

Metis in the Belgian Congo

An archival research on the racial categorisation and colonial treatment of metis

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Preamble: COVID-19 pandemic

In the spring of 2020 Belgium was severely affected by COVID-19 and the crisis that followed. On the 13th of March, measures were taken to prevent the virus from spreading. These much-needed measures had their impact on the progress of this master's dissertation. The university and the archives had to close, which made the consultation of sources very complex and sometimes even impossible. The Corona Crisis has forced me to search other sources of information and make some alterations related to the themes of this thesis. In the original plan, I would have searched the archives more thoroughly and would have used more archive sources. I have used the materials which I had already collected and supplemented them with additional primary sources. I have also extended my literature review. I will explain the impact of the corona measures into detail in the methodology on pages 24 until 30.

This preamble was formulated by mutual agreement and was agreed to by the candidate and the supervisor.

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Table of contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Preamble: COVID-19 pandemic..... | II |
| Acknowledgements | III |
| Table of contents | IV |
| 1. Introduction..... | 1 |
| 2. Theoretical framework and literature review | 4 |
| 2.1. A note on the used terminology..... | 4 |
| 2.2. Previous research on the topic..... | 6 |
| 2.3. Belgian colonialism in Africa..... | 8 |
| 2.3.1. Early European presence and the Congo Free State | 8 |
| 2.3.2. The Belgian Congo..... | 9 |
| 2.3.3. Ruanda-Urundi | 10 |
| 2.4. Sexuality, gender and racism in the colonial period..... | 10 |
| 2.4.1. Racism..... | 10 |
| 2.4.2. Colonial visions on sexuality | 12 |
| 2.4.3. Gender and colonialism..... | 14 |
| 2.5. Metis and legislation in the Belgian Congo | 16 |
| 2.5.1. Nationality in the Belgian Congo | 16 |
| 2.5.2. The status of évolué | 17 |
| 2.5.3. Figures..... | 18 |
| 2.6. Different doctrines towards the metis in the Belgian colonies..... | 20 |
| 2.6.1. Indigénisation | 20 |
| 2.6.2. Européanisation..... | 21 |
| 2.6.3. Racialisation | 22 |
| 3. Method and data collection | 24 |
| 3.1. Archive sources | 24 |
| 3.2. Literature review | 27 |
| 3.3. Methodological reflections..... | 28 |
| 4. Metis commissions and organisations | 31 |
| 4.1. Commissions | 31 |
| 4.2. International aspect of the commissions on metis | 38 |
| 4.3. Charity organisations..... | 39 |
| 5. Gender and marriage policy..... | 42 |
| 5.1. Metis & motherhood | 42 |
| 5.2. Metis: a gendered category..... | 46 |

| | | |
|--------|---|----|
| 5.3. | Marriage policy | 48 |
| 6. | The “metis problem” embedded in the colonial system | 51 |
| 6.1. | Spatial planning | 51 |
| 6.2. | Education and employment | 54 |
| 6.3. | Healthcare | 57 |
| 6.4. | Public transport..... | 58 |
| 7. | Metis and évolués | 59 |
| 7.1. | Legal status | 59 |
| 7.2. | The opinion of évolués about metis..... | 62 |
| 7.3. | The relation of metis with different groups in other colonial empires | 66 |
| 8. | Conclusion..... | 68 |
| 9. | List of references..... | 72 |
| 9.1. | Archive sources | 78 |
| 9.1.1. | Africa Archive | 78 |
| 9.1.2. | KADOC | 80 |

1. Introduction

During the colonial period, a number of metis were born in the Belgian territories of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. These are children resulting from an interracial relationship. In this case, this was mostly a relationship between an African woman and a European man. Every colony worldwide witnessed the birth of a number of “mixed” children. I will focus on the metis of the Belgian Congo.

In recent years, the story of the Belgian metis has come under the attention of the general public.¹ On the fourth of April of 2019, the Belgian government apologised for how they treated metis during the colonial period. Last year’s apologies were the result of a resolution adopted by the Chamber of Representatives about the segregation that these children experienced. Apart from the apologies, the Belgian government also engaged to help the metis and their descendants to find out more about their roots by compiling a database of personal files of metis.² This resolution was the first acknowledgement of the Belgian state of the mistreatment of metis. The first recognition of this black page in Belgian history. This story was also picked up by foreign news agencies.³ The resolution was the result of advocacy work of the metis and their descendants who founded the organisation ‘Metis van België/Métis de Belgique’. They wanted to find out more about their past and the specific circumstances in which they or their parents were born. The growing interest also resulted in a few academic publications about the metis in the last two decades.

The metis were at the same time a logical result of the colonial system and a threat to it. In colonial documents, it is therefore referred to as *le problème des mulâtres* or the “metis problem”. The colonial system was based on a racial division in which the whites were superior to the blacks. The metis were neither black, nor white and did not fit into any of the categories. The topic of metis was heavily debated in the colony and the metropole and there were many opinions about how to deal

¹ Brinckman, B. (2019, 3 april). Michel excuseert zich bij kinderen van de kolonie. *De Standaard*. Retrieved from: http://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20190402_04297701

² Belgische Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers. (2018, 29 maart). *Resolutie over de segregatie waarvan de metissen uit de periode van de Belgische kolonisatie in Afrika het slachtoffer zijn geweest* [DOC 54, 2952/007]. Retrieved from: <http://www.lachambre.be/FLWB/pdf/54/2952/54K2952007.pdf>

³ Some examples of the story of metis in foreign newspapers: BBC: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaG6onTdRU4>
TV 5 MONDE: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0dDlsM0auE> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=III2M3S6lxU>

with the “metis problem”. Politicians, religious actors, and philanthropists all had a meaning about metis, and they all thought that they had the best solution for them. The main point of debate was the struggle between giving them too much privileges or too little. Some focussed on the white and thus superior ancestry of metis and others focussed on their “uncivilised” native roots (Heynssens, 2017).

The story of the metis of Belgian colonisation remains an underexposed and understudied part of Belgian and Congolese history. It is a black page in Belgian history and it sheds light on different aspects of the colonial system. The metis did not fit into the colonial system of segregation and their stories give information about many spheres of life, going from education to colonial ideas of gender. At the time of decolonisation, many of the metis living in religious boarding schools in the Belgian Congo or Ruanda-Urundi were brought to Belgium to be adopted here (Jeurissen, 2003b). It is only in recent years that their stories have been told and the connection to the early stages of their lives is made. This master’s dissertation tries to contribute to Congolese historiography and to the knowledge about Belgian colonialism in both Belgium and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This master’s dissertation examines the context in which the metis children were born and unravels the actions of the colonial state, religious congregations and other actors involved in the lives of metis. This is done by using archive sources from the Africa Archive in Brussels and KADOC Archive in Leuven. There were already mixed children born during the era of the Congo Free State, King Leopold’s II private territory and the predecessor of the Belgian Congo. Apart from the metis born in the Congo, there were also mixed children in Ruanda-Urundi, Belgium’s mandate territory (Heynssens, 2017). This master’s dissertation, however, only focuses on the metis born in the Belgian Congo between 1908 and 1960.

After searching the archives on sources about metis in the Belgian Congo and reading secondary literature on the topic, I identified four different themes which stood out to me. These four themes seemed interesting to go deeper into because of the number of primary sources on the topic and because they have not or only partially been dealt with in secondary literature. The first topic is about the commissions and organisations which dealt with the metis, the second topic goes deeper

into the gender aspect of the story of metis, the third topic tells something about the position of the metis in the colonial system and the last topic investigates the link between metis and *évolués*.

After this introduction in which the research goal was also introduced, this master's dissertation starts with the theoretical framework and literature review. This is a relatively large part of this thesis because the story of the metis covers multiple aspects of social life in both the metropole and its colony. In the third chapter, the methodology which I have used is explained. This includes the impact the corona pandemic had on this research. In the fourth chapter, the commissions and organisations which dealt with the metis of the Belgian Congo are examined. These commissions and organisations give an insight in the difficulties of the "metis problem" and shed light on the multiple actors involved in the treatment of these mixed persons. The fifth chapter focuses on gender and marriage policy related to the metis and to the parents of metis. In the following chapter, the story of the metis is embedded in the colonial system. By focussing on spatial planning, education, employment and healthcare for the metis, the segregationist policy in the Belgian Congo is displayed. The seventh chapter focuses on the relation between metis and *évolués*. *Évolués* were Congolese who according to the colonial government, reached a certain level of civilisation which gave them a special status and more rights. The chapter examines the correlation between both "intermediate groups" in the colony. Finally, this master's dissertation ends with the conclusion.

Throughout this whole master's dissertation, the ubiquity of the "metis problem" is emphasised. Each colony worldwide witnessed the presence of mixed children and every colonial empire had to come up with ideas to keep this changing population under control. The international character of the topic of this thesis is analysed by giving attention in every chapter to examples of other colonial empires and by making the comparison with the situation in other territories.

Throughout the different themes, the artificial creation of a metis identity is demonstrated. Because the metis did not fit in the category of white Europeans or black natives, a distinct typology of metis was formed by the many actors involved in making decisions about their lives. There were many stereotypes about metis and these were influential for their identity construction. The number of different actors involved in making decisions concerning their lives also contributed to this external identity construction.

2. Theoretical framework and literature review

2.1. A note on the used terminology

Because of the delicacy of the topic of this research it is important to first explain the used terminology. I will start with the notion of race. It is widely accepted that race is a social construct and not a genetical one. There are no categories in nature, only physical variation. The concept of race developed in very specific historical circumstances. It served as a way to distinguish and categorise groups of people and is one of the parameters through which group identity is defined. In colonial times, the notion of race was used in relation to the civilising mission. Racialism or biological determinism, and eventually also racism served as a way to justify colonialism (Harris, 1968). As Rahier (2003, p. 101) says: “Race is, indeed, a floating signifier: it means different things, at different times, in different places.” In the continuation of this paper I will place quotation marks around the word “race” to indicate the ambiguity of the concept.

The most important use of terminology for this research is the term to indicate the children born from these “interracial” relationships in the Belgian Congo. Throughout history, the designation of these people has changed multiple times. There are different terms in use in different colonial empires and linguistic areas, but I will focus on the terms specifically used to indicate the children of mixed descent in the Belgian Congo. Because French was the main language among Belgian colonial personnel, the earliest and most used term is “*mulâtre*”. In British colonies, colonizers adopted the equivalent “mulatto” (Rahier, 2003). The term comes from the Latin *mulus* which refers to a mule, the offspring of a donkey and a mare. This term is not only unseemly because it associates these people directly with animals but also because the infertility of the mule was emphasised (Budagwa, 2014). Considering that this term is also strongly connected to colonialism, I will not use it in my paper.

Most scholarly works about the offspring of European men and Congolese women in the Belgian Congo have chosen the word *metis* to indicate these children. *Metis* comes from the French “*métis*” which denotes everyone born out of mixed relationships. In the Belgian Congo, this term was used specifically for the children resulting from African-European relationships. *Metis* also has a mythological meaning. Being a daughter of Zeus, she became the goddess of wisdom, wise counsel, and prudence. This specific concept of *metis* was first used by Ghesquière and others (2010) who

collected testimonies of metis of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. Metis van België/ Metis de Belgique, an organisation which brings together the metis of Belgian colonisation also relies on this term. Because the people on which this thesis focuses, use this term themselves, I will also do this. Metis is in the first place a Dutch term but because of lack of a better term in English I will continue to use metis in this paper. I will use the same form of metis for both the singular and the plural. Apart from “*métis*” the term “*métissage*” was also often used in Belgian and French colonial territories. “*Métissage*” indicates the practice of the mixing of “races”.

I want to note here that although Ghesquière and others (2010) have chosen to use the term metis for the mixed children of Belgian colonialism, they do not stick with it throughout their publication. They chose to title the book ‘De bastaards van onze kolonie: verzwegen verhalen van Belgische metissen’ which could be translated as ‘The bastards of our colony: hidden stories of Belgian metis’. Their use of the word ‘bastard’ was critiqued by some of the contributors to the book and by Budagwa (2014) for having a negative connotation. I will therefore not use this word in my research.

In Dutch, the terms “*halfbloed*” and “*dubbelbloed*” are sometimes used. These could be translated as “half blood” and “double blood”. I will not use these terms because of their reference to “race” as a biological division (Heynssens, 2017). “Mixed race” falls under the same category. In the archival sources which I have investigated, the colonial government also makes use of the term “*quarteron*”, which denotes the offspring of a metis and a white person. This term again refers to race as a biological category and not a social construct. It is also clearly associated to colonialism.

The anthropologist Bambi Ceuppens (2006) has chosen to go with the term *Eurafricanen*. I believe that this is a relatively neutral term and because of this I will also sometimes use *Eurafricans* in my paper.

It is clear from the above examples that words are not neutral. Languages and therefore also terms carry ideologies. Notice that the terms to denote *Eurafricans* in colonial Congo were French terms. In literature there are no references to local terms (Gilmour, 2006). To summarise, I prefer using the terms metis and *Eurafricans*. I will only use the other, more colonial, or negatively connotated terms mentioned above when I refer to (colonial) documents in which they were used. Terminology to refer to *Eurafricans* is clearly very delicate. Using the terms metis and *Eurafricans* is a thoughtful choice, but I realise that it is almost impossible to find a term that pleases everyone.

2.2. Previous research on the topic

I will first give an overview of the scholarly works that have dealt with the metis of Belgian colonisation. There are some works concerning metis dating from the colonial period itself. These papers focus mostly on the former situation and how the “metis question” was perceived at that moment in time. Important authors from this time are Hulstaert and Vindevoghel and to a lesser extend also Cruyen, Dryepondt and Rubbens. Most of these authors were closely involved with the treatment of metis, either as members of religious congregations or as employees of the colonial state.

The topic of metis in former Belgian colonies⁴ has only recently come back under the attention of scholars, so there is little contemporary literature. The general public realised the importance of this topic even later. The story of the metis was not broadly known for decades until the metis themselves drew attention to their history which eventually resulted in the resolution of the Belgian government in 2018. The first academic analysis after the colonial period was done by Lissia Jeurissen. Her most important work about this topic is ‘Quand le métis s'appelait "mulâtre": société, droit et pouvoir coloniaux face à la descendance des couples eurafricains dans l'ancien Congo belge’, written in 2003. Jeurissen focuses specifically on the Belgian Congo and not on Ruanda-Urundi. She examines the treatment of metis from a juridical standpoint by looking at colonial sources.

Secondly, there is Assumani Budagwa’s book ‘Noirs-Blancs, Métis: La Belgique et la ségrégation des Métis du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi (1908-1960)’ in 2014. Budagwa’s work discusses more aspects of the treatment and the life of metis than Jeurissen’s does but he does not go into much detail. Budagwa primarily relies on interviews which he conducted with metis, colonial officers, Belgian foster parents and mission staff. Because of this, his approach is more bottom up than the other works mentioned in this chapter. The lived experience of the metis and the actors that contributed to how their lives were arranged are placed in the centre of his analysis.

The third author who has done important research on the metis of the former Belgian colonies is Sarah Heynssens. She did extensive research on the metis who were accommodated in the hostel of the White Sisters of the mission in Save in Ruanda-Urundi. In her book ‘De kinderen van Save: een

⁴ Strictly spoken, Ruanda-Urundi was not a Belgian colony, but a Belgian mandate and later trust territory as decided by the League of Nations/United Nations.

geschiedenis tussen Afrika en België' (2017) she explains the story of the children from the mission in Save who were brought to Belgium right before the independence. It was believed that without the Belgian, civilised presence the Rwandans, Burundese and Congolese would behave "primitively" again and they would form a danger to the metis. Therefore, a considerable number of metis was taken away and brought to Belgium to live in orphanages or with a foster family. Apart from explaining the story of the metis of this one specific mission, Heynssens also shortly discusses the Belgian doctrine towards metis and "*métissage*" and the difficulties the children experienced later on in their lives in Belgium. Heynssens did not only try to explain the story of the metis of Save, but also tried to help them find information about their heritage and give them the attention they deserve.

The three books mentioned above are, apart from a number of articles by Bambi Ceuppens, the only recent scholarly works about the metis of Belgian colonisation. Furthermore, there are also some works that are more accessible to the general public. In 2000, George Kamanayo released his documentary 'Kazungu, le métis' about his life as a metis in Ruanda-Urundi and Belgium and the search for his parents later in his life. Ten years later Ghesquière and others (2010) have published a book with testimonies of metis of Ruanda-Urundi and the Belgian Congo, now living in Belgium. The book was titled 'De bastaards van onze kolonie: verzwegen verhalen van Belgische metissen'. There are definitely more works about the metis, but I will not list them all here.

