The Mulele “Rebellion,” Congolese Regimes, and the Politics of Forgetting

La « rébellion » Mulele, les régimes congolais et la politique de l'oubli

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The Mulele “Rebellion,” Congolese Regimes, and the Politics of Forgetting*

It was the [1st of October 1968]. [...] I turned on my small radio that had survived the rebellion. [...] I heard that Pierre Mulele was now in Kinshasa. [...] The journalist said that an agreement concluding his extradition was signed between the Government of Brazzaville and that of Kinshasa. [...] After listening to this news, I got worried. But not too much because I had faith in our president. [...] On the [10th of October 1968], I switched on my radio once again. After a few songs, the journalist went on to say that Pierre Mulele had died. He was put on trial by the military court and found guilty and then killed. [...] The journalist added that now people can rejoice. Because their enemy was definitely defeated. He ended by saying that the page was turned. [...] Everyone should forget about everything. [...] Seized with emotion, I burst into tears. [...] I had completely forgotten that it was forbidden to talk about Mulele, or about events in relation to his name. [...] I got into my house. I scratched my head. I could not believe that Mulele was killed. [...] It was just impossible to believe, knowing who this man was. [...] It pained me to hear that. Mulele was someone who lived among us. After hearing this, how could I not be worried? [...] I had not spent thirty minutes inside the house when I heard someone knocking on my door: “Bastard! Come out of the house. Today, we are going to crush your head.” I came out of my house only to find that seven plain-clothed armed men had invaded my yard. [...] One of them raised his voice and said: “Bastard! You have not learned anything! Are you a stranger to this region? You know very well that it is forbidden to talk or think about this monster. But now you allow yourself the luxury of resuscitating him. Today, you are going to see what we will do to you.” Even before this man finished talking to me, another raised his bayonet and stabbed me, here, on the chest. I moved a little bit. The bayonet scratched me here. You can see the scar. I begged them, but none of them would listen to me. [...] I cried out: “Please, I have had nothing to do with this

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man.” They said to me: “Shut up, idiot! You think you are above the law. Today, we are going to correct you.” [...] They began to beat me up. My mouth swelled up. You could not even see my face. I became unrecognizable. [...] They grabbed me. They threw me in their vehicle. They took me to Kikwit and put me in jail.¹

With these lengthy words, Cyril Mukelenge, a former rebel from Idiofa whom I met in December 2013, recalled his experiences in the late 1960s. Painful by nature, these words referred to the Mobutu regime’s approach to managing the memory of the Mulele rebellion—a guerrilla war led by Pierre Mulele and his companions in the Kwilu region (and beyond) between 1963 and 1968.² It is this politics, which I call “the politics of forgetting,” that constitutes the subject of this article.

Academic works on remembering and forgetting have argued over the years that injunctions to forgetting may be central to peace-making in many transitional moments, but they craft a particular grand narrative of history that excludes the experiences of many. Indeed, this is not merely a case of the social and political suppression of memory, it is also potentially a psychological repression of memory. After all, forgetting is a form of memory that is critical to living and avoiding doing so in a constant state of fear, terror, and trauma.

Suppression and repression of memory always open up the possibility of a return of the suppressed and the repressed (Freud 1966: 117-128), but such returns may also adversely lock us into cycles of repetition-compulsion in which we are forever inextricably bound to and defined by these memories

1. Interview with Cyril Mukelenge (73 years old), Idiofa, 23 December 2013. This article is largely based upon early postcolonial archives of the Mulele rebellion. These were created at the time and enriched over the ensuing five decades. The Conseil National de Libération (Congo), Commandement des Forces Armées Populaires, État Major Général Records collection (forthwith Archives Conseil National or ACN) is located at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. The documents are mainly written in Kikongo, a Congolese language, and in French. I also draw on a number of oral interviews I conducted with witnesses and survivors who are today settled in Kinshasa, Kikwit and its surrounding villages (500 km east of Kinshasa), Idiofa (656 km east of Kinshasa) and Gungu (686 km southeast of Kinshasa). The interviews were conducted in Kikongo, Lingala, and French. They took place in several stages and over several months: March 2013, September 2013-February 2014, March 2015, July-August 2015, and December 2015. All translations into English from the archives and interviews are my own unless otherwise stated.
2. Pierre Mulele was one of the founders of the Parti Solidaire Africain (PSA) in 1959 and former Minister of National Education in the Lumumba government in July 1960. On the roots, aims, and the context in which the Mulele rebellion arose, see FOX *ET AL.* (1965: 1-35), MARTENS (1985), VERHAEGEN (1966). In the 1980s, a strong debate emerged among scholars about whether Pierre Mulele’s actions in Kwilu should be considered a rebellion or a revolution (COQUERY-VIDROVITCH 1987; MARTENS 1987; VERHAEGEN 1987). Scholars’ views remained divergent on this question. In this article, I will use the word “rebellion” instead of “revolution.”

through their incorporation into grand new narratives. This is the paradox of remembering and forgetting.

My interest in the concept of forgetting is not connected to transitional justice and its paradoxes. Neither is it concerned with its importance in maintaining the life cycle. My research relates to disciplinary practices in the postcolony, particularly the forms these practices have taken in the Congo since the 1960s. I am interested in their effects on subjecthood and the ways in which they reproduce the past and transform it into a living memory that shakes one at the very core of one's human beingness. In the first part of my analysis, I seek to unpack how, from the end of the Mulele rebellion in the 1960s, the postcolonial state in the Congo deviated from a classical approach to controlling bodies (Foucault 1975) and embarked upon a new project of controlling the minds of its subjects. The overarching goal of this deconstruction is not to show how the state secured control over the minds of its subjects through ideology and its mode of operation (Althusser 1976: 67-125; Bates 1975: 351-366; Gramsci 1999; Mouffe 1979: 168-204), but rather to grasp, in a very profound way, the quality of suffering produced in the minds of those subjected to the will of power. The suspicions that the new system of control and surveillance gave rise to among Mulele's followers and the ways in which they responded to it in the 1970s and 1980s constitute the second part of this article. The last part looks at the collapse of the Mobutu regime, in 1997, the transfer of power to Laurent Désiré Kabila, and the significant changes that took place in the country, as a result. I briefly examine this era, Kabila's politics with regard to the rebellion, as well as the renewed suffering that it brought about among those who had been subjected to bodily disruption during the rebellion.

End of the Rebellion: Imbroglia, Heightened Surveillance, and Population Control

From 1964 to 1968, the Congolese government attempted to pacify the Kwilu region (CRISP 1967: 125-134). It was during this period that people came out of the bush. During this time, many of the rebel leaders were arrested, and most were subsequently killed by the Mobutu regime.³ These arrests and

3. Evidence from the Archives Conseil National includes: J. Mbadu, "Lettre: Arrestation Commandant rebelle adjoint Menaba Evariste," Kikwit, 6 Novembre 1967, reel 11, box 8, folder 4, file F, doc. G67/34, ACN; Anonymous, "Télégramme," Kikwit, 29 novembre 1967, reel 11, box 8, folder 4, file F, doc. G67/ 35, ACN; Innocent J. Lobo, "Lettre: la rébellion en C. I. Imbongo," Imbongo, 1 février 1968, reel 11, box 8, folder 4, file F, doc. G68/5, ACN; and François Ngunda, "Rapport administratif sur l'arrestation du chef

killings essentially quashed the rebellion.⁴ They marked the end of an event defined in time as that historical moment which had begun in July 1963 when Pierre Mulele reached the Kwilu region to set up his *maquis*.⁵

Nonetheless, even if the arrests and killings marked the official end of the rebellion, the problems it had caused for the ruling regime had not been solved. The first years after people returned from the bush were dramatic. The controversy sparked by the rebellion rebounded dramatically. Those who had been affected and even threatened by the rebellion demanded that effective and fair trials should be held.⁶ People bitterly demanded revenge for their suffering, to the point of re-fracturing social cohesiveness.⁷ The re-opening of courts at the level of local community acted as a catalyst in this situation. The heads of sectors called on those living in their jurisdictions to lodge complaints. These could vary from dealing with mere annoyances to reporting egregious offenses. In September 1965, the chief of Lozo sector vigorously defended this decision: "Everyone must lodge their complaint with the court as was done before [the rebellion]. [...] In every country where the courts do not work, the population is not at peace. Things must work normally [as they used to]."⁸ Encouraged by this decision, people and cases flooded the courts. On 30 April 1966, for example, a man reported the theft of stolen goods:

They [the rebels] stole my 3 iron metal trunks. Each had 60 *pièces américanis* [fabrics]. Each *pièce* costs 800 francs. The grand total was 48,000 francs. They also stole 3 pairs of my pressed trousers. Each of them was worth 3,000 francs. The three of them would cost 9,000 francs in total. They stole 3 empty iron metal trunks. Each of them was 350 francs; 1,050 francs in total. They stole 2 dress shirts, each of them was worth 600 francs; 1,200 francs in total. [...] They stole 30 drinking glasses, each cost 20 francs; 600 francs in total. They took 2 golden oil cans, each cost 150 francs; 300 francs in total. They stole 2 singlets, each was worth 100 francs; 200 francs in total. They stole my brand new Continental typewriter [...] for my office. I had bought it at 50,000 francs. [...] They stole

rebelle Louis Kafungu," Kilembe, 25 juin 1970, reel 11, box 8, folder 5, file F., docs. G70/ 18 A-18 B, ACN.

4. Note the title of the book by NDOM NDA OMBEL (1984), *Pierre Mulele assassiné, la révolution étranglée*.
5. *Maquis* is the French term for a territory where armed resistance gathers.
6. Interviews with Frade Zunga Zunga (56 years old), Kinshasa, 29 September 2013 and with Agnès Lakung (56 years old), Kikwit, 16 October 2013.
7. Interviews with Odette Zunga Zunga (66 years old), Kinshasa, 29 September 2013; with Palmie Andiang (75 years old), Idiofa, 24 November 2013; and with Tony Etono (68 years old), Luano, 26 October 2013.
8. Anonymous, "Procès-verbal de la réunion du Conseil de secteur Lozo tenue en date du 4 septembre 1965," reel 11, box 8, folder 2, file D, doc. G65/27A, ACN.

