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Congolese Rumba and Other Cosmopolitanisms

Most first-time listeners of Congolese popular dance music comment on the fact that this typically African musical style actually sounds like it comes from somewhere else: “Is that *merengue*?” or “It sounds kind of Cuban”. Given that since the beginning of Congolese modern music in the 1930s, Afro-Cuban music has been one of its primary sources of inspiration, this is obviously not a coincidence. In historical terms, it is probably more accurate to say that Cuba and other Caribbean nations have been inspired by the musical traditions of Africa, though this is not the focus of my article. While research on the question of transatlantic cultural flows can provide valuable information about the roots and resilience of culture, I am more interested in what these flows mean to people in particular times and places and ultimately what people are able to do with them, both socially and politically. In this article I will look briefly at how Afro-Cuban music came to be imported to the Congo (in the form of a series of records referred to as the G.V. series). I will reflect on what this musical style might have sounded like to Congolese living under colonial rule, but also what kind of social significance it held for them. My central argument is that Afro-Cuban music became popular in the Congo not only because it retained formal elements of “traditional” African musical performance, but also because it stood for a form of urban cosmopolitanism that was more accessible—and ultimately more pleasurable—than the various models of European cosmopolitanism which circulated in the Belgian colonies in Africa.

An exciting new literature has emerged on the topic of cosmopolitanism and precisely because of its insistence on history, it is now possible to speak of “cosmopolitanisms” in the plural and of cosmopolitan practices that take place in the periphery, topics that I will discuss in the final section of this article. But this is not how I came on the question of cosmopolitanism. When I began field research on Congolese popular dance music in the summer of 1995, the Democratic Republic of Congo was still Zaire. The Mobutu regime was in its final epileptic throes, and *authenticité* (Mobutu’s back to the roots political platform of the 1970s and 1980s) was more often a source of humor than of pride. I was immediately struck by local ways

of speaking about popular music, which was known in Kinshasa as “*la musique zaïroise moderne*” and which many Congolese view as a colonizing force within Africa that attests to the unfulfilled potential of this huge resource-rich nation located at the center of the African continent. The “modernity” of Congolese popular dance music was marked not only by its accoutrements (electric instruments, expensive European cars, cellular phones and international high fashion), but also by the degree of its commercialization and by the way that it represents (or according to some compromises) Congolese national identity. If there is some sense in which Congolese view their nation or culture as “modern”, this has to do not only with their music, but also with the legacy of Belgian colonial rule, itself a particular type of “modern” institution. As a complement to my work on popular music during the Mobutu years, I recently began research on questions of popular culture and cultural policy in the cities of the Belgian Congo. This article is the first in a series of publications that will appear on this subject¹.

Congolese popular music has a long history, and its success in other parts of Africa can only be understood through a close reading of its evolution over time². A central element in this history is the story of Kinshasa, formerly Leopoldville, the city that came to be known elsewhere in Africa in large part because of its music. As Manda Tchewa has observed, Kinshasa’s urban identity is tied up in the music and in many ways the two come of age together: “[...] La chanson de Kinshasa porte en elle tous les germes de l’urbanité et de la *citadinité*” (Tchewa 1996: 252). After *bolingo* (“love”) and *motema* (“feeling” or “heart”), the most frequently occurring word in Congolese popular song lyrics is most likely “Kinshasa”, whose multiple identities reflect the combinatory playfulness of the city’s predominantly Lingala-speaking population: “Kiniville”, “Kin Plaisir” (Kinshasa the Pleasurable), “Kin la Joie” (Kinshasa the Joyful), “Kin la Belle” (Kinshasa the Beautiful) and following the economic and political crisis of the early 1990s “Kin la Poubelle” (Kinshasa the Garbage Can). It is almost unheard of for musicians to achieve success without first having earned celebrity status in the nation’s capital and very few groups are able to sustain careers

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1. Research for this article was conducted during my residency as a post-doctoral fellow at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. in the Spring of 2000. I am especially grateful for the interest and support of Tony Seeger, Mary Jo Arnoldi, Atesh Sonneborn, Richard Kurin and Emma Snyder. Throughout the process of additional research I have benefited from the generosity and resourcefulness of Flemming Harrev, Will Prentice, Mike Aylward, Pekka Gronow, and John Grinling. Serge Makobo conducted additional research in Kinshasa. I received very helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper from Will Straw, Chris Waterman and the Cultural Studies reading group at the University of California Santa Cruz.
 2. Scholarly research on the topic of Congolese modern music is still very limited, but there are several sources of popular writing that may be of interest to readers: see BEMBA (1984); LONOH (1969); TCHEBWA (1996); STEWART (2000).

elsewhere in the Congo. For people from Kinshasa (*les Kinois*), this city is the cradle of modern Congolese rumba³.

When Congolese talk about the history of Congolese popular music, a history that invariably evokes a great sense of pride, they usually refer to three primary sources of musical inspiration: Western music (this includes church music as well as European romantic ballads and ballroom traditions), “traditional” music (different types of African folklore and ritual-inspired performance), and Afro-Cuban music. So why have I decided to focus on the Afro-Cuban element of this equation? First, I have been struck by the historical literature, both by Cubans and non-Cubans, which looks at the impact of Afro-Cuban popular music abroad. If ever there were such a thing as a “proto-world music”, rumba would certainly be one of the most well documented early examples (Moore 1997; Diaz Ayala 1993). Second, this literature takes very seriously the idea that rumba, even in a Cuban context, means many things to many people, and it seems to yearn for further research on how the various musical styles coming out of Cuba have been localized, indigenized, and re-invented elsewhere in the world.