Notwithstanding the important work done by Jeurissen, Budagwa, Heynssens and Ceuppens, essential aspects of the histories of these metis remain understudied. Most authors focus on the metis of Ruanda-Urundi and not on those in the Belgian Congo. This is because most metis of the Belgian mandate territory were brought to Belgium on account of the mission institutions in contrast to the Congolese metis. This makes it easier to trace them and their stories. Budagwa's work gives the broadest overview of the treatment of metis but without going into much detail. Lissia Jeurissen is the only one that only focuses on the Belgian Congo, but she emphasises the legal framework and therefore leaves out other important aspects of the life of metis. It is for this reason that I want to focus on seeing the story of the Belgian metis in a bigger picture.

2.3. Belgian colonialism in Africa

I will first go over the main events of Belgian colonialism in Africa, as it is the Congo Free State, Belgian Congo, and the Ruanda-Urundi Protectorate. I will go over it rapidly and will only focus on aspects of the colonial system that appeared to be important in the treatment of metis because I expect the readers to be aware of the main events of Belgian colonisation in Central Africa.

2.3.1. Early European presence and the Congo Free State

There has been European presence in the area of the Congo river since at least the 15th century. The Kongo Kingdom was “discovered” by Portuguese sailors in 1483 and maintained good relationships with multiple European states (Bostoen & Brinkman, 2018). In the 1870s, Henry Morton Stanley, on behalf of King Leopold II of Belgium, explored the Congo region. During the Conference of Berlin from November 1884 until February 1885, the European powers discussed the rules for trading and missionary activities in Africa. Most nations had already occupied their respective parts of Africa before 1884 and reached bilateral agreements regarding borders before or after the conference. The Conference was thus only marginally meant to multilaterally draw borders and divisions on the African map. Instead, its main objective was to negotiate treaties and conditions under which they could access each other’s occupied territories. Colonel Strauch, the man who was de facto in charge of the Association Internationale du Congo (AIC) but actually represented King Leopold II, managed to convince the other leaders to give him access to the area of the basin of the Congo River by promising, among other things, that he would suppress the slave trade (Katzenellenbogen, 1996). Only on the first of August of 1885, some months after the Conference of Berlin, the AIC became the Congo Free State with King Leopold II as its sovereign ruler (Cornelis, 1991). King Leopold II ruled in an authoritarian way with no room for opposition. The Belgian King applied indirect rule on the political, administrative, and judicial level because of the small number of European personnel in the colony. In the spheres of language and culture, an assimilationist approach was used. This meant that local languages and cultures were largely suppressed in favour of the French language and Belgian-European culture (Meeuwis, 2011). To make his colony profitable, the King adopted some harsh measures through which he could claim a large part of the land and force people to work on this land after which he could exploit them. The colony’s economy was focused towards the exploitation of raw materials such as rubber and ivory.

Local resistance against colonialism was extensive and took on many forms but was heavily suppressed.

2.3.2. The Belgian Congo

Multiple international actors denounced the atrocities committed by King Leopold II towards the Congolese people. The international critique on the King's brutal rule could no longer be ignored and the Belgian state eventually intervened. In 1908, the Congo Free State became the Belgian Congo as recorded in the Colonial Charter. The Belgian state combined civilisation with Christianity and commerce to get the colony under control. The conditions for the Congolese people improved a little, but the switch from Congo Free State to Belgian Congo implied a de facto continuation of the circumstances for most people. The Belgian government had relatively little interest in its new colony. The unusual mix between indirect rule on the administrative-political level and assimilationism on the level of language and culture stayed in place during the first decade of the Belgian Congo. When Louis Franck became minister of Colonies in 1918 the way of ruling the Belgian Congo changed tremendously. The colonial enterprise was revived and new plans and policies were put into action to make the Belgian Congo profitable again. After years of criticism on the assimilationist policy on the linguistic and cultural level, minister Franck implemented an adaptationist policy for all spheres of the colony. This meant that the indirect rule on the political and administrative level was extended and reinforced on all levels, including the policy concerning language and culture. Instead of rejecting the local languages and cultures and trying to Westernise the Congolese, adaptationism accepted the differences between both groups (Meeuwis, 2011).

The road to independence for the Congo was fast and relatively unexpected. The Belgian government was not aware of the situation in the colony and planned a gradual independence. This can for example be seen in the actions of the Belgian professor van Bilsen, who published his 'Thirty Year Plan for the Political Emancipation of Belgian Africa' in 1955. As a result of the education policy of the Belgian government, a Congolese elite only emerged towards the end of the 1950s. The first political organisations, ABAKO (Alliance des Bakongo) and MNC (Mouvement National Congolais), were set up in this period. The Belgian programme of gradual independence was affected by the reactions and organisation of the Congolese people. A round-table conference was

held in Brussels in January of 1960 and Congo eventually gained its independence on 30th June 1960 (Weiss, 2012).

2.3.3. Ruanda-Urundi

Ruanda and Burundi were two kingdoms in the Great Lakes region that became part of the German Empire in 1894. Together with Tanganyika, they formed German East Africa. After the Second World War, the German Empire lost all its colonies as a punishment for the role the nation played during the war. The German colonies were partitioned among the allied forces as laid out in the Treaty of Versailles. Ruanda and Urundi were already occupied by Belgium from 1916 onwards and in 1919 the League of Nations decided that Ruanda-Urundi became a Belgian mandate territory. With the creation of the United Nations in 1945, the Ruanda-Urundi mandate territory became the Ruanda-Urundi trust territory. The creation of mandate and trust territories had as their purpose that the nation in charge would help the territories on their route to complete independence. The mandate and trust that were appointed to Belgium were in theory supervised by the League of Nations at first and the United Nations later on. In practice, Belgium was at first not really interested in its newly acquired territory but eventually realised that it could generate high profits by focusing on cash crops. Ruanda-Urundi gained its independence in 1962 and was dissolved in the Republic of Rwanda and the Kingdom of Burundi (Vijgen, 2005).

2.4. Sexuality, gender and racism in the colonial period

In the following chapter, I will focus on racism as the basis of the colonial system and on the colonial vision on sexuality and on African women.

2.4.1. Racism

The colonial conquest was foremost driven by an urge to find new economic opportunities. This ultimate goal was concealed by the civilising mission. The superior white colonisers were going to bring civilisation to the “dark continent” and “lift up” the Africans. The idea of the superiority of the white, Western, European “race” against the black, African “race” was key for the civilising mission. In many colonial empires, the state relied mainly on religious institutions to civilise the natives (Heynssens, 2017).

With the Age of Enlightenment in the 19th century, the notion of “race” became increasingly more associated with biological and scientific concepts. Together with social Darwinism, this led to the idea of a fixed classification and hierarchy of human “races”. This implied that human evolution was a linear concept with the European “race” as the most evolved and most civilised of all “races”. The African “race” was placed at the bottom of the hierarchy (Stoler, 1989).

With the assimilationist approach on the level of languages and cultures until approximately 1918, the Belgian state still believed that by learning and adopting the French language and the Belgian culture, Congolese could be Westernised. Although they had a different skin colour and belonged to a different race, there was hope for them to climb the ladder of evolution. As mentioned before, things changed when Louis Franck became minister of Colonies in 1918 (Meeuwis, 2011). The policy of adaptationism was introduced on all levels including the linguistic and cultural level. It was no longer believed that it could be possible to Westernise the Congolese because the differences between the Congolese and the Belgians and in the end the differences between the two “races” were too substantial. Franck’s policy of adaptationism stemmed from his racist and racialist view. The minister was convinced that members of the “black race” were inherently unsuitable for Western civilisation and Western intelligence (Franck, 1926).

Starting in 1918, there was an implicit colour bar and apartheid in the Belgian Congo. The Belgian government has always declared that there was no such thing as a “colour bar” in the Belgian Congo. The reality, however, proves the opposite (Marzorati, 1954). The whites and blacks which in reality equalled the colonisers and colonised were literally separated in the colony. Both groups had different legal rights and obligations (Ceuppens, 2003). We will see later in this paper that this separation was effectuated in different spheres of which spatial planning and education are probably the best-known.

The Belgian colonial system was based on the division between natives and Europeans and it was thought that the differences between both “races” were clearly noticeable. The metis, however, posed a threat to this system of classification. They were too white to be considered native and too

black to be considered European. It is no wonder that the “metis problem” was so heavily debated since the colonial system relied so intensely on this racial classification (Heynssens, 2017).⁵

2.4.2. Colonial visions on sexuality

The story of the metis is partially formed by the colonial vision on sexuality. This colonial vision differs extremely from the vision on sexuality in the metropole. One could even say that they are each other’s opposites. The opposition was especially remarkable during the era of the Congo Free State. In 19th century Europe, women and men inhabited different spaces. Women had to focus on their domestic duties and men were the breadwinners. It was not possible for women to have sexual relations outside a marital relationship. Men, on the other hand, were free to pursue other sexual encounters. Prostitution was definitely seen as a problem but was nevertheless ubiquitous. Marriage was valued primarily as a reproductive asset without any attention for the female sexuality (Weeks, 2017).

Especially in the beginning of the colonial conquest, as Anne McClintock says, Central-Africa was seen as “porno-tropics”. Young European men sought new adventures and travelled to the newly explored regions. In almost every colony, exoticism was paired with eroticism. The image of the naked African women was widespread and was even used as a propaganda tool to urge Belgian men to move to the colonies to work there. Belgium was not the only country to try to lure their men to the colonies using this image, the same was for example done in Italy (Ponzanesi, 2012). This image gave African women a promiscuous reputation in the Western world. African women, more often still girls, were not seen as “wife material” but as a relaxing pastime. They were seen as the personification of all the wrong in the colony: childish, subversive, and led by primordial sexual desires. They were therefore definitely not suited to be a white man’s spouse. (McClintock, 1995).

Until the 1910s, white men in the Congo Free State were even encouraged to take on a *ménagère* or concubine. It was seen as a better solution than prostitution because of the lower risk for diseases (Moehler-De Greef, 2018a). It was said that having a *ménagère* could help them get used to the

⁵ Notice here that I refer to Europeans and not Belgians. This is because apart from Belgians, there were people from all over Europe in the Belgian Congo. It is estimated that when the Congo Free State became the Belgian Congo in 1908, about 60 percent of the non-Africans in the colony were Belgians. The other 40 percent came from all over the Western world. There were among others Swiss, British, Portuguese, Norwegians, French and Americans (Moehler-De Greef, 2018a).

challenging and often lonely life in Africa. According to popular tradition, the white “race” was not equipped to live in tropic climatic conditions. The sun and heat could make him suffer from “*Congolité*”. This was believed to be a type of disease caused by excessive sunlight and heat. People suffering from *Congolité* will eventually try to find refuge in alcohol and African women (Jeurissen, 2003b).

This view on African women and the practice of concubinage was certainly not specific to the Congo Free State. All colonial powers relied on some sort of superiority construction to justify colonialism which gave rise to these derogatory views on African women. The phenomenon was also more widespread than just the African continent (Moehler-De Greef, 2017). The same things happened in Asian and South American colonies. As we will see later in this paper, all colonial powers struggled with unequal colonial relations but the colonial doctrine towards interracial relationships and mixed children varied enormously (Lauro, 2005).

It is important to note here that interracial relationships in the colony varied enormously. There were two important visions on the African women having a (sexual) relationship with white men. They were either seen as helpless victims of the cruelty of the white men that used and abused them or seen as cunning temptresses luring innocent colonialists. In reality, all kinds of relationships in between these two extremes were possible. It is hereby important to not forget the agency of African women. This type of relations could also be beneficial for the women. They could improve their economic and social status and go against ruling gender roles in their respective societies. This, however, does not rule out that the relationship of African *ménagères* and colonialists were always characterised by inequality. There are nevertheless a couple of examples of interracial relationships that were distinguished by real feelings and love. Some of these couples eventually even returned to Belgium to live their lives there, but even when there is love, the inequality remains (Heynssens, 2017).

Apart from the *ménagère* or concubine type of relationship, which was more long-term, there were also cases of prostitution in the Belgian Congo. This was officially not allowed because of the high risk of diseases for the white men but was practiced informally. The combination of concubinage and prostitution was especially in the urban areas no exception (Jeurissen, 2003a). The Belgians tried to suppress prostitution in the colony by reforming gender roles and the family life in Ruanda-

Urundi and the Belgian Congo. According to Hunt (1990), the colonial authorities tried to domesticate African women and make perfect wives and mothers of them.

2.4.3. *Gender and colonialism*

The colonial history is above all a gendered history. This applies to both the Western woman and the African woman. Both groups of women are underrepresented when it comes to the colonial history.

Western men going to the Congo Free State were preferably young, unmarried men. They had to be below the age of 35 and preferably even under 25. When it was the case that they were already married, the men were strongly recommended to leave their wife at home. It was thought that for Western women the African climate and harsh living conditions would be even more problematic than for Western men. The white woman was said to be too sensitive and delicate to be living in such a “dark continent”. In some urban, more protective regions in Eastern Congo colonisers’ spouses could go and visit their husbands once and a while. The only Western women who really moved to the colony were religious women (Jeurissen, 2003b).

When the Congo Free State was taken over by the Belgian government in 1908 and it became the Belgian Congo, the view towards concubinage changed. Things had to be adjusted in order for the colony to lose its bad reputation. The barbarous treatment of the locals had to be kept within bounds. This included that interracial relationships that were previously tolerated came to be under pressure. Apart from the now more negative view of the state, these relationships also suffered from the increasing racial segregation. The shift towards adaptationism, accompanied with an increasingly negative view towards African people, had as a result that white colonisers were less prone to start a relationship with an African woman. The white colonisers had to show their moral superiority towards their black subjects in all aspects of life (Heynssens, 2017).

The *ménagères* who were in the 19th century seen as a way to let a white coloniser accommodate to the African climate and different living conditions were now seen as a danger to them for the exact same reason. According to the colonial government, white men in interracial relationships were at risk of lowering their standards and accepting a lower stage of civilisation. It was believed that the practice of concubinage blurred the boundaries between the two cultures and the two races

(McClintock, 1995). The concubines were said to be the cause of the “*négrification*” of the European population in the colony (Lauro, 2005).

Not only the colonial state but also the religious institutions were involved in restraining the African female sexuality. The Church was against the mixing of “races” and the licentiousness of the white colonisers. With the influx of missionaries in the 1910s and 1920s, the preoccupation about these relationships only grew. The religious institutions also became involved in the treatment of metis. It is in this sphere that their hatred for the *ménagères* became clearly visible (Vermeersch, 1914).

To restrain the practice of concubinage, the colonial government encouraged men to bring their spouses to the colony as from 1908 onwards. The demand for young adventurous unmarried men was replaced by the demand for married catholic men coming from respectable families. The switch did not happen as fast as the Belgian government would have wanted, but especially after 1945 most of the new arrivals in the Belgian Congo were European married couples. This was in part due to the improved infrastructure and perceived living conditions in the colony. As we will see in the statistics later on this theoretical framework, this change did absolutely not mean that there were no metis being born in the colony anymore (Heynssens, 2017).

Most colonial powers even adopted laws that made the interracial concubinage illegal. This was for example done in the British colonies in 1909 with the ‘Lord Crewe’s Circular’ and in the Italian colonies in 1938. The Belgian authorities never went so far as to legally forbid the practice, but send out letters to white men known for having a relation with an African woman, calling for more discretion (Lauro, 2005).

The practice of interracial relations also reflected gender inequalities in the Western world. There are almost no examples known of interracial relationships between an African man and a European woman in the Belgian colonies (Jeurissen, 2003b). I could only find one testimony in the book ‘De bastaards van onze kolonie: verzwegen verhalen van Belgische metissen’ from Ghesquière and others (2010) that speaks about this type of relation. In the book the story of Sophie, born in 1957 as the daughter of a Congolese man and a married Flemish woman, is told. This had multiple reasons. To start with, there were very few European women in the colony and most of them were religious sisters or were married. The colonial authorities turned a blind eye to European men having an African concubine, but European women having a relationship with an African man were much less

accepted. Apart from the inequality between Africans and Europeans, there was also inequality between men and women (Lauro, 2005). In the French colonial empire, this Western gender inequality can also be witnessed. In the magazine about metis from this area, *L'Eurafrican*, there are no accounts of white women who gave birth to metis children (Jean-Baptiste, 2011)

2.5. Metis and legislation in the Belgian Congo

The following part will be about the legislation concerning metis in the Belgian Congo. The main difference hereby is the difference between metis who were recognised by their fathers and metis who were not. Some figures about the amount of metis and their status will give information about the magnitude of the “metis problem”.