3 deluxe cupboards I bought in Kikwit at 5,000 francs each; 15,000 francs in total.⁹ The grand total of the stolen goods comes to 128,950 francs. I say one hundred twenty-eight thousand nine hundred and fifty francs.¹⁰

By 24 June 1966, notices against individual rebels wanted for arrest were multiplying, as this letter by the mayor of Gungu to the head of Lozo sector shows:

Mr. Chief of Lozo sector, I have the honour of sending you a warrant of arrest against Nzofu, accused by the Chief of the Kiboba-Matadi sector of confiscating his goods during the rebellion. We called him before our court, but he did not want to attend. He ran away. He is now in your jurisdiction. He is from Lozo Munene. [Here is the list of goods he confiscated:] 1) Two pairs of pants. 2) One pair of trousers. 3) Three long-sleeved shirts. 4) A bed sheet and 1,500 francs in cash. 5) One bar of Tango soap. I would appreciate it if you could send him to me under escort.¹¹

On 30 June 1966, a man lodged a complaint against the rebels about his friends who had been killed during the rebellion. He vigorously called for an investigation in order to establish who was responsible for this:

Here are the names of my fellows [...] murdered by the Mulelists: Kapita, [...] Kiwevua, [...] Leonardo Poofele, [...] [Jacob] Kituku, [all of them from] Mukedi. Matthieu Kabula, one of the most important merchants of Mukedi. Thau, a mother; she left four children behind. Hangwa, from Mukedi, has [also] left four children behind. Bwalungu, the chief of the Madimbi *groupement* has also been killed. Kipoy, Bwalungu's little brother, was killed. [Norbert] Khongolo, a [...] man from Madimbi, was [also] killed. [Justin] Yenge, Ngulungu and Mutemangandu from Madimbi, [have also been killed]. [...] Those who committed these crimes must pay before the court.¹²

During the days that followed, the situation became increasingly confusing. Everyday life came to be regulated by an economy of vengeance. The rebels could no longer live in peace in the sectors: they were being dragged in front of the courts and forced to pay tax for the *Mulele caisse* [the Mulele fund]. This was to compensate for what they had stolen during the rebellion. In early

9. David Yengo, "Rapport: Conséquence de la révolte, Mukedi, 30 avril 1966," reel 11, box 8, folder 3, file D, doc. G66/ 29, ACN.

10. *Ibid.* See also Matadi-Frère & B. Kambembo, "Liste de biens [pillés] lors des événements dans le village Lufuchi—secteur de Loso," reel 11, box 7, folder 13, file G, doc. F?, ACN.

11. J. B. Fu..., "Lettre: Affaire Nzofu," Gungu, 24 juin 1966, reel 11, box 8, folder 1, file G, doc. G66/37, ACN.

12. David Yengo, "Rapport conséquence de la révolte," Mukedi, reel 11, box 8, folder 3, file D, doc. G66/ 66, ACN.

1966, for example, the authorities of the Kobo sector forced Vendo, a man from Kikhandji, to pay 10,000 francs for the *Mulele caisse*.¹³ At the same time, Edouard Kita from Kikanda village paid 5,000 francs to the same authorities.¹⁴

Even within the administration, tensions ran high. Most of the administrative officers adopted extremist positions against the rebels. They wanted to avenge what they called “wounded conscience” (*“conscience blessée”*).¹⁵ The main reason for them to act in such a way was that they had been the rebels’ primary target during the rebellion. The rebels had strongly believed that the administrative officers embodied the power of the Congolese state. They killed many officers and humiliated many others, weakened the officials’ authority and replaced it with their own hegemony. This had considerable impact on the decisions taken by the administrative officers at the end of the rebellion. Many applications submitted by former rebels for their re-insertion into the administration were dismissed.¹⁶ The situation became extremely chaotic.¹⁷ Herbert Weiss, an American political scientist who later wrote a book on political protest in the Congo,¹⁸ said the following about his visit to the region in 1966:

I can give you a short testimony to confirm what you have just said. It is the case of Fimbo. Fimbo [...] was perceived by the administration [officers] [and] also by other civilians [...] of Gungu as having been fierce in his activities as *Chef de zone* [during the rebellion]. Nevertheless, he managed to get out of the bush and continued to live in Gungu. The administrator of Gungu hired him for hunting wild game. He [the administrator] gave him a rifle and cartridges. [...] This was a combination [of events] that had nothing to do with him. In the absence of the administrator, he was put in prison for illegal possession of a weapon. Yet, it is the administrator who had given him the weapon and cartridges.

13. F. Kindela and Ph. Makulu, “Lettre: Perception taxe pour caisse Mulele,” Kobo, 16 avril 1966, reel 11, box 8, folder 3, file D, doc. G66/32A, ACN.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Secrétaire provincial du Kwilu, “Reprise des fonctions du chef de secteur Banga,” Kikwit, 1 février 1966, reel 11, box 8, folder 3, file D, doc. G66/7, ACN.

16. Laurent Luyolo, “Lettre: transmission rapport administratif de Mr Kalunga Philippe sur ses activités dans le bois, Mbangi, 13 octobre 1965,” reel 11, box 7, folder 14, file E, doc. G63/16, ACN. See also B. H. Kambembo, “Rapport sur le dossier de Mr Samano J., agent territorial sorti récemment de forêt,” reel 11, box 7, folder 13, file G, doc. F? doss 14, ACN.

17. Interview with Delphin Mafuta (75 years old), Kikwit, 22 October 2013.

18. WEISS (1967), published by Princeton University Press is entitled, *Political Protest in the Congo: The Parti Solidaire Africain during the Independence Struggle* and is an account based on his experience. He first came to Congo in 1959 as a member of the African Economic and Political Development Project organized by the Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute for Technology.

[I guess you understand that] he was only arrested because of jealousy [...]. This is how the District Commissioner, with whom I spoke later, interpreted it.¹⁹

Added to this state of confusion was the hostility felt by the population for the rebels. In many areas, communities judged rebel activities with extreme severity. They demanded social re-organizations. They asked that all those who had instilled fear and terror during the rebellion be excluded and forced many rebels to move away.²⁰ Those who failed to move were subjected to reprisals.²¹ They were accused by the *militaires* who were still in the region.²² In the following extract, the receiver of revenue of the Lozo sector referred to this climate of hostility in a letter of 6 May 1966 about the *Cercle* Kilembe hearing:

I have the honour to inform you that [...] only two workers [may] take care of [Lozo-Munene and Kinzamba] dispensaries. [...] The worker in charge of Kinzamba dispensary will be Mr. Bernabé Kianza. Mr. Beledji will be in charge of the Lozo-M[unene] dispensary. But the latter is in one month's arrears because he had seriously threatened the population during their rebellion. [...] The population of Lozo does not want to see him working in the dispensary again. [...] At the end of May, we will send his successor.²³

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19. Herbert Weiss, "Commentaires Ndom-Weiss sur les documents Kwilu-administration," Bruxelles, Summer 1988, 7609_a_0000927_r02_pt02-N'Dom, Weiss-CD2of2, ACN. It is also the case of Louis Kinkondo, the rebels' chief, who was arrested a few months after his release by Major Yamvwa. Interview with Delphin Mafuta (75 years old), Kikwit, 22 October 2013.
 20. Laurent Luyolo, "Lettre: transmission rapport administratif de Mr Kalunga Philippe sur ses activités dans le bois," Mbangi, 13 octobre 1965, reel 11, box 7, folder 14, file E, doc. G63/16, ACN; F. Kindela and Ph. Makulu, "Lettre: Perception taxe pour caisse Mulele," Kobo, 16 avril 1966, reel 11, box 8, folder 3, file D, doc. G66/32A, CAN. Also see interviews with Justin Kaziana (60 years old), Kinshasa, 1 December 2013 and with Bastin Bembo (66 years old), Idiofa, 16 December 2013.
 21. B. H., "Lettre," Gungu, 6 septembre 1965, reel 11, box 8, folder 2, file D, doc. G65/23A, ACN. See also interviews with Odette Zunga Zunga (66 years old), Kinshasa, 29 September 2013 and with Isidore Ngyum (73 years old), Idiofa, 21 November 2013.
 22. Interviews with Théopane Kambembo (57 years old), Idiofa, 18 November 2013 and with Bastin Bembo (66 years old), Idiofa, 16 December 2013.
 23. Timothée Fulbert Gamaygelo, "Lettre: engagement travailleurs dispensaires C.I. Mukedi, 6 juin 1966," reel 11, box 8, folder 3, file D, doc. 66/33, ACN. These conflicts also emerged in families and clans. People used occult practices and poisoning to eliminate those who were fearsome during the rebellion. See interview with Bastin Bembo (66 years old), Idiofa, 16 December 2013.

To deal with this situation, the Congolese authorities introduced new measures between 1966 and 1970.²⁴ First, they decided to treat everyone as “victim” of the rebellion, regardless whether they had been rebels or civilians (Monnier 1967: 331). Mulele alone would be made to carry the responsibility for all the crimes committed during the rebellion.²⁵ Those who were captured by the peacekeeping mission were issued certificates stating that they were survivors of war.²⁶ This measure allowed many rebels to be re-integrated into the administration.²⁷

The second measure taken by the authorities consisted in the suspension of all prosecutions for stolen property during the rebellion. The Provincial Secretary, following the Council of Ministers of the Bandundu province²⁸ held in August 1969, instructed his administration as follows:

I have the honour to inform you that the study and approval of records of property looted during the rebellion have been suspended by the Council of Ministers. Given the above, I recommend you read the following instructions: 1) No longer will the administrative authority of the province of Bandundu approve a dossier on the matter, nor conduct any investigation relating thereto. 2) The cases filed in your office will be inventoried, numbered and kept pending until further notice. 3) Three copies of the minutes concerning the deposit of these files will be sent to the Department of Internal Affairs and Customary Practices. This is an instruction. I ask you to ensure its wide dissemination among the Regionals of your respective jurisdictions.²⁹

24. Constant Ndom, “Commentaires Ndom-Weiss sur les documents Kwilu-administration,” Bruxelles, Summer 1988. 7609_a_0000927_r02_pt02-N’Dom, Weiss-CD2of2, ACN.