But I think there are also musical grounds for focusing on the Afro-Cuban antecedents of Congolese popular dance music. Much has been made of the influence of Afro-Cuban music on early forms of urban popular music in various parts of Africa, but more than any other national or regional style of African popular music, Congolese music has remained close to its early Afro-Cuban influences. There are at least three formal aspects of Congolese music that in my opinion reflect this proximity. First is the prominence of the guitar. Whereas today we do not generally associate stringed instruments with Cuban popular music, the classic *son* compositions that most influenced early Congolese music gave a central place to a cousin of the guitar called the *tres*. Today the complex, multi-layered guitar stylings of contemporary Congolese music (while very different from the *tres*) are a defining feature of the style, so much so that in many parts of English-speaking Africa Congolese rumba is referred to as “Congolese guitar music”. Second is the importance of the clave rhythm, which in Congolese music has migrated from the percussion instrument known as the *clave* (two hardwood sticks struck together) to the snare drum of the post-1970 youth groups who made it a prominent part of the dance section of each

3. A cautionary footnote on my use of the term “rumba” may be in order. Specialists of Cuban music insist on differentiating between “rumba” (the non-commercial folk dance practiced primarily by Cubans of African descent which emerged in Cuban urban slums in the mid-1800s) and “rhumba” (a term which came to refer to any number of Latin dance styles that became popular in Europe and North America after the Second World War). For more on the use of this term within Cuba, see MOORE (1997), chapter 6. In today’s Congo, the term “rumba” is associated with a particular style of dancing and a particular rhythm that was common in the early years of Congolese dance music (1940s-1960s), but it is also used as a generic term to refer to Congolese popular dance music in general, “la rumba Congolaise”.

song (for more information about the rhythm and the instrument, visit: <http://www.drumrhythms.com/english/congaengl/articlessons/claveeng/clavebasiceng.htm>). Third is the emergence of a two-part song structure, one that in many ways resembles the Afro-Cuban *son-montuno* progression from a slow lyrical introduction to an improvised solo section which in Kinshasa is called *seben* or *chauffé*. Other forms of popular music in Kinshasa (especially urban traditional music and contemporary Christian music) have evolved under the weight of Congolese rumba and because of this they often bear many of the same musical and structural characteristics.

Discourses of Sources

Part of the story of Congolese rumba that needs to be told is the mind-bending genealogical tale of successive musical waves back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean. This story usually begins with the Atlantic slave trade, which resulted in the displacement of millions of Africans and varying degrees of social and cultural integration in the plantation economies of the New World. Different regimes of production and colonial ideologies facilitated to differing degrees the maintenance of African patterns of ritual, performative aesthetics and local ways of knowing. As was the case in New Orleans, Charleston, Port au Prince, and Sao Paulo, so Cuban expressive culture reflected the legacy of what Fernando Ortiz first called “afro-negrismos”, the uniquely African cultural traits that manifested themselves as much in musical aesthetics as they did in language, ritual practice and various forms of social organization (for a discussion of Ortiz’ work, see Moore 1997). This narrative of cultural resilience constantly re-surfaces around the African-derived musical genres that have set the tempo for generations of Western popular music: blues, jazz, reggae, and of course most recently hip hop.

As the work of Paul Gilroy has shown, the discourse of originary sources that permeates much of our writing and thinking about the history of Black music and culture should not be accepted uncritically⁴. There is increasing attention being given to the way that African-American musical styles (already implicated in the *longue durée* of African cultural production) have themselves influenced the production and performance of popular music in many parts of Africa. Examples range from early African-American choral groups (Gilroy 1993) to the King of Soul James Brown, whose visit to Kinshasa as part of Don King’s boxing roadshow in 1974 is still a common topic of conversation among music fans in that city⁵. But there are other reasons to be skeptical about a model of transatlantic exchange based on

4. For a provocative critique of the category of “Black Music” from a musicological perspective see TAGG (1989).

5. See Leon Gast’s recent documentary film *When We Were Kings* (USA Films, 1997), which uses original footage and interviews from the “Rumble in the Jungle”.

“cultural retention”. If we are able to prove, for example, that African-American blues shares tonal patterns with certain musics of West Africa, what politics does this serve? If, for example, traces of African languages such as Kikongo and Yoruba appear in pan-Caribbean forms of contemporary ritual practice, then what do we know that we didn’t know before, apart from the fact that people of African descent come from Africa? While I acknowledge the existence of certain kinds of cultural “retention”, I am not sure what to do with such observations, apart from make the triumphant—and perhaps reassuring—claim that African culture is stronger and more resilient than the legacy of its troubled history would suggest. Here I think we have to ask ourselves two questions: first, who stands to benefit from such representations of Africa and Africans, and second, why can Africa never seem to get past its status as something of the past, something authentic, something originary, something before or outside of history?

One way of avoiding the uncritical discourse of sources that plagues much of the writing on the African diaspora is to look at the evolution of musical styles in terms of their status as commodities, an approach that finds its most sophisticated expression in Paul Gilroy’s discussion of music and authenticity in the *Black Atlantic* (1993). Indeed, as Timothy Taylor and others have argued, the concept of authenticity may be one of the best ways to understand cultural products such as world music more generally (Taylor 1997). In order to do this exercise for Afro-Cuban music, it is important to look at what was going on in turn of the century Cuba and how the larger political economic context affected the movement of musicians and musical ideas. On this topic I have benefited from the recent work of Robin Moore, who has written a fascinating monograph about the history of race and popular music in Havana, and Timothy Brennan, whose recent book on cosmopolitanism contains a chapter about Alejandro Carpentier, a turn of the century Cuban intellectual whose writing and public appearances helped to put “Black identity at the center of Cuban nationalist politics” (Brennan 1997: 277). Because of his leftist leanings, Carpentier was forced into exile in 1928 and ended up in Paris, where the Cuban rumba would become “a sensation, a rage, an epidemic” (Carpentier 1931: 18). Together with Moises Simon (composer of the world famous Afro-Cuban hit *El manicero*) Carpentier began organizing rumba soirées for cosmopolitan-minded Parisians that included Cuban dancing lessons. During this time he likely came into contact with the countless number of Cuban musician-composers that had begun touring North America and Europe at about the same time, artists like Eliseo Grenet, Ernesto Lecuona, Fernando Collazo, just to name a few. In many ways the true cosmopolitans of Paris in the 1920s and 1930s, these artists and intellectuals had important ties to the avant-garde and modernist art circles that used a certain brand of primitivism as their trademark (Clifford 1991), but they probably had more in common with New World colleagues such as Josephine Baker and Al Brown, who were also darlings of the Paris arts scene at that time.

So what were the conditions that led Fernando Ortiz to write that the presence of Afro-Cuban music abroad stood for the “cosmopolitan triumph of the Cuban drum”? (Cited in Brennan 1997: 259). At home in Cuba it was becoming increasingly clear that the Machado presidency was unraveling. Dropping prices for sugar on the world market in the 1920s, the Great Depression of 1929, and Machado’s strong-arm politics amidst widespread accusations of corruption, all contributed to a political culture of fear and terror. Furthermore, the history of U.S. intervention in Cuban affairs and the expanding U.S. culture industries led Cuban nationalists and radicals alike to see Afro-Cuban music as an antidote to American cultural imperialism (Moore 1997: 105). It seems clear that the excitement which surrounded the performance of Afro-Cuban authenticity—not only in Paris, but also Barcelona, New York and Buenos Aires—was fuelled to a great extent by nationalist projects and desires. What is interesting is that at the same time as an intellectual notion of African identity (*afrocubanismo*, *negrismo*, *africanismo*) became central to the symbolic work of Cuban nationalism, people in the Congo were appropriating the very same musical symbols, but using them instead as evidence of their participation in a world of cosmopolitanism that was trying to break free of the confines of racial identity. The success of Afro-Cuban music was due in part to this structural ambiguity, which made it possible to function as a torch of authenticity for some and as a marker of cosmopolitan modernity for others, a topic to which I will return later in this article.

