study of Japanese and German civil society, see M. Hettling and G. Foljanty-Jost, eds., *Formenwandel der Bürgergesellschaft. Japan und Deutschland im Vergleich* (Halle: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2009). On the emergence of a middle class in the Middle East under colonial rule, see K. D. Watenpugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East. Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006). On the urban middle class in inter-war Southeast Asia, see S. L. Lewis, *Cities in Motion. Urban Life and Cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia, 1920–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

83 See, for example, S. Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); D. Chakrabarty, “The Difference – Defferral of a Colonial modernity. Public Debates on Domesticity in British Bengal,” in *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); M. Pernau, *Bürger mit Turban. Muslime in Delhi im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); M. Sinha, “Britishness, Clubbability and the Colonial Public Sphere. The Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India,” *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 4 (2001); S. Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010); C. Dejung, *Fäden des globalen Marktes. Eine Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte des Welthandels am Beispiel der Handelsfirma Gebrüder Volkart 1851–1999* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2013). The prominence of the Indian case is due not just to its centuries-old written and intellectual tradition, but also to the fact that India has become a privileged arena for “subaltern studies.” On the value of the latter to research in global history, see S. Conrad and A. Eckert, “Globalgeschichte, Globalisierung, multiple Modernen: Zur Geschichtsschreibung der modernen Welt,” in *Globalgeschichte. Theorien, Ansätze, Themen*, eds. S. Conrad, A. Eckert and U. Freitag (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2007), 22–26.

84 Pernau, *Bürger*, 355–359.

85 The studies by M. O. West, “The African Middle Class in Zimbabwe. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives,” in *The Making of the Middle Class. Toward a Transnational History*, eds. R. A. López and B. Weinstein (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), and E. Hunter, “Modernity,

with the fact that in Africa, in many cases it was not until the 1880s that a “Western-oriented elite” took shape in the mission schools, while the colonized population was less integrated into the new economic structures than in Asia or was ousted from the realm of commerce.⁸⁶

Colonial Africa provides an important corrective to the tendency to interpret “bourgeois existence in Asia and Africa from the late nineteenth century on” primarily as entailing attempts at “linking into the development of ‘civilized’ morals and lifestyles.”⁸⁷ Even more than a history of “inclusion,” the history of bourgeois culture in colonial Africa is one of exclusion. The colonial state’s elite-making policy in the Belgian Congo dramatically illustrates the “exclusionary processes” inherent in the term (bourgeois) “citizen” in the imperial age.⁸⁸ Recent studies have established that the European bourgeoisie had values in common and defended them *vis-à-vis* colonial subjects, while also concluding that the emergence of a global bourgeoisie went hand in hand with “the asymmetries of colonial rule and racial exclusion.”⁸⁹ But what has been lacking is empirically rich research on how actors with bourgeois ambitions in colonial Africa responded to the fact that they were allocated to the lowest level of civilization.

The Lumumba Generation takes us into the world of “doing being middle class”⁹⁰ in colonial Africa, though this was a world in which the wrongdoings of the African bourgeoisie were lamented over and over again. However much the Congolese elite oriented itself towards the bourgeois ideal, in order to preserve the colonial order, it was vital that they never live up to it. The position of the *évolués* within the global bourgeoisie was one of exclusionary inclusion.

To cut to the chase: an African bourgeois class was not a desirable goal for the Belgian colonial state. The predominant narratives of the bourgeoisie had two roots. The first was its struggle for freedom: inspired by Enlightenment

print media, and the middle classes in Colonial East Africa,” in *The Global Bourgeoisie. The Rise of the Middle Classes in the Age of Empire*, eds. C. Dejung et al. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019) are exceptions. Research on educated Africans in the British and French colonies also contains only scattered references to the importance of bourgeois culture. On the African associations in the Gold Coast, which borrowed from a bourgeois template, see Newell, *Game of Life*, 27–52; J. K. Prais, “Imperial Travelers: The Formation of West African Urban Culture, Identity, and Citizenship in London and Accra, 1925–1935,” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, Michigan, 2008), 333–345.

⁸⁶ See Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 766.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 771.

⁸⁸ Pernau, “Transkulturelle Geschichte,” 146.

⁸⁹ Dejung et al., “Worlds of the Bourgeoisie,” 2. See also Lentz, “Doing Being Middle-Class in the Global South,” 447.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

ideas, it rebelled against the aristocracy and the king in the French Revolution in order to achieve democracy and civil rights. Alternatively, in a Marxist reading, “bourgeoisie” meant the dominant class in capitalism, namely the one that controls the means of production. The *évolués* in the Belgian Congo were not supposed to be distinguished by social and political participation or by economic power and civil rights. They were meant to wear suits and read the newspaper in the living room surrounded by their family. But the Congolese elite was unwilling to be reduced to a bourgeoisie in a culturalist sense – and this too is an aspect of the Lumumba generation.

Tellingly, the sources on the Belgian Congo almost never use the term “bourgeois” to refer to educated Africans eager to advance within society. For historians, meanwhile, use of the term “African bourgeoisie” might entail the imposition of Eurocentric standards, the conceptual colonization of local phenomena resulting in the idea of their deficiency. To avoid this risk, the present work does not try to shoehorn its historical object into the mould of bourgeois culture, instead analysing how and why historical actors themselves kept a “checklist” of bourgeois characteristics.