25. Herbert Weiss, “Commentaires Ndom-Weiss sur les documents Kwilu-administration,” Bruxelles, Summer 1988. 7609_a_0000927_r02_pt02-N’Dom, Weiss-CD2of2, ACN.

26. Interview with Delphin Mafuta (75 years old), Kikwit, 22 October 2013.

27. Anonymous, “Remarques sur le rapport d’inspection administrative de Gungu du 24 mars au 16 avril 1966,” 2-3, cited by MONNIER (1967: 333). See also Constant Ndom, “Commentaires Ndom-Weiss sur les documents Kwilu-administration,” Bruxelles, Summer 1988. 7609_a_0000927_r02_pt02-N’Dom, Weiss-CD2of2, ACN. The issuing of a certificate to everyone so that all become officially “victims” on paper, created a specific relationship between the government and the “victims.” This further complicated the situation because the “real victims”—in the humanitarian sense of the word—never got any assistance from the government. This kind of victimhood made official by the government has been recently at the core of debate and theorization, as per GUPTA (2014: 198-217).

28. In 1966, Congolese authorities created Bandundu province and Kwilu became one of its districts.

29. A. Musumani, “Lettre: Assistance à l’audience pour dossiers biens pillés par les rebelles,” Kikwit, 4 août 1969, reel 11, box 8, folder 5, file H, doc. G69/16, ACN.

The final measure was to call upon the population to live in peace and harmony.³⁰ The words “forgiveness” and “reconciliation” became common in official speeches as this was the official launch of the regime’s policy on dealing with the past.³¹ The authorities wanted to make the rebellion a place of loss, but a loss that should not necessarily lead to the claiming of debt.³² Strong emphasis was placed on forgetting the past.³³ Everyone should transcend the rebellion and the problems it caused.³⁴ People could rejoice that the “lost children” had been “retrieved.”³⁵ The region was liberated and all could now enjoy their freedom.³⁶ A speech made by the administrator of Gungu during the release of prisoners in 1970 demonstrates the scope of this measure:

The honour falls to me, today, to thank in particular the armed forces of our valiant Congolese National Army which, day and night, deployed commendable efforts to restore order, tranquility, and peace in this [...] territory. [...] Today constitutes a decisive phase for the administration. [...] It is understood that, after the efforts of the Congolese National Army and the Congolese National Police, we have found hundreds of our misguided brothers who have returned to the fold. As the parable in the Gospel says: “These are the lost children who find their father.” The paternal decision of the General Headquarters of the National Congolese Army, requesting the surrender to the civil authorities of all [...] persons captured during operations, is a reunion for them. In fact, they are required to return to their villages, rebuild [them] [...] and live again in peace. This day marks the end of the disorders that have [...] [paralysed] the region. Lost brothers, [...] go back to your villages! Forget the past! I invite you to rebuild the territory. You will have to remake your huts, [...] your fields, [...] get back to life, as in the past, and live in harmony and peace [...] won at the cost of enormous sacrifices.³⁷

30. Anonymous, “Allocution prononcée par Monsieur l’Administrateur de territoire de Gungu à l’occasion de l’évacuation des personnes capturées par l’Armée Nationale Congolaise, Gungu, 25 avril 1970,” reel 11, box 8, folder 5, file F, doc. G70/ 8A, ACN.

31. Interview with Daniel Palambwa (83 years old), Kinshasa, 23 September 2013. See also Anonymous, “L’Assajef tente une réconciliation entre les divers partis au Kwilu,” in *Courrier d’Afrique*, 35, Thursday, 18 August 1964, 190: 5; MONNIER (1967: 320). Daniel Palambwa was a member of the provincial government in the 1960s.

32. “You lost your goods and family members during the rebellion, but you cannot claim them anymore.” Interview with Ernest Kiangu (59 years old), Kinshasa, 14 December 2015. Kiangu is an expert on Congolese history.

33. Anonymous, “Allocution prononcée par Monsieur l’Administrateur de territoire de Gungu à l’occasion de l’évacuation des personnes capturées par l’Armée Nationale Congolaise, Gungu, 25 avril 1970,” reel 11, box 8, folder 5, file F, doc. G70/ 8A, ACN.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

“Concord,” “peace,” “harmony,” and “freedom” are the words that most capture the imagination of the people who gathered at the ceremony.³⁸ The restitution of property looted during the rebellion was indeed suspended. Those who came out of the bush truly benefitted from the fact that the status of being a victim was conferred to everyone. But the promise to enjoy the freedom achieved “at the cost of a thousand sacrifices”³⁹ remained, for most of those who returned from the bush, a utopian project. The authorities distinguished themselves by their inability to maintain a balance between theory and praxis. Their attitude towards those who came out of the bush was completely ambiguous. Zénon Mibamba, former companion of Pierre Mulele and sent from one prison to another between 1968 and 1972, is one of those who suffered from these ambiguities. In an interview he said:

When I was released [in 1972], Matungulu, who was head of security here in Kinshasa at the time, received me in his office. He said to me: “Zénon, you have now been released. But you are not free. You must know that they will follow you wherever you go. So, be careful about everything you are going to say. Be careful about the people you are going to spend time with. You must be careful about your behavior. Do not say anything. Do not do anything. [...] Do not spread ideas against the government. Do not join any movement, otherwise, tomorrow, they will come and pick you up and throw you in jail. [...] You have been released. But you must know that you are not free at all. They will follow you. You will be watched. At the slightest move, you will be caught.”⁴⁰

These ambiguities were in compliance with the general policies of the Mobutu regime. It should be said that the main concern of local authorities at the time was the implementation of the regime’s overall vision: “People and colleagues,” wrote the administrator of Gungu to his regionals and heads of sectors in April 1966, “we all must now follow the policies and dictums of the current government. [...] Please go and immediately execute this instruction.”⁴¹ As stated in the literature, Mobutu suspended the activities of political parties after his *coup d’État* in November 1965 (Monnier 1967: 305, 311). He set up a single-party regime that abolished people’s freedoms (Ndaywel è Nziem 1998: 665-772). He sought the collaboration of members of his administration

38. Interviews with Philémon Lozo (74 years old), Gungu, 12 January 2014; with Elie Kakesa (79 years old), Gungu, 12 January 2014; and with Nestor Mukwangu (79 years old), 12 January 2014. These three people were among those in the crowd.

39. Anonymous, “Allocution prononcée par Monsieur l’Administrateur de territoire de Gungu à l’occasion de l’évacuation des personnes capturées par l’Armée Nationale Congolaise, Gungu, 25 avril 1970,” reel 11, box 8, folder 5, file F, doc. G70/ 8A, ACN.

40. Interview with Zénon Mibamba (75 years old), Kinshasa, 28 March 2013.

41. B. M. Kambamba, “Lettre: Rapport fanatique de la population,” Gungu, 14 avril 1966, reel 11, box 8, folder 3, file D, doc. G66/25, ACN.

to consolidate and stabilize his regime,⁴² instructing them to watch over all forms of political and social conflict,⁴³ and recommended that they oppose all forms of political propaganda that criticised his regime.⁴⁴ Yet, to a large extent, the rebellion continued to play a central role in the Kwilu region. It allowed for the articulation of political propaganda contrary to that of the Mobutu regime on both individual and collective memory (Jewsiewicki 1987: 141). It is from this that the necessity arose for the regime to maintain control and surveillance over the people that returned from the bush.⁴⁵

The regime opted for a system of monitoring based on opacity. This consisted of blurring the lines between what was seen (the visible) and what was not seen (the invisible, the intention); and between what was heard or spoken and what was concealed (the secret). The regime would take care of the ex-rebels, or some of the orphans left by the most influential of them, only to put these persons under its control.⁴⁶ In so doing, the regime added mental and psychological methods of population control to traditional technologies of surveillance. The authorities ensured that the ideas incarnated by the rebellion, as well as the name of the man who had created them, disappeared from people's minds.⁴⁷ The regime distinguished itself in how it managed to dispossess social actors of agency by dominating the discourse on power sharing and talking about the events of the rebellion and the suffering it had caused. Speaking on one's own about the rebellion became an offense against the regime in everyday practice.⁴⁸ The name of Mulele was banished from

42. Interview with Ernest Kiangu (59 years old), Kinshasa, 23 March 2015. See also B.M. Kambamba, "Lettre: Rapport fanatique de la population," Gungu, 14 avril 1966, reel 11, box 8, folder 3, file D, doc. G66/25, ACN; MONNIER (1967: 303).

43. B. M. Kambamba, "Lettre: Rapport fanatique de la population," Gungu, 14 avril 1966, reel 11, box 8, folder 3, file D, doc. G66/25, ACN; interview with Ernest Kiangu (59 years old), Kinshasa, 23 March 2015. An overview on the history of Congolese student movements can show how any form of contestation was violently repressed: KALEMA (2012), MONAVILLE (2013), MUTAMBA MAKOMBO (2000: 83-89), NDAYWEL E NZIEM (2007, 2010a).

44. B. M. Kambamba, "Lettre: Rapport fanatique de la population," Gungu, 14 avril 1966, reel 11, box 8, folder 3, file D, doc. G66/25, ACN.

45. N. M. interviewed by Kibari Nsanga in the late 1980s, private collection, Kibari Nsanga, Kikwit. See also Théophile Kisaki (Frère), "Lettre: Protestation contre les arrestations arbitraires," Kingandu, 12 Octobre 1966, reel 11, box 8, folder 3, file D, doc. G66/ 49, ACN.

46. After the assassination of Mulele, some of Mulele's children benefitted from being placed in the care of some *militaires*, without knowing that the latter were tasked with their surveillance (interview with Jeannette Mulele, 57 years old, Kinshasa, 16 September 2013).