My Record Lies over the Ocean

The potentially most interesting part of this story—how it is that Afro-Cuban records actually made it to African urban centers during the colonial period—is a history that remains to be written; even specialists of ethnic recordings in the early years of the international record industry lament the lack of information available for the Caribbean and Africa (Vernon n.d.; Gronow 1996: 130). Preliminary findings, however, do point in certain directions. We know, for instance, that as early as the 1890s record companies such as Edison (U.S.) and Pathé (France) were recording local artists in Havana. By 1904, larger record companies such as Columbia and Victor (both based in the U.S.) were sending field agents and engineers to Havana on a biannual basis, but as the companies that came before them, they were primarily interested in recruiting and recording classical music, opera, military bands and ballroom dance orchestras (Moore 1997: 101). It was not until later that record companies expressed interest in local popular music: Victor first recorded the legendary *son* group Sexteto Habanero in New York in 1920 and Sexteto Nacional, their primary rival, was picked up by Columbia in 1926 (*ibid.*: 97-98). In 1928 Victor discovered the Trio Oriental in Santiago, Cuba and brought them to Camden, New Jersey to record

as the Trio Matamoros⁶. When the Gramophone Company (later EMI) decided to re-issue some of these early *son* recordings, the industry was trying to come back from a drop in sales resulting from the depression. The music of the classic early *son* groups was extremely popular at home and abroad, and it was probably with hopes that these records could boost international sales that the G.V. series was launched by EMI on the His Master's Voice label in 1933⁷. According to Paul Vernon, the G.V. series was intended for export, especially to Africa, but given the popularity of Afro-Cuban music at that time, the series probably had multiple audiences and presumably these audiences changed over time as the series evolved (Flemming catalog)⁸.

The international record industry arrived relatively late to sub-Saharan Africa, with a small number of novelty recordings (mostly African "spirituals") from the Gold Coast, Nigeria and South Africa in the years leading up to the first World War (Gronow 1996: 132). Beginning in the late 1920s, international companies such as Gramophone (U.K.), Odeon (Germany) and Pathé (France) began to compete for markets in various parts of the continent, but due to hard economic times, the relatively limited size of local markets and the ongoing war effort, local commercial recording did not develop on a wide scale until the 1940s. Records in the G.V. series thus

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6. Robin Moore credits an American record label called Brunswick with the initial inspiration to record much of the early Afro-Cuban urban popular music, beginning in as early as 1910 (MOORE 1997: 102). According to VERNON (n.d.), however, Brunswick was only "dabbling" in Latin American music and did not produce records in Cuba before 1923. Whether the majors were reacting to the activities of smaller record labels (which was often the case during this period) or simply responding to growing international interest in Afro-Cuban and other Caribbean popular music, what seems clear is that during the 1920s the Havana-based *son* groups were quickly becoming international celebrities, performing at hotels, cabarets, and fairs across the United States and Europe.
 7. A number of interesting folk etymologies have circulated concerning the title of the G.V. series. "Grabation Victor" ("Victor Recording" in Spanish) was one such etymology I heard from senior musicians in Kinshasa. Eric CHARRY (2000) in his recent book on Mande music cites Flemming Harrev's suggestion that the acronym stood for "Grabado en Venezuela" (recorded in Venezuela), an explanation that Harrev himself has begun to question (personal communication). Gary STEWART (2000) suggests that the acronym stood for the collaboration between Gramophone (G) and Victor (V), but he also mentions a Congolese interpretation from an earlier period: "Grands Vocalistes" (great singers). According to a researcher at the EMI archive in London who asked to remain anonymous, the acronym G.V. had no particular meaning, "it was just a series along with G.U. and G.W." (personal communication).
 8. The G.V. series continued into the 1950s, including approximately 250 titles, and clearly moved from the music of the early classic *son* sextets and septets to the more derivative internationally popular groups who adapted *son* and a variety of other Latin dance styles for foreign audiences abroad (Rico's Creole Band, Xavier Cugat and His Waldorf-Astoria Orchestra, Orquesta Hermanos Castro and others). For a good discussion of this phenomenon, see MOORE'S (1997) chapter entitled "The Rumba Craze".

played an important role in the early African recording industry and as some of the most widely circulated records of the 1930s, they had a huge influence on urban popular music from various parts of the continent. Not very much is known about the specific arrangements between international record companies and local distributors of the music, but based on his knowledge of similar arrangements in other parts of the world, Pekka Gronow believes that orders for G.V. records were probably made by an EMI agent or subsidiary which had parts of Africa as their domain. Presumably, "The agent ordered the masters, arranged to have them pressed (either locally or in UK), sold the records to dealers and paid a royalty to EMI, which... [then] forwarded part of the money to RCA" (personal communication, Oct. 19, 2001). RCA (formerly Victor, the company that originally recorded much of the material in the G.V. series) had a series of agreements with EMI (formerly the Gramophone Company) by which the two record giants effectively divided the world between them and guaranteed access to each other's catalogues⁹. Thus the G.V. series was probably initiated by someone connected with EMI who was familiar with the earlier Victor recordings from Cuba and who perceived a potential market for this music in the colonial cities of Africa.

Before the 1940s the majority of the records listened to in Leopoldville were manufactured in Europe and imported to the Belgian Congo through the country's principal port of entry, Matadi. During this period it was common for African sailors to bring back records from their travels abroad, some of which were intended as gifts and others that would be sold to friends or acquaintances. It was also common for such transactions to happen through roving vendors at or around the port as boats arrived from overseas. After the arrival of radio technology to the region, the demand for pre-recorded music increased substantially and a number of local merchants began to see records as a potentially lucrative venture. A Belgian radio enthusiast and entrepreneur by the name of Hourdebise, who in 1939 opened the first commercial radio station in the Congo, regularly played records from the G.V. series on the air, but he also devoted a regular part of air time to local artists; in fact it was Hourdebise who is credited with discovering the legendary singer-songwriter Wendo Kolosoy. Hourdebise's *Radio Congoliya* featured local and international news in four African languages and he was the first to install loud speakers in order to broadcast directly in the African sections of the city. Following the popularity of Radio Congoliya, local merchants became more interested in selling records and several large retailers in the capital such as SEDEC Montre and Olivant began to order imported records in large amounts to sell alongside more expensive imported items, such as phonographs and radios.