2.5.1. Nationality in the Belgian Congo

Every nation worldwide relies on a juridical construction of nationhood to include and exclude people. This was no different and maybe even more important in colonial territories. Having a legal status comes with a number of advantages. The first question concerning people living in the Belgian Congo is whether they were Belgians, Congolese, or fell under a different category. At times of the Congo Free State, the Congolese Civil Code clearly stated that the inhabitants of the Congo Free State were Congolese. The legislation regarding nationhood in the Belgian Congo was a lot more ambivalent and confusing. The Colonial Charter of 1908 de facto replaced the Congolese Civil Code but in theory the Civil Code was included in the Colonial Charter. This made the legislation open to discussion (Sohier, 1950). It was eventually decided that the Congolese subjects were given the Belgian nationality because they were Congolese. Having the Belgian nationality, however, did not mean that they were Belgian citizens. This difference is in official documents mostly indicated by using the terms ‘Belgian citizens’ and ‘Belgian subjects’ (De Meester, 1998). The main aspect on which this opposition was based was the difference in skin colour or “race”. It is not surprisingly that the metis formed a difficulty to this system (Jeurissen, 2002b).

Theoretically a child of a Congolese mother and a Belgian father, either born in Belgium or abroad, is automatically Belgian. According to Jeurissen (2003b), this was in practice very rare. Most metis children were not recognised by their fathers. When they were recognised by their mother, they were seen as “ordinary” Congolese and received the same ambiguous status as their mothers. In most

cases, however, metis children were not recognised by either one of their parents and because of this not inscribed in the resident registration. As a result, they could not enjoy any rights. This was a quite common phenomenon in the colony, but it had far-reaching consequences for the metis who were brought to Belgium around the time of independence. They had to apply for a Congolese identity card but many of them did not have the necessary paperwork. As a result, a large group of them was never recognised and were illegal in Belgium. This, for example, caused problems when they wanted to get married or wanted to recognise their own children (Heynssens, 2017).

2.5.2. *The status of évolué*

Apart from Belgian citizens and Belgian subjects, there was also a third category in the Belgian Congo. Congolese who had reached a certain level of civilisation could be appointed the status of *évolué*. This status of *évolué* lay somewhere in between the category of natives and the category of European citizens in the colony. *évolués* thus had an intermediate position in the colony and they were therefore often compared to the metis. Both metis and *évolués* were considered to be slightly better than regular natives and therefore deserved a different status (Heyse, 1952). Metis who were only recognised by their “native parent” were considered to be *immatriculé* or could apply for it at any time if not declared *évolué* from the beginning. In theory, however, a lot of colonial officers perceived a metis as a native and the goodwill of the local colon decided whether the metis could become an *évolué* or not (Crevecoeur, 1947). The link between metis and *évolués* will be further explored in the fifth chapter of this master’s dissertation.

Already during the era of the Congo Free State, the status of *immatriculé* existed. This status was given by the state authorities to those Congolese that had adopted a Christian and Western lifestyle and who had turned their backs to “traditional” African ways of life. As opposed to Congolese natives who fell under customary law, the *immatriculés* fell under the Belgian civil code. Because of this, they enjoyed a lot more rights. According to Meeuwis (1997), the Congolese who had received the status of *immatriculé* were mostly soldiers, urban workers and people who lived in the vicinity of missions or stations.

After the second World War, colonial powers worldwide were pressured to reform their colonies and decrease their dependency upon the metropole. Belgium eventually gave in and took some small steps in trying to ameliorate the lives of the Congolese and giving them access to politics. As

a part of this process, the *Carte d'Immatriculation* was reinvigorated in 1948 as the Card of Civil Merit. In 1952, it was renamed *Carte d'Immatriculation* and the Congolese who had received this card were known as *évolués*. Congolese who believed that they had achieved a higher level of civilisation could apply to be *immatriculé* or registered as *évolué*. From 1952 onwards, Congolese had to undergo a series of tests to be able to receive this status. They had to be older than 21 years, had to be able to speak and write French, had to be able to count and had to reject polygamy. The status of *évolué* did, however, not make any difference in theory and the *évolués* were certainly not equal to Belgian citizens in the colony. By 1959, one year before the independence, no more than 1783 Congolese had received the status of *évolué* (Vanderlinden, 1989). This relatively low number and the lack of expected benefits attached, led to frustration with the Congolese.

By introducing the status of *évolué*, there were now three legal categories in which the inhabitants of the Belgian Congo were divided. These three categories were *indigènes* or natives, *indigènes immatriculés* or *évolués* and Belgian citizens (white Belgians working in the Belgian Congo). In theory all Congolese had the Belgian nationality, but in practice they were second-class nationals (De Meester, 1998). The metis were divided over the three categories.

2.5.3. Figures

Most literature concerning the Belgian metis estimates the number of metis based on several colonial sources. These estimations, however, vary enormously. I will list here all the references of estimations of the numbers of metis that I have found in order to get a thorough overview.

Jeurissen (2003b) makes an assessment based on some colonial sources. She states that these sources are anything but reliable because of various reasons. To start with, most of the calculations take into account all children of mixed heritage. This includes the children of Afro-Asian descent.

Secondly, the surveys often only count the metis that were recognised by their fathers or the metis that were inscribed as *évolués*. Jeurissen relies on the statistical yearbook of Belgium and the Belgian Congo⁶ to come at 178 metis recognised by their European parent for the period 1919-1927. The number of non-recognised metis would in all probability have been a lot higher. In 1932, the government held a survey to document the metis living in the Belgian Congo. They documented

⁶ Annuaire statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge, 1920-1928.

1307 metis of which two-thirds were under the age of seven. 117 of them were recognised by their European or Asian father (Vindevoghel, 1935). In 1935, the missionary of Scheut Alphonse Cruyen, who was involved in the care of the metis children, estimated that there were about 2000 to 3000 metis living in the Belgian Congo (Cruyen, 1935). The following year, however, Joseph Magotte, an employee at the Ministry of Colonies, mentioned that there were 1500 metis living in the Belgian Congo⁷. During the same year, the Comité Européen de Protection des Mulâtres send a questionnaire about the identification of metis to all local chiefs. This questionnaire resulted in detailed personal documentation of 855 metis of which 264 had a Belgian father and only 36 were legally recognised by their European or Asian father. This number of 855 metis is obviously inadequate but the other statistics give important information about the composition of the metis group (Vindevoghel, 1938). Ghesquière and others (2010) for their book 'De bastaards van onze kolonie: verzwegen verhalen van Belgische metissen' from Ghesquière and others (2010) rely on the same numbers as Jeurissen and emphasise that no one really knows the exact number of metis in the Belgian Congo.

Ceuppens (2006) in her article 'De moeder van alle problemen: Koloniale Eurafrikanen, "ras", burgerschap en gender' mentions some estimations of the number of metis in the Belgian Congo. She observes that these numbers vary a lot. Ceuppens refers to some of the same sources as Jeurissen, so I will only list the numbers that are not mentioned earlier. Delval (1966) mentions 4000-4500 metis in the Belgian Congo. Rubbens makes an estimation of 10,000 metis in 1954. Vellut (1982) knows of 300 metis in 1919, 5000 in 1939 and 6000 at the time of independence in 1960. Vellut also estimates that the Belgian Congo had a total population of about 13 million people in 1962. Lambilotte (1992) estimates that there were about 6000-15,000 metis in 1946.

Heynssens (2017) uses the same sources as Jeurissen and Ceuppens but also refers to a government inquiry of 1947 that speaks of about 4000 metis in 1947⁸.

I also found two counts of metis in the Africa Archive. The first one is the number of metis living in the cité of the Leopoldville urban district⁹. This census was done somewhere between 1947 and 1952 but there is no exact date given. They counted 309 metis of which the youngest one was two

⁷ Magotte (J.), "Notes pour Monsieur le Ministre. Enfants mulâtres". Ministère des Colonies.

⁸ Africa Archive, AI 1417, IV B Commission Mulâtres.

⁹ Africa Archive, AI 1417, IV B Commission Mulâtres: District urbain de Léopoldville: liste des métis résident à la cité indigène.

months old and the oldest one was 55 years old. The children of metis, called “*quarteron*” have also been included here. In the same folder of the Africa Archive, there is mention of a count of metis living in all the provinces of the Belgian Congo in 1947. They have counted 1670 metis¹⁰.

Apart from the numbers in the Africa Archive, I found two estimations of the number of metis in the personal archive of André Dequae, which I consulted in the KADOC archive. In a letter of 1946, the Governor General of Léopoldville declares that the number of metis has doubled from 6000 to 12.000 during the interbellum¹¹. In the same folder, there is also some information in a note for the President of the Commission for the study of problems concerning mulattoes from 1948. In this note, it is mentioned that the number of metis is probably far exaggerated. He says that the number of 12.000 which is suggested by the Minister of Colonies cannot be true and that a number of 4000 métis is much more accurate¹².

2.6. Different doctrines towards the metis in the Belgian colonies

All colonial powers had to deal with the “metis problem”. Pomfret (2009) called these mixed children “inevitable byproducts of the imperial relationship” (Pomfret, 2009, p. 317). As opposed to most other colonial powers, Belgium never agreed upon a legal doctrine towards the metis. During the colonial period, they shifted between three approaches. These three doctrines were heavily debated and each had its proponents and opponents. Especially from the 1920s onwards, the metis question came under the attention of the general public in Belgium (Heynssens, 2017).

2.6.1. Indigénisation

The first doctrine is the one of *indigénisation*. This approach was developed by Doctor Gustave Dryepondt who was an employee of the Belgian government working on tropical diseases in the Belgian Congo. He developed the policy of *indigénisation* in his study ‘La question des métis du Congo belge’, which was published in 1923. This doctrine was adopted by a considerable number of colonials, but had lost its approval almost completely at the time of the death of the Doctor in

¹⁰ Africa Archive, AI 1417, IV B Commission Mulâtres: count of 1947 in all provinces (exact title of document unknown due to corona measures.)

¹¹ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: 04/02/1948: Note pour monsieur le Président de la Commission pour l'Étude des Problèmes intéressant les Mulâtres, Dr. L. Mottoulle, Bruxelles.

¹² KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: 04/02/1948: Note pour monsieur le Président de la Commission pour l'étude des Problèmes intéressant les Mulâtres, Dr. L. Mottoulle, Bruxelles.

1932. This switch coincided with the overall change in policy of the colonial government from assimilationism to adaptationism (Jeurissen, 2003b).

With the policy of *indigénisation*, the focus was on the metis as being a part of the native Congolese population. It was assumed that because of the perceived low number of metis children, they were too insignificant to form a distinct group and pose a threat to the colonial society. The state should not interfere with the treatment of the non-recognised metis and they should just let them grow up with their mother's family. Apart from this, Dryepondt also believed that the children inherited most of their physical and psychological traits from their "black" mother. Nevertheless, the negative qualities of the "black race", Dryepondt believed a child is best off with his or her mother. The doctor feared that creating a third class for the metis would alienate them from both the white and the black class. The doctrine of *indigénisation* would adopt the metis in the native population which would eventually dissolve the category of metis (Jeurissen, 2003b). According to Dryepondt, the small number of metis that was recognised by their father should be raised by the father's family in a Western environment (Jeurissen, 2002b).

2.6.2. *Européanisation*

The doctrine of *Européanisation* was first established by Joseph-Marie Jadot. He was a magistrate serving in the colony between 1910 and 1935 and was also known as a renowned writer. Jadot did not agree with Dryepondt and developed a whole new doctrine. Jadot believed that helping the metis was the moral responsibility of the Belgian government. According to him, this was the case for both the recognised and the non-recognised metis. In Jadot's view, the white parent had to be pressured to financially support his children in order for them to be able to enjoy a good education. Preferably the white parent also recognised his metis child and took full responsibility in raising this child. Jadot thought that the black mother of the metis would not really care about her child being taken away, because she would be aware of the cultural superiority of the white society and would recognise that her metis child would be better off in this white society (Jeurissen, 2002a).

In Belgium, Jadot's doctrine was considered to be too expensive and the general public feared that it would result in a large number of metis children coming to Belgium. The Belgian government therefore did not want to follow the approach of *Européanisation*, so Jadot proposed a second, less invasive solution. He suggested that all the metis were automatically considered *évolué*. Apart from

this, the government had to rely on religious institutions to provide education for them. The Belgian government never really followed the doctrine of *Européanisation* but did follow Jadot in engaging the religious institutions for the education of metis (Jeurissen, 2002a).

The A.P.P.M. or Association pour la Protection des Mulâtres, translated into English ‘the association for the protection of mulattos’ was in favour of a mix of *Européanisation* and *indigénisation*. The A.P.P.M. was one of the first organisations concerned with the fate of Belgian metis. According to the organisation, the metis who were recognised were supposed to live with their European family and the metis who were not recognised had to be raised by their African family. By doing this, the A.P.P.M. actually suggested to divide the metis into two groups. This approach was adopted by some regional officers and religious institutions but was never widespread (Jeurissen, 2003b).

2.6.3. *Racialisation*

The third official doctrine was *racialisation*. This approach was based on the implicit colour bar in the Belgian Congo. The colour bar divided the population in the Belgian Congo in two groups according to their skin colour. According to this doctrine, the metis, being both black and white, did not fit in any of these two categories. It therefore was recommended to develop a third category. The “racial” category of “mulattos” came into being (Jeurissen, 2002b).

In the approach of *racialisation*, the metis took up an intermediary position between blacks and whites. They needed a special upbringing and education that suited their intermediary position. Religious institutions, who were the main proponents of this doctrine, established boarding schools where the metis children could receive education that lay somewhere between European and indigenous education. This type of education would prepare them to take on jobs that were appropriate for their position. These were the jobs that Europeans did not want to do, and natives were not allowed to do. Metis girls could become nurses or typists. Metis boys could pursue a career as carpenter or mechanic (Heynssens, 2017). The religious boarding schools were also instrumental in keeping the metis children together because it was thought that they would be happiest around people of their own “race” (Jeurissen, 2002b).

One of the main supporters of the system of *racialisation* was the Scheut missionary Alphonse Cruyen. Cruyen believed that neither the black native society nor the white society wanted to take

on metis children. They were considered an abnormality in both the society of their mother and the society of their father. They were received with hostility in both groups. According to Cruyen, making a third category could be a solution for this problem (Cruyen, 1935). The Belgian government partially followed the doctrine of *racialisation* by establishing specific schools, but they never went as far as legally developing a third class (Jeurissen, 2003b).

3. Method and data collection

3.1. Archive sources

For my thesis, I have consulted two archives to collect primary sources related to the story of the metis in the Belgian Congo.

The first archive which I have consulted is the Africa Archive¹³ in Brussels. This is part of the State Archives of Belgium and consists of documents of the former Ministry of Colonies, the Ministry of African Affairs and other files of other departments related to the Congo Free State, the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. Consultation of the archive is free after registration. The archive houses many files related to the treatment of metis in the Belgian Congo. Most of these files can be found in folders concerning religious institutions and education (M 615, M 650) or in folders related to the Ministry of African Affairs (AI 1417, AI 3733, AI 4674). The folders of the Ministry of African Affairs which I have consulted are mainly about the commissions on “mulattos” and the legal decisions related to them. There are certainly also sources about the metis to be found in other folders. Heynssens (2017), Budagwa (2014) and Jeurissen (2003b) for their books also rely on sources from the Africa Archive. Most of them use the folders which I rely upon, but supplemented with folders related to their specific research. Supplementary to the folders which these three authors refer to, I also used sources of M 650.

There was a clear difference between the folders related to the Ministry of African Affairs and the folders concerned with religious missionary education. The first category of folders mostly contained sources written by politicians. These were announcements and discussions of political discussions which does not allow much space for the politician’s own opinion. The folders about missionary education were more biased and less standardised.

