

## The European presence on Kükua plateau 1880-1960

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**ABSTRACT** : The meeting between the Europeans and the Kükua, initially based on good neighborly relations, ended in a total occupation of the territory by the Europeans. The Kibami becoming masters had subjected the Kükua to hard work. The loss of their cultural identity led to acculturation and disorganization of Kükua society. The European presence had led to a generation conflict. The younger generation, who had adhered to the ideas of the newcomers, was at odds with their elders. All classes were forced to work with the Kibami. The latter had installed the *Mfumu* at the head of each land, spreading the new policy throughout Kükua territory. The grouping of lineages and villages had pushed Kibami to set up the governing bodies acquired for its cause. Kibami sowed desolation throughout Kükua society.

**Keywords** : Presence, european, colonial, kibami , kükua ,

### I. Introduction

The French penetration on the territory of Congo was made from Gabon. Indeed it is the Gabon and Ogouee that would provide Peter Savorgnan De Brazza driveways and penetration of Congo. Arrived at Mbe, the royal capital, on September 10, 1880 Brazza signs with the king Teke a convention which will place the territory of the king under French protectorate. Little by little, the French would invest the entire territory of the kingdom in general and the plateau kükua in particular. Good neighborliness from the reports turned into occupation of the Kükua the territory. From then on, the attitude of the Kükua changed towards the French and opposed their installation on the set. Thus was born a new type of relationship based on the conflict between colonists and colonized.

### II. The traditional society assets

The traditional Kükua society consisted of three distinct classes namely : the *Mfumu* class represented at the summit by the supreme leaders *Mfumu has yulu* and *Mfumiansye* ; the class of *Ntsaani* composed of farmers, weavers, hunters and blacksmiths: the class of slaves. The Kükua plateau was divided between twelve lands that correspond to large families; J. Ollandet confirms it in these terms: Tradition says that these twelve lands correspond to the location of the first twelve great families who occupied this small plateau of high altitude, and this since ancient times (Ollandet, 2013).

These lands each had its *Mbe* , its capital and its lord. There was council of elders, composed of nobles from different lineages; this assembly of *Mfumu an sye* symbolized the link of the soil with the ancestors. They are the true depositories of the old power.

The Lord at the head of the Nsy was imbued with all power; he possessed in him all the virtues which justified the total trust that was granted to him. A holder of magico-religious power *Mfumu* enjoyed unquestionable authority toward his subjects and had to enjoy all the advantages due to his functions. An intermediate between the living and the ancestors his decisions were without appeal, which earned him total control over the population, his power was for life. Later, by necessity, a new class of lords appeared. Indeed, following the massive presence of the panthers who invaded everything the Kükua country has ravaged small farms of hens and goats, sometimes attacking men and women in the fields and sometimes in the villages ; the people lived in very distressing moments. All *mfumu an Sye* board met in a general assembly to implore the assistance of the ancestors in the fight against the fearsome felines, without success. Arrived a very powerful man Mubie who rid the whole country of the felines. His achievement earned him recognition from all; he became an *outstanding* man, a real *Mfumu* who seems to come from the sky. So he donned the old landed a hierarchy new class ; the class of *Mfumu has yulu* . About this is what Meillassoux says: they settled around the middle of the 18th century. Their founding hero, Mubié, imposed by his power associated with the panther (ngo) connoted by the term Mpu (Meillassoux, 1975).

This is how two classes of *Mfumu* were born : *Mfumu Sye* and *Mfumu has yulu*, the latter accepted to share their new authority with the former heads of the country. From then on the *Mfumu an Sye* gave up some of their power to the benefit of the *Mfumu a Yulu* , they no longer have the same power to decide, dictate and reap the benefits alone without the *Mfumuyulu* . This was not easy to accept, J. Ollandet confirms it in these terms : The compromise was difficult in its articulation at the level of the power of each category screwed the right to land and status ((Ollandet, 2013).

But the influence ever-growing influential newcomers finally eclipsed the old authority; the *Mfumu NSYE* has accepted the *fait accompli* and started the full service of the new power. This change in the system inevitably has social repercussions. If until now the *Mfumu* administration has opted for matrilineal descent, with the newcomers *Mfumu to Yulu* the tendency is reversed, henceforth patrilineal descent was established. Certainly it was a fatal blow that had been brought against the heads of family: *Mfumu a ndzo* accustomed to the benefits derived from their title (marriage, decision, conjuration ...) .In spite of everything, the two powers came together to lead, and that was the strength of Kükü's power in the colonial era. The *Mfumu* had a place out of the ordinary, very revered; it is to him that returned the resolution of both natural and supernatural problems. He is the key man in the life of the Kükü , so he should enjoy the honors and praise worthy of his rank. The direction of the Kuku plateau was censured by a hierarchy of the chiefs of the twelve lands. The *Mfumu*, *Mfumu a yulu*, and *Mfumu nsye* , were meeting on the land of the chief who was the *eldest of all* , the *eldest* was the head of the *Mfumu* assembly . The decisions made by the *Mfumu* were irrevocable and without appeal, everything was thought to have effective control of the population. The *Mfumu has nsye* had an obligation to relay the decisions to village heads (*Mfumuolaa*) which were applied immediately. It is worth pointing out that all that existed on earth belonged to *Mfumu*, so he took advantage of all the activities practiced on his land, he was the richest of all. Everything was organized so that only the *Mfumu* could benefit from the advantages in the agricultural activities, hunting, trade ... even the great witch doctors were only in the pay of the *Mfumu* who had to benefit from the care to obtain a long life.