9. For an excellent overview of the early record industry, especially with regards to international expeditions and ethnic recordings, see GRONOW (1996).

According to Gary Stewart (2000), commercial recordings of local artists in Leopoldville began with the Belgian entrepreneur Fernand Janssens who arrived in the Congo at the end of World War II with recording equipment and the intention of making recordings that would be mastered and pressed through his Belgium-based company SOBEDI (Société belge du disque). An important number of recordings were published on Janssens' Olympia label (and its local Congolese labels Kongo Bina and Lomeka) and by 1948 the Olympia African catalog contained more than 200 titles including recordings of military bands, missionary choirs and even a series of records for learning Lingala (Stewart 2000: 24). Janssens also recorded some of the most important artists of the first generation of musicians in Leopoldville (among them Wendo's Victoria Kin, Orchestre Odéon Kinois, Camille Feruzi) and helped paved the way for a generation of local foreign-owned record companies that would be instrumental in the development of an urban popular music style that was Afro-Cuban inspired and yet uniquely Congolese.

Listening to the G.V. Series

The G.V. series was not necessarily the first Afro-Cuban music to be heard in the Congo, but it certainly seemed to have the most impact. It was the music of preference for Congolese living in the fast-paced, quickly growing colonial city of Leopoldville, and it remained popular up until locally recorded commercial music became widely available. There were other musical styles that were available to Congolese audiences—French crooner music like that of Tino Rossi and Patrice et Mario, various types of Caribbean music that people refer to vaguely as *Antillais*, fanfare or marching band music, and of course church hymns and mission music—but the songs of the G.V. series are the ones that elicit the most passionate response from Congolese who were born or living in Leopoldville during the 1930s. As Chris Waterman has shown for Nigeria, the G.V. series had a similar effect elsewhere on the continent: “If you have a G.V. record, and I'm living very near you, I'll be expecting you to play that record in the morning, and I can because of that become your friend. I'll be visiting you... I like your record, and we'll drink beer and palmwine” (1990: 47).

For the most part people who grew up in Kinshasa during this period do not remember the names of particular G.V. songs or song lyrics, but they do remember melodies and they were eager to share them with me during our conversations. Even more common were memories of parents and family members listening to G.V. songs on the family phonograph. One woman edged her way into a group interview to tell me about her father's G.V. listening ritual: “My father...my father... [she is cut off and then comes back into the conversation] My father would buy a bottle of beer. He would come home and sit down with those G.V. records and just play them. He had his record player and he would just sit there and play those G.V. records.

[she raises her voice in excitement] He was so happy he used to daaaaaance...!" (March 18, 2001).

Throughout preliminary interviews I heard a number of stories with similar narrative elements: the child or children observing the parent (usually the father) listening, the ceremonious nature of the listening either in terms of timing (usually on Sunday), or company (often neighborhood friends of the same age) and the joy that this music inspired in the people listening. In many cases, the father or figure of authority would require absolute silence while listening, and dancing—at least for the children observers—was not permitted. Obviously not all Congolese were able to afford a record player, or even records, thus for a family to have pre-recorded music in their home was a marker of social status and this was evident from the way that interviewees recounted their memories of watching their parents listen.

When asked why these early recordings provided Congolese audiences with so much pleasure, people usually responded by expressing a vague sense of identification with the music and the people who played it. Listening to early Afro-Cuban music seems to constitute a moment of long-distance self-recognition. Here is an excerpt from one of the group interviews I conducted in Kinshasa:

Woman 1: "It's ruuuumba. That's what rumba is."

Woman 2: "It comes from Africa. It was Africans that were sold over there and they started singing in the fields and they tried to play this music that came from here, the music that they brought with them."

BW: "So you knew the people singing were descendants of Africans?"

Woman 2: "No we learned that later, but we could feel they were like us."

BW: "hmmm..."

Woman 2: "You see it's like a blood thing. It's blood, yeah that's right, it's blood. When you're there [listening] and you find yourself close to someone else, you don't know him but you can tell that there is something there. You feel that he is really your brother. It's the blood...[the other interviewees agree emphatically, repeating her last few words]. Yeah, it's the blood. The blood."

And this is not an argument about the universality of biology or the salience of race. Instead the metaphor of blood is used as a source of knowledge about the legacy of slavery and the origins of this global musical form that now benefits Cubans much more than it does Congolese. The well-known Congolese artist Luambo Makiadi "Franco" expressed this idea in a personal interview a few years before his death:

"Some people think they hear a 'Latin' sound in our music... It only comes from the instrumentation, trumpets and so on. Maybe they are thinking of the horns. But the horns only play the vocal parts in our natural singing style. The melody follows the tonality of Lingala, the guitar parts are African and so is the rumba rhythm. Where is the Latin? Zairian music does not copy Cuban music. Some Cubans say it does, but we say their music follows ours. You know, our people went from Congo to Cuba long before we ever heard their music" (Ewens 1994: 74).

Similar thoughts were expressed by the people with whom I spoke in Kinshasa:

Man (a professional musician): “Cubans use to play our music without knowing we were already playing this in our country. They have been promoting our music without even knowing it. We can identify with this music; it’s our music.”

BW: “And what made people feel this way about the music? Was it the way they sang? Or the rhythm? Or...”

Man: “The melody, the rhythms, those are Congolese rhythms, the drums, the melody, they even give the lyrics a special flavor. But the melodies and the rhythms they use, that’s what breaks Congolese hearts” (March 18, 2001).

Listening to this music was pleasurable in part because it represented the possibility of being cosmopolitan on terms that made intuitive and aesthetic sense to Congolese audiences. The excitement of being from somewhere else, or at least of being connected to somewhere else through music, was filtered through a sonic experience that was already in many ways familiar. Despite the distant familiarity of this music to Congolese ears, many Congolese comment on the fact that Afro-Cuban popular music was seen as thoroughly “modern”, perhaps because of the way that it arrived to Congo, through various foreign brokers and intermediaries, and in the form of a 78 r.p.m. disc. Or perhaps the fact that the *son* music of 1920s Havana was being combined with more “socially acceptable” forms of local Cuban music such as *trova*, *bolero*, and *danzon* in order to appeal to more “respectable” audiences in urban areas (Moore 1997). Or perhaps it was simply because only people from a certain social category in Leopoldville had access to the phonographs required to play such music.