The second archive which I have consulted is KADOC¹⁴ in Leuven. This is the documentation and research centre for religion, culture and society hosted by the Catholic University of Leuven. The archive has a complete online inventory¹⁵ which can be used to search relevant sources. Documents can then be requested and be consulted in the reading room of the archive. I have searched the

¹³ https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/documentation/archives/sections_and_collections/africa_archive

¹⁴ <https://kadoc.kuleuven.be/>

¹⁵ <http://abs.lias.be/Query/suchinfo.aspx>

inventory on keywords such as metis, métis, métissage, mulâtre, mulatto, mulat, mulatten, Eurafricain, concubine and concubinage. Apart from the keywords I have also searched for personal names which I had found in the literature concerning metis. I have looked for Alphonse Cruyen, Gustave Dryepondt, Paul Coppens, André Scohy, Jean Vindevoghel, Gustaaf Hulstaert, Eugène Delooz, White Sister Lutgardis (Irma De Rycke). All these people were engaged with the question of the metis, either as employees or advisors of the colonial state or as members of religious congregations. Thirdly, I searched for the religious congregations of which I knew from Jeurissen's (2003b) work that they received metis children. These are the Catholic Mission of Tumba, Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (White Sisters) in Save, Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary in Moanda, Franciscan Missionaries of Boma, The Daughters of the Cross of Liège in Kindu and The Congregation of the Holy Spirit at the station of Brain-l'Alleud-Saint-Joseph in Lubunda. I especially investigated the archival files about the missionary activities of these congregations in the Belgian Congo (or Ruanda-Urundi). I eventually consulted 6 folders of which BE/942855/239/37, BE/942855/239/654, BE/942855/451/72, BE/942855/209/11.2.21.9 proved to be most interesting for my research. The first two folders are part of the personal archive of André Dequae (1945-1965). Dequae was Minister of Colonies from 1950 until 1954. The third folder is part of the archive of Romain Moyersoën (1887-1961), who was President of the Senate from 1936 until 1939. BE/942855/209/11.2.21.9 is a component of the personal archive of August-Edmond De Schryver. De Schryver occupied different political positions from the 1920s until the early 1970s. The other folders through which I went more rapidly, were part of the archives of religious congregations. These files gave some interesting background information but contained little information about metis.

Because the archives I consulted in KADOC were personal archives, there is more variety in the types of documents I found here compared to the Africa Archive. In the archive of André Dequae, I for example found several articles from Belgian newspapers reporting on the issue of metis. In the different folders which I have consulted, there are also quite some sources in which written notes have been added or certain parts have been highlighted. This tells something about how these politicians perceived what was written in the documents.

I had permission from KADOC to take pictures of the archival files that were of interest for my research. This has helped me tremendously since I could only consult the archive once before it was

closed because of the corona measures. The online inventory was easy to use. The only problem I experienced was that documents with French names were often translated into Dutch and that this translation was not done consequently. This was especially problematic because most of the sources about the Belgian Congo are in French. To avoid missing documents because of the translation issue, I looked up every keyword in both French and Dutch, singular and plural. The same goes for the personal names. I, for example, searched both Alphonse Cruyen as Alfons Cruyen. Since I was the first one to consult the KADOC archive for sources about the metis, I could not rely on folders that had been previously mentioned in other works. This, however, makes the sources of KADOC even more important because they have not been used before.

I am quite sure that I have been able to locate all the relevant information in the KADOC archive but looking things up in the Africa Archive proved to be more difficult. The Africa Archive does not have an online inventory, so you must rely on the archivists to collect the relevant folders. As a result of the resolution adopted by the Belgian government on the 29th of March of 2018, a research project is issued to create a database bringing together all documents concerning the metis of Belgian colonisation¹⁶. This database would include general documents and individual records. I have contacted Delphine Lauwers, one of the researchers attached to the State Archives of Belgium issued with this project. She told me that the research project is only in a preliminary phase but gave me a list of folders in the Africa Archive which could be of interest for my master's dissertation.

The initial plan was to go through all the relevant folders, both collected with the help of the archivists in the Africa Archive and Delphine Lauwers, and to take notes of the interesting documents. In a second stage, I wanted to look more closely at the sources that I was planning on using and if possible, would have requested copies. Ideally, I would also have investigated the Africa Archive more attentively and would have consulted more folders to be sure that I had all the information on the metis topic that is available. Due to the Corona Crisis and the subsequent measures, I could no longer visit the archive to get to the second stage of my archival research. In consultation with my supervisor, dr. Gillian Mathys, I contacted the Africa Archive to try to get copies of relevant sources that I had already consulted before. They were able to send me scans of

¹⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/04/world/europe/belgium-kidnapping-congo-rwanda-burundi.html>

the newspaper articles which I wanted to use. Sending government documents was not possible because of privacy issues.

As a result of the corona measures and their impact on the collection of primary sources, I refer in the continuation of my master's dissertation to sources of which I have only partial accounts. Most of the times, it was not possible to use citations of the sources, which made me decide to try to paraphrase these documents. I am aware of the fact that paraphrasing the documents from what I remember about it and from the little notes I took of them, is not the best way to refer to documents. One's memory works selectively, and I only took notes of the parts of the documents that were of interest for me at that time. I only have a snapshot of the documents and I cannot revisit the documents in their totality. There is no problem for the sources from the KADOC archive because I have been able to photograph the relevant documentation. For the Africa Archive, however, I only have my own notes which I made of the sources. These notes are often incomplete and cannot replace the source itself. Because of the difficult situation in which these master's dissertation was written, I have nevertheless used these incomplete notes to refer to the primary sources. When I did this, I have always indicated it with a footnote. I have put all the information which I had of this source in the footnote.

3.2.Literature review

Every research needs a good literature review, but in the original plan this would have been more elaborate. The Corona Crisis has forced me to make some alterations to this original plan. Because I could not consult the archives anymore, I have decided to elaborate on my literature review. The extra literature is meant to back the archival sources of which I have only partial records. I have started my literature review, not surprisingly, with the status quaestionis of my topic of research. I believe that knowing the work that has already been done on a certain topic, is a very important first step. Doing the same research twice is of no use, so a summary of the previous work and results allowed me to see gaps in the historiography in order to work complementary.

Because I did not have access to several archival sources, I have tried to find other primary sources. The help of my supervisor Michael Meeuwis has been instrumental for this. In the remainder of this thesis, I will thus not only refer to primary sources which I have found in the Africa Archive and KADOC archive, but also to primary sources which I have found online or could consult with the

help of my supervisors. These are for example the works of Heyse and Hulstaert and the colonial propaganda film 'Bwana Kitoko' from 1955.

My focus is on the metis of the Belgian Congo, but in my theoretical framework I also pay attention to the situation in the Congo Free State and Ruanda-Urundi. I believe that because the Congo Free State can be perceived as the precursor of the Belgian Congo, it is necessary to also investigate the situation of metis in the Congo Free State. This allows me to see continuities and discontinuities. It is for the same reasons that I decided to also look deeper into the situation in Ruanda-Urundi. Ruanda-Urundi and the Belgian Congo cannot be seen separately. Both territories are acquired in different ways and the policy was mostly separated but, in many aspects, the approach was alike. The legal framework towards metis differed in both territories but the Belgian colonial vision towards these children was very similar in both the Belgian Congo as Ruanda-Urundi. It is even more important to look at both areas because many metis who were born in Eastern Congo were transferred to religious institutions in Ruanda-Urundi, as there were the children of Save.

3.3. Methodological reflections

The work of Ann Laura Stoler's 'Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense' from 2009 allows me to make reflect on my methodology. Archive source can be very useful but must be carefully interpreted. Reflecting on my methodology is especially important since I am missing some documents because of the corona pandemic. In the first chapter of her work, Stoler quotes Lévi-Strauss, who beliefs that in ethnology paying attention to what has not been written, is the most important. Stoler, however, looks at the opposite, the things that are written in colonial archives. She says the following thing about her book: "It is a book that asks what we might learn about the nature of imperial rule and the dispositions it engendered from the writerly forms through which it was managed, how attentions were trained and selectively cast" (p. 1). The relatively large number of files about metis in the archives thus tells something about the way that the colonial state dealt with this "problem" and the importance that was given to it.

Stoler primarily relies on sources about the Dutch East-Indies in both the State Archives of the Netherlands and the National Archives in Jakarta, Indonesia. As I have previously mentioned I have only looked at archives in Belgium. Stoler clearly indicates that she found most of her sources in archives in the Netherlands but still believes that archives in ex-colonial territories can be of great

interest as well (Stoler, 2009). The Democratic Republic of the Congo has a national archive in Kinshasa, so it is possible that there are sources to be found about the metis in this archive. Chances are, however, big that sources from the colonial period in Congolese archives are documents from the colonial administration as well. Other types of documents than those of the colonial administration could have given me different perspectives on the metis. I am for example thinking about documents about metis written by évolués of which I have also found some in the archives in Belgium. It would have been interesting to have found some more voices from below. This is of course only a presumption and I cannot be sure about this because I have not looked into this archive. It is nevertheless important to also pay attention to the things that I have not done, instead of only explaining the things that I have done.

Stoler focusses on archiving-as-process rather than archives-as-things. The focus is on looking at colonial archives as “condensed sites of epistemological and political anxiety” (Stoler, 2009, p. 20). This is more useful than only seeing them as biased sources. Colonial archives and especially the way they are composed say something about power relations and shed light on what was perceived as important. Tracing a document’s place in the archive and finding out its relation to other documents in the same file is often neglected but equally as important as what is actually written down in the document. A thorough background check of the author of the document, the ministry or organisation mentioned on the heading of the document and the relation between the author and ministry/organisation can also give important information (Stoler, 2009).

Stoler dedicates a chapter of her book to the traces of “mixed-race” children in colonial archives. As previously mentioned, mixed children could be found in every colonial territory and the metis of the Belgian Congo were thus no exception. The mixed children in the Dutch East-Indies were called *Inlansche kinderen*. Just as there are documents of the metis to be found in the Belgian colonial archives, there are documents of the *Inlandsche kinderen* to be found in the Dutch colonial archives. According to Stoler, identities and categories can be captured in colonial archives. This also applies for the category of metis/*Inlandsche kinderen* and the subsequent identity construction. Stoler noticed that a lot of the documents concerning *Inlandsche kinderen* are about future plans and about the things that could be done about them. There must be made a clear distinction between documents about *what has been* and documents about *what might have been*. These last type of documents gives an insight into the anticipatory characteristic of the colonial state. They deal with

possible responses to threats against the colonial state and the colonial order. This is clearly an indication of the anxieties of colonial states (Stoler, 2009). The same can be witnessed for documents about metis in Belgian archives. Most documents are official state papers about how to deal with the metis. A lot of the plans that have been discussed in these documents, have never been put into action. They are preparations for future threats against the colonial state.

Ann Laura Stoler also gives special attention to the organisation of commissions by the colonial state. She sees these commissions as places where characteristics of the colonial state were enlarged. Stoler quotes Dutch anthropologist Frans Husken when he is speaking about colonial commissions in Java: “when nothing else works and no decision can be reached, ‘appoint a commission’ was a favourite response of colonial authorities” (Husken, as cited in Stoler, 2009, p. 30). According to Stoler, commissions were not really meant to take decisions but to give everyone the feeling that their concerns about a specific topic were heard. It was a means to collect information about a certain topic but in the end, only the information that played in favour of the state was included in the report. Organising and performing a commission is a lengthy process and it was therefore often used to delay events and to keep every actor satisfied (Stoler, 2009). In the Belgian colonial archives, we can also identify many commissions. I will give some more information about Stoler’s view on commissions in the discussion.

4. Metis commissions and organisations

In this chapter I will tell something more about the commissions concerning metis and natives and about the organisations dealing with metis, founded both in the colonies and the metropole. I will explain the role that these commissions and organisations had as an advisory body for legal decisions concerning metis and more subtle in the identity construction of metis.

From the research done by Jeurissen, Budagwa and Heynssens it also became clear that there were many actors with often contradictory visions involved in the “metis problem”. I will give attention to some of these actors and trace the origins of their contradictory views.

4.1. Commissions

Apart from just giving an overview of the commissions concerning metis, I want to go deeper into the reasons for organising a commission. What is said and decided during a commission is one thing, but why the commission is being held is another thing. Both aspects give valuable information.

As I have already mentioned in my methodological reflection, Stoler (2009) focusses on the construction of colonial archives. She dedicates a chapter of her book to the presence of documents about commissions in colonial archives. According to her, colonial empires appointed a commission when it proved to be difficult to reach a decision. During these commissions there were, however, not many decisions taken. Some issues were tackled and decided upon, other things were discussed elaborately, but never agreed upon. As Stoler also points out, colonial archives are filled with documents about *what might have been*. This is also applicable for the archival traces of commissions. Many sessions of the commissions focussed on what measures might be taken to control the metis. Only a very limited amount of these measures has eventually been taken. This clearly refers to the anticipatory character of colonial states or what Stoler indicates as the “anxiety of colonial states”.

The first commission that dealt with the metis was the *Commission Permanente pour la Protection des Indigènes* in 1896. This commission did not focus on the metis but did give attention to this topic. The creation of this commission was a reaction to the atrocities committed during the era of

the Congo Free State and was meant to set up regulations to protect the natives. This can be seen in light of Stoler's (2009) view that states used commissions to show their goodwill to tackle problems and distract the population from ongoing struggles. It was a permanent commission and was continued to be held after the Congo Free State became a Belgian colony under the name of the Belgian Congo. The first session of the commission was only held in 1911. During this first session, the metis children and what to do about them was already discussed (Budagwa, 2014). This is obviously a very early date and it indicates that the issue of metis was already recognised in the early days of the Belgian Congo. Documents about the establishment of the first institutions for metis date from the same period.¹⁷

During the *Commission Permanente pour la Protection des Indigènes*, the topic of education for the metis was discussed. I will give a little extract of the 1911 session of the commission:

La Commission exprime le vœu que le gouvernement se préoccupe d'une façon toute particulière des enfants mulâtres abandonnés dans la Colonie. Elle souhaite qu'ils puissent être recueillis dans des établissements qui leur seraient spécialement affectés et où ils recevraient avec des soins spéciaux, une instruction leur permettant d'occuper plus tard une situation honorable dans la Colonie (Guebels, 1952, p. 553-554).

(Own translation: The Commission expresses the hope that the Government will pay particular attention to the abandoned Mulatto children in the Colony. Their hope is that they will be taken care of in establishments especially assigned to them, where they would receive special care and an instruction enabling them to occupy an honourable position later on in live in the Colony.)

The commission clearly focuses on the metis children that have been abandoned. This usually refers to abandonment by their fathers and not necessarily by their mothers. More so, the mothers of metis children are not discussed during this session of the commission. This is an indication of the negative view on African women during the colonial era. The commission preferred that the abandoned metis

¹⁷ Africa Archive, M 615, Instruction publique – colonies scolaires. (I refer to the complete folder because I do not have the titles of all the documents in it due to the corona measures.)

were taken care of in special institutions. This advice was nothing new because the construction of these establishments had started earlier that year (Budagwa, 2014).

During the session of the *Commission Permanente pour la Protection des Indigènes* in 1938, the advice for separate education was withdrawn. As mentioned before, the overall policy in the colony had changed and this had its effect on the treatment of metis. The indirect rule on the political and administrative level was extended to the linguistic and cultural level. Natives were no longer believed to be able to become as civilised as Westerners. From this moment onwards, the commission advised that metis went to schools for natives (Budagwa, 2014).

The most important commission concerning metis was the *Commission des Mulâtres*, held from 1947 until 1952 (Budagwa, 2014). During this commission, the question of education was also heavily debated. It was discussed whether the metis children should go to European schools, schools for natives or institutions established especially for them. It was also decided which kind of education the metis should receive to prepare them for a job that suited their intermediary position. The topic of education was especially thoroughly treated by the *Commission des Mulâtres*. There were two different possibilities for the education of a metis child.

Le projet prévoit, que les élèves porteurs d'un certificat entériné délivré par une école d'adaptation, pourront être admis dans les établissements secondaires pour européens. Les autres, sortis des écoles d'adaptation, avec certificat non entériné, soit des écoles indigènes, seront admis dans les établissements secondaires pour indigènes.¹⁸

(Own translation: The project foresees that pupils holding a certificate issued by a school of adaptation, will be able to be admitted in the secondary establishments for Europeans. The others, graduates of adaptation schools without a confirmed certificate, that is to say coming from native schools, will be admitted in secondary establishments for natives.)