It was colonial officials, missionaries, settlers and the vernacular elite who engaged in fraught discussions on the *évolués*’ adaptation to elements of bourgeois culture and tried to come to grips with the consequences of this process for the social and political order. This was by no means merely a matter of style. It pertained to rights, influence, having a say, and power. The question of the similarities and differences between white bourgeois citizens and black *évolués* was thus highly political and explosive. It was centred on the foundation for the legitimacy of colonialism and laid bare the “internal contradictions of colonial rule.”⁹¹ On the one hand, the colonial state derived its legitimacy from its self-imposed mission to civilize the African population and stylized Europeans as the model for those pursuing cultural assimilation. On the other hand, it sought to ensure that the “dose of civilizing”⁹² among Africans was not too high, because their cultural otherness always legitimized the European claim to political dominance and civilizational superiority. Hence, it was not just the British and French, but the Belgians too who idealized the improved but not Europeanized African.⁹³ The African bourgeoisie emerged “in the inter-

⁹¹ See Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft*, 28. See also, Comaroff and Comaroff, *Revelation*, 212.

⁹² A. Eckert, “Kolonialismus, Moderne und koloniale Moderne in Afrika,” in *Selbstbilder und Fremdbilder. Repräsentationen sozialer Ordnungen im Wandel*, eds. J. Baberowski et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2008), 64.

⁹³ Cooper and Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony,” 7; Eckert, “Kolonialismus, Moderne,” 64–65.

stances of relations of domination.”⁹⁴ It had to assert itself in a social order in which white supremacy rested on the permanent marking of difference *vis-à-vis* the colonized population.⁹⁵ These differences were always a key theme in colonial discourse and had to be performed and demonstrated in everyday life and within the social world in such a way that the African population accepted their lot as backward subjects.⁹⁶ The maintenance of “colonial dichotomies” was “hard work” for the actors of the colonial state.⁹⁷ *The Lumumba Generation* shows that this production of difference became particularly laborious due to the steady growth in the number of educated Congolese who made the civilizing mission their own, and who saw cultural bourgeoisification as the royal road to advancement and recognition within society. Within this dichotomy, the vernacular elite found itself on the borderline between the “civilized” European governing elite and the “barbarous” African population. They stood at the centre of a battle ground of colonial distinction.⁹⁸

The present book understands the “cultural bourgeoisification”⁹⁹ of the *évolués* as an empowerment strategy pursued by colonial subjects, which was based on the individual accumulation of social and cultural capital in institutions of African elite formation. This was a contingent and cultural process of social ascent under the constraints of the colonial situation. Cultural bourgeoisification, however, does not imply a history of diffusion in which European bourgeois cul-

⁹⁴ Drayton, “Race, Culture, and Class”, 358.

⁹⁵ Stoler, “Foucaults ‘Geschichte der Sexualität’ und die koloniale Ordnung der Dinge,” in *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, eds. S. Conrad and S. Randeria (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2002), 325. Pesek, *Ende eines Kolonialreiches*, 32.

⁹⁶ Cooper and Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony,” 4 and 35.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁹⁸ The concept of distinction comes from the influential analyses of Pierre Bourdieu: P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979). Studies of the global bourgeoisie and the African middle class also grapple with a range of practices of distinction: Dejung et al., “Worlds of the Bourgeoisie,” 9; Lentz, “Doing Being Middle-Class in the Global South”; C. Gastrow, “Housing Middle-Classness: Formality and the Making of Distinction in Luanda,” *Africa* 90, no. 3 (2020). This concept also proved popular in French-language studies on the colonial history of Africa. See J. H. Jézéquel, “Grammaire de la Distinction Coloniale,” *Genèses* 69, no. 4 (2007); Glasman, *Les corps habillés*.

⁹⁹ Simone Lässig shows that the cultural bourgeoisification of the German Jews in the nineteenth century was by no means merely a concomitant to their contested membership of the bourgeoisie. Taking Pierre Bourdieu’s social analysis as her starting point, in the accumulation of cultural capital she discerns a prerequisite for, and crucial preliminary step towards, the German Jews’ career as “model citizens.” S. Lässig, *Jüdische Wege ins Bürgertum. Kulturelles Kapital und sozialer Aufstieg im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 40.

ture gradually spread in Africa and was adopted in an unquestioning way. The agency of the *évolués*, the colonial power structure and the local contexts led to diverse and hybrid forms of bourgeois culture located somewhere between incorporation and attempts at resistance. Nor does this study propound a “history of deficiencies”¹⁰⁰ that assumes an unfinished form of bourgeois culture outside Europe. But it does show that – for historical actors in the Belgian Congo – the hybridization mentioned so often in the history of the global bourgeoisie with reference to the African continent¹⁰¹ was an expression of deviant deficiency and evidence of lack of development. Inherent in the colonial state’s elite-making was the demand for standardization, the idea that only total compliance with the bourgeois ideal could justify access to social prestige and legal privileges. In the logic of colonial distinction, bourgeois culture became a dogma. When we look closely, we find that for the *évolués* the three-piece suit was both garb of power and straitjacket.

Analytic fields

The Lumumba Generation brings out the tense relationship between the empowerment and disempowerment of the African bourgeoisie. With reference to a variety of situations, places, media and biographies, I probe the changing discursive realms and lifeworld of the Congolese elite, whose ambivalent position in the colonial order was subject to a transformation every bit as sweeping as that which enveloped the politics and discourses of the colonial project itself. Inspired by cultural analysis, I seek first to describe the broadest possible panorama of the colonial state’s elite-making. Second, with the help of case studies, I provide a close-up view in order to both contextualize and exemplify aspects of cultural bourgeoisification.¹⁰²

I pay particular attention to the media of the elite public sphere. So far, the Belgian Congo has largely been a footnote in the press history of colonial Afri-