Not surprisingly, many Congolese comment on how this imported music was used as an expression of individual and social distinction. Musicians in Leopoldville played cover versions of Cuban compositions in Spanish not only because they enjoyed the songs, but also to convey a sense of worldliness and sophistication, and this performance of cosmopolitanism is still present in Congolese popular music today, albeit in French or English¹⁰. So no one flinched upon hearing a series of O.K. Jazz songs sung in Spanish in the 1950s with titles such as *Es Mi Cumpleaños* and *Corre Yo Te Llamo* or the African Jazz version of Miguel Matamoros’ famous *El Que Siembre Su Maíz*. On the contrary, according to Jean-Serge Essous (veteran musician and co-founder of the legendary O.K. Jazz), with each successive wave of Latin and Caribbean music, there was a new look and a new dance step. Essous takes credit for popularizing the cha-cha-cha in the capital region of the two Congos:

“I was in touch with cha-cha-cha, in direct contact because I went to Pointe Noire [French Congo] where I saw it for the first time and it only took me three or four

10. For a discussion of the use of French and English phrases in contemporary Congolese dance music, see WHITE (forthcoming).

days to learn, it was easy. Then I brought the dance to Kinshasa and started showing people. People loved the new king of cha-cha-cha. 'Don't try to understand,' people said, 'these guys are the leaders'. I had to remember very carefully the exact steps and tones, and when I brought it back it was a big event. People went crazy for anything that was new" (personal interview, September 7, 1995).

And what could be more cosmopolitan in colonial Africa than to sing songs about romantic love and life in the city using the idiom of Afro-Cuban popular dance music? If Wendo Kolosoy's 1948 hit *Marie-Louise* was the target of colonial censorship, it was not only because the song was rumored to have brought the dead back to life, but also because of how its lyrics inserted Wendo and his colleague Bowane in a world that was outside of Belgian colonialism's sphere of control and that was filled with wealth and treasures: desirable young women, automobiles and imported musical instruments...

Marie-Louisa, solo eh, ngai na yo	Maria Louisa, oh yeah, just me and you
Marie-Louisa, solo eh, ngai na yo mama	Maria Louisa, oh yeah, just me and you
Wapi kombo Louisa?	Where is Louisa?
Wapi kombo Louisa?	Where is Louisa?
Lobela ngai ti na wapi Louisa	Tell me where is Louisa
Louisa, na kobala te	Louisa, I won't marry (anyone else)
Louisa, na kozela yo bokilo lobi	I'll wait for you tomorrow at your father's house

Solo penza ngai na kobala Louisa	I swear I'm going to marry Louisa
Bokilo a boyi na ngai na yo nde libala	Your father refused to let us marry
Ngai na yo, to lingani	You and me, we love each other
Libala na ngai na yo Mama Louisa	We'll get married, Mama Louisa
Wapi Louisa eh...	Where is Louisa?

Yoka seben...

Listen to this seben...

Bokilo alobeli ngai na makanisi ya motema	Your father told me to think about it
Kofinga ngai na mayele	He really insulted me in a clever way
Kotonga ngai na mayele	He really criticized me in a clever way
Likolo na mwana, nde Louisa	Feet like a child, Louisa
Ngai na kobala te Louisa	I won't marry anyone else
Bokilo kofinga ngai po na Louisa	The father insults me because of Louisa
Oyebaka te Bowane bokilo wa yo	You don't know that Bowane is your father
Wapi Louisa?	Where are you Louisa?

[sung by Henri Bowane]

Wendo yo koloba pamba	Wendo you're wasting your breath
Biso tozali na voiture	We have a car
Biso tozali na baguitares na biso	We have our own guitars
Biso tozali na mingongo na biso	We have our own?
To ko kima na ye nzela Kingabwa,	We'll run away with her on the road to
mama	Kingabwa

"We Chose the Wrong Colonizers"

If it is true, as Robin Moore has argued, that Afro-Cuban music was appropriated in the name of Cuban nationalism, then what was being accomplished by the appropriation of Afro-Cuban music in an African setting? This

is an ambitious question, but the answer probably lies somewhere in between the music, its audiences, and colonial cultural policy in the Belgian Congo. Like Cubans, and almost at exactly the same time, Congolese were using music and other forms of artistic expression (dance, plastic arts and writing) to experiment with new types of urban and national identities. Unlike Cuba, however, the Congo of the inter-war period found itself under direct colonial rule, and with a black majority whose lives and movements were more tightly controlled than perhaps any of the African colonies. Congolese elites and intellectuals deeply resented the Belgians because “they kept all their secrets from us” and they failed to follow through on the promises of social and racial advancement. But Congolese also saw Belgians as undesirable colonials, since they were notoriously brutal and not particularly talented, either commercially or culturally. “We chose the wrong colonizers”, a Congolese friend once told me. “The British are good with money and French have their language, but what are the Belgians known for? Chocolate!”¹¹.

Recollections of individual Belgians, at least in the context of discussions about music, are not frequent¹². More common are memories of the various other Europeans living in the Congo, especially the Greek wholesale merchants who sold consumer items such as soap, cloth and dry goods in the African sections of the city. When asked about the differences between Greeks and Belgians, most of the people I interviewed said that Belgians were “stricter” and “more distant”. Others described them as cold and stoic. A man in his late sixties told me: “The Greeks trusted you, could take what you needed and pay later. In the Belgian store if it’s two francs then you have to pay two francs, but in a Greek store he says ‘How much do you have? One franc and 80? Fine, give me one franc and 80.’” Others recounted that it was rare for Belgians to be involved in commerce at all, especially small-scale commerce, since they were more interested in having “positions of real power”.

Wendo Kolosoy has fond memories of the Greek studio owner who hired him as one of the first local musicians to work in Leopoldville on a professional basis. Nicolas Jeronimidis, who opened Ngoma records for business in 1948, sought out Wendo as the headliner for his new label. Wendo explains what his relationship was like with the Greek merchant and amateur musician:

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11. In his recent book *In Search of Africa*, Manthia DIAWARA (1998: 100) discusses a similar disdain among young urbanites in the former French colonial city of Bamako: “We walked tall in packs and pretended we couldn’t speak French [...]. We especially did not want any Johnny Hallyday records—we considered him too French to be a genuine rock-and-roller.”
 12. One exception was Bill Alexander, a Belgian jazz guitarist who played with Django Reinhardt before coming to the Congo in the early 1950s and who is credited with the introduction of the electric guitar, the guitar pick, and a set of playing techniques that heavily influenced Congolese guitarists of the period, most notably the legendary lead guitarist Dr. Nico.