The Kükü traditional power had forced its people to a difficult life, all the glory was only *Mfumu*.

### III. Contacts between the the Kükü and French

Pierre Savorgnan De Brazza after his hassle with the Bafourous had given up continuing his journey; he left and then enters the interior of the kingdom from the Kükü plateau. It is from this moment that the Kükü will become acquainted with the white man ( *mundele* ), with whom they will form bonds of friendship. The whites were received by the Kükü hierarchy : The *Mfumu* that were e s ducts and interested in the brand of European products. The attitude adopted by the French on their arrival at the start was full of sweetness, an expression of sincere friendship ; they had been very courteous to the power of the *Mfumu* Kükü and through them the whole population. The French had adopted the low-profile attitude, diplomacy to accomplish their mission without encountering the hostility of the population; Liebrechts says the French had to: Before everything rely on their diplomacy and prestige (...)(Liebrechts, 1920).

To seduce the Kükü *Mfumu*, to establish a climate of mutual trust, the French had exploited their prestige by distributing *Mfumu* European products, which they accepted without too much reluctance in exchange for gifts. The *Mfumu* were happy to share their friendship with the Whites because they have had establish trade relations with them. I explained to them that the goal that white people were proposing by establishing villages was to keep open the roads through which the goods would come to the country (Julien et Morsy, 1978).

This kind of speech could only whet the appetites of the *Mfumu* , who were more and more thirsty for wealth and, above all, they were the only holders of commercial power. They sold rubber, ivory and bought fabrics, shoes, rifles, in short, the European products, the *Mfumu* and the French maintained bilateral relations.

To reassure them of their power the Kükü *Mfumu* did not want the French to settle on their land, here is what C. Coquery-Vidrovitch says: The importance of the group made them white for ivory dealers; they allowed them to trade but not to settle. The blacks declared me that they did not want whites at home, and that we had to buy immediately ivory to leave immediately after (Coquery Vidrovitch, 1969).

Beneficiaries of the benefits of the relations with whites, the *Mfumu* enjoyed their power without worrying about the common people who were reduced to poverty. The power of Kükü *Mfumu* experienced during pre-colonial times was characterized by the confiscation of all the benefits, governance profit. The *Mfumu* were feared, powerful, mythic and rich men.

This period of the triumph of power of the *Mfumu* was to end with the new face of the French, wanting to set up their colonial apparatus. The time for collaboration was over; the colonial ambitions of the French took over. It was then a new phase of relations that began characterized by Kükü resistance. In fact accustomed to the euphoria of power, the *Mfumu* did not want to lose their advantages and their hold on the population organized a fierce resistance against the whites. At the heart of this resistance were the *Mfumu* , it had to be on two sides : Armed resistance and civil resistance. It is worth pointing out that before the colonial period the *Mfumu* and the people had refused to pay taxes and to obey the French.

Attempts to collect the tax had been precocious ... as early as 1906-1908. All indications are that they remained very fruitless. That's why French decided to undertake a vast operation of submission of the Plateau koukouya ... in 1913 ... 1914-1915 (Bonnafe, 1987).

Determined to safeguard their power, their privileges being threatened by the French, the *Mfumu* embarked on the battle against the whites. This battle was characterized by incessant attacks, ambushes. Despite their rudimentary weapons, the Küküa pledged to protect their interests; in this regard, the Achikouya are absolutely opposed to European civilization and declare war on every white man who ventures into their neighborhood (Ernaud, 1995).

The civil resistance was marked by many manipulations of the population by the küküa power. During this period, the *Mfumu*, the fetishists held anti-French speeches on the basis of the defense of tradition. The ancients insisted on the possible reaction of the ancestral spirits on the Küküa population in case it adhered to the cause of whites. They brandished the threat of catching a bad spell on anyone who would opt for the new Western civilization. But the message did not pass correctly because the French: Fought against the leaders of charismatic power, against polygamy, against the initiation of young men and women ... against all traditional ceremonies in general (Trincas, 1981).