100 Pernau, *Bürger*, 8.

101 Dejung et al., “Worlds of the Bourgeoisie,” 16.

102 The logic of the historical cultural analysis entails understanding “cultural phenomena by first investigating the web of relationships” in which they are embedded. R. Lindner, “Bandenwesen und Klubwesen im wilhelminischen Reich und in der Weimarer Republik. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Kulturanalyse,” in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, no. 3 (1984). On the development of the historical analysis of culture as an approach to research, see J. Wietschorke, “Historische Forschung in der Europäischen Ethnologie. Ein Diskussionsbeitrag,” in *Kultur_Kultur: Denken. For-schen. Darstellen*, eds. R. Johler et al. (Göttingen: Waxmann, 2013).

ca.¹⁰³ The few publications focused on Congolese authors have provided portraits of specific periodicals or overviews of press history.¹⁰⁴ Tellingly, the *Croix du Congo*, a high-circulation newspaper serving the educated elite that was close to the missions, has been discussed in just one book on the journalistic activities of Patrice Lumumba.¹⁰⁵ The *Voix du Congolais* newspaper has served as the basis for content analyses of the articles produced by Congolese authors. For the first time, however, I analyse its ambivalent role as an organ of the General Government and voice of the African elite.¹⁰⁶ On the one hand, the Belgian

103 For an introduction to the colonial press in Africa, see D. R. Peterson, E. Hunter and S. Newell, *African Print Cultures. Newspapers and their Publics in the Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016); E. Hunter, “Newspapers as Sources for African History,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (2018), accessed 11 October 2020, doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.228; C. H. Ambler, “Mass Media and Leisure in Africa,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35 (2002); S. Newell, *The Power to Name. A History of Anonymity and Colonial West Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013). For case studies, see J. Glassman, “Sorting out the Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar’s Newspaper,” *Journal of African History* 41, no. 3 (2000); R. Heinze, “‘It recharged our Batteries.’ Medien in der Dekolonisierung Afrikas,” *Zeitgeschichte Online*, June 2010, <http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/Themen-Heinze-06-2010> (20 February 2021); T. Odhiamblo, “Inventing Africa in the Twentieth Century: Cultural Imagination, Politics and Transnationalism in Drum Magazine,” *African Studies* 65, no. 2 (2006); N. Plageman, “‘Accra is changing, isn’t it?’ Urban Infrastructure, Independence, and Nation in The Gold Coast’s ‘Daily Graphic,’ 1954–1957,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 43, no. 1 (2010); P. Zessin, *Die Stimme der Entmündigten: Geschichte des indigenen Journalismus im kolonialen Algerien* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012).

104 Just one anthology on the press of the Belgian Congo has appeared. See M. Quaghebeur, and B. Tshibola Kalengayi, *Aspects de la culture à l’époque coloniale en Afrique centrale. Presse. Archive* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2008). Contemporary publications on the press landscape of the Belgian Congo are encyclopedic in character. See, for example, J. Berlage, *Répertoire de la presse au Congo belge (1884–1954) et du Ruanda-Urundi (1930–1954)* (Brussels: Commission belge de bibliographie, 1955); J.-M. Van Bol, *La presse quotidienne au Congo Belge* (Brussels: Pensée catholique, 1959); H. Claessens, *La Presse d’Information en Afrique Belge* (Louvain: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1958). Additional literary overviews are provided by M. Kadima-Nzuji, *La Littérature Zaïroise de langue française* (Paris: Karthala, 1984); S. Riva, *Nouvelle histoire de la littérature du Congo-Kinshasa* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006).

105 Mutamba-Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba*. The exception is B. Misobidi, “‘La Croix du Congo’ et ‘Horizons.’ Face à l’indépendance,” (PhD diss., Université Nationale du Zaïre, Kinshasa, 1977).

106 Kadima-Nzuji, *Littérature*, 40–45; Riva, *Nouvelle histoire*, 40–43. For a concise account of the *Voix du Congolais*, see M. Kadima-Nzuji, “Autour de la Voix du Congolais. Les premiers auteurs zaïrois,” *Notre Librairie* 87 (1982). For a content analysis of the newspaper, though one that leaves aside the historical context, see N. O. Eloko, *Les structures inconscientes de “La Voix du congolais”* (1959) (Brussels: CEDAF, 1975); B. Kadima-Tshimanga, “La société sous le vocabulaire. Blancs, Noirs et Évolués dans l’ancien Congo belge (1955–1959),” *Mots* 5 (1982): 1.

colonial state provided educated Congolese with a media-based public sphere in order to preserve its influence on the new elite and allow it to monitor how their views were developing. On the other hand, it was the periodicals that enabled the elite to conceive of themselves as a colony-wide group with a specific identity in the first place. Couched in constructivist terms, the Congolese elite became a reality only in the wake of elite-making policy and through the communicative nexus of the colonial state's periodicals.

The Lumumba Generation also examines the elites' social world. Crucially, given the intermeshing of associations and periodicals as key institutions in the colonial state's elite-making, the analysis presented here integrates both the discourse and practice of the elite,¹⁰⁷ while also scrutinizing colonial discourse and colonial practice, with a focus on everyday situations.¹⁰⁸ Borrowing from Georges Balandier, I analyse "colonial situations" in which power relations were up for negotiation.¹⁰⁹ Investigation of the institutions of elite-making illuminates how the order-stabilizing differences between Europeans and Africans were produced within the framework of developmental colonialism.