“I started out when music was hard, we had it tough, but when Jeronimidis came to me it was no more problems [...] He was much older than me, 40 or so, he was old, he became just like my father, he used to smell my breath to see if I was drinking. If he smelled alcohol he would get mad and lock me in my room” (personal interview, August 12, 2000).

Together with several other musicians of the Ngoma label (among them Leon Bukasa and Manuel D’Oliveira), Wendo and Jeronimidis piled into the company’s Dodge pickup and drove from Kinshasa to Kisangani and south to Shaba toward the border with Rhodesia (a picture of the Ngoma truck appears on the cover of “Ngoma: the early years 1948-1960”, a CD issued recently by the label Popular African Music). They would usually spend 3-4 months at a time on the road, performing in small towns along the way and selling records. “It was hard work”, Wendo remembers, “but I didn’t have a worry in my life”. Jean Serge Essous vividly remembers another foreign studio owner, the founder of the Loningisa label. According to Essous, not only was Papadimitriou a musician (“he used to sing in his shop while he sold *pagnes*”), but he had also taken a Congolese wife, a young woman named Marie Kitoko, who was herself a singer.

“He used to come at night with his wife. He used to like the clarinette. ‘Okay Franco’, he would say, ‘you sit down. Let me listen to the clarinette some’. Sometimes he told Franco and I to do duos with guitar and clarinette. He would come to the studio after closing his shop at 5:00pm. The Greeks were good with people. They spoke good Lingala like the Portuguese. They came to our country to get rich, but the French and Belgians came as administrators” (Essous, Sept. 7, 1995).

Stories about the owners of the early studio houses are common among a certain generation of musicians¹³. They usually focus on the gifts that the studio owners offered them (clothes, instruments, bicycles and even sometimes cars), the advice that they gave about how to compose and play music, and the extent to which these white foreigners (*mundele*, pl. *mindele*) took a personal interest in the lives and well-being of their Congolese employees. According to Stewart (2000: 55), the Papadimitriou enterprise provided company housing for musicians and even included a number of Congolese advisors on a special committee whose goal was to choose songs that would be likely to sell the most records. There was obviously some acknowledgement of the fact that Congolese had special knowledge about local audiences and their tastes. In many cases the studio owners were musicians themselves, or at least aspiring musicians, and this tended to soften the relation between Congolese musicians and their employers: “Papadimitriou played the accordion”, one musician in his early sixties told me, “we trusted him”.

13. For a good overview of the studio houses in Leopoldville, see STEWART (2000).

As can be expected not all Congolese had praise for the foreign studio owners. According to Thomas Kanza, these merchants were profiteers who,

“...far from trying to improve the artistic quality of Zairian music, were more concerned with the profitability of industrial production. I admire their business sense, but I find regrettable the exploitation of Zairian artists by which they themselves became celebrities. Only a small percentage of profits from record sales was ever given to the artist” (Kanza 1972: 43).

But few deny the important role played by these early cultural brokers in the formative years of the music industry and the promotion of local talent:

“The role played by the music recording houses in the Congo is one of immeasurable importance. The future of our music and the development of African musical arts could only have been suffocated, like so many gifts and innate musical skills brought together by colonization, were it not for the fortunate coincidence that certain merchants felt compelled to benefit from making records, a coincidence which indirectly gave them the title of curator...” (Lonoh 1969: 30).

When Congolese debate the relative merits of their encounter with colonialism, they often focus on the ways that African bodies and movements were regulated under Belgian rule: the physical barriers that separated the city into African sections (*la cité*) and white sections (*la ville*), the use of public address systems on street corners throughout the African *cité*, the strict application of nightly curfews and pass laws, and mandatory testing for sexually transmitted diseases are the most common examples. What is interesting is that despite the invasive nature of these measures, many people look back on this period with a certain sense of nostalgia. They remember that during the colonial period the streets were clean, unemployment was almost unheard of, hospitals were fully staffed and maintained, schools were in session and food was affordable. “That’s just the way the Belgians were”, I often heard people say. As Johannes Fabian (1996) has shown, expressions of nostalgia about a colonial past can also serve as a series of potent discourses about the post-colonial present. This important observation is only possible when we begin to distinguish between colonial rule *per se* and the mood of “coloniality” that colonialism produces (Mignolo 2001).

Narratives about colonialism in the Congo are extremely complex and have been the subject of a rich historical scholarship¹⁴. Congolese ways of representing colonialism and colonial institutions vary from the association of whites with returning spirits (*revenants*) and bogey men (*mundele ngulu*) to the various popular representations of colonial officers and the

14. For good recent examples see the works of Johannes FABIAN (1996), Bogumil JEWSIEWICKI (1996), Osumaka LIKAKA (1997), Nancy Rose HUNT (1999).

colonial state (*banoko, bula matari, mitumbula*)¹⁵. Relatively little, however, has been written about the diverse social categories of whites in the Belgian Congo (though see Vellut 1982) and even less has been written on the role of what might be termed “colonial middles” (see Burke 1996). By “middles” I am referring not only to the non-Belgian European merchants who were so instrumental in the early history of the music industry in Kinshasa, but also their Congolese interlocutors such as the flamboyant Congolese entertainer Henri Bowane who in more than one case convinced Europeans living in Leopoldville that recording Congolese artists in order to sell records could be a profitable venture. By focusing on interactions with Europeans other than Belgians, I would like to suggest that Congolese accounts of these interactions are also instructive for what they tell us about local categories of whiteness. The topic of Afro-Cuban music is particularly revealing because it represents a form of cultural practice that is expressly African and yet profoundly cosmopolitan. Afro-Cuban music was so attractive to Congolese musicians and audiences not only because of the way that it sounded, but also because of what it stood for. It provided urban Congolese with an alternative to a particular form of cosmopolitanism—Belgian colonialism—that was strict and stiff, if not cruel and in many ways anti-cosmopolitan.