Traditional ceremonies were a means of persuasion, during which the *Mfumu* had no choice but to highlight the probable diseases, droughts, natural and social calamities. In order not to offend the ancestors, it is necessary to block the road to the Whites, so the *Mfumu* sent messengers from one village to another to relay the message. There was no question that the *Mfumu* lose their privileges for the benefit of kibami that is to say the colon because :

The lords had the ritual authority, perceived tribute under felm gifts, exercised their arbitration (Bonnafe, 1978) Unfortunately all the *Mfumu's* efforts to keep power and safeguard their interests were reduced by the colonial apparatus which now imposed its authority over the Küküa. To get there, the whites were obliged to carry out military operations, as P. Onka confirms in these terms...two military operations to achieve some submission (Onka, 1983)

Thus began colonization on the Küküa plateau.

#### IV. The colonial installation

After stripping the traditional authority of all its powers, the *Kibami* (settler) had to set up a new way of submission. From now on, all socio-economic and health sectors were in the hands of the *Kibami*. All the traditional administrative apparatus had disappeared, a very severe coercive system had been put in place ; many people were fleeing into the forests to escape arrest. In its annual report the Lieutenant - Governor of Middle Congo tells us more: ..... the demographic knowledge of the different groups that populate the colony is closely linked to the administrative occupation. When the administration arrives in a village, everyone fled with the exception of some old men and the chief. The native is instinctively seeking to evade controlling the administration by concealing part of the population even in the most submissive regions. Young men and women leave the village at sunrise to return only at dusk... (Annual Policy Report 1909).

The resistance was timid and ephemeral, the traditional power was quickly defeated. The whole social hierarchy had collapsed, now the *Kibami* had taken over everything.

To establish its power and to definitively get rid of the traditional Küküa authority the *Kibami* had proceeded to the nomination of the native administrators and collaborators. The whole traditional structure had to be replaced by native auxiliaries, militiamen, monitors, nurses and others.

Here is what G. Hardy reveals about this: The use of chiefs has moral and political advantages: colonized populations passing under our authority via of their traditional leaders do not feel like a sudden change which upsets all habits. It's easier to get them to admit our intentions when they are translated by men of their race, they are so easily tamed. The European authority would be wrong to count exclusivity on itself; it cannot do without indigenous authority (Hardy, 1990).

The new leaders were auxiliaries, intermediaries enjoying the trust and respect of the people. The economic task of the new leaders was twofold to organize the recruitment of forced laborers and their supervision. Every land, every village was endowed with a customary court, charged with regulating current affairs. The colonial administration was not only the affair of the French, it also interested the natives

To these actions should be added the work of the missionaries who supported the colonial policy by the evangelization of the Küküa populations. They broke the nail in the destruction of the Küküa's traditional beliefs, the prohibition of cults, practices and wearing fetishes.

The population as well as those who held the fetishes refused to bend ; for they found in fetishes the sure means of finding solutions to their different preoccupations. This attitude resulted in the establishment of a conflict

atmosphere between the missionaries and the natives. Evangelization efforts met with little success among natives, except hostility on the part of *Mfumumu* and fetishists.

The missionaries evangelized the pagan lands while raising vocations to the religious life. However, this evangelization was possible through education, while departing missionaries were broadcasting the strengths of European and French civilization. The mission of God undertaken in the name of France obliged the missionaries to use methods from intimidation to seduction. Schools were created to fill the staffing needs, new trades appeared, hence a sort of preference for the services of white to make a living with a new currency. Vocational training had given birth to different trades; Kukua power had difficulty accepting such changes which benefited only whites.

The formation of the indigenous elite by *Kibami* and the catechists by the missionaries had worked in favor of the whites. The *Mfumumu* were stuck on the one hand by whites and on the other by their own sons. The *Mfumumu* were discredited, humiliated *Kibami* named the new leaders to use them for their purposes. The political structure had experienced a new situation, the *Mfumumu* with a power emanating from the ancestors will see their authority crumbling for the benefit of the men of a new social class that of auxiliaries of whites. The grouping of lineages and villages led the whites to find governing bodies for all his families. The colonial installation was a blow to the Küküa power, the failure of the resistance gave free rein to the whites who set up a new administrative apparatus by removing the *Mfumumu* from the management of society.

## V. Conclusion

The arrival of Europeans on the shelf Kukua was crowned by a struggle between *Kibami* and *Mfumumu*. The attitude of power had varied over two periods according to the interests of each other. At the beginning of the contacts, the *Mfumumu* holding the whites for trading partners had gained a lot of benefits and believed in the good relations of friendship and exchange. But then, when the whites revealed their true intentions to occupy the plateau and impose their imperialist policies, the *Mfumumu* rose up and their resistance was crushed. Thus the power fell to the hands of the whites who put in place a system of total submission and very severe exploitation. The küküa plateau was placed under the tutelage of the colonial power with all the abuses that ensued.

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