¹⁸ Africa Archive, AI 4674, Commission des Mulâtres (1947) 1948: éducation des mulâtres (Exact title of document unknown due to corona measures.)

The system of education for the metis had changed throughout the years. Metis were no longer seen as a homogenous group and not every metis was granted the same type of education. The advice of the *Commission Permanente pour la Protection des Indigènes* in 1938 to close the special metis schools, was not followed. Metis children who went to special primary schools for metis and who had received a certificate, could be admitted in secondary European schools. Metis children who went to native primary schools or who did not receive the certificate, could only go to native secondary schools or to secondary schools specifically established for metis. Primary school metis could only go to native or specific metis schools. It was thought that they first had to be “Westernised” and “civilised” in specific schools before mixing them with the European children. The metis that did not go to specific metis primary schools had to pass an exam to be allowed in “white” schools. This was also true for Sybille, a Belgian metis. She explains that she was home-schooled by her father who had also recognised here. She had to pass an exam to prove that she was “civilised” enough to go to a “white” school (Ghesquière et al., 2010). This measure was also supported by European fathers in the colony who wanted to prevent their white children following classes together with Eurafrikan children (Hulstaert, 1945). Although the Belgian government has repeated on multiple occasions that it did not want to divide the metis into two groups, the organisation of education had exactly this outcome. In reality, only very few metis children, mostly recognised metis, were enrolled in secondary European schools (Heynssens, 2017).

Another topic that was discussed during multiple commissions was the issue of their categorisation. How to fit the metis in the colonial system based on racial segregation? Which category was best suited for the metis? Was there a need for a new category? Should the basis of classification be changed? The commissions tried to give an answer to these questions. This topic gives a clear indication of the racial thinking in the colony.

In 1938, the session of the *Commission Permanente pour la Protection des Indigènes* decided that the metis should be assimilated in the native society and even better in the society of the *évolués* (Guebels, 1952). During the session of 1947, this point of view was repeated. This session of the commission was the last session in which the “metis problem” was discussed. The session of 1951 did not say anything on this topic (Budagwa, 2014).

The racial categorisation in the colony even caused one of the commissions to be suspended. The last commission on the metis and the most important one was the *Commission des Mulâtres*. This commission was suspended for a few months starting on the 13th of March of 1948 because the commission had reached an impasse. It was perceived impossible to come up with a solution for the metis as long as there were only two classes in the colony. What was needed was a thorough reform of the colonial system with its division in two groups according to race. Instead of this racial division, a division based on “*degré d'évolution*” or the level of evolution was needed. In order for the *Commission des Mulâtres* to move on, a second group of experts was called to action to look at the possibilities of a new system of division. A system in which there was a place for the metis. All this can be read in a letter of Julien Vanhove written on the 13th of December of 1949 addressed to Mister Deschamps.

Cette réforme était envisagée comme suit: institution de plusieurs régimes juridiques entre lesquels la population congolaise devrait être répartie, sans distinction de race selon le degré d'évolution de chacun, ce degré n'étant pas essentiellement dépendant de l'instruction, mais de l'éducation et de la valeur individuelle. Les mulâtres se répartiraient entre ces statuts selon leur degré de formation personnelle et les problèmes particuliers les concernant seraient ainsi résolus.¹⁹

(Own translation: This reform was envisaged as follows: establishment of several legal regimes between which the Congolese population should be distributed, without distinction of race according to the degree of development of each, this degree not being essentially dependent on schooling, but on the education and individual worth. The mulattoes would be divided between these statutes according to their degree of personal training and the particular problems concerning them would thus be resolved.)

This is the first time that the categorisation based on racial segregation was put under pressure by the policy makers themselves. It is clear that the metis posed a threat to this system, but before, the

¹⁹ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: Ministre des colonies, Note pour monsieur Deschamps: Activité en 1949 de la Commission des mulâtres créée par Arrêté ministériel du 19 mars 1947. Bruxelles, le 13 décembre 1949.

metis were the ones that had to be fit in in the system. During this commission, it is proposed that the system had to be altered to the presence of metis.

This new system of division was, however, never installed. The *Commission des Mulâtres* restarted a couple of months later and revisited the issue of the legal status of metis. The main point of discussion was whether to create an official legal status of metis, which would in the end create a third class in the colony. This new third class would, however, still be a racial category. Eventually, most members of the commission were against the creation of a third class (Budagwa, 2014). This is an extract from a report of the commission from 1948.

On ne peut pas créer, pour les mulâtres, un statut spécial, qui ne serait basé que sur des critères raciaux; il faut au contraire les rattacher, selon leur standing social, aux différents régimes qui existent en fait, à la colonie.²⁰

(Own translation: We cannot create a special status for mulattoes, which would be based only on racial criteria; on the contrary, they must be linked, according to their social standing, to the different regimes that in fact exist in the colony.)

The focus was not only on the skin colour of the metis but also on their “standing social” (sic.). This mostly referred to the society in which they grew up. Recognised metis who more often went to European schools, were seen as taking on a higher position in the colony. They were sometimes linked to the group of *évolués* or *indigènes immatriculés*. Both categories functioned as intermediaries between the white and the black society. There was disagreement between the members of the commission about the question whether every metis should be given access to become *immatriculé*. It was generally perceived that metis with a high “social standing” should be allowed to be *immatriculé* but the case was different for metis who grow up in the native society.²¹ I have not found documents in which a clear decision about this topic was taken. One thing is clear,

²⁰ Africa Archive, AI 4674, Commission des Mulâtres (1947) 1948: Statut juridique (Exact title of document unknown due to corona measures.)

²¹ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: Note manuscrite de monsieur le gouverneur général Ryckmans. Léopoldville, le 18 juin 1945.

however, an official third class for metis has never been established. I will explain the link between metis and *évolués* more elaborately in the seventh chapter.

Another important topic discussed during the *Commission des Mulâtres* was the question of fatherhood. There was discussed what to do when the European father did not want to take his responsibility, how to prevent fathers from abandoning their children and how to trace the fathers and get them to pay for the upbringing of their children. It is decided during the commission that the regional officers should do everything to convince the fathers to pay for their presumed children.²² Although, it is not necessary that he also recognises his children. The commission proposes that if the (presumed) father shows “*mauvaise volonté*” or ill will, he will as a result receive penalties inspired by the Belgian law on family abandonment.²³

Apart from these three big themes on which the commissions have decided, there were also some minor topics that were discussed. There were for example sessions on the issue of healthcare: whether the children should be treated in hospitals for Europeans or hospitals for natives. The *Commission des Mulâtres* followed the same way of thinking as for the question of education. “Westernised” and “civilised” metis could go to European hospitals and the others had to go to hospitals for natives. The commission decided that their “standing” must be taken into account.²⁴ This conclusion of the commission was, however, never legally decided. It is clear from the examples above that the decisions of the commission had a huge influence on the identity construction of the metis. The colonial government decided for them that they occupied a special position, not white and not black, with a special type of education and specific jobs that suited this position. They could not become white or black. They could only become “a bit more” white and “a bit more” black.

²² KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: (no title) Letter written by P. Poncelet, attaché de Cabinet addressed to Théo Lefevre, Membre de la Chambre des Représentants. Bruxelles, le 20 mars 1948.

²³ Africa Archive, AI 4674, Commission des Mulâtres (1947) 1948: Abandon de famille (Exact title of document unknown due to corona measures.)

²⁴ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: Note pour monsieur le président de la commission pour l'étude des problèmes intéressant les mulâtres: II: Pour l'hospitalisation et le régime judiciaire. Bruxelles, le 4 février 1948. Dr. L. Mottoulle.

4.2. International aspect of the commissions on metis

Stoler (2009) also pays attention to the international character of commissions and colonial states in general. Colonial states often attract international experts to join the commission. Apart from this, we have also seen that international conferences can be organised to bring together different views on a widespread issue. The existence of metis was definitely a widespread issue in colonial times.

The second commission which dealt with the metis was the *Commission ministérielle pour l'étude du problème des mulâtres* held in Brussels. Contrary to the previous one, this commission was not permanent and was held from December 1937 until the concluding séance in January 1939. I found very few documents concerning this commission in the archives I consulted. As a result, I rely primarily on Budagwa (2014) and Jeurissen (2002b) for information about this event.²⁵ *L'Œuvre de la Protection des Mulâtres* has urged the colonial administration to care about the fate of the metis children and to have a commission discussing the issues surrounding their treatment. The Belgian government also felt pressured by the decision of the French government to give most metis direct access to obtain the French nationality. The Belgian government realised that they had to give attention to the metis and they organised a commission. During the commission there were, however, no real decisions taken. This fits perfectly in Stoler's view on commissions. According to her, commissions were held to satisfy the actors concerned and to distract them from what was really happening. The only thing that was really done during the *Commission chargée de l'Étude du Problème des Mulâtres* was bringing together information about the metis and listening to the advice of organisations that were concerned with the Euraficans of Belgian colonisation. The concluding remarks kept the balance between measures leading to *Indigénisation* and measures leading to *Européanisation*. In this way, both the government and the organisations were satisfied with the outcome of the commission. The commission's conclusions could either be seen as favouring the incorporation of metis in the society of the *évolués* or as favouring the foundation of a distinct third class. The influence of decisions taken in the French colonies is also clearly visible in the commission's discussion of education for the metis. The commission states that the example of the

²⁵ Jeurissen calls this commission the *Commission chargée de l'Étude du Problème des Mulâtres*. This title differs slightly from the one Budagwa gives it but because the dates correspond, I presume that they refer to the same commission.

French colonies should be followed when it comes to boarding schools for metis. They refer in this regard to such an institution in Brazzaville.²⁶

Apart from these three commissions discussed above, there was also an international congress about metis held in October 1935 in Brussels. This was the *Congrès internationale pour l'étude des problèmes résultant du mélange des races*. Leading colonials and politicians discussed possible solutions for the “problem of the mixing of races” during this congress. Hulstaert (1936) states that different topics were treated, as there were the biological and anthropological aspect of “race mixing”, their moral condition and their legal status. Most of the members of the congress were Belgians, but there were also Portuguese and French present. The congress was less racist than the commissions discussed earlier, and they even concluded that there was no scientific basis to classify metis as inferior to “pure” races (Heynssens, 2017). The motive to organise the congress and seeing metis as a problem is of course still very racist. This congress shows the scale of the “metis problem”. There were mixed children in all colonies and all colonial powers tried to find a solution to keep this group of people under control. The colonial powers did not act in a vacuum, they watched how the other colonies dealt with their mixed persons and as this congress showed, even consulted with each other.

4.3. Charity organisations

Over time, multiple organisations concerned about the fate of the metis have seen the daylight. They were often related to religious charity. Most organisations were established in Belgium or focussed on the metis of specific regions in the Belgian Congo or Ruanda-Urundi. On multiple occasions, the organisations acted as protectors of the metis during the commissions previously discussed.²⁷

One of the first organisations that was concerned with the metis was ‘l'Œuvre de la Protection des Mulâtres’, founded in 1932 by Father Alphonse Cruyen, Mrs Van Der Kerken and Paul Crockaert. Cruyen has always been involved with the story of the metis out of a religious conviction and Mrs

²⁶ Africa Archive, AI 1417, IV B Commission Mulâtres: Commission pour l'étude du problème des mulâtres, séance tenue le mardi 5 avril 1938 en la salle du Conseil Social, p 2-3.

²⁷ To see the influence of these charity organisations, see: Africa Archive, AI 1417: IV B Commission mulâtres; and AI 4674: Commission des mulâtres (1947) 1948.

Van Der Kerken (born Jeanne Rogissart) was the founder of an organisation for the protection of *femmes indigènes* or native women. The third founder, Paul Crockaert was minister of Colonies in 1932. In 1937, the organisation changed its name to ‘Association Pour la Protection des Mulâtres’, generally abbreviated as A.P.P.M.. In the beginning, the association was mainly concerned with the Congolese metis living in Belgium. After the second World War, the association also cared for the children of black American soldiers and Belgian women (Budagwa, 2014).

According to A.P.P.M., the Belgian government left the metis to fend for themselves. Abandoned by their fathers, they were brought up by their “uncivilised” mothers. The association preferred the children to go to Europe to have their education there. The A.P.P.M. was a trusted partner of the Belgian government and became one of the most privileged associations dealing with the metis. They especially owed this position to their respected founding members. The association had local sections in Léopoldville and Elisabethville. The organisation in Léopoldville was led by Vindevoghel. This was not surprisingly one of the most active members of the Congrès international pour l’Étude des Problèmes résultant du Mélange des Races. The A.P.P.M. did, however, not succeed in carrying out all their plans for the metis and their focus remained on the assistance of metis (Jeurissen, 2002b). The A.P.P.M. remained influential during the last days of colonialism. They were partly responsible for the “evacuation” of metis to Belgium at the end of the colonial period. The association, under the control of Paul Coppens at that time, placed the metis with foster families or in orphanages upon arrival in Belgium. Apart from caring about the young metis, the association also provided loans for adult metis who were in need of money (Heynssens, 2017). Although the association was often consulted by the government, they did not receive enough funding from the state and were unable to perform their task properly. In documents found in the Africa Archive, the A.P.P.M. is asking for more funding for their much-needed work. The government, however, was not willing to give more money to the association which is an indication of the low importance they attached to the case of the metis.²⁸

Later on, the regional section of A.P.P.M. in Léopoldville helped founding ‘l’Œuvre de la Protection des Mulâtres de l’Uélé’. This organisation did not have as its goal to bring the metis to Belgium, but

²⁸ Africa Archive, AI 3733, fourth subfolder: assistance aux mulâtres.

wanted to give them a better life in the Belgian Congo. According to the organisation, the legal status of the metis children needed to be improved and as many metis as possible should go to the religious institutions especially created for them (Budagwa, 2014).

Another important organisation was the 'Comité Européen de Protection des Mulâtres'. The association did not perform a lot of actions to help the metis but was influential in the cooperation between European colonial metropolises. They were of the opinion that the metis had their place in the native society and that this place should be protected. This organisation was also presided by Jean Vindevoghel (Heynssens, 2017).

Most organisations and protection societies only wanted the best for the metis and seemed genuinely concerned with their fate, but did make decisions that had long lasting effects on the lives of the metis. The members of the organisations for metis suffered from a paternalistic view on Africans that was typical for the colonial period. Their interest in the metis was based on racial thinking and stereotypes in which the metis had to be uplifted from the native society. The international character of the metis problem was also visible when it comes to these organisations. One could find protection societies for mixed children in most colonial empires. As mentioned earlier, there was even an organisation for the metis born in European colonies. There was no real cooperation between organisations of different nations, but they clearly had an influence on each other. In French Indochina there was for example the 'Société pour la Protection des Métis Indochinois' (Pomfret, 2009).

Another remarkable observation of these organisations and associations is that there were relatively many women among their members. This can be explained by the popularity of the 'Union des Femmes Coloniales' (Budagwa, 2014). This charity organisation issued a magazine in which articles about the misfortune of the metis children were published regularly. Because of this, a lot of colonial women felt pressured to concern themselves about the fate of these mixed children (Heynssens, 2017).

5. Gender and marriage policy

In this chapter, I will analyse the information I found concerning gender and marriage policy as related to the metis. As I have mentioned in the theoretical framework, the colonial view on African women contributed to the presence of metis in the Belgian Congo and to the treatment of both their mothers and the female metis themselves.

5.1. Metis & motherhood

Most interracial relationships in the Belgian Congo were between an African woman and a European man. This had different reasons. Until about 1910, white men going to the Congo Free State, and later on to the Belgian Congo were preferably young and unmarried. During their time in the colony, they were recommended to take on a *ménagère* or concubine (Jeurissen, 2003b). When Minister of Colonies Louis Franck became influential in the late 1910s, the policy towards concubinage changed (Meeuwis, 2011). Moehler-De Greef (2018b) notes that there were less concubines from the 1920s onwards. According to Heynssens (2017), this resulted in a decrease of births of metis. This would be a logical effect of the measures taken but it is, however, not visible in the estimations of the numbers of metis which I have listed in the theoretical framework. Howbeit these figures vary enormously and cannot be assumed to be correct. We cannot conclude from these figures that the presumed altered view on concubinage resulted in a decrease of the birth rate of metis. Quite the opposite even, the statistics show a steady growth of the number of metis. This is probably an indication of the overall increasing number of white people in the colony and of the fact that most estimations are not reliable. It is also important to take into account that it is generally thought that the infant mortality rate in the Belgian Congo was quite high in the lower social classes. There were mothers of metis in every social class, so we cannot conclude that the high infant mortality rate in the lower social classes had a substantial effect on the overall number of metis. It could, however, been assumed that it would have had an influence on the ratio recognised and non-recognised metis. Recognised metis were mostly born in the higher social classes that had a lower infant mortality rate. Children from interracial relationships from the higher social classes, mostly recognised metis, thus had a bigger chance to reach adult age (Jeurissen, 2003b).