Rooted Cosmopolitanism

In this article I have focused primarily on the first wave of Cuban music to reach African shores, but Cuban music and Cuban artists have continued to have an impact on audiences in the Congo and elsewhere in Africa. The latest wave of Afro-Cuban music abroad must be understood in the context of increasing demand for salsa, merengue and other forms of tropical “world music” especially in the cities of Europe and North America. Following Nick Gold’s hugely successful *Buena Vista Social Club*, an increasing number of African Afro-Cuban revival groups are competing for this piece of the world music market: Manu Dibango’s recent collaboration with the Cuarteto Patria, Congolese singer Delvis El Salsero, a Senegalese Afro-Cuban group called Africando, and the “Africa Salsa” series on the World Circuit music label are only a few examples¹⁶. By far the most striking example of this

15. More detailed accounts of stories that circulated about whites during the colonial period can be found in DE LANNOY *et al.* (1986). For the region of Central and Southern Central Africa, see Luise WHITE (2000).

16. Ironically, Nick Gold’s initial idea for *Buena Vista* was to bring together world music heavyweight Ry Cooder with a number of veteran salsa musicians from Mali and organize the production of the album in Havana. When the African musicians were prohibited from entering the country due to visa problems, Gold decided to stay on in Havana and organize a series of recordings with Cuban musicians that were already there, but that for one reason or another were no longer active in the Havana music scene (Ibrahim Ferrer, Compay Segundo, Ruben Gonzalez); and the *Buena Vista Social Club* project was born.

phenomenon is the music of Ricardo Lemvo, a Congolese musician who, from his base in Southern California, has been getting the attention of the world music press by promoting his own brand of African musical authenticity. Unlike most Congolese musicians who reference Afro-Cuban music by adding superficial aspects of Afro-Cuban music to their compositions, Lemvo's band Makina Loca is predominantly made up of Latin musicians and has a repertoire that is more Afro-Cuban than Congolese. Most of what he plays is international mainstream salsa, the main difference being his vocals, which even in Spanish are flavored with African accents and inflections. On his latest album (*Sao Salvador*) Lemvo combines a number of Afro-Latin rhythms (salsa, merengue, bomba, rumba) and occasionally throws in lyrics in Lingala or a short *soukous*-inspired dance section, but his music is marketed as salsa. And this formula seems to have worked; Lemvo has already put out two albums on the prestigious Putumayo world music label, a label that generally focuses its energy on publishing compilations and regional or genre-based world music samplers.

What is most striking about Lemvo and the other African *salseros* is the way that they use a romanticized, essentialized notion of Africa and African identity as a selling point for their music, something that would have been unimaginable (and unnecessary) for the African musicians who were inspired by early Afro-Cuban music:

“Africando means Africa reunited in the Wolof language of Senegal. It is a concept that goes beyond race and ethnicity. It is the recognition of a shared history, the celebration of a shared cultural heritage, and the commitment to a shared future. By bringing together musicians from the African Motherland and from the African Diaspora—and, with their music, bringing their diverse audiences together as well—the group Africando puts the concept of a reunited Africa into practice” (From the Africando CD, *Baloba*).

“This is perhaps Lemvo's most African record. He once said that he wanted to expand the ideas of the founding fathers of Congolese rumba of the 50s and 60s...by re-Africanizing the soul of Cuban music. With this record Lemvo has achieved his dream. By presenting a colorful palette of his musical imagination he takes us back to the African roots of Latin music” (George Collinet in the liner notes from Lemvo's *Sao Salvador*).

But Lemvo's music is an exception to the Congolese rule. When J.P. Busé, a former member of Congolese super-group Zaïko Langa Langa, explained to me that in recent years salsa has become a standard part of the repertoire of most young Congolese musicians living in Paris and Brussels, he used the Lingala expression “*Mikolo oyo kaka salsa*” (These days its nothing but salsa). What he did not say was that the adoption of salsa into the Congolese repertoire is rarely more than window dressing. A significant number of Congolese CDs produced in the last ten years contain some reference, either verbal or musical, to contemporary Afro-Cuban music; this reference usually takes the form of a piano accompaniment, an added horn

line, a salsa-inspired bridge or flute, or a Spanish shout such as “*baila! baila!*”¹⁷. Apart from these elements, however, many of which are purely decorative, the basic song structure and expository style remain the same. While the songwriting formula which seems to have trapped Congolese musicians in the last ten years has led critics to accuse them of repetitiveness and monotony (White forthcoming), their fans—almost exclusively African with an overwhelming Congolese majority—continue to attend sold-out shows in the most prestigious concert halls of France, Belgium and the United Kingdom.

If salsa is popular with Congolese musicians in Paris and Brussels, it is in part because salsa is popular in Paris and Brussels; one needs to look no further than the Paris-based Afro-Cuban hip hop sensation Orishas, a group that has done as much for international salsa as more mainstream salsa acts such as Ricardo Lemvo. The main difference between a group like Makina Loca and the majority of Congolese groups who record and perform in Europe is that Lemvo is targeting non-African audiences. In the case of most Congolese musicians, even those living more or less permanently in Europe, adding touches of salsa is a way for them to signal “their attentiveness to change occurring elsewhere” (Straw 1991), but the message is clearly intended for fellow Congolese. Appropriating the sounds of contemporary Cuban music enables musicians to show fans (both in Paris and in Kinshasa) that they are aware of the latest trends in world music, but it also enables them to make claims about African (especially Congolese) roots: “Singer Nyboma Mwan Dido said Congolese rumba was like country music compared to the electrified genre that followed it. While he wondered if younger Africans will like the laid-back groove of Kekele’s album, ‘Rumba Congo’ (Stern’s), he said one of the goals of the labor of love is that ‘We want people to remember where we are from’” (Marty Lipp for *Newsday Magazine*, August 5, 2001: 1-2).

This strategy makes sense given the fact that most Congolese musicians are already familiar with Afro-Cuban music and at the same time it serves as a nod to musical elders and elites in Kinshasa, many of whom tire of young people’s music and long for the days of simple, no-sweat *rumba ya kala* (good old fashioned rumba).