47. Interview with Mukidi Mbongo (68 years old), Gungu, 13 January 2014.

48. Interviews with Prospère Mbwise (63 years old), Kikwit Sacré Coeur, 17 October 2013 and with Zénon Mibamba (77 years old), Kinshasa, 30 March 2013.

the public sphere. The regime officially declared a “war” against those who pronounced the name of Mulele, as well as those who remembered the events associated with this name.⁴⁹ The regime set up mechanisms to fight against all mobilization of this memory. The following fragments of testimonies of those who lived during the 1960s and 1970s provide insight into how these strategies worked:

Papa, who could speak again about Mulele? [...] Mobutu placed guards everywhere, here. They were watching us in our villages.

At the end of the rebellion, [...] [four] *militaires* were still stationed here in Mungay. One of them was called Maurice. The second, *Alia Atundi*, meaning “he who has eaten and who is now full.” The third was called *Alingi Abima*, meaning “he who wants to get out.” He nicknamed himself *Alingi Abima* because, once he pulled his bayonet out of its protective carrier case, he would only return it back if he had hurt someone. [...] The fourth was called Napoleon. [...] These are the nicknames they brought to the region.

[...] They would brutally kill people. If they caught someone, it was only to cut their head off. [...]. One day, those who had been infiltrated among us to monitor [not only] us [but also] [...] our conversations arrested a man. They accused him of inciting people to talk about Mulele. [...] They took him to Mungay. [...] For *Alia Atundi*, this man was only a beast. Before he was even untied, *Alia Atundi* had already taken out his bayonet. [...] He jumped on the man. He strangled the man. [...] It was hot that day. The blood was flowing. *Alia Atundi* asked for a bowl. They brought him a bowl. [...] The blood of this man ran into the bowl as if he was a beast. [...] The man died on the spot. [...] To everyone’s surprise *Alia Atundi* undressed. He mixed blood with water. He began to bathe in front of everyone there [...] It was horrible [...] [to see how] [...] a man, responsible for a family, was killed [...] simply because they wanted him to forget Mulele’s name.

From these testimonies, we can see how the “bodies” of the “victims” were subjected to destruction by the *militaires* in the name of the policy of forgetting; and how, at the same time, those who were forced to witness the deployment of violence onto these “bodies” were exposed to the perpetual renewal of a stronger fear, such that their ability to think was impaired or destroyed.⁵⁰ Hence, to set up a variety of strategies in order to control people

49. Interviews with Palmie Andiang (75 years old), Idiofa, 24 November 2013 and with Tony Etono (68 years old), Luano, 26 October 2013.

50. Reflecting upon the “what is a thinking thing?” R. DESCARTES (1912: 89) writes: “It is a thing that doubts, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, [a thing] that imagines also, and perceives.” Doubting, conceiving, affirming, denying, willing, refusing, imagining, as well as perceiving are the attributions of existence; they are existence in themselves. In the context of extreme fear—as Etono’s testimonies show—it is impossible for the subject to think. In such conditions, existence becomes a denial—and the subjects are non-existent because they are unable to perform the act of thinking.

and force them to forget images they had formed during the rebellion is to do violence to these people. By imposing a regime of suffering over these people, the victims were deprived of their fundamental freedom to have and to hold their own memories. Thus, peoples' minds were forced to navigate between "wanting not to know" and "wanting not to tell" their experience(s) of the past (Ricoeur 2000: 580). As the interviewees put it in these testimonies:

After the rebellion, [wanting not to know] what others had experienced when fleeing during the rebellion was a very tough task. [...] Personally, I was curious to hear the stories of others. But since it was strictly forbidden to talk about it, I had to discipline myself. [...] But it was not easy at all. Many times, I found myself walking into the trap, even though I knew that, in the end, it was a choice between life and death.⁵¹

This is why, all this time, I never got the courage to tell my children what I had experienced. [...] I did not want them to become victims. [...] You know how kids are. You tell them something now; even if you say to them that it is a secret, they will end up sharing it with their friends. [...] I was scared that one day they would end up being arrested because they shared what I had told them. [...] I preferred to keep quiet for the sake of their safety.⁵²

The result of navigating between "wanting not to know" and "wanting not to tell," as the above testimonies show, equated unequivocally to the repression of one's memory within oneself. People were doomed to fall back on themselves as disintegrate as fragmented "bodies," and live piecemeal between the corporeal world, the body, and the incorporeal world, the world of memory. Because they were not allowed to share these memories, their lives became fragmented and they themselves became fragmented, incomplete, and disembodied people. In the real world, as Etono's words above demonstrate, they would live in fear. While seeking refuge in the incorporeal world, they would feel or know they were being observed by the state.⁵³ Under such conditions of permanent fear, the incorporeal world itself became a space of organized repression, a site of the impossibility of all possibilities. This is what Etono refers to as the "impossibility of thinking," reminding us of the work of trauma.⁵⁴

To set up a variety of strategies to control people and force them to forget their past experiences is also to force them to live continually between the domain of secrecy—a form of remembering, but specifically and deliberately

51. Interview with Hortense Ngo (63 years old), Idiofa, 22 November 2013.

52. Interview with Tony Etono (68 years old), Luano, 26 October 2013.

53. See Etono's testimonies above.

54. See ARENDT (1951), BELL (2006), CARUTH (1995, 1996), CASTAIGNOS-LEBLOND (2001), CONNERTON (2011), FASSIN & RECHTMAN (2009), HODGKIN & RADSTONE (2003), LUCKHURST (2008), ROSS (1991), WERBNER (1998).

not disclosing or making known what one remembers at all—and the refusal to consider this secret as a secret—because the conscious mind is aware that what happened is not secret. It is the impossibility of navigating between these contradictory poles that led to numerous people being arrested in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Cyril Mukelenge, who was arrested in 1968, raised this problem in front of the investigating judges of the Court of Kikwit in 1969, framing it within the realm of memory and forgetting. He recalls:

I kindly told the judge: “Dear sir, with all the suffering that we went through during the rebellion, I wonder if it is really possible to forget everything.” [...] It was 1968. We had just come out of the bush. [...] Whenever you were tired and tried to sleep, what is it that [always] came to mind? Isn’t it [the images] of the rebellion? Either you are fleeing the *militaires*, or you are burying someone who has just passed away because of malnourishment. [...] With all of these [experiences], how could we forget everything? [...] How could we forget, when our [own] dreams were [infused] with [the images] of the rebellion? [...] This is what I told him.⁵⁵

Despite these remarks on the impossibility of an absolute forgetting,⁵⁶ the authorities did not lose their commitment to fight against the memory of the rebellion. People continued to be sent to jail. The shadows of these people were constantly monitored under the effects of the “panopticon” (Deleuze 1986: 40; Foucault 1975: 197). Through this all-reaching control and surveillance of society, the authorities sought to create a new “anatomy of power” to define their relationship to those onto whom they sought to impose forgetting. As this man explains in this testimony:

I thought my comments would bring the judge to reason. On the contrary, it only brought confusion. [...] The judge opened his eyes widely. [...] He became raging mad. His attitude changed completely. [...] You could read it from his face. [...] His gaze became increasingly threatening. [...] He rose from his seat. He pointed his finger at me and said: “Who are you to challenge the president, huh? [...] Today you are going to die. Nobody will plead for you.” [...] He ordered that I be sent to prison. [...] Two policemen came to escort me. They threw me in jail. [...] It was a small room with a few dozen prisoners. There were two small windows above, which [...] let in fresh air. [...] But, even with them the smell of urine was unbearable. [...] Lower down in the wall there were two other openings. They were protected by an anti-theft system. [...] It is through these openings that our movements were tracked. [...] The supervisor would see our shadows moving and come

55. Interview with Cyril Mukelenge (73 years old), Idiofa, 23 December 2013.

56. On this topic, see RICEUR (2000).

open the door roughly: “*Tala biyungu yayi!* [Look at these idiots!]. Do you want to be released? Invoke Mulele to come and release you!”⁵⁷

In some prisons, portraits and effigies of the president were distributed to prisoners as a way of maintaining control over them. After liberation, the ex-prisoners were forced to put these portraits in their private homes, just as they would have been displayed in public and official spaces.⁵⁸ To avoid any attempt of re-embracing Mulele’s ideas, they had to contemplate portraits of the president every morning.⁵⁹ They were made to acknowledge that the president’s power was based on the notion of exclusivity and concentration of sovereignty.⁶⁰ The idea that the president was jealous and, as such, could not tolerate any other forms of worship than those addressed to him was enforced.⁶¹ This demonstrates how the regime, over and above controlling physical bodies, sought to gain control over people’s imaginations, making them strongly believe in the actual existence of the forms of bodily power “dis-embodied” in official photograph and portraits.

Symbolically, *rapprochement* through the portraits of the president indicated the regime’s presence among its detractors. The image of the president exercised a personalized form of surveillance over his opponents, and the president’s “magical power” enhanced the exercise of tight control over them.⁶² Above all, the president’s *rapprochement* through portraits was an indication of both the abolition and maintenance of distance.⁶³ While the body of the president was actually far away in Léopoldville-Kinshasa, at the same time, he was also physically present through his representation in people’s houses as “tangible, palpable, and visible” material (Mbembe 2001: 153). A former *militaire* of the 1960s strongly confirmed in an interview that it was their responsibility to maintain this *rapprochement* with the president.

57. Interview with Cyril Mukelenge (73 years old), Idiofa, 23 December 2013.

58. Interviews with Mukidi Mbongo (68 years old), Gungu, 13 January 2014 and with Cyril Mukelenge (73 years old), Idiofa, 23 December 2013.

59. Interview with Mukidi Mbongo (68 years old), Gungu, 13 January 2014.

60. Telephone conversation with Ernest Kiangu (60 years old), Johannesburg-Kinshasa, 28 January 2016.

61. Interview with Mukidi Mbongo (68 years old), Gungu, 13 January 2014. Mobutu constructed his person around a religious cult from the early 1970s onwards. See DE BOECK & PLISSART (2006: 110).

62. Interview with Mukidi Mbongo (68 years old), Gungu, 13 January 2014. On the magical powers of the president, see CLARK (1998: 81-101), GRICE (2011), NGANDU NKASHAMA (1995), and STEWART (1992).