It is, however, possible to see this altered view on concubinage when we look at testimonies of that time. Arthur Vermeersch (1914) makes a typology of the Congolese woman. He identifies three

types: the spouse of a polygamist, the *ménagère* of a white man, and the Christian woman. All three types of Congolese women are clearly inferior in his eyes, but there is still a hierarchy in his typology. In his opinion, an African woman can only reach a higher stage of civilisation when she has enjoyed a religious education and becomes a Christian. According to Father Vermeersch, the spouse of a polygamist is characterised by an unhealthy obsession for sexual encounters, which he has only seen in wild animals. It is for this reason, that Vermeersch detests interracial concubinage. He presents the *ménagère* as an animal like sexual being or as the devil herself. She is seen as even worse than other African women, because it was thought that she tried to seduce and lure colonials (Vellut, 1982). The Congolese woman is viewed very negatively, with the *ménagère* of a white man as the worst type. Because of this, she had to be controlled. The Belgian state together with the religious missions tried to discourage interracial concubinage by both controlling African sexuality and presenting Congolese women as the devil to discourage interracial concubinage. Also notice that Vermeersch already drafted this typology in 1914. This is one of the first accounts of this very negative view towards concubines and the mothers of metis. In the 19th century, their presence was not perceived to be this problematic (Ndaywel è Nziem, & Mudimbe-Boyi, 2009).

The reinforced racial segregation from 1910 onwards, which led to the increasing disapproval of interracial relationships, also had its influence on the treatment of metis (Heynssens, 2017). The first archival records about the metis which I identified, date from the same period. According to Jeurissen (2003b), the Belgian government started to go with the doctrine of *racialisation* around 1910. This approach focussed on the metis as a distinct class, because of insurmountable differences between both the metis and the blacks and the metis and the white population. It is no coincidence that all these dates overlap. Both the reinforced racial segregation as the choice for *racialisation* are results of the changing view on African people in general. In the archival record, this change can be identified in a relatively large number of sources concerning the foundation of the first special schools for metis. These sources date back to 1910. These archive documents are about the best place to construct these schools, lists with the names of the children that were going to be sent to the schools and the religious missions that were going to be responsible for these schools.²⁹ The importance of these institutions was also discussed. It was thought that it was best to take the

²⁹ Africa Archive, M 615, Instruction publique – colonies scolaires. (I refer to the complete folder because I do not have the titles of all the documents in it due to the corona measures.)

children away from both their mother and their father. They could then be raised in a closed environment. It was thought that metis were best off with their own category. The special schools were also meant to hide away the metis children because they did not fit the image the colonial state tried to propagate. The colonial government was not proud of its metis population and was afraid that their presence could cause problems (Heynssens, 2017). This also shows in discussions about the best place to construct institutions for metis.³⁰ The schools were preferably established far away from the cities, where the metis children were protected from both the white and the black population.

The mothers of metis were not thought to be able to take care of their children. It was generally thought that African women were good mothers because they were perceived as close to nature, but they were seen as incapable of raising metis children (Ceuppens, 2006). Having a relationship with a white man already made them inferior to other African mothers. The doctrine of *racialisation* therefore proposed to completely cut the ties between African mothers and their metis children. Establishing the religious institutions for metis in remote locations could help with this. Most metis were transferred hundreds of kilometres, which made it almost impossible for the mothers to visit their children (Heynssens, 2017).

Some metis were born out of loving relationships, but these were exceptions. Every relationship between a Congolese woman and a white colonial man was characterised by unequal power relations. Many Congolese women were the victim of sexual violence and exploitation. White colonials felt like they were entitled to an African concubine or to sexual favours of their African “subjects” (Lauro, 2005). On many occasions, these unequal power relations and sexual violence brought forth metis. The mothers of these children were often still very young themselves and becoming the mother of a mixed child endangered their position and their future in society. They were sometimes not able to care for their metis child and the promises of the religious institutions to take care and raise their children seemed the best solution. Some colonial actors saw this as the confirmation of their negative view on African women and African mothers. The problems of these

³⁰ Africa Archive, M 615, Instruction publique – colonies scolaires. (I refer to the complete folder because I do not have the titles of all the documents in it due to the corona measures.)

women, more often still girls, and the violence and discrimination they had to endure, was not taken into account (Heynssens, 2017).

In ‘De bastaards van onze kolonie: verzwegen verhalen van Belgische metissen’ (Ghequière et al., 2010), Imelda, a metis born in the Belgian Congo in 1956, testifies about how her mother was seen by the colonists:

Onze moeders werden ook allemaal als hoeren bestempeld. Ze hadden de blanke mannen verleid. Het was hun fout. (...) In de koloniale context was het gemakkelijker om de zwarte vrouwen te beschuldigen. Anders moesten ze de confrontatie aangaan en de verantwoordelijkheid inzien van de daden van Belgische mannen, vaders en zonen. Het was immers veel gemakkelijker de schuld af te schuiven op diegenen die als minderwaardig werden beschouwd. Vrouwen waren toen al minderwaardig, zwarte vrouwen dus nog meer. (Ghesquière et al., 2010, p. 102)

(Own translation: Our mothers were labelled as whores. They seduced the white men. It was their own fault. (...) In the colonial context, it was easier to blame the black women. Otherwise, they would have to confront themselves and recognise the responsibility of the actions of the Belgian men, fathers, and sons. After all, it was much easier to pass the blame on those who were considered inferior. Back then women were inferior and black women even more so.)

The negative view on the mothers of metis is clearly visible in this testimony. This negative view was a combination of the perceived inferiority of black people and the perceived inferiority of women. This testimony shows that blaming the mothers was also just the easy solution. The Belgian men going to work in the colony, were propagated as heroes by the government in order to attract more colonials. Stories of their sexual escapades in the colony and the resulting (extramarital) metis children could not spread to Belgium. Blaming African women for the licentious behaviour of Belgian men was a way to distract the general public in Belgium from the actions of their men. Apart from this, a negative and “uncivilised” image of Africans suited the colonial government in their goal to justify and glorify their colonial enterprise (Heynssens, 2017).

5.2. Metis: a gendered category

The view towards female metis, generally called *mulâtresse* or *métisse* in primary sources, differs profoundly from the view on male metis. Female metis did not only suffer from racial prejudices but also from gender discrimination. To understand the gender difference for metis, it is important to first explain the general view towards metis and the stereotypes of Eurafricans.

It was thought that a child born out of a mixed relationship did not only have a mix of the physical appearances of both “races” but also had character traits of both groups. The metis were either thought to have all good characteristics of both the white and the black “race” or all the negative characteristics of both “races”. As can be expected, the first view fitted in the approach of *Européanisation* and the second view in the approach of *Indigénisation*. In the first view, metis were thought to be relatively smart, good with numbers and hard workers. In the second view, they were perceived as lazy, immature, and wrongheaded. Belgian missionaries and colonials used to say that “God had created the white man and the black man, and the devil had created the metis” (Jeurissen, 2003b). Nolf (1930) says the following thing about metis: “Si attrayant que puisse être l'aspect physique de ces métis, il ne doit pas nous faire oublier qu'ils portent en eux les déterminants des caractères purs de la race noire (...)» (Nolf, 1930, p. 424-425). (Own translation: However attractive the physical aspect of these half-breeds may be, we should not forget that they carry within them the determinants of the pure character of the black race (...).) Nolf clearly wants to draw attention to the character traits of the “black race” of the metis. Although the metis had these black characteristics, it was generally perceived that they were superior to the natives. This superiority was attributed to their “sang blanc” or “white blood” (Cruyen, as cited in Burns, 1949, p. 2-3). These prejudices contributed to the external identity construction of metis as one of the categories of the colonial taxonomy.

Female metis were attributed some as the same qualities their mothers allegedly had. They were thought to be as licentious as their mothers were. This was also one of the reasons to keep them away from both the white as the native society and raise them in a protective environment. Female metis were wanted among white colonialists because it was thought that they were willing and sexually attractive but a little more sophisticated than black women. They were perceived as good-looking (Jeurissen, 2003b). In the personal archive of André Dequae in KADOC is a document from

1947, drafted by the ‘Association des Mulâtres de Léopoldville’, a local section of the ‘Association pour la Protection des Mulâtres’.³¹ This document among others mentions the specific situation the female metis were in and that they should be educated to deal with this situation.

Dans tout ceci, la jeune mulâtresse fera l'objet d'une attention toute spéciale. Elle devra être élevée à la hauteur de sa tâche pour qu'elle soit hors des multiples embûches qui, chaque jour, se dressent sur sa route et qui la fait aujourd'hui la proie de toutes les viles passions.³²

(Own translation: In all of this, the young mulâtresse (female metis) will receive special attention. She will have to be raised in order for her to avoid the pitfalls, which will be on her path every day of her live, and which make her prey to all vile passions.)

I want to share this citation because it clearly proves the special attention for female metis. They were perceived as “femmes faciles” or “easy women” (Ghesquière et al., 2010, p. 155). In the specific schools for metis, the girls are taught to be humble and to protect themselves from both the advances of black and white men.

Female metis were the victims of sexual objectification by white and black men. The focus was on their physical appearance and they were treated as objects of sexual desire. Sexual objectification of African women by white colonials was the reason many of the metis were born in the first place. Because of their “white blood”, female metis had to be protected from the sexual desires of men. In the opinion of the colonial authorities, their mothers and other African women did not have to receive this kind of protection.

Because of the perceived licentious character of the *mulâtresse* and because they were liked by both black and white men, it was thought that many of them were in danger of becoming prostitutes. Hulstaert (1936) says that the metis girls offer little resistance to the “groote zedelijke gevaren” or the “big moral dangers” that threaten them (Hulstaert, 1936, p. 25). It should above all be avoided that the Eurafrican girls end up like their mothers (Lambilotte, 1992). The religious institutions

³¹ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: Association des Mulâtres de Léopoldville, à Monsieur Sohier, Président de la Commission des Mulâtres Conseiller à la Cour de Cassation, Bruxelles. Léopoldville, le 4 mars 1947.

³² KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: Association des Mulâtres de Léopoldville, 04/03/1947.

should raise the metis girls and protect them from becoming prostitutes or concubines themselves (Ceuppens, 2006).

5.3. Marriage policy

Related to this gender aspect and to the characteristics that were attributed to the metis, is the policy concerning marriages of metis. Metis were as much as possible encouraged to marry fellow metis. This had multiple reasons.

Especially in the beginning of the twentieth century, the idea of the analogy between metis and mixed offspring in the animal world was widespread. It is no coincidence that “mulatto” refers to a mule, the offspring of a mare and a donkey. A mare and a donkey can produce offspring, but their offspring cannot procreate. In other words, a mule is sterile (Heynssens, 2017). It was generally thought that the same thing was true for metis. By encouraging metis to marry fellow metis, they hoped that this “species” would eventually become extinct (De Geest, 1934). The “metis problem” would solve itself. In reality, metis were of course not sterile, and they had equal chances to produce children than all other human beings (Ceuppens, 2006). The idea of the sterility of metis became less prominent throughout the decades, because the reality of the growing number of metis contradicted this view. This resulted in a growing effort to control the sexuality of female metis. The term “*mulâtre*”, however, remained widespread until the end of the twentieth century (Jeurissen, 2003b).

The religious institutions generally preferred their metis students to marry other metis. There were separate institutions for boys and girls but the different religious congregations leading the schools, kept in touch and introduced their students to each other when they reached a marriageable age. Sometimes the institutions also sought out white men (or women) to marry their metis girls. A marriage with a black man (or woman) was not accepted by the missionaries (Jeurissen, 2002b). The citation of Luciano, a metis born in the Belgian Congo in 1945, illustrates this:

De metissen werden daarom samen onder toezicht van blanke nonnen in een internaat gestopt. Je kon alleen uit die internaten ontsnappen door een huwelijk met een blanke of met een andere metis (Ghesquière et al., 2010, p. 175).

(Own translation: The metis were therefore put together in a boarding school under the supervision of white nuns. You could only escape from those boarding schools by marrying a white person or another metis.)

Many metis accepted these marriage proposals because it was seen as a way out of the institutions. When they did not marry, they were usually employed by the religious institution itself because they had difficulties finding jobs. There are also traces of this practice to be found in the archival records. In folder M 650 of the Africa Archive there are reports of “*inspections scolaires*” or school inspections. The inspections among others mention the “*élèves sortie*” or the “*situation postscolaire*”. This is information about the students that have left the institutions and why they have left. This is either because they had found employment or because they got married. I have found two examples of metis that got married with fellow metis.

Rapport du 01/01/1928 au 01/01/1929 sur l’œuvre des filles mulâtres dirigée par les Filles de la Croix à Lubunda (Braine-l’Alleud-St. Joseph) près Kongolo: élèves sorties: Geneviève Kongolo s’est mariée le 05/01 à un mulâtre résident à Kindu.

(Own translation: outgoing students: Geneviève Kongolo got married to a mulatto living in Kindu on the fifth of January.)³³

Rapport annuel 1929 enfants mulâtres (garçons), Lubunda (Braine-l’Alleud-St. Joseph) près Kongolo, missions des pères du St. Esprit préfecture apostolique du Katanga septentrional: situation postscolaire: 1 mulâtre, Michel Matifieri s’est marié à une mulâtresse de l’internat dirigé par les filles de la croix.

(Own translation: post-school situation: 1 mulatto, Michel Matifieri got married to a female mulatto from the boarding school led by the Daughters of the Cross.)³⁴

The first example is an example of a metis girl that got married to a fellow metis. It is remarkable that it is clearly stated in the report that her husband is a metis. The second example is about a male

³³ Africa Archive, M 650, Enseignement: inspection scolaires, statistiques 1928: Rapport du 01/01/1928 au 01/01/1929 sur l’œuvre des filles mulâtres dirigée par les Filles de la Croix à Lubunda (Braine-l’Alleud-St. Joseph) près Kongolo.

³⁴ Africa Archive, M 650, Enseignement: inspection scolaires, statistiques 1928: Rapport annuel 1929 enfants mulâtres (garçons), Lubunda (Braine-l’Alleud-St. Joseph) près Kongolo, missions des pères du St. Esprit préfecture apostolique du Katanga septentrional.

metis and it says that he has married a female metis from another religious boarding school. This proves the cooperation between the religious institutions when it comes to marriage policy, which Jeurissen (2002b) also mentions.

We should not forget that the metis also had their own agency to make decisions or to go against decisions made for them. When it comes to marriage policy, a metis marrying a fellow metis can also be a deliberate choice. I could not find clear examples of this in the Belgian Congo, but I did find a case in the French colonial empire. The '*Union Internationale des Mètis*' (International Union of Mixed-Race Persons) published its magazine *l'Eurafricain* once or twice a year. This was a magazine primarily written for the metis of French-ruled sub-Saharan Africa. The organisation advocated for financial, moral, and educational assistance to metis and wanted to facilitate the cooperation between metis of different nations by publishing this magazine (Jean-Baptiste, 2011). In the edition of *l'Eurafricain* of 1957, there is an article about metis marriages and households. Metis marrying other metis was encouraged by the magazine because it could ensure the social and biological reproduction of the group. The article also mentions that metis are happiest in a marriage with a fellow metis.³⁵ Coming from the same background and having experienced similar things can indeed be the foundation needed to create a special bond between people (Ceuppens, 2003).

³⁵ *l'Eurafricain* (1957), 25 (30).

6. The “metis problem” embedded in the colonial system

In the next chapter of this master’s dissertation, I would like to look at the metis and how they were treated as a part of the colonial system. Colonialism impacted every sphere of life and I want to focus on the relation that the metis had with some of the pillars of colonialism. The system of colonialism was based on segregation and this was visible in every aspect of this colonial system. As mentioned earlier, the metis were a threat to this system based on segregation. For every pillar of colonialism, specific rules for the treatment of metis were drafted in order to protect the colour bar. Their intermediary position demanded specific rules. I want to focus on spatial planning, education, and healthcare.