Based on my research in Kinshasa, I could certainly make the observation that the appropriation of Afro-Cuban music is an example of what Georges Balandier referred to as the uniquely Congolese *passion moderniste*, in which people express their will to be modern through the adoption of

17. A few examples: *Si Si Si* (Koffi Olomide, *Attentat*), *Zaniha* (Koffi Olomide, *Droit de Veto*), *Grace à toi Germain* (J.B. Mpiana, *Toujours Humble*), *Ntima Mbote* (Werra Son, *Kibuisa Mpimpa*), *Soundiata Keita* (Empire Bakuba, *Cocktail*), *Reflexion* (Quartier Latin, *Viagra*), *Tubela* (Stino Muby, *Invitation*). Some of the most striking examples come from Papa Wemba’s *Viva La Musica*. On a recent album Wemba features the trumpet of Tito Puente and a vocal lead by Congolese salsa singer Delvis El Salsero (“Etaleli” *Mzee Fula Ngenge*).

foreign language, dress, and various kinds of imported consumer goods. In fact, one of the reasons that contemporary Congolese dance music has failed with non-African listeners is precisely because of its modernist aesthetic, both sonically and visually (compare with James Ferguson's 1999 discussion of Congolese rumba in Zambia). While I do believe that markers of being "modern" are important to people in Kinshasa, I agree with Harri Englund that it is important to distinguish between debates that are "about" modernity and debates that take place "within" modernity, a distinction that has been lost on much of the recent scholarship about African modernities. I am no longer convinced that people in Kinshasa are using music to make claims about being "modern". To riff on Bruno Latour (1993), they have always been modern and the way they talk about Afro-Cuban music clearly reflects this knowledge. At the same time, if Congolese are using music to make claims about being cosmopolitan, it is not cosmopolitanism in any classical sense of the term.

In his contribution to a recent issue of *Public Culture* (volume 12/3) David Harvey declares with some irony that "cosmopolitanism is back", but recent writing on this topic has shown that the study of cosmopolitanism has a "new cast of characters" (Robbins 1998: 1). Cosmopolitanism, like most concepts with multiple lives, has a rich intellectual history beginning with the philosophy of the Greek stoics, following through Kant and Heidegger, and this history of intellectual thought on the subject is only beginning to be written (Anderson 1998; Rée 1998). For the purposes of this and future research, I am most interested in analyses that show why nationalism and cosmopolitanism can no longer be seen as antithetical (Cheah 1998: 24-25). As Robbins (1998: 2) has argued, "[...] there is a growing consensus that cosmopolitanism sometimes works together with nationalism rather than in opposition to it", and this is certainly true for post-colonial politics in many parts of Africa, as Thomas Turino (2000) has shown in his complex analysis of popular music and political culture in Zimbabwe.

The material I have presented in this article reveals cosmopolitanism's potential to bring into focus the complex relationship between local subjectivities and the "larger, impersonal systems" which Marcus and Fischer proposed as one of the correctives to anthropology's crisis of representation almost twenty years ago (1986). The appropriation of Afro-Cuban music by Congolese living under Belgian colonial rule shows how cosmopolitan practices manifest themselves as a disposition, a state of mind, or to use Ulf Hannerz' useful expression, "a mode of managing meaning" (1992) in which individuals activate a particular set of cultural competences (Clifford 1992). But the recent wave of writing on cosmopolitanism, while very engaged philosophically and historically, has failed to observe what to me seems most obvious: unlike "globalization" or "modernity", cosmopolitanism is not something that happens to people, it is something that people do. In order for this observation to be of any use, we need to ask ourselves the question if cosmopolitanism is a project for people in Africa, either

historically or at present, and if so, in what sense is this project a political one?

Although Congolese found something strangely familiar in the imported Afro-Cuban music that was being played in the colonial cities of the Belgian Congo, and though this potentially liberating moment of self-identification represented a very real source of pleasure, I also think that Afro-Cuban music stood (and stands) for a particular brand of cosmopolitanism, one that was initially more accessible by virtue of the way it sounded. Despite its multiple influences and mediations, Afro-Cuban music was cosmopolitan without being European—or more accurately without being Belgian. This was an important part of its charm for audiences in the Belgian Congo and possibly elsewhere in colonial Africa, since as Will Straw writes, “Cosmopolitanism is a vital force in overcoming the capacity of local authorities to dictate what is valuable or acceptable” in the context of emerging national identities (personal communication, February 12, 2002). If there is anything specific about this cosmopolitanism today, it has to do with the extent to which it is rooted in a particular place, the extent to which it is a rooted cosmopolitanism. When Congolese musicians experiment with new dance steps and shouts, they keep their ears very close to the ground, but unlike their competition in the market for “world music”, what they are listening for is rumblings from home. If Congolese musicians dream of making it big in Paris, and judging from ticket sales there they do, it is primarily so that they can return, triumphantly, to the city that they proudly call “the cradle of African music”.

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I will look briefly at how Afro-Cuban music came to be imported and distributed in the Belgian Congo and I will discuss some of the stylistic borrowing that has given Congolese music a strongly Afro-Cuban flavor. But I am also interested in the way that Congolese rumba has gradually undergone a process of indigenization which has made it the "*musica franca*" of much of sub-Saharan Africa and an important marker of Congolese national identity. My central argument is that Cuban music became popular in the Congo not only because it retained elements of "traditional" African musical and performative aesthetics, but also because it stood for a form of urban cosmopolitanism which was something other than European. By comparing the appropriation of Afro-Cuban music in the Congo during two distinct historical periods (during the peak of colonialism and several years after the death of Mobutu), I hope to show not only how changes in larger political economies correspond with changing notions of cosmopolitanism in a local setting, but also how popular music mediates at various levels between the local and the foreign.

RÉSUMÉ

La rumba congolaise et autres cosmopolitismes. — Dans cet article, on examine la façon dont la musique afro-cubaine fut importée et distribuée au Congo-belge ainsi que la nature de l'emprunt stylistique ayant donné à la musique congolaise une saveur fortement afro-cubaine. Par ailleurs, on s'intéresse à la façon dont la rumba a subi progressivement un processus d'indigénisation qui a en a fait véritablement la « *musica franca* » de toute l'Afrique noire ainsi qu'un signe distinctif de l'identité nationale congolaise. L'idée centrale de cet article est que la musique cubaine devint populaire au Congo pas seulement parce qu'elle conservait des éléments de la musique traditionnelle africaine mais aussi parce qu'elle présentait une certaine forme de cosmopolitisme urbain qui différait de l'influence européenne. En comparant l'appropriation de la musique afro-cubaine au Congo à deux époques différentes, on tente de montrer en quoi les changements économiques mondiaux accompagnent les changements dans les conceptions locales du cosmopolitisme mais également de quelle façon la musique populaire sert de médiateur entre le local et le global.

Keywords/Mots-clés: Congo-Zaire, Cuba, audiences, colonialism, cosmopolitanism, popular music, record industry, rumba/Congo-Zaire, Cuba, publics, colonialisme, cosmopolitisme, musique populaire, industrie du disque, rumba.