Running like a thread through my narrative is the vernacular elite's demand for access to the status of citizen.¹¹⁰ Insistence on an exclusive legal status was

107 For a discussion of discourse analytical approaches in the discipline of history, see P. Sarasin, "Subjekte, Diskurse, Körper. Überlegungen zu einer diskursanalytischen Kulturgeschichte," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, special issue 16: *Kulturgeschichte heute*, eds. W. Hardtwig and H.-U. Wehler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

108 This approach has been adopted by a number of recent studies, of which I can mention just a selection here. See, for example, U. Lindner, *Koloniale Begegnungen. Deutschland und Großbritannien als Imperialmächte in Afrika 1880–1914* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2011), 19; H. Fischer-Tiné and S. Gehrman, "Introduction: Empire, Boundaries and the Production of Difference," in *Empire and Boundaries. Rethinking Race, Class, and Gender in Colonial Settings*, eds. H. Fischer-Tiné and S. Gehrman (New York: Routledge, 2009), 4. On the combining of the analytical levels of discourse and practice, see also A. Mbembe, *Sortir de la grande nuit: Essai sur l'Afrique décolonisée* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013); E. Sibeud and M.-A. De Suremain "Histoire coloniale' et/ou 'colonial studies', d'une histoire à l'autre," in *Écrire l'histoire de l'Afrique autrement?*, eds. P. Barteley, S. Awenengo, and C. Tshimanga (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 80–83.

109 G. Balandier, "La situation coloniale: Approche théorique," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 11 (1951). In terms of disciplinary history, the analysis of specific colonial situations dates back to the studies of Max Gluckman, published in 1940. Frederick Cooper fittingly refers to Balandier's approach as the "micropolitics of the colonial situation" and that of Gluckman as the "micropolitics of a colonial situation"; F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 35.

110 On citizenship in France's African empire, see F. Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation. Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014). An overview of the history of imperial citizenship is provided by D. Gosewinkel,

the key theme of the upwardly aspiring Lumumba generation.¹¹¹ So far, the debate on the legal status of the Congolese elite has been described with reference to European legislatures and with an emphasis on the elite's disappointment at the failure of the associated reforms.¹¹² Congolese authors' contributions to the debate on status reform enter into these accounts for purposes of illustration or are reproduced in detail but without relating them to the political decision-making process.¹¹³ For the first time, the present study places the *évolué* status in the Belgian Congo in the context of contemporaneous debates on citizenship in other African colonies.¹¹⁴ The strict division of colonial society into segregated legal systems, with one legal status for Europeans and another for Africans, was tempered by an intermediary group. The inhabitants of Senegal, for example, like other territories of the French Atlantic empire, had rights of political participation and an inferior form of citizenship by 1848. Just under 50 years later, residents of the enormous colonial territory of French West Africa, established in 1895, could potentially obtain the so-called "*évolué* status" on the premise of cultural assimilation.¹¹⁵ By 1936, of 14 million inhabitants, a minority of just 2,000 individuals held this status.¹¹⁶ In the French colonies – with the exception of four municipalities in Senegal – by 1945 only those subjects who had adapted to the precepts of French culture and a bourgeois way of life could gain European status. Culture became the key criterion for legal equality because this status related

Schutz und Freiheit? Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016), 284–345.

111 Taking Karl Mannheim's classic treatise on the "problem of the generation" as a starting point (K. Mannheim, *Mensch und Gesellschaft im Zeitalter des Umbaus* [Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1935]), Lindner has discerned in the "theme of the generation" a socializing effect on the formation of generational entities. R. Lindner, *Die Stunde der Cultural Studies* (Vienna: WUV Universitätsverlag, 2000).

112 Anstey, "Belgian Rule," 217; Young, *Politics*, 73–87; De Schrevel, *Les forces politiques*, 129–159; Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 206.

113 Kadima-Nzuzi, *Littérature*, 49–64.

114 Overviews of citizenship in colonial Africa as a research field are provided by E. Hunter, "Introduction," in *Citizenship, Belonging and Political Community in Africa. Dialogues between Past and Present*, ed. E. Hunter (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016); S. R. Dorman, "Citizenship in Africa: The Politics of Belonging," in *Routledge Handbook of Global Citizenship Studies*, eds. E. F. Isin and P. Nyers (London: Routledge, 2014).

115 On the dissemination of demands for citizenship in the nineteenth-century French Atlantic, see L. Semley, *To Be Free and French. Citizenship in France's Atlantic Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). On the specific case of Senegal, see Jézéquel, "Les mangeurs de craies," 199.

116 H. Sharkey, "African Colonial States," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History*, eds. J. Parker and R. Reid (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 156.

mainly to penal and civil law and the latter dealt with highly culture-specific phenomena such as marriage and family. In the colonial legal logic, then, a change of legal status presupposed cultural assimilation.¹¹⁷ These issues were so contentious in French and Belgian colonialism because conceding cultural equality to Africans shook the foundations of the colonial order, whose legitimacy rested on differences between Europeans and Africans.¹¹⁸

When reference was made to the Congolese elite, in the first instance this meant men. As a relational and dynamic concept, masculinity is constituted through a hierarchical gendered relationship with other masculinities and concepts of womanhood, a relationship that took on complex forms in the colonial context.¹¹⁹ The *évolués* were supposed to take their lead from the cultural model of their colonial rulers, whose position of power was underlined by the performance of a “hegemonic masculinity”¹²⁰ of European provenance. In pursuit of “colonial masculinity,”¹²¹ the *évolués* distanced themselves from competing forms of masculinity,¹²² though they could not live up to the ideal of the white citizen within a racially segregated colonial society. In addition, the present study integrates a gender perspective that addresses the relationality of mascu-

117 See Saada, *Les enfants de la colonie. Les métis de l'Empire français entre sujétion et citoyenneté* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007), 15; Cooper, “Imperial Inclusion,” 95. For an analysis of citizenship and cultural differences as a field of conflict with reference to Algeria under French rule, see T. Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization. The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 19–54.

118 Saada, “Entre ‘assimilation’ et ‘décivilisation,’” 32.

119 For an introduction to the history of masculinities, see J. Martschukat and O. Stieglitz, *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2008). On the extensive historiography of gender history, see for example G. Bock, *Geschlechtergeschichten der Neuzeit: Ideen, Politik, Praxis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014); U. Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte. Zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1986). An overview is provided by G.-F. Budde, “Geschlechtergeschichte,” in *Geschichtswissenschaften. Eine Einführung*, ed. C. Cornelißen (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2000).