6.1. Spatial planning

Spatial planning was an important thing in every colony. It visualised the colour bar. Even more, it is the proof that there was a colour bar and racial segregation in the Belgian Congo (Rahier, 2003). This racial segregation was especially prevalent in the urban areas. From 1932 onwards, the colonial government prescribed an urban organization in which the European city was separated from the *cit  indig ne* (a native city) by a neutral zone, a *cordon sanitaire*. These different zones can also be witnessed in the 1955 colonial propaganda film ‘Bwana Kitoko’. This urban outline was in part influenced by ideas of hygiene. The *cit s indig nes* were thought of as sources of diseases and a neutral zone would stop the diseases from spreading to the European cities (Lagae, 2015). There was some discussion about the best place for the metis to live. Are they “white” and “civilised” enough to live in the European zones? Or are they seen as part of the native society and should they live in the *cit  indig ne*? What about the vision of *Racialisation* which wanted the metis to be among their own group?

In the chapter about gender and marriage policy, I have already said that the special institutions for metis were mainly build in remote areas, far away from the cities. This had multiple reasons. According to the religious congregations, a remote location was best suited to protect the metis girls from the advances of both black and white men and it would also make it harder for the mothers to visit their children. Another reason which made it better to build the institutions in isolated areas was the issue of colonial spatial planning. Most colonialists did not want Euraficans in their neighbourhoods and placing the institutions in *cit s indig nes* amongst the “uncivilised” Africans

did not seem safe either.³⁶ The colonists in the European cities wanted to keep their neighbourhoods as white and “civilised” as possible and the presence of Euraficans did not fit that image. The religious missions, however, did not want to establish their metis institutions in the cités, because of the perceived bad influence the black would have on the metis children. Neither the European city, nor the *cité indigène* was thus suited for a metis institution.

Apart from the metis children taken care of in the religious institutions, there were also metis children living with their parent(s) and adult metis that had to find a place to live. Some metis lived with their African mother in the *cités* . A small number of metis had parents that were still in a relationship. Because this was not generally accepted, these couples mainly lived in the rural areas where there were no such things as European and native neighbourhoods. The case was more difficult for adult metis. Father Cruyen had the following thing to say about the position of metis:

Op straat vermijdt men te spreken met een mulat, zooals het ook gaat voor een zwarte. Hij moet in de inlandsche wijk wonen en verblijven, en in alle openbare plaatsen is hij niet meer dan een inlander. (Van Der Schueren, 1946, p 341).

(Own translation: On the streets, one avoids speaking with a mulatto, as is the case with a black person. He must live and reside in the native district and in all public places, he is no more than a native.)

Cruyen says that the metis can be valued by white people as good workers, but outside of an employment context, they remain “mulattos”. In his opinion, they should live in the *cité indigène* and behave like a native.

There is one remarkable example of the way spatial planning was adjusted to the presence of metis that I would like to mention. In the testimony book ‘De bastaards van onze kolonie: verzwegen verhalen van Belgische metissen’ from 2010, we can read the story of Luciano. He was born in 1945 in the Belgian Congo. Luciano has a white Belgian father and a Congolese mother with roots

³⁶ Africa Archive, M 615, Instruction publique – colonies scolaires 2: colonie scolaire aux enfants mulâtres. (Exact title of documents unknown due to corona measures.)

in Greece and Zanzibar. Because of her foreign roots, Luciano's mother was a metis herself and Luciano has a relatively pale skin colour. His skin colour had a big influence on his life:

De koloniale administratie had toen beslist dat de metissen die heel blank waren, zoals ik, toch in de wijk van de metissen moesten wonen. We woonden in de streek Talli Kassi. Ik kreeg geen toegang tot de wereld van de blanken. We mochten echter in de metissenwijk geen Swahili spreken en geen Afrikaans eten meer nuttigen. We moesten ons als blanken gedragen. Op school werd ik gepest omdat ik op een blanke leek. Ik huilde en treurde. Er was in Congo ook apartheid. Men doet soms alsof dit alleen in Zuid-Afrika voorkwam. (Ghesquière, et al., 2010, p 174).

(Own translation: The colonial administration then decided that the metis who were very white, like me, had to live in the district of the metis. We lived in the Talli Kassi area. I was denied access to the world of the whites. However, we were not allowed to speak Swahili or eat African food in the metis district. We had to act like whites. I was bullied at school because I looked like a white person. I cried and mourned. There was also apartheid in Congo. It is sometimes thought that this only occurred in South Africa.)

This extract from his testimony proves that the Belgian policy towards the metis evolved over time. Luciano could live in the European city until he was four years old because he has a light skin colour. The rules, however, changed and he had to move to the "*metissenwijk*" or the metis neighbourhood. From one day to the next, Luciano was kept out of the European city. I did not find any sources about specific metis neighbourhoods, so Luciano might also be talking about an area in the *cit  indig ne* where many metis lived.

The same issues about metis and spatial planning can be found in other colonies in the world. In Hong Kong, a British territory from 1842 until 1997, the growing number of Eurasians in the beginning of the twentieth century caused turmoil with the European population in the colony. Just like in the Belgian colonies, the mixed children had a relatively low status. They were perceived as Chinese but also as semi-European or "semi-civilised". The growing presence of Chinese and Eurasians at Victoria Peak, one of the main regions for wealthy foreign residents, caused problems. The European men increasingly brought their wife and children with them to the colony and they were afraid that the Eurasian children would form a danger to their family. Just as in the Belgian

Congo, they believed that a high concentration of natives or mixed children could spread diseases. This was perceived as a danger especially to the European children, who often had Eurasian kids as playmates. The contamination of diseases was not the only thing that the European families worried about. The contamination also played at the cultural domain and they feared that the mixed children would teach the European children decadent behaviour specific for their “race”. As a result, it was made harder for Chinese and mixed families to settle down in the predominantly white areas (Pomfret, 2009).

6.2. Education and employment

A second sphere of social life on which the segregationist policy of the colonial government had a big influence, was education. I have already said something about the specific institutions for metis in the previous chapters but in this chapter I will elaborate on the exact type of education the metis received and what it said about their position in the colony. I also look at the precise interpretation of education in the Belgian Congo.

I start this subchapter by explaining the most important features of the school system in the Belgian Congo. In most colonies, religious missions were responsible for educating the children. This was not different in the Belgian colonies. During the era of the Congo Free State, the education was mainly organised by the religious congregations who focussed on preaching. The state itself set up very limited educational structures under the name of *colonies scolaires*, literally school colonies. Religious missions were often linked to these state institutions which were propagated as places where orphans or children freed from slavery could find refuge. The state only installed minimal structures because the focus was on exploitation (Ndaywel è Nziem, Obenga, & Salmon, 1998). During the period of the Belgian Congo, more schools were established and education was more organised. The education of the black population was not meant to create “poor copies of Europeans, but good Africans” (Dunkerley, 2009, p. 42). The natives received a type of education that would prepare them to become valued members of the colonial state. In practice, this meant a focus on manual and agricultural work and a lack of literacy education. European children went to different schools both organised by the state and by the missions (Dunkerley, 2009).

As was already clear in the chapter about commissions and organisations, the question of education for the metis was heavily debated. The segregationist policy and de facto colour bar in the Belgian

Congo made the decision about which schools were fitted for the metis, even harder. In the early days of the colony, the metis children that did go to school, went to black schools. At the end of the 1910s, special institutions for metis children were established. The first school for metis boys was established in Boma in 1919. In the same year, the institution for natives in Moanda run by the Sisters of Charity, opened a special section for metis girls.³⁷

Recognised metis and Asian children could be admitted in European schools from 1948 onwards. Two years later, a very limited number of Congolese children, mainly children from *évolués*, could also go to the European schools. According to the statistics of the government itself, there were only 290 metis enrolled in European schools in 1953 (Dibalu, 1969). The fact that metis children were allowed in European schools as of 1948 is only a minor fact but it says a lot about how the metis were recategorized. In the first decades of Belgian colonisation in Africa, Eurafrikaners were mostly categorised as blacks. This changed over time and the metis came to be valued more. This resulted in the foundation of special boarding schools for metis and eventually these children were even allowed to go to white schools. The propaganda of the charity organisations previously mentioned was influential in persuading the white population, both in the colony and the metropole, of the quality of these people and of the moral role the whites had in taking care of the metis. The Eurafrikaners were still represented as vulnerable and childish, but it was just because of these features that they needed the protection of the superior white population (Heynssens, 2017). For non-recognised metis, the situation, however, remained mostly the same. Officially, non-recognised metis were not allowed to be enrolled in European schools, but as written in a report of the *Commission des Mulâtres*, there were some exceptions.³⁸

The decision to allow recognised metis at white schools attracted quite some criticism by the white colonialists. The Belgian politician Pierre Wigny expressed his concerns about this issue in a letter addressed to Father Van Wing. According to Wigny, it would be best that an independent commission decided on individual cases of fathers that wanted their metis child to be enrolled in a European school. After one year, the general public would have accepted the presence of metis

³⁷ Africa Archive, M 615, Instruction publique – colonies scolaires. (I refer to the complete folder because I do not have the titles of all the documents in it due to the corona meas.)

³⁸ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: Conclusions de la commission du ministre des colonies sur le problème des mulâtres: 3^e Admission des enfants mulâtres dans les écoles pour enfants européens. Bruxelles, le 11 décembre 1950, A. Dequae.

children in European schools without the guidance of the independent commission. The religious institutions would then be allowed to make the decisions themselves.³⁹ Criticism on the decision of the government is also expressed in an opinion piece in a newspaper from the 27th of May 1948.

Les papas d'enfants mulâtres sont rarement des catholiques et ils enverront leurs enfants à l'Athénée. Ceux mêmes qui sont catholiques craindront où l'enfant mulâtre sera toujours considéré comme le fruit de péché, comme un intrus, et ils enverront leurs enfants également à l'Athénée. Les quelques rares mulâtres qui iront chez les Pères y subiront de telles vexations qu'ils auront tôt fait de désertter ces lieux inhospitaliers. Et ainsi, la propagande insidieuse pourra présenter les Athénées comme des "dépotoirs" aux regrettables promiscuités.⁴⁰

(Own translation: The fathers of mulatto children are rarely Catholics and they will send their children to the Athenaeum. Even those who are Catholic will fear whether their mulatto child will always be regarded as the fruit of sin, as an intruder, and they will send their children also to the Athenaeum. The few mulattos who will go to the Fathers will undergo such humiliation there that they will soon desert these inhospitable places. And so, the insidious propaganda will be able to present the Athenaeums as "dumping grounds" to the regrettable promiscuities.)

This comment should also be seen in the context of the Second School War in Belgium that started in 1950 and during which the issue of religion in education was discussed. The conflict was also fought in the colony and the cooperation between religious schools and state education was under pressure in the Belgian Congo (Depaepe, Vinck, & Herman, 2009).

The question was not only about in which institutions the metis should be enrolled but also about the type of education they had to receive. Schooling was meant to prepare children for a profession. European children received education focussed on writing, reading and mathematics so they could take on high positions in the colony or the metropole. As previously mentioned, black children received education focussed on manual and agricultural work in order for them to serve the colonial

³⁹ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: (no title) Letter written by P. Wigny, addressed to Père Van Wing. Bruxelles, le 22 avril 1948.

⁴⁰ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: newspaper article: Echos ...: Encore les mulâtres. 27/05/1948. (name of newspaper and author missing).

society in the best way they could. The type of education and appropriate employment for the metis was far more difficult. The religious institutions tried to find “intermediary jobs” for the metis. According to Heynssens (2017), the education of metis was aimed at ‘bottleneck professions’. She defines these as jobs that were considered inappropriate for blacks and that were not preferred by whites. Metis boys were trained to become mechanics, doctor’s assistants, or skilled craftsmen. Metis girls could pursue careers as teachers, midwives or seamstresses. All according to their personal abilities.⁴¹

Although their specific training, the metis population was characterised by high rates of unemployment. This had multiple reasons. The main reason for this issue was their salary. The metis, because of their European ancestry, enjoyed a special arrangement that said that they had to receive a fairly high salary.⁴² Their salary was almost as high as the salary of whites. Employers were not very willing to take on metis employees because of this special status. They could better take on black employees. Apart from being cheaper, they were also considered to work better and harder. It was thought that metis had poor health and were therefore not suited to do heavy physical labour. The metis who had enjoyed secondary education could apply for jobs with a higher status. For these jobs, they had to compete with white candidates. Although the metis had to receive a lower salary, employers still preferred to hire white employees because of the low social standing of metis (Heynssens, 2017).

6.3. Healthcare

Another aspect of social life in which the colour bar in the Belgian Congo was clearly visible, is healthcare. The presence of metis caused a problem for the segregationist policy in the hospitals. Prove of this are the many discussions about healthcare during the commissions concerning metis.

Doctor Duren, head of the *Service de l’hygiène*, submitted the question of separate hospitals for metis during the *Commission chargée de l’Étude du Problème des Mulâtres* of 1937-1939.⁴³ This

⁴¹ KADOC, archive Romain Moyersoen, BE/942855/451/72: Éducation des enfants mulâtres (Rapport à la Conférence des Chefs Ecclésiastiques du Congo JUIN 1936).

⁴² KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: Note pour monsieur le président de la commission pour l’étude des problèmes intéressant les mulâtres: III: contrat de travail – contrat d’emploi. Bruxelles, le 4 février 1948. Dr. L. Mottoulle.

⁴³ Africa Archive, AI 4674, Mulâtres avant 1940: Problème des mulâtres. Questions soulevées par le Service de l’Hygiène, Duren, A. Bruxelles, le 20 janvier 1938.

was based on an analogy with education: if metis needed separate schools they might also need separate hospitals. Another reason which made it more appropriate to give metis access to better healthcare was the idea that they had poor health. The Commission did, however, not think that every metis was entitled to better healthcare. A distinction was made based on level of education. A proposal was prepared in which metis who had enjoyed higher education, defined as having followed eight extra years of schooling after finishing primary education, could be treated in European hospitals. The families of these educated metis could receive the same level of healthcare on condition that they had a high “social standing”. The European hospital itself had the permission to decide whether the family of the metis could be treated in this hospital. These were, however, only recommendations. The Commission never decided upon the issue of healthcare.⁴⁴

6.4. Public transport

To a lesser extent, the issue of public transport for the metis was also debated. The colour bar could also have an influence on public transport. It was eventually recommended that everyone in the colony, including metis and natives, had access to all classes of public transport. No distinction was made on the basis of level of education or skin colour. In a note for the president of the *Commission des Mulâtres* we can read that the only discriminatory measure is the budget one has to pay for the public transport. According to this document, this will result in people taking their seats in the class suiting their “social standing”.⁴⁵ This document assumes that metis who have been educated among the natives and who live with the natives would have similar financial means as the natives. Other metis with a higher “social standing”, mainly recognised metis, were thought to be financially sound and able to buy the same tickets as the Europeans in the colony. This example again shows that the metis were not considered to be a homogenous group.

⁴⁴ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: Note pour monsieur le président de la commission pour l'étude des problèmes intéressant les mulâtres: II: pour l'hospitalisation et le régime judiciaire. Bruxelles, le 4 février 1948. Dr. L. Mottouille.

⁴⁵ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: Note pour monsieur le président de la commission pour l'étude des problèmes intéressant les mulâtres: I: transport en commun. Bruxelles, le 4 février 1948. Dr. L. Mottouille.

7. Metis and évolués

Apart from sources about metis, I have also found a lot of sources about the relation between metis and *évolués* in the Africa Archive and KADOC archive. In the archives but also in secondary literature, the link between metis and *évolués* is made in different areas. I will explain these connections and the criteria on which the colonial government based itself to categorise metis and *évolués* in the same group. I will also elaborate on how these two groups perceived each other and make the comparison with the status of mixed persons in the region of what is nowadays Senegal. This will give an insight into the categorisation of metis in the colonial era.

7.1. Legal status

Metis and *évolués* are most commonly linked in the domain of nationality law. As I have already explained in the theoretical framework, as of 1948, the colonial authorities reinvigorated the system of *immatriculation*. The status of *évolué* became more desirable from that year onwards.⁴⁶ The reinvented category of *évolués* can be seen as a result of the foundation of secondary schools for natives by the religious missions from the 1920s onwards. This gave rise to a group of people (in reality only men) that had a good knowledge of the French language and that adopted Belgian culture. Before, the government tried to prevent the rise of a Congolese upper class by only offering primary education to the natives. This group of educated Congolese received the opportunity of the Belgian government to become *immatriculé* (Gerard, & Kuklick, 2015). As already mentioned before, at the time of independence in 1960, less than 2000 Congolese had received this status (De Meester, 1998).