63. In Cameroon, Paul Biya proceeded in the same way (MBEMBE 2001: 153).

Our task was to show to people that Zaire, as a state, had a president; and that all those who went against the will of the president would be punished. [...] In the late 1960s, when I began my military career, for those we arrested for the Mulele case, we had to ensure that each of them got a portrait or an effigy of the president when they were released. [...] We would tell them that the president himself was going to watch them. [...] He would be with them, live among them, and participate in their lives. [...] We would remind them that the president was endowed with magical powers. [...] He could multiply whenever he wanted and listen to their conversations in what form they were. [...] We would tell them that the president could read their thoughts, including their intentions. [...] We would remind them that the president was a leopard and that his portrait could, at any time, [...] devour those who would think about Mulele again.⁶⁴

This is how, in the name of a politics of forgetting, people's imaginations became the subject of control in addition to their physical bodies. The authorities were convinced that the distribution of portraits of the president should have an effect on the imagination of those on whom they sought to impose forgetting. But, they were also aware that the mere distribution of the portraits was not enough to bring the figure of the president to the core of his detractors' lives. Thus, they resolved to maintain a dose of coercion on the people, to whom they promised protection and freedom, to get them to comply.⁶⁵

The principle was, therefore, to infiltrate information officers among former prisoners, to ensure that the latter had kept the portraits of the president on their walls.⁶⁶ The implication was that there was virtually no limit to what the president could do. He could tear their flesh and organs apart and break their bones. He could drink their blood and, in so doing, demonstrate the locus of his excessive power and brutality.⁶⁷ It was known that he was "the all-powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win,

64. Interview with Anonymous (70 years old), Idiofa, 22 December 2013. On the effigy of the president, see THASSINDA UBA THASSINDA (1992: 93-110). On the "Great Leopard," see M'BOUKOU (2007). The unparalleled success of Mobutu's methods was partly due to his being an "architect of rumour." As D. MALAQUAIS (2012: 236) writes, referring to the 1974 Ali-Foreman boxing match in Kinshasa, Mobutu was known as "a master in the art of manipulating rumour" in order to capture "the imagina[tion] of the local population, who, already, was having to face on a daily basis the terror inflicted by Mobutu's police, army and secret services." See also MONAVILLE (2013). On the relationship between rumour and history, see WHITE (2000).

65. Interview with Anonymous (70 years old), Idiofa, 22 December 2013.

66. Interviews with Mukidi Mbongo (68 years old), Gungu, 13 January 2014 and with Cyril Mukelenge (73 years old), Idiofa, 23 December 2013.

67. See Etono's testimony above.

goes from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake.”⁶⁸ Strong emphasis was put on the fact that he was an absolute subjectivity, “god” (Stannard 2006: 42-43). As such, he could surround everyone and have dealings with them; especially because they had not managed to replace him with Mulele.⁶⁹ All of this contributed to people permanently living in fear, as this man remembers:

Living during the Mobutu [era] was painful. [...] Every morning I had to kneel down in front of his portrait. [...] I had to testify continuously my loyalty in front of his portrait. I was supposed to do this every morning [...] as [my] morning prayers. [...] This is something I could not get over. [...] I was constantly being monitored. [...] I even became suspicious of my own wife and children because you never know who is going to betray you. [...] Who could stand against Mobutu? [...] Papa, no one. [...] There was no way to escape.⁷⁰

This is the point to which the obsession with controlling people and forcing them to forget their past experiences led. The regime even targeted those who criticised the rebellion in art. It confiscated these artworks in the name of the politics of forgetting. The artists were told to stop bringing the “pervasive” name of Mulele to the surface. Justin Kaziama is one of those people who experienced the arbitrariness of the regime, for defying the president’s authority. In 1971, he brought to life a substantial critique of the Mulele rebellion through his play *La mort de l’abbé Lankwan*.⁷¹ It led not only to the arrest of all of the actors, but also to their intensified surveillance.

The deputy commissioner called the head of my school and said to him: “Before we release your teacher, he must reassure us that: 1. He will no longer make plays for the theater, neither here in the town of Idiofa nor in other parts of the territory of Idiofa. He must guarantee us that he will keep his promise. 2. He must bring us all the texts, manuscripts, and typescripts [...] that he and his students used for the production of this play. We will burn them. [...] No one will have access to these documents again. 3. He must reassure us that, from now on, he will pay attention to the type of readings that he will provide his students with. No more anti-revolutionary readings. 4. He must promise to everyone that he will never convey messages that go against the person of the president nor against his ideology. 5. And you, his head of school, from now on, you will ensure that he is transmitting good quality of education to his students [...]” These are the conditions

68. This “all-powerful warrior” or “leaving fire in his wake” is the meaning of Mobutu’s full name, Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa za Banga, which he adopted in 1972 onward.

69. Interviews with Mukidi Mbongo (68 years old), Gungu, 13 January 2014 and with Cyril Mukelenge (73 years old), Idiofa, 23 December 2013.

70. Interview with Cyril Mukelenge (73 years old), Idiofa, 23 December 2013.

71. Abbé Adolphe Lakwan was a priest of the Diocese of Idiofa. He was arrested and killed in 1965 by the rebels in his attempt to flee the *maquis*.

under which the Commissioner of the zone released me. [...] I lost my freedom. [...] The security services were constantly watching me. [...] I stayed in Idiofa for a while. Then I decided to leave.⁷²

The above testimonies show how the regime was deeply invested in its politics of forgetting. It did not matter that someone was critiquing the rebellion; what was taken exception to was that the name and the presence of Mulele were highlighted in people's imaginations. From 1963 onwards, the regime was at war with the mere mention of this name and the presence that gave to the banned memory of Mulele. Hence it felt the need to censor the play and impose a strict control over all persons involved in it, as well as its means of production and dissemination of knowledge.

The "Re-incarnation" of Mulele: Mourning, Ghosts, and Forgetting

The regime's ambiguities analysed above, and the suffering that these ambiguities caused, led many people to become suspicious of the regime. If it was true that Mobutu had killed the man who had threatened his regime, why did he continue to mistreat them?⁷³ Why was the government working so hard to deprive them of their freedom to think, if the man who constituted the threat was dead?⁷⁴ Why did the government keep doing this?⁷⁵ Why did it not allow them to live in peace? Why did they continue to have to subject themselves to this regime?⁷⁶ These are some of the questions that people affected by this regime began to ask themselves in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The treatment of Mulele's body after his death, as well as the absence of any burial of the body, reinforced these suspicions even more.⁷⁷ The testimony by Balingite Osam illustrates this:

They said they killed him, but where did they bury him? Before Mulele left, he recommended that we return to our villages. [...] He said he went to seek reinforcements in Brazzaville.⁷⁸ [...] He advised that we return to our respective villages and go wait for him. [...] We were surprised when we learned that he was killed. [...] If, indeed, he had

72. Interview with Justin Kaziamia (60 years old), Kinshasa, 1 December 2013.

73. Interview with Balingite Osam (81 years old), Idiofa, 24 November 2013.

74. Interview with Bastin Bembo (66 years old), Idiofa, 16 December 2013.

75. Interview with Cyril Mukelenge (73 years old), Idiofa, 23 December 2013.

76. *Ibid.*

77. Interview with Balingite Osam (81 years old), Idiofa, 24 November 2013. See also MARTENS (1985) and MONGUYA MBENGE (1977).

78. Pierre Mulele reached Brazzaville by canoe on 13 September 1968 after he had left his *maquis* on 2 September 1968.

been killed, where had they buried him? [...] What did they do to his body? [...] This man, we had seen him doing extraordinary things; how could he let himself be killed without escaping? [...] Besides, Mulele had all the power. [...] He could turn into anything. [...] He could become a woman or a girl. [...] We used to call him *Eniang Mvul* [Raindrop]. How could someone kill a raindrop? [...] Whenever the *militaires* wanted to arrest him, he disappeared and reappeared on the other side.⁷⁹ [...] We were very surprised to hear that they killed him. If it is true they killed him, where did they bury him? [...] Where did they put his body? Mulele could not be killed. For the record, he continued to live with us. [...] We saw him many times appearing to us [...] and giving us his instructions. [...] Whenever he came back, he would go and sleep at my friend's place.⁸⁰

These are the mysteries that surrounded Mulele's death. Apart from the skepticism that it created among Mulele's followers, it left many in a situation where it was impossible to mourn. Osam's testimony seems to be, at first glance, phantasmagorical. But a close reading shows that, to a large extent, it is this impossibility of mourning that was at stake. In addition to the fact that "the contract" between the living and the dead had not been broken—which is the opposite of Filip de Boeck's postcolonial "beyond the grave" (de Boeck & Plissart 2006: 82)—this impossibility of mourning led Mulele's followers to keep the dead Mulele alive among them. They could revive him in their imagination, talk to him and interact with him, despite all of the regime's prohibitions against interiorizing or exteriorizing Mulele in any form whatsoever. They could let themselves be entertained by him.⁸¹ They could bear his name in their thoughts, while being unable to locate and identify his corpse and his remains.⁸² They could appropriate him as an image and, as such, internalize him and incorporate him within themselves, in a form of "cannibalistic consumption" (Gaston 2006: 2).⁸³

This was the psychological atmosphere that prevailed at the time. The combined elements of the harassment by the regime, the mystery surrounding Mulele's death, the impossibility of grieving and mourning, as well as the

79. Unlike Gaston Soumialot and Christophe Gbenye, who also contributed to the *Conseil National de Libération* established in Brazzaville in 1963-1964 under the protection of the Congolese "revolution" (MBAYA 1987: 185-210), Mulele enjoyed (and continues to enjoy) a substantial place in the imagination of his followers.

80. Interview with Balingite Osam (81 years old), Idiofa, 24 November 2013. Even now, he still does not believe that Mulele was killed. When he received me in his house, he said to me: "Who knows if you are not Mulele. Mulele used to take many forms. He could present himself like a young man [just] like you."