120 On this concept, see R. W. Connell and J. W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender & Society* 19, no. 2 (2005).

121 For a paradigmatic analysis of colonial masculinity, see M. Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: the “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali” in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). On the concept’s transfer to colonial Africa, see for example S. Maß, *Weisse Helden, schwarze Krieger. Zur Geschichte kolonialer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1918–1964* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006).

122 On the example of the ambivalent construction of masculinity in colonial Ghana, see S. F. Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). On this field of tension within colonial Kinshasa, see C. D. Gondola, *Tropical Cowboys. Westerns, Violence, and Masculinity in Kinshasa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 10.

linity and femininity.¹²³ Elite-making focussed chiefly on the male elite as public figures, husbands and family men, together with their notions of femininity. But women were addressed too, as good mothers and good wives, and as a corrective force for their husbands. It was their role to bring up the children and decorate the living room with crocheted fabrics. This book thus includes consideration of the role of women as actors and as producers of a bourgeois culture that was embedded in elite-making.

A study on the African bourgeoisie from a global perspective has to clarify its spatial frame of analysis. There is a tendency to expect studies in global history to extend the boundaries of the colonial territory, but this book will make it clear that the *évolués* could barely travel beyond the Congo and had limited opportunities to build international networks or engage with debates in the global public sphere. The Congolese elite's place in the world was highly circumscribed. It is, nevertheless, essential that the present study follow Frederick Cooper's and Ann Laura Stoler's widely noted call to examine colonies and metropole within a "single analytic field" rather than viewing them in isolation.¹²⁴ Yet, while (sometimes profound) mutual influences between metropole and colonies have been established in the case of the British and French empires in particular,¹²⁵ scholars continue to view these interconnections as relatively insignificant and limited in the case of Belgian colonialism.¹²⁶ The present book seeks not just to identify

123 On this perspective, see for example R. Habermas, *Frauen und Männer des Bürgertums. Eine Familiengeschichte (1750–1850)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 18. Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*.

124 For the discussion of a "single analytic field," see Cooper and Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony," 15.

125 The debate on the impact of colonialism on Great Britain has been highly contentious. Influences on the metropole have been assessed as extensive by A. S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2005), and C. Hall and S. O. Rose, eds., *At Home with the Empire. Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). B. Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), is more sceptical. The debate on the French empire in this respect is similarly controversial. See for example Conklin, *Mission to Civilize*; P. Blanchard et al., eds., *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

126 For a detailed account of Congo's influence on Belgium, see G. Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo 1885–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Stanard goes so far as to refer to an "imperial immobility" in the case of Belgium and calls for the retention of colony and metropole as separate analytical categories. M. G. Stanard, "Belgium, the Congo, and Imperial Immobility: A Singular Empire and the Historiography of the Single Analytical Field," *French Colonial History* 15 (2014).

entanglements and transfers that spanned metropole and colony and beyond, but also to shed light on their extent and the specific forms they took.

An analytical focus on the Belgian Congo and Belgium emphatically extends the investigation of bourgeois culture from a global history research perspective. First, in spatial terms, as mentioned earlier, the African continent has been given scant attention within this historiography. Second, this applies in temporal terms as well, since the immediate post-war period and the 1950s have been ignored in research on the global bourgeoisie, which has almost always focused on the long nineteenth century. When examining the African bourgeoisie in the Belgian Congo it is to European post-war bourgeois culture that we must look to find the “implicit social visions”¹²⁷ inherent in developmental colonialism. Societal development and modernization were simultaneous and at times intertwined post-war projects pursued by Europe’s political elites in order to enforce their bourgeois aspirations to global hegemony, which faced challenges from communism and fascism, but also from colonial subjects of an anticolonial bent who were calling for self-determination. The Belgian government – mostly dominated by the Christian Social Party – set great store by bourgeois norms and conservative familial models in the moral reconstruction of both metropolitan and colonial post-war society. The “re-recasting of bourgeois Europe”¹²⁸ as evident in Belgium ran in parallel to the “recasting” of the civilizing mission in the Belgian Congo. The moral education of the vernacular elite propagated by the colonial state was in accordance with idealized notions of European bourgeois culture. The British and French African empires’ disciplining programmes were pervaded by similar models of bourgeois culture but increasingly decoupled the political and legal integration of colonial subjects from their cultural assimilation.¹²⁹ Only in the Belgian Congo, by contrast, did the bourgeois character of the vernacular elite become the central political issue. Until the late 1950s, the *évolués* had available to them neither political parties nor trades unions that might have

127 F. Cooper, *Decolonization*, 174. Cooper makes the case, when analysing colonial projects of “social engineering,” for decoding the ideas of social order on which these projects were based.

128 S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia. Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 78. On the continuity and disjunctions of the bourgeois way of life after 1945, see G.-F. Budde et al., eds., *Bürgertum nach dem bürgerlichen Zeitalter. Leitbilder und Praxis nach 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); E. Conze, “Eine bürgerliche Republik?,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 30, no. 3 (2004).

129 Eckert, *Herrschen*, 72–73; F. Cooper, *Kolonialismus denken, Konzepte und Theorien in kritischer Perspektive* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2012), 355.

enabled them to advance their demands.¹³⁰ For them it was already progress to make their voices heard through periodicals and associations, which were closely aligned with the colonial state, and to call for a special legal status with reference to their feats of cultural assimilation. Given the UN's requirement that the European colonial powers guarantee the colonized peoples political self-determination upon attaining a sufficient level of maturity, in the late colonial Congo a bourgeois way of life determined nothing less than the capacity for democracy and emancipation. In this "global constellation,"¹³¹ the cultural bourgeoisification of the Congolese elite not only became a core criterion for achieving, but above all a barrier to, legal equality and political independence.