81. Interview with Balingite Osam (81 years old), Idiofa, 24 November 2013.

82. Interview with Cyril Mukelenge (73 years old), Idiofa, 23 December 2013.

83. See also KOPYTOFF (1971) and NSANZE (2004: 420-425). The same happened for Lumumba. See JEWSIEWICKI (1996: 221-262), JEWSIEWICKI & WHITE (2005: 1-9), OMASOMBO TSHONDA (2004: 221-262).

anxious wait for Mulele's return caused people to mobilize *en masse* when, in the late 1970s, a prophet by the name of Kasongo suddenly made his appearance in the region. Kasongo proclaimed to be Mulele "re-incarnated." With this re-incarnation, the memory of the rebellion that the authorities had sought to contain resurfaced. No one could speak of anything else but this man, the "new" Mulele. No one could think of anything anymore, except only of this specter, the becoming-body, the "new" Mulele.⁸⁴ Even though Kasongo had a body and attachments to the land, Mulele's followers firmly believed that he was an absence; something not really existing.⁸⁵ They were convinced that he was, to use Derrida's words, the "living repetition" of Mulele, the "regenerating reviviscence" of his spirit (Derrida 1994: 109).

Although Kasongo was primarily driven by economic interests,⁸⁶ his sudden appearance was of great value to most of Mulele's followers. It allowed them to re-imagine the physical integrity of their leader. It offered them the opportunity of fantasizing about the presence of their leader. As some of those who were part of the movement remembered, they could represent him not as an amorphous and motionless mass, but as a presence-absence, as he was now a specter.⁸⁷ They could project him as something that is cast on an imaginary screen.⁸⁸ They could visualize him—at the very moment when they were unhurriedly projecting themselves into the incorporeal world. At the end of this process they would gain peace, evoke their own memories as in dreams, and escape from the constraints of time and location.⁸⁹

We used to go at night to the camp. [...] There was food and drink. [...] There were big holes, underground deposits, where we used to keep our goods, as at the time of Mulele. [...] We had everything. [...] We were fine. [...] Personally, I did not get to see Kasongo. He was hiding in a house. But even then, we were reassured that he was Mulele. [...] He would teach us and give us time to remember Mulele's marvels. [...] He would give us a time for intense meditations. [...] Everyone would remain calm. [...] After these moments of meditation, we would gather in front of his house. Everyone would tell what he had seen during his meditation. [...] People would say everything. Some people would say

84. Interview with Emile Nkwimi (58 years old), Kwanga Carrefour, 18 October 2013.

85. Interview with Grégoire Engwel (71 years old), Idiofa, 16 November 2013.

86. Kasongo was primarily a traditional healer. He wanted to use the name of Mulele and, in doing so, extort the population as he knew that the latter would easily be fooled after hearing the name of Mulele.

87. Telephone conversation with Anonymous (60 years old), Johannesburg-Kinshasa, 28 January 2016.

88. Telephone conversation with Anonymous (60 years old), Johannesburg-Kinshasa, 28 January 2016.

89. Telephone conversation with Anonymous (60 years old), Johannesburg-Kinshasa, 28 January 2016.

that they had seen Mulele alongside Lumumba. [...] Others would say that they have seen him sitting beside Kimbangu. Some others would say that they saw him with a big army that was going to free the country soon. [...] After all that, we would have the moment of prayers, followed by healing sessions. People would go one after another in his house. [...] They would not see him, but only listen to his voice.⁹⁰

With all of these activities, the camp of the “new” Mulele became not only the place of production of reverie and fantasy as during the colonial era, but also the site of remembering the rebellion.⁹¹ The camp became a site *par excellence* for the representation of the past, where the move between the corporeal and the incorporeal world was no longer subjected to any forms of control.⁹² Those who attended the camp declared that they held a portion of the specter. Through a purely paradoxical incorporation, the “new” Mulele’s followers believe that the specter could confer Mulele’s powers on them. Following the completion of this process, those who received the power of the specter could leave their bodies, travel through time, stutter, or go into trance where they could talk with the specter.⁹³ When ideas were detached from the specter, Kasongo’s followers would prepare their “bodies” to receive them.⁹⁴ After receiving the ideas, their bodies were, in turn, fused and merged, to use Derrida’s words (although made in a different context), “by the very subject of the operation who, claiming the uniqueness of its own body” would then become “the absolute ghost,” “the ghost of the ghost of the specter” (Derrida 1994: 127). At the end of such an operation, the ghost who had become “the ghost of the ghost of the specter” (*ibid.*) engendered several other ghosts, the small ghosts. These, in turn, would also generate other ghosts, through the spread of the ideas of the previous ghost, the “original” specter, the becoming-body, the “new” Mulele.⁹⁵

90. Interview with Anonymous (71 years old), Kwanga Carrefour, 20 October 2013.

91. On *Nganda* (camp) as site of refuge, reverie, and fantasy during the Belgian colonization, see HUNT (2014: 115-136, 2016: 80-81, 101-110, 113-116).

92. Telephone conversation with Anonymous (60 years old), Johannesburg-Kinshasa, 28 January 2016 and interview with Anonymous (71 years old), Kwanga Carrefour, 20 October 2013.

93. Telephone conversation with Anonymous (60 years old), Johannesburg-Kinshasa, 28 January 2016.

94. Interview with Balingite Osam (81 years), Idiofa, 24 November 2013 and telephone conversation with Anonymous (60 years old), Johannesburg-Kinshasa, 28 January 2016.

95. Interview with Balingite Osam (81 years), Idiofa, 24 November 2013 and telephone conversation with Anonymous (60 years old), Johannesburg-Kinshasa, 28 January 2016. These “ghostly” and “magico-religious” modes of thinking, the result of oppression and repression by the state, remind us of various syncretic religious movements that took place in the Congo in the colonial era and immediately after independence (KIANGU 2009: 271-274 ; NDAYWEL E NZIEM 1998: 415-428). A thorough analysis of the relationship

The echoes of this movement were quick to reach the political sphere. The authorities were very confused. Most of them could not make sense of what was going on.⁹⁶ They did not understand, not because they were ignorant but “because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one, no longer” belonged “to knowledge” (Derrida 1994: 6). They did not understand whether it was living or dead. Even though they did not speak of Kasongo as Mulele directly, they were confused whether it might not be Mulele after all. In their anxiety and their obsession with dismembering collective memories, they decided to conjure away the “new” Mulele, this “presence-absence,” the becoming-body, the man who brought back to the surface not only the name of their enemy, but also the popular ideology of resistance (Jewsiewicki 1987: 135).

In January 1978, Mobutu sent the Red Berets from *camp* Tshatshi (Kinshasa) to occupy the whole territory of Idiofa.⁹⁷ The decision was to kill Kasongo, he who condensed himself into people’s lives and overtook their personal identities. Before making use of the violence of death, the *militaires* began their procedures by hunting. They hunted the ghost, as well as those who belonged to his lineage, like animals. To effectively combat the “new” Mulele, civil authorities of the region were forcibly militarized. The intelligence services were mobilized.⁹⁸ Youths of the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR), the sole legal political party presided over by Mobutu, were mobilized and enscribed, alongside the brigadiers of the sectors. They had to assist the *militaires* in their efforts of putting people to death.⁹⁹ All Idiofa villages, and some villages of Gungu, were invaded by the *militaires*. Several people were arrested, but most of them were killed in the name of both the politics of forgetting and the powerful bureaucratic tradition of fear of resistance that the regime had towards the population.¹⁰⁰ One of the intelligence agents who participated in this operation remembers:

The *militaires* arrived at Idiofa. [...] They were armed to the teeth. They commanded us to serve as guides. They gave us uniforms. [...] Together we moved across the villages.

between memory and these modes of thinking, specific to the Kwilu region, could well be undertaken. It is, however, a task that goes beyond the boundaries of this article.

96. Interview with Ignace Kapitene (72 years old), Idiofa, 20 December 2013. He was the head of Cité d’Idiofa in 1978.

97. Interviews with Anonymous (71 years old), Idiofa, 21 December 2013 and with Mbo Way (57 years old), Kinshasa, 6 October 2013.

98. Interview with Anonymous (71 years old), Idiofa, 21 December 2013.

99. Interview with Emile Nkwimi (58 years old), Kwanga Carrefour, 18 October 2013.

100. Interviews with Bastin Bembo (60 years old), Idiofa, 16 December 2013 and with Grégoire Engwel (71 years old), Idiofa, 16 November 2013. See also JEWSIEWICKI (1987: 135).

[...] They would force the chiefs of the villages to gather people. [...] They would call the names of those who had gone to Kasongo's headquarter. [...] We would put our hands on them and pass them to the *militaires* who would then kill them. [...] We arrested Impey, a man from Musenge Mputu. We also arrested Célestin Nsinankutu and Inswey. [...] We handed them over to the *militaires*. They killed them at close range in the bush. [...] In my own village, we arrested eight people. [...] I still remember that the *militaires* killed a lot of people that day. They buried them in mass graves in the bush [...]. Those they could not bury were left within reach of the pigs. [...] Corpses were everywhere. When they began to smell, it was terrible. No one could stand the smell.¹⁰¹

If the death given to most of the little ghosts was private—that is, mostly administered in the bush and not witnessed by the other villagers—the death of the “new” Mulele took on public qualities. Because Kasongo had made an attempt to raise the name of Mulele to the surface, the *militaires* declared absolute ownership over his body and the right to end his life.¹⁰² Together with fourteen of his disciples, Kasongo was hanged in Mayunga stadium in Idiofa.¹⁰³ Unlike the secretive characteristic of the assassination of the “old” Mulele, the *militaires* decided to make Kasongo's execution a “highly visible act.”¹⁰⁴ They requested a huge crowd to witness how his body and those of his followers were “invested by power”¹⁰⁵: the crowd was meant to realize that, as in the time of the rebellion, the power of the state in Congo-Zaire was primarily based in an economy of death. The bodies of Kasongo and his followers were smashed with extraordinary power. The *militaires* intended to ensure that, in the future, they would no longer come back¹⁰⁶ because, as Derrida reminds us, “the specter is” first and foremost “the future. [...] [I]t presents itself [...] as that which could come or come back” again “in the future” (Derrida 1994: 39). They assured the crowd of the impossibility of any further return of the specter, either publicly or in secret. They forced the same crowd to witness this certainty, as these two men remember:

101. Interview with Anonymous (60 years old), Kwanga Carrefour, 20 October 2013.

102. Interviews with Isidore Ngyum (73 years old), Idiofa, 21 December 2013 and with Grégoire Engwel (71 years old), Idiofa, 16 November 2013.