Sources and methods

A study of the colonial state's creation of a Congolese elite faces a sources problem. The challenges are due not to a lack of written material but to the surplus of specific source types and the dominance of particular source producers. This study relies mainly on press publications produced in the Belgian Congo from the 1930s to the 1950s.¹³² All the issues of the most important elite periodical, the *Voix du Congolais*, are available for the 15 years of its existence and for the most part the same goes for the *Croix du Congo* newspaper, which was published from 1932 on. But this contrasts with the small number of chance finds I managed to make of internal documents produced by the editors. Editorial records were absent from the Colonial Archive in Brussels, the National Archive in Kinshasa and various Congolese press archives. Even visits to various family members of the deceased editor-in-chief of the *Voix du Congolais* failed to turn up documentary evidence. As a result, while we can carry out material-rich content analyses, the study of the background, production, selection and reception of articles is limited to a small number of samples.

130 Powerful trades unions emerged only in the last few years of Belgian colonial rule. See Mutamba-Makombo, *Du Congo belge*, 64. On the trades unions' great influence on decolonization in British and French Africa, see Cooper, *Decolonization*.

131 S. Conrad, *Globalgeschichte. Eine Einführung* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2013), 230.

132 The most fruitful sites of research on periodicals were the *Bibliothèque Royale* and the library of the Colonial Archive in Brussels; the *Bibliothèque Contemporaine* in Tervuren, which holds the papers of historian Benoît Verhaegen; the Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society (KADOC) in Leuven; the *Bibliothèque Bontinck* in Kinshasa; and the *Archives nationales d'outre-mer* (CAOM) in Aix-en-Provence. A digital photographic archive based on several dozen newspapers and magazines was created for the present study, comprising a total of 15,000 photo files.

I was able to examine archival materials produced by associations serving the Congolese elite at the Africa Archive in Brussels. These were mainly documents amassed by colonial officials in their role as the patrons of associations, consisting of correspondence between different administrative levels and between association members, constitutions, minutes and photographs. In Kinshasa, I was able to access the privately run archive of an important association of mission secondary school graduates, and I viewed similar source materials in the mission archives in Leuven.¹³³ In light of the close institutional and personal links between associations and periodicals, press reports by and about associations are a rich source that allows us to draw inferences about the associations' membership trends and activities. In addition, newspaper articles afford us a vivid sense of association life, often allowing us to hear voices that dissent from official reports. Finally, I drew on studies concerned with specific associations and the associational landscape of the Belgian Congo.¹³⁴ To analyse associations and periodicals in the context of the colonial state's elite-making policy, I consulted archival materials at the various levels of the colonial administration and colonial government. Depending on the topic at hand, I complemented this stock of sources with grey literature. Documents written from a range of perspectives are available on the negotiation, introduction and implementation of the so-called *évolué* status: expert discussions, debates in newspapers and official announcements. I also carried out interviews myself. In addition, I studied the reports produced by the awarding committees, most of which are evaluated here for the first time. In order to avoid excessive analytical focus on elite-making policy in the Belgian Congo and so as not to inadvertently construct an exceptional case in colonial history, I analyse Belgian colonial reforms after 1945 in the context of a changing international order, comparing them here and there with the developmental colonialism of other European powers.

Research on the colonial state's elite-making that can draw on a wealth of official documents runs the risk of seeing things through the eyes of the colonial state. How might we sharpen our analytical perspective on our fields of investi-

133 In interviews with contemporary witnesses, former association members explained the patchiness of the archival materials by stating that the various presidents and secretaries took personal possession of the documents produced during their time in office. There is evidence of this in the sources as well. See, for example, minutes of the president of the *Cercle Van Gele* association in Libenge, 18 December 1951, AA/GG/6372.

134 The studies on specific associations focus on members who later achieved renown or treat the associations as the forerunners of political parties. Verhaegen, *Les premiers manifestes politiques*; Verhaegen, "L'Association des Évolués."

gation and draw on a corpus of sources that provides insights into both the colonial propaganda of elite-making policy and the lifeworld of the elites?¹³⁵

One tried-and-tested strategy of historical research on colonial Africa consists in developing one's own colonial archive through interviews.¹³⁶ The methods of oral history promise to provide access to the so-called African point of view and can enlarge our perspective on historical objects. Nonetheless, as Pierre Bourdieu warned, we should avoid succumbing to the "biographical illusion," that is, reading interviews as authentic and unproblematically truthful accounts.¹³⁷ In fact, they are shaped by actors' retrospective efforts to endow remembered events with meaning, by the rationalization and justification of their actions and by the repression or omission of certain elements. A wealth of methodological and theoretical reflections from anthropologically inspired colonial research is of much help in this regard. These underline that scepticism about the Eurocentric perspective discerned in written sources in the colonial archives does not have to give way to uncritical naivety towards a supposedly unmediated and undistorted Afrocentric perspective.¹³⁸

I carried out two dozen interviews with contemporary witnesses in Kinshasa for the present study.¹³⁹ My interlocutors were supposed to be individuals in their eighties or older who saw themselves as members of the Congolese elite and were active in associations or as journalists. In fact, just half the interviews could be carried out with representatives of this group of individuals. Several interviews were called off due to illness, while one individual had died by the scheduled date of our meeting. I thus carried out additional interviews with younger companions and descendants of – sometimes famous – representatives of the elite, who provided insights into everyday life in an *évolué* family and what

135 For an overview of research in the history of everyday colonial life, see A. Eckert and A. Jones, "Historical Writing about Everyday Life," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2002).

136 J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff, *Ethnography and Historical Imagination* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

137 P. Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action* (Paris: Seuil, 1994). On the problematization of biographical interviews in colonial history, see for example Eckert and Jones, "Historical Writing," 9.

138 J. Allman, "Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot Named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History-Writing," *American Historical Review* 118, no. 1 (2013): 106.

139 I carried out multiple interviews with several contemporary witnesses. This amounted to a total of thirty hours of digital audio material. As my research visit began one month after the official celebrations marking 50 years of independence, the history of decolonization was highly present in everyday conversation.

it was like to grow up in one.¹⁴⁰ In some cases, my meetings with contemporary witnesses gave me access to private archives containing photos, diaries, letters and memoirs. These are sources anchored in the everyday world that are largely absent from the state archives.

The educated elite left a large stock of written sources by a variety of authors, which I analysed with the help of several interpretive techniques.¹⁴¹ First, I read documents from the colonial archives against the grain. Inspired by micro-historical studies of the Middle Ages in Europe,¹⁴² an era with a comparable source problem, this procedure is underpinned by a shift of perspective that gives a “voice” to groups of individuals referred to in the sources.¹⁴³ I could thus interpret the deviations and abnormalities generated by the ideal-typical discourse of and about the Congolese elite not as a failure of elite-making, but as evidence of conflicts, alternative visions of life and creative appropriations. Second, following Ann Laura Stoler, I read the sources “with the grain.” This does not mean presenting colonial knowledge from the colonial archives as authoritative, but rather emphasizing documents’ fragility and ambiguity. Inconsistencies, omissions and seemingly trivial details take on importance when we subject them to historical scrutiny. These “watermarks of empire”¹⁴⁴ must be held up against the light of other sources. Official colonial records are “entangled documents,”¹⁴⁵ which certainly articulate a Eurocentric perspective but always communicate with other documents featuring alternative points of view. I thus paid particular

140 The interviews were geared towards contemporary witnesses’ narratives and biography on the one hand, and key research topics on the other. On the method of the semi-structured interview, see F. Stöckle, “Zum praktischen Umgang mit Oral History,” in *Oral History. Mündlich erfragte Geschichte. Acht Beiträge*, ed. H. Vorländer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990). On the use of photographs to trigger a response in interviews, see K. Plummer, “On the Diversity of Life Documents,” in *Social Research Methods: A Reader*, ed. C. Seale (London: Routledge, 2004). In addition, I used a selection of photos from the colonial period in order to arouse my interviewees’ memories. For a critical discussion of oral history and African history that includes consideration of research practices, see L. White et al., eds., *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

141 A recent overview of techniques for interpreting colonial sources is provided by Allman, “Phantoms,” 106–107; A. L. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), 46–49.

142 The classic work of micro-history by C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1975), is often mentioned.

143 However, as Stoler points out, attempts to attribute “agency” to the colonized have often been made at the cost of turning the colonizers from actors into depersonalized components of a power structure. Stoler, *Archival Grain*, 47.

144 *Ibid.*, 51.

145 *Ibid.*, 52.

attention to those events and situations for which various source types could be found. Since every source type has its own significance and different rules governing the representation of events, the challenge is to bring the different material from archives and interviews into dialogue with one another.

Structure

The structure of the following chapters is geared towards the various linchpins of the colonial state's elite-making. At the same time, I maintain an emphatically chronological narrative approach. The beginnings of the Lumumba generation are explored in depth in the first chapter. It presents the foundations of Belgian colonial rule in the Congo and introduces readers to the missionary-run schools and educational establishments that the future elite passed through. I then place the colonial state's post-1945 elite-making policy in the Belgian Congo in the context of a changed international order. The chapter also discusses the connotations of the concept of the Congolese elite and its historical predecessors. The ideal of an elite was oriented towards the notion of a colonial elite, which in the first instance included only Europeans and which highlighted criteria of morality. I argue that elite-making within the framework of developmental colonialism was an extremely delicate undertaking for the Belgian colonial state. Ultimately, the discourse on the Congolese elite's development chimed with a discourse at large in the international community, one that linked the right to self-determination with the maturity of colonized peoples. The so-called *évolués* served, so to speak, as a gauge of Africans' level of civilizational development in the Belgian Congo.

Chapter 2 discusses the press landscape of the Congolese elite. Here the *Voix du Congolais* newspaper, founded in 1945, stands centre stage. Created by the General Government, the *Voix du Congolais* was an important element in a new public sphere that catered to the educated elite and was moulded by colonial power relations. After a brief introduction to the genesis, production, reception and distribution of the *Voix du Congolais*, I analyse its institutional links, conflicts and symbioses with the colonial government. For the aspiring elite, the *Voix du Congolais* was both the media locus of elite subject formation and a forum for making demands of the colonial state. Case studies sound out the potential and limits of the media-based public sphere, in which attempts by Congolese to have their say and colonial propaganda entered into ambivalent fusions. The *Voix du Congolais* emerges as a means of mutual oversight, through which the vernacular elite monitored the implementation of colonial reforms

and the colonial state kept an eye on the journalistic activities of educated Congolese.

Chapter 3 focuses on the post-war debate on the reform of the elite's legal status. The Belgian colonial government planned the so-called *évolué* status as the crowning achievement of its elite-making policy and in this it was responding to demands first made by educated Congolese during the Second World War. To aid understanding of the explosive nature of these issues, the chapter begins with the history of the legal classification of the Belgian Congo's population. It then examines how Congolese authors positioned themselves with the help of the *Voix du Congolais* within the tangled status debate and entered into dialogue with European periodicals and political decision-makers. Discussion of the different versions of status reform drawn up by various expert commissions reveals divergent ideas about the *évolués'* characteristics and the scope of any legal equality with Europeans in the colony. Against the background of resistance among sections of the European population, the African authors of the *Voix du Congolais* served as strategic allies of those advocating an affirmative elite-making policy. The introduction of the *carte du mérite civique* in 1948, as a hard-won compromise solution, is testimony to the fact that the *Voix du Congolais* was of only limited use to the Congolese elite as a medium for debating colonial development.