103. 15 people according to the president of Mulele Foundation (Anonymous, “Commémoration du 35ème anniversaire de la mort de Pierre Mulele,” 14 October 2003, http://www.f-ce.com/cgi-bin/news/pg-newspro.cgi?id_news=1175, accessed on 17 March 2016).

104. Interview with Paul Muyenzi (64 years old), Kikwit, 16 October 2013.

105. Interviews with Mundeke (57 years old), Idiofa, 16 November 2013; with Paul Muyenzi (64 years old), Kikwit, 16 October 2013; and with Innocent Yamb (56 years old), Kinshasa, 29 September 2013.

106. Interview with Innocent Yamb (56 years old), Kinshasa, 29 September 2013.

We were mobilized *en masse* to see how the man who had caused trouble in the region was killed. [...] Mobutu decided that Kasongo, as well as his disciples, should be killed where they were arrested. [...] The *militaires* requested Charles Dia's orchestra. [...] There was music to decorate the hanging scene. We all surrendered to the *militaires*. They were looking at us. [...] No one could cry. We had to applaud.¹⁰⁷

Kasongo was killed here outside by the *militaires*. [...] Everything started with a speech. A *militaire* gave a long speech: "I have been sent by the military court to execute some people." He then mentioned the name of Kasongo. [...] They asked him to stand on the staircase. They forced him to confess. [...] Then they quickly removed the planks [he was standing on]. [...] Kasongo was suspended in the air. Suddenly he began to urinate. Finished! He was dead. The *militaires* cut the rope off. [...] They asked the medical doctor who was there to confirm that Kasongo was dead. The latter approached the corpse. He confirmed with certainty that he had died. The *militaires* shot the corpse to show the crowd that Kasongo was truly dead.¹⁰⁸

Then a bayonet was plunged into his chest. They began to tear his body apart, in the presence of everyone. After that they threw the pieces of his body into their vehicle. [...] It was the end. [...] Kasongo was dead. No one could deny it.¹⁰⁹

Following the killing of the "ghost of the ghost" and the multitude of small ghosts he had brought to life, Idiofa was declared a red zone of high political and social conflict for the rest of Mobutu's reign. Together with Gungu, its inhabitants were subject to maneuvers by the military operations Nguma I and II in the 1980s.¹¹⁰ People from the area continued to be arrested and tortured as a result of these military activities.¹¹¹ This is the situation which the politics of forgetting put people into during the 1970s and 1980s.

The Re-invention of Mulele: Facts, Friction, and Suffering

On 17 May 1997, the troops of the *Alliance des Forces pour la Libération du Congo* (AFDL) entered Kinshasa (Reyntjens 2009: 102-166). With this, Mobutu and his regime fell (Ndaywel è Nziem 2010b: 604). When Laurent Désiré Kabila took power, it was the beginning of a new era in the history of Congolese nationalism, in general, and with respect to Mulelism, in particular.

107. Interview with Grégoire Engwel (71 years old), Idiofa, 16 November 2013.

108. Interview with Munde (57 years old), Idiofa, 16 November 2013.

109. Interview with Grégoire Engwel (71 years old), Idiofa, 16 November 2013.

110. Interview with Mukidi Mbongo (68 years old), Gungu, 13 January 2014.

111. Interview with Mukidi Mbongo (68 years old), Gungu, 13 January 2014. In Kinshasa, those who defied the power of the president by pronouncing the name of Mulele in public were arrested. It is the case of Thérèse Pakasa of the Parti Lumumbiste Unifié (PALU), and many other women of the same political parti. See AKWETY KALE (2011).

As with most Congolese nationalists, the Mulelists were now honoured.¹¹² Many of them were rewarded for their “anti-Mobutu” and “anti-imperialist” efforts of the 1960s. They recovered the freedom they had been denied for years. Now they could finally talk about Mulele, remember him without fear, evoke his name in public places¹¹³ and completely liberate their memory of the rebellion.¹¹⁴

The presence of Faustin Munene as Minister of Interior made things easier.¹¹⁵ Presenting himself as Mulele’s “spiritual heir,” he devoted all his energy to re-honouring and re-inventing Mulele’s memory.¹¹⁶ His task was to give assistance to the forgotten dead.¹¹⁷ He had to exhume Mulele for a “third” life, the first and the second having been brutally stripped away by the Mobutu regime.¹¹⁸ In an interview in October 1997, he said:

I remember [...] in prison [...] that night, one last time he [Mulele] said to me: “My son, we are stuck. I can escape, but where to? To Brazzaville? There I will still be taken and it will not do any good. As we are stuck, I want something of me to remain. They [can] kill me. Let them kill me. Let them do with me whatever they want. But I want something to remain. I am thinking of you. If you are ready to serve the revolution; if you can affirm that, I will die happier.”¹¹⁹

The Mulele Foundation, created in June 1995, served as a springboard for this project.¹²⁰ One only has to read press articles published between the 2-4 October 1997 in Kinshasa to realize the magnitude of this project. During these three days, Kinshasa was in an uproar.¹²¹ Grandiose demonstrations were organized by the Mulele Foundation to commemorate the 29th anniversary of Mulele’s assassination. Countless events, on an epic scale, were organized to

112. Interview with Zénon Mibamba (77 years old), Kinshasa, 17 September 2013.

113. Interview with Paul Lama (54 years old), 22 September 2013.

114. Interviews with Ernest Kiangu (59 years old), Kinshasa, 14 December 2015; with Zénon Mibamba (77 years old), Kinshasa, 28 March 2013; with Paul Muyenzi (64 years old), Kikwit, 16 October 2013; and with Grégoire Engwel (71 years old), Idiofa, 16 November 2013.

115. This was Mulele’s nephew. He was among the people that the Mobutu regime arrested on 2 October 1968 in Bomboko’s residence, together with Pierre Mulele.

116. Honsek, “Faustin Munene, l’héritier spirituel de Pierre Mulele,” *La Solidarité*, 4-7 October 1997, 136: 3.

117. *Ibid.*

118. Interview with Paul Lama (54 years old), 22 September 2013.

119. Honsek, “Faustin Munene,” 3.

120. Interview with M. Lakubu (57 years old), Kinshasa, 21 September 2013.

121. E. Kiekike, “Réhabilitation de la mémoire de Pierre Mulele,” *La Solidarité*, 4-7 October 1997, 136: 3.

celebrate the anniversary.¹²² Members of government and officials took part. Panel discussions on Mulele's life, work, ideas, and legacy were held at the Kinshasa Zoo.¹²³ Poems evoking the immortality of Mulele were recited.¹²⁴ Mulele's biography was sung by Langung, a folk group from Idiofa. Concerts featuring nationally acclaimed artists, such as Tabou Ley, were organized.¹²⁵ Mulele's friends and fellows stood at the podium, one after another testifying to Mulele's life.¹²⁶ There was an unprecedented effervescence.¹²⁷

The aim of these commemorations was to expand the presence of the dead, Mulele, into the realm of the living. He had to come back, this time not to be conjured away, but to live forever and serve as a bridge between the living and the dead. He had to come back so that the forgetting "equation" imposed by the Mobutu regime could be reversed, from "remembering-forgetting" to "forgetting-remembering." Paul Lama, one of the Mulele Foundation staff members explained it as follows: "During the Mobutu regime, we were forced to forget. But, when Laurent Kabila came into power, things changed completely. We were asked to remember Mulele."¹²⁸

The tradition of commemorating the anniversary of his assassination was maintained and continued over the years. The Mulele Foundation set up exhibitions to spread his memory.¹²⁹ Numerous activities were organized to explain the meaning of his struggle. Congolese historians were approached by the Foundation to write "a scriptural tomb" (de Certeau 1988: 2) to Mulele. The name of Mulele began to re-capture the Congolese imagination in a new way.¹³⁰ On 3 October 2001, Abdoulaye Yerodia—one of Mulele's former companions, director of the office of president Laurent Désiré Kabila between 1997 and 1999 and Foreign Minister between 1999 and late 2000—gave a rousing speech. In his address, he raised Mulele to the level of a signifier and martyr. He invited the population to award him honours worthy of a national hero (Yerodia 2001: 4). He reiterated his loyalty to the memory of the symbol of Mulele (*ibid.*). He called all Congolese to proceed in the same way as

122. *Ibid.*

123. Particularly by Ludo Martens, Pierre Mulele's hagiographer.

124. Anonymous, "Programme des manifestations pour la célébration du 29^e anniversaire de la mort de l'assassinat de Pierre Mulele," *La Solidarité*, 4-7 October 1997, 136: 1. The poem recited by Georgette Kimpanga was entitled "To die in order to live" ("*Mort pour vivre*").

125. Kiekile, "Rehabilitation," 3.

126. Especially Léonie Abo, Théophile Bula-Bula, Léon Makasa, and Nelly Labut.

127. Interviews with Zénon Mibamba (77 years old), Kinshasa, 17 September 2013 and with Jeannette Mulele (57 years old), Kinshasa, 16 September 2013.

128. Interview with Paul Lama (54 years old), 22 September 2013.

129. *Ibid.*

130. Interview with Zénon Mibamba (77 years old), Kinshasa, 17 September 2013.

him, reminding them of the form of death that Mulele had been subjected to (*ibid.*: 7-9).