Chapter 4 gets to grips with the debate among the African elite on "genuine" and "false" *évolués*, an omnipresent theme when *évolué* status was being discussed. Periodicals such as the *Voix du Congolais* and *Croix du Congo* are analysed here as media arenas of colonial subject formation. The authors' ideal-typical discourse on the "perfected black" foregrounded virtues, ideas on morality and self-portrayals as well as social and cultural practices that were viewed as civilized within colonial discourse and were supposed to characterize the new elite. In light of various aspects of elite discourse – education and attire, gendered orders, family and domesticity, consumption and bar culture – discrepancies emerge between expectations of elite conduct and the way they actually lived. The ideal-typical division between bourgeoisified and snobbish *évolués* was a strategy pursued by authors to lend public weight to their demands for a status reform. But the Congolese elite paid a high price for this discourse of perfectibility. The medialized discrepancy between is and ought resulted in a strict selection procedure, saturated by mistrust, for the awarding of *évolué* status.

In the shape of the Congolese associational landscape, chapter 5 addresses another crucial component of elite-making. The associations, under the patronage of missionaries and the colonial state, served the aspiring elite as a means of network-building, prestige-attainment and distinction *vis-à-vis* the uneducated

majority of society. In addition, like the press, the associations were a mainstay of a public sphere that facilitated both empowerment and control by the colonial state. Following a general look at the foundation, objectives and activities of the associations, which were promoted by the colonial state, I present select case studies. The analytical linkage of discourse and practice demonstrates that associational sociability not only led to the desired socialization and disciplining of the Congolese elite, but also to rivalries and tensions within this elite and between it and the representatives of the colonial state. Finally, by revealing that Congolese sociability could have its own unique character, I point up the limits of the colonial state's control of the elite's free time.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the appointing of the elite through the selective issuance of *évolué* status, which was subject to contentious debate for several years and was institutionalized in the form of the *carte du mérite civique* and *immatriculation*. This chapter begins with the genesis of immatriculation, which triggered intense debate within the colonial public sphere as the second stage of the status reform. Much as with the *carte du mérite civique*, it was pushed through in the face of resistance within the settlers' milieu, whose members began to organize themselves throughout the colony in the wake of the debate on assimilation. I then examine the legal benefits of the two status reforms, bringing out the differences and shared elements of the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation. The focus of the chapter then shifts to the awarding committees. With the help of case studies, I reconstruct the application process and mechanisms of selection. In deciding whether to issue a *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation, this section argues, the awarding committees converted the traits of "genuine" *évolués*, as negotiated and propagated in the media, into bureaucratic test criteria. The applicants sought, with varying degrees of success, to boost their chances through the performance of cultural bourgeoisification. I go on to scrutinize the social profile of applicants for, and holders of, the *carte du mérite civique* and immatriculation. Their negligible utility was out of all proportion to the work candidates for *évolué* status had to put in to qualify for them, and the meagre benefits frustrated Congolese authors' great expectations.

The elite's constant disappointments at the status reforms are the object of chapter 7. Incidents in which the colonial authorities behaved disrespectfully towards holders of *évolué* status ran counter to the Belgian-Congolese Community proclaimed by the colonial state, which the elite was supposed to help construct. I compare this Community with reforms to the political association between colony and metropole pursued by other European imperial powers from 1945 onwards. I also examine initiatives through which the colonial state sought to give expression to this new social order. One of the main reasons why the vision of a Belgian-Congolese Community became less appealing to the elite was the

colonial state's upholding of legal inequality between Europeans and Africans. Finally, I show that, in the form of the School War, a political crisis that engulfed Belgium in the mid-1950s spread to the Belgian Congo. As a result, sections of the elite became politized and readily joined in the nascent debate on independence.

Chapter 8 is dedicated to the centrifugal forces of decolonization between 1957 and independence in 1960. It explores how the elite, so close to the colonial state, spearheaded politicization in the Belgian Congo at a moment when the colonial system in general came under pressure. The newly introduced mayoral elections were a catalyst for the fragmentation and ethnicization of the urban *évolué* milieu. In light of the changed press landscape, I elucidate the fact that the reforms facilitating political participation went hand in hand with growing anti-colonial agitation, in the wake of which the colonial state's elite-making policy was discredited. I then turn to the emergence of political parties led by former representatives of the Congolese elite, paying particular attention to their internal conflicts with respect to the country's political future and territorial form. Despite their differences, these political parties managed to pressure the Belgian government into abandoning its strategy of gradual decolonization in favour of immediate independence. After providing an account of the election campaign and detailing the first cabinet, in which the *évolué* generation dominated, the chapter concludes with the Congo Crisis and discusses the extent to which we can view the post-colonial chaos as a consequence of Belgian elite-making policy.

The conclusion brings together the findings of the present study and discusses the characteristic features of Congolese elite formation and Belgian developmental colonialism. I also bring out the ambivalences of cultural bourgeoisification in the colonial situation. While in Europe being a bourgeois citizen meant becoming one, being *évolué* meant that this was never going to happen. In order to preserve colonial hierarchies, the "development" of the Congolese elite was viewed as a permanent state of affairs. As unappreciated model pupils of the Belgian civilizing mission, the *évolués* are both a component in the global history of the bourgeoisie in the imperial age – and the immanent reverse image of this bourgeoisie. The bare feet in the photograph discussed at the start of this introduction thus symbolize the *évolués'* place at the margins of the global bourgeoisie.