But above all, in his speech, Yerodia invited everyone to reflect upon the meaning of the supreme sacrifice which Mulele symbolized. He repeatedly insisted on the fact that the figure of Mulele was indexical of “the Congolese nation” and that, by identifying with him and his death, each Congolese person was invited to stand for, index, embody or instantiate the nation as a whole—and the individual self-sacrifice that made the transcendent, enduring collectivity possible and imaginable. He strongly recommended that a special place be reserved for Mulele by each Congolese person to allow his reproduction and survival, this time in the absolute “deepening” of their imagination. Interestingly, he added a comment that resonates with the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ, automatically rehabilitating and re-inventing Mulele:

Our brother and comrade, Mulele, had none of the funeral pomp reserved for heroes, those who have served their country. We do it for the first time in 33 years. This raises a question. Each of us should reflect on—and answer—the question that I’ve formulated from Retamar’s poem: “We, the survivors, who are we to survive? Who died for us in jail? Who received in their heart the bullet that was meant for me? On what death am I alive? His bones incrusting in mine, the eyes that they tore from him can see from the gaze of my face; and the hand which is not mine stands at the end of my arm. This hand which is not mine traces broken words where they no longer survive” (Yerodia 2001: 11-12).

This great campaign of the rehabilitation of Mulele and his release from oblivion came to fruition in 2002. The governor of Kinshasa, in discussing what he called the “historical struggle” led by Mulele in the liberation struggle of the Congo, declared the death of Mulele as a sacrifice “for the safeguarding of” the Congolese state’s “independence and sovereignty.”¹³¹ Having considered the duty to immortalize Mulele in the history of the Congo, he decided, in his order of 8 February 2002, to rename *Avenue de la libération* after Pierre Mulele, the man who paid with his life in 1968.¹³² With this the governor assigned Mulele a *lieu de mémoire* which he had been denied for many years, in the heart of the Congolese capital. The new *Avenue Pierre Mulele* became both a symbol of the reconciliation with loss, the dead Mulele, and a grave for this loss. The media reported the event lively, considering the “renaming” itself as a form of revenge against the Mobutu regime.¹³³

131. Anonymous, “Pierre Mulele, héros et martyr d’Afrika,” *Servir le Peuple, le blog des Nouveaux Partisans*, <<http://servirlepeuple.over-blog.com/article-pierre-mulele-heros-et-martyr-d-afrika41243941.html>>.

132. *Ibid.*

133. *Ibid.*

If these sepulchral mechanics, triggered by the new regime in 1997 and prolonged until 2010,¹³⁴ contributed to re-inventing the name of Mulele in the imagination of the Congolese, it should be said that it also constituted a form of subjugation for those who suffered during the rebellion. Men and women whose bodies were marked with disruptions by the violent interventions of war have seen—and continue to see—in these practices the manifestation of a political power, both authoritarian and exclusivist; as intensively devoted as the previous regime to control the minds of its citizens. They have seen—and continue to see—in these proceedings the manifestation of a regime characterized by an unprecedented and spectacular blindness, the one that is driven by a strong desire of imposing a unique form of apprehension of the past in order to only “totalize the de-totalized totality which” (Sartre 1956: 357) it is. This is what these two people express in the following testimonies:

The ways in which [my body] was treated [during the rebellion], how different is it from death itself? [...] The *militaires* gave me a bullet through my cheeks. [...] They [literally] destroyed [my organ of language]. [...] They seized my testicles, they cut them off. What is that? And when they sing: “*Mulele asekwa!* [May Mulele resurrect!],” where does that put me? [...] Where is my place? Don’t I deserve to be treated with dignity and honour?¹³⁵

These are the scars that we will continue to carry throughout our lives. We will never forget about them. [...] The day they took the decision to rehabilitate Mulele, it was a big humiliation for us. [...] They showed us that we are [...] only the figures of indignity; people mingled here and there for scraps of a derisory humanity. [...] They belittled us and, more than that, they force us to continuously live with an unbearable pain. [...] This is something we will take up for infinity.¹³⁶

But above all, the same people whose bodies were marked by disruptions have seen—and continue to see—in these decisions a “gruesome” performance of a “sadistic” behavior by the state. In their own words, this “sadistic” behavior is characterized by “tenacity.”¹³⁷ As the previous regime, the new one is strongly engaged in a “for-itself” kind of relationship. It is engaged in this form of relationship to the extent of seeing itself as engaged, while intentionally ignoring the consequences of this engagement for those who suffered during the rebellion. It persists in this “for-itself” form of relationship

134. In 2010, General Faustin Munene attempted a *coup* against Joseph Kabila. Since then, the name of Mulele has once again been banished from the public sphere; this time, because of its association with Munene’s name.

135. Interview with Eugène Kitoto (80 years old), Kikwit, 7 August 2015.

136. Interview with Frade Zunga Zunga (58 years old), Kinshasa, 8 August 2015.

137. Interviews with Anonymous (59 years old), Kinshasa, 9 August 2015 and with Anonymous (58 years old), Kinshasa, 29 September 2013.

and colonizes its subjects. It invests in their minds to the point of incarnating in them, through the violence of speech,¹³⁸ the other, Mulele, the man who brought the rebellion that left them in unbearable pain and suffering.

This new form of state sadism is what many of them understood as “appropriation” because, as Sartre (1956: 375) reminds us, “the object of sadism is” first and foremost “immediate appropriation.” It is appropriation in so far as it “seeks to strip the other of the acts which hide him” in order to “confront a freedom captured by the flesh” (*ibid.*). But, since the culture of inflicting physical pain on the flesh belonged to the past, the sadist—that is, the new regime—enjoys “confronting a freedom captured by the” (*ibid.*) minds of its subjects. It enjoys making suffering more apparent by “consciously” treating those who suffered during the rebellion as instruments: decomposing their minds, getting hold of their freedom and capacity of imagining and freely interpreting their past; as well as forcing them to remain subjectively crushed as they used to be during the Mobutu regime. Hence the presence of frustration, disappointments, and disapproval on the side of the injured people, as shown in the testimonies above. This is where the reversal of the remembering “equation,” from “remembering-forgetting” to “forgetting-remembering,” led those living with disruptions in their bodies.

Every political regime in Congo from the late 1960s up to the present has dealt with the memory of the Mulele rebellion in different ways. Through fragments of stories, this article has looked deeply into this history in order to understand how this politics has been constructed and functioned since the late 1960s. The extreme violence of the Mobutu regime configured a set of strategies to enforce silence and impose amnesia by creating a public forgetting about Mulele by shifting the focus of control from the physical (or actual bodies) to the mental (the mind or the imagination). To control people and force them to forget images of their experiences of the rebellion was an act of violence which imposed a regime of suffering, depriving people of their fundamental freedom to remember their own past and thus, the ability to think, constantly navigating, as they were, between “wanting not to know” and “wanting not to tell” as they feared for their lives and bodily integrity.

The result of this new form of control was that people were doomed to fall back on themselves, to disintegrate into fragmented “bodies,” and live

138. See the speech by YERODIA (2001) above.

piecemeal between the corporeal world—the body—and the incorporeal world—the world of memory. While moving to the incorporeal world to seek refuge, they would feel as if they were continuously being watched by the same power, the presidential state, as the enforced substitution of the presence of the image of Mobutu's all-powerful and all-seeing persona entered their private domestic realm.

In the end, this new form of control proved to be “partially” a failure, given the fact that memories of Mulele re-occupied the private world of the mind or remained alive in secrecy and finally as a ghostly avatar that would re-publicize those memories of Mulele, as evidenced by Kasongo. With the advent of Kabila in 1997, as well as the inversion of the injunction to forget Mulele after he came to power, Mulele's victims, in turn, began feeling just as mentally “colonized” by the political memory-work of the new regime.

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ABSTRACT

Between 1963 and 1968, Pierre Mulele led a rebellion in Kwilu province against the Congolese government. The uprising ended in a heavy defeat for the rebel forces. Every political regime in Congo from the late 1960s up to the present has differently dealt with the memory of this rebellion. Through fragments of stories, this article looks deeply into this history in order to understand the ways in which the politics of forgetting has been constructed since the late 1960s. During the Mobutu regime, this politics was incredibly violent. The regime distinguished itself by its ability to configure a set of strategies to enforce silence and create a public forgetting about Mulele. The result of this new form of control and surveillance was that people were doomed to fall back on themselves as fragmented “bodies” and live piecemeal between the corporeal world (the body) and the incorporeal world (the world of memory). But this new form of discipline and control also proved to be “partially” a failure, given the fact that memories of Mulele merely became private (or secret) and that the potential (re)publicizing of these remained, in particular via a ghostly avatar. The advent of Laurent Désiré Kabila in 1997, as well as the inversion of the injunction to forget Mulele after he came to power, left Mulele’s victims feeling equally and mentally “colonized” by the political memory-work of the new regime.

Keywords: Mulele, control, forgetting, imagination, memory, suffering, surveillance.

RÉSUMÉ

La « rébellion » Mulele, les régimes congolais et la politique de l’oubli. — Entre 1963 et 1968, Pierre Mulele mena une rébellion dans la province du Kwilu contre le gouvernement congolais. Le soulèvement se solda par une lourde défaite pour les forces rebelles. Depuis la fin de la rébellion en 1968, chaque régime politique au pouvoir au Congo a traité de manière différente la mémoire de cette rébellion. À travers des fragments de récits, cet article examine en profondeur cette histoire afin de saisir comment la politique de l’oubli a été construite depuis la fin des années 1960. Pendant le règne de Mobutu, cette politique était extrêmement violente. Le régime se distingua par sa capacité à configurer un ensemble de stratégies pour imposer le silence et créer un oubli public concernant Mulele. Le résultat de cette nouvelle forme de discipline et de contrôle est que les gens furent condamnés à se replier sur eux-mêmes comme des “corps” fragmentés vivant entre les mondes corporel et incorporel (le monde de la mémoire). Mais cette nouvelle forme de discipline et de contrôle se révéla également « partiellement » un échec, étant donné que les souvenirs à propos de Mulele devinrent privés (ou secrets) que la (re)diffusion potentielle de ces souvenirs demeura, notamment par le biais d’un avatar fantomatique. L’avènement de Laurent Désiré Kabila en 1997, ainsi que l’inversion de l’injonction d’oublier Mulele après son arrivée au pouvoir, amenèrent les victimes de la rébellion muleliste à se sentir mentalement « colonisées » par la politique de la mémoire du nouveau régime.

Mots-clés: Mulele, contrôle, imagination, mémoire, oubli, souffrance, surveillance.