After proving that you can speak French and a series of tests about the “Western civilisation”, a native could receive the status of *évolué*. This came with a special type of card to prove this status. The category of *évolué* had some benefits like access to European neighbourhoods, but these were mostly symbolical and the *évolués* did not receive what they expected of the system. It was, nonetheless, the closest they could get to the whites. They took on an intermediate position between the natives and the whites in the colony. Because of this, they were often considered to fall under a similar category as the metis, who also occupied an intermediate position. Because of this similar

⁴⁶ As already explained in the theoretical framework, there was already a system of *immatriculation* in the Congo Free State and in the Belgian Congo before 1948, but it did not come with such a high status as after 1948.

position it was proposed by some colonial actors to give the metis the official status of *évolué*. This would acknowledge their intermediary position between the black and the white society and would also give them more rights than the natives (Jeurissen, 2003b).

Not everyone agreed to give metis the status of *évolué*. The persons that were proponents of the doctrine of *Européanisation* thought that the status of *évolué* was not good enough for the metis. It enhanced their situation slightly, but it was a status that could also be given to natives. They did not want to create a third intermediate class for metis and especially not a class which also consisted of blacks. This proves that even though they rated the metis quite high, they had a very negative opinion about blacks. This was also the view which the A.P.P.M. had in the 1930s. In 1946, 'l'Association pour la Protection des Enfants de Statut Européen' (A.P.P.E.S.E.), an organisation based in Lusambo, turned against the proposal of placing recognised metis in the same category as *évolués*. In a newspaper article, they expressed their fear that this would give metis a negative status. The association, however, did believe that non-recognised metis could be paired with the *évolués*.

The members of A.P.P.E.S.E. clearly saw a big difference between recognised and non-recognised metis.⁴⁷ Most people involved in the story of the metis, independently of the doctrine they supported, observed a difference between the non-recognised and recognised metis. Recognised metis were perceived as being closer to whites because their white father was still in their lives. Non-recognised metis, however, had hardly any links with the white society and were often the result of extramarital affairs and sexual exploitation of African women. This shows that the metis were not perceived as a homogeneous group.

Placing the metis and the *évolués* in the same category would eventually have the same result as supporters of the approach of *racialisation* wanted: a new category which acknowledged their intermediate position. The only difference was that this category was not only reserved for mixed persons but that natives who had reached a high level of civilisation were also allowed in the category. The magistrate Joseph-Marie Jadot was a supporter of the doctrine of *racialisation* and he wanted every metis to go to Europe to be educated in a Western environment. He did not want to create a real distinct class for the metis and proposed that the metis who stayed in the Belgian Congo

⁴⁷ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: Résumé des propositions faites par l'Association pour la Protection des Enfants de Statut Européen (A.P.P.E.S.E) Lusambo à la Commission établis à Bruxelles pour l'examen du problème général des mulâtres, Notre lettre du 26/12/46.

became part of the category of *évolué*. According to Jadot, this was the best solution for the metis and it did not require an adjustment of the nationality legislation (Jadot, 1927).

During the different commissions on the “metis problem”, the legal status of metis was heavily debated. The similarity with the *évolués* was noticed quite early. During the *Commission des Mulâtres* from 1947 until 1952, the possibility to give metis the status of *évolué* was discussed. The colonial government already presented the idea to the commission in 1948. The magistrate Antoine Sohier, president of the *Commission des Mulâtres*, communicated to the minister in 1948 that the commission agreed to give the metis the status of *évolué*. According to Sohier, this would also solve the problem of the categorisation based on a racial division. As I have already mentioned in the chapter about commissions and organisations, the *Commission des Mulâtres* was suspended for some months because the members thought that they could not overcome the legal colour bar in the Belgian Congo. Sohier was in favour of grouping them together but he also feared that the persons categorised as *évolués* wanted even more benefits.

La question est de savoir si elle sera une classe de mécontents dont feront indistinctement partie tous ceux qui voudront s'en réclamer ou si, grâce à la sélection qu'opérera la carte et à la satisfaction que celle-ci leur procurera, elle sera composée uniquement d'indigènes et de mulâtres méritant réellement le nom d'évolués et animés d'un bon esprit.⁴⁸

(Own translation: The question is whether it will be a class of dissatisfied who will indiscriminately be included if they demand to, or if thanks to a selection procedure and the satisfaction the card will give them, it will be made up entirely of natives and mulattoes who really deserve the name of *évolué* and who have a good spirit.)

To prevent this, the candidates for the new category must be well selected so that the category of *évolué* will have a high status. According to the commission, the card of *immatriculation* should be something desirable for both the natives and the metis. The members of the commission assumed that everyone, both blacks and *évolués* wanted to reach a position as close as possible to the whites. This fits in the colonial view wherein the white population is superior.

⁴⁸ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: (no title) Letter written by A. Sohier, addressed to the minister. Bruxelles, le 18 juin 1948.

7.2. The opinion of *évolués* about *metis*

The colonial government planned to place the *metis* and *évolués* in the same group, but they did not consider what the *évolués* thought of this comparison. In the archives, I have found quite some sources of *évolués* talking about the *metis*. This is interesting because most sources about the *metis* are written by white colonials. I did not find accounts of non-*évolué* natives and although *évolués* often distance themselves from the native Congolese society, I still believe that the accounts of *évolués* can give some information about how the *metis* were perceived in the Belgian Congo.

Most *évolués* were aware of the fact that their position was often compared to the position of *metis*. Because of this, some colonials thought that giving *metis* the Belgian nationality, would make the *évolués* jealous. Jean Vindevoghel, president of the *Comité Européen de Protection des Mulâtres* therefore thought that giving them the same legal status was the best option (Vindevoghel, 1935).

This fear of Vindevoghel was not unjustified. *Évolués* have written multiple articles in which they express their hostility towards the *metis*. In these articles their fear of “race-mixing” is expressed. The authors of the articles demonstrate animosity towards the *metis*. They believe that they are not the ones to solve the problem of the *metis* and refer to the “white blood” that the *metis* have. The *metis* are aligned with the colonisers and can therefore never be accepted by the black society. According to them, the white colonisers created the “*metis* problem” and they should solve it themselves.⁴⁹ This strong reaction may be a result of the view of Europeans towards the *évolués*. They were looked down at and laughed at by many whites which caused frustration by many *évolués*. The *évolués* thought that by reaching this status, the white colonisers would finally take them seriously. The reality proved to be completely different and the *évolués* were looked down on as “wanna be whites”. As a result, many *évolués* had a quite negative view of the white colonisers (Van Bilsen, 1993).

In the Africa Archive there are also some sources of *évolués* talking about marriages with *metis*. As I have mentioned earlier, the religious missions recommended *metis* to marry fellow *metis*. This recommendation was followed by many of the recognised *metis*, but a large part of the non-

⁴⁹ KADOC, archive André Dequae, BE/942855/239/37: Résumé des propositions faites par l'Association pour la Protection des Enfants de Statut Européen (A.P.P.E.S.E) Lusambo à la Commission établis à Bruxelles pour l'examen du problème général des mulâtres, Notre lettre du 26/12/46.

recognised metis grew up in the native society and married black persons. *Évolué* Jason Sendwe discusses the practice in an article from the magazine *l'Etoile-Nyota* from 1946.⁵⁰ This magazine was published in French and Swahili and focused on regional Katangese news and a Katangese readership. It was a counter reaction to the magazine *La Voix du Congolais* which was more nationally oriented (Bolamba, 1946). The author of this article, Sendwe, was involved in Congolese politics and founded the BALUBAKAT (Association Générale des Baluba du Katanga) party in 1957 which represented the interest of Baluba of Katanga. In the article, Jason Sendwe, states that the marriage law in the Belgian Congo prescribes that metis marry fellow metis. He declares that it is “*trop rare*” that a female metis marries an *évolué*. He does not talk about male metis marrying female natives. It is not really clear whether he approves of marriages between metis and *évolués*, but because his article is quite positive towards metis, one would assume that he approved of it. His view is obviously gendered because he can only imagine a female metis marrying an *évolué*. This is also because there were no real female *évolués* and he could probably not imagine metis marrying regular natives. There are, however, examples to be found of metis marrying black persons in ‘*De bastaards van onze kolonie: verzwegen verhalen van Belgische metissen*’. This is proof that metis did marry natives (Ghesquière et al., 2010).

In the same article, Jason Sendwe acknowledges the position of the metis and expresses his concerns about their treatment.

Personne de nous autres, noirs, n'a l'intention de mépriser les mulâtres; au contraire, nous serions totalement contents s'ils pouvaient même occuper une belle situation parmi les européens, car nous pensons, dans notre mentalité, que les mulâtres sont venus au monde pour lier le sang du blanc à celui du noir.⁵¹

(Own translation: No one of us, blacks, intends to despise mulattoes; on the contrary, we would be completely happy if they could even occupy a good position among Europeans,

⁵⁰ Africa Archive, AI 4674, third subfolder: extrait du journal *l'étoile* (Nyota) du 5 septembre 1946 d'Eville - les mulâtres. Written by Sendwe Jason.

⁵¹ Africa Archive, AI 4674, third subfolder: extrait du journal *l'étoile* (Nyota) du 5 septembre 1946 d'Eville - les mulâtres. Written by Sendwe Jason.

because we think, with our mindset, that the mulattoes came into the world to link the blood of the whites to that of the blacks.)

This makes clear that the category of *évolués*, just like any other group, is not homogenous and that there were as many opinions as there were *évolués*. By writing this article, Sendwe Jason tries to be involved in the discussion about metis in the Belgian colonies. He gives advice about spatial organisation, employment and marriage. Sendwe is positive towards the metis.

I have also found an account of an *évolué* who tries to explain that not every *évolué* despises the metis. He refers to the article of Sendwe Jason as a good example of a more positive view. The author, Jacques-Marie Ndalia, identifies himself with metis because they are both ill-treated by the white population in the colony.

Quelques'uns parmi nous prétendent que les métis nous injurient; nous traitent de "sales nègres"; oui, mais combien de fois n'ai-je pas entendu les noirs traiter les mulâtres pour des "HARAMU" (enfants du péché); cela n'est-il pas plus blessant que "SALES NEGRES"?⁵²

(Own translation: Some of us claim that the métis are insulting us; call us "dirty negroes"; yes, but how many times have I heard black people treating mulattoes for "HARAMU" (children of sin); isn't that more hurtful than "SALES NEGRES"?)

Some metis insult *évolués*, but according to Ndalia the insults of black people towards *évolués* are far more serious. In his opinion, *évolués* should not insult metis but should welcome them. In Ndalia's opinion, both the metis and the *évolués* are marginalised groups in the Belgian Congo and they should support each other.

Évolués generally tried to show how civilised they were and how different they were in comparison with the other natives. They often took over Western habits like eating with fork and knife, but especially in the beginning they also adopted colonisers' opinions (Gerard, & Kuklick, 2015). It is thus a possibility that Ndalia and others felt like welcoming the metis was an appropriate reaction for their position. This can also be derived from the following sentence in his article:

⁵² Africa Archive, AI 4674, third subfolder: extrait du journal « l'étoile – Nyota » du 9 janvier 1947, p 3: un coup de lumière sur des banalités. Written by Ndalia Jacques-Marie.

Nous ne devons pas non plus oublier, mes chers amis, qu'en respecte les mulâtres, nous respectons en même temps nos civilisateurs.⁵³

(Own translation: We must not forget either, my dear friends, that by respecting the mulattoes, we at the same time respect our civilisers.)

Ndalia tries to encourage fellow *évolués* to be positive about the metis because it will be perceived as a sign of their respect towards the “civilisers”. This could enhance their status with the white population.

In this account, the opinion of regular natives about the metis would also be interesting. I did not find any information of natives talking about metis in the archives, other primary sources or secondary literature. I did, however, find an article from the colonial magazine ‘L’avenir colonial belge’. In this article the “metis question” is discussed and the author compares metis and *évolués*.

Au Congo, la question des mulâtres ressemble beaucoup à celle des évolués, mais l'attitude des Noirs purs vis-à-vis des mulâtres est parfois différente. Ils sont hostiles ou jaloux, méprisants ou apeurés.⁵⁴

(Own translation: In the Congo, the issue of mulattos is very similar to that of the *évolués*, but the attitude of pure blacks towards mulattos is sometimes different. They are hostile or jealous, contemptuous, or frightened.)

According to this colonial article, the native population has a different opinion of the metis than it has of the *évolués*. Their situation is similar, but the view towards metis is a lot more negative. This supports what Ndalia says in the previous paragraph. He also mentions that the black population insults the metis. According to this extract, this attitude has different reasons. It can be the result of hostility, jealousy or fear towards the metis. In general, the view the natives had of the *évolués* was a lot more positive.

⁵³ Africa Archive, AI 4674, third subfolder: extrait du journal « l'étoile – Nyota » du 9 janvier 1947, p 3: un coup de lumière sur des banalités. Written by Ndalia Jacques-Marie.

⁵⁴ Africa Archive, AI 4674, third subfolder: extrait de l'avenir colonial belge n°201 - lundi 22 juillet 1945: la question des mulâtres. Written by N.C.

7.3. The relation of metis with different groups in other colonial empires

In most other colonial empires, metis occupied a marginalised position in the colonial society. Their mixed heritage was disliked by both the native and the colonial population. Another reason for which they were despised, was the fact that they were often born outside of a marriage. This was obviously not always the case, but in the Belgian Congo metis children were known as “*enfants du péché*” or children of sin. According to Father Cruyen, being a “natural” child was already humiliating for “normal” children, but even worse for metis children because their skin colour would always reveal their “wrong cause of existence” (Cruyen, 1935).

In a lot of colonial territories, mixed persons were perceived by the local population as the representation of colonisers. Although the relatively low status of metis in the Belgian colonies and the low number, their presence still attracted quite some criticism (Jeurissen, 2003b). In colonies where mixed persons occupied high positions, there were a lot more critical remarks. I want to give the example of Senegal to show that the “metis problem” differed in other colonies. In Senegal, interracial relationships were already common in the 15th century. Unlike the mixed relationships in the Belgian Congo, these relations were positively perceived and the African women occupied high positions in the Senegalese society just because of their affiliation to white men (Lauro, 2005). The mixed girls born out of these relationships, were referred to as *signares*. In the 18th and 19th century, the *signares* were powerful traders, often involved in the slave trade. They were praised for having both knowledge of the local situation and the “finesse” of European civilisation. The *signares* were desired by both black and white men because it could give them commercial privileges (Jones, 2012).

Signares in Senegal in the 18th and 19th century could be compared to the *évolués* in 20th century Belgian Congo. Both groups were seen as linking blacks and whites together. As opposed to in the Belgian Congo, metis were seen as influential and powerful persons in Senegal. In that time, there was no native upper class with which they had to compete. During the era of the slave trade, the category of metis and the category of “evolved natives” coincided in Senegal (Lauro, 2005). This clearly shows that mixed persons were not treated in the same way in every colony and that there was an evolution in the perception of metis. We have also seen that metis were not perceived as negatively at the time of the Congo Free State compared to the Belgian Congo. Towards the end of

the colonial time, a native elite emerged in most colonies and native Senegalese could also receive the status of *évolué*, similar to the system in the Belgian Congo. Mixed persons were sometimes part of this elite if they enjoyed a high status in that colony. Their status often depended on the status of white people in the territory. In Senegal, metis were seen as the predecessors to the emergence of an authentic African political consciousness (Jones, 2012).

8. Conclusion

This thesis investigated the treatment of Eurafrikan persons born in the Belgian Congo between 1908 and 1960. These persons, called metis, did not fit into the colonial system based on racial segregation and therefore posed a threat to the continuation of Belgian colonialism. In colonial sources the questions about how to deal with them were grouped under the name of *le problème des mulâtres* or the metis problem. I have searched the Africa Archive and KADOC Archive on sources about metis of the Belgian Congo and have in this way identified four understudied themes related to the lives of metis.

To start with, I analysed previous research done on the Belgian metis and examined the social and political context in which they were born and brought up. I hereby tried to pay attention to continuities and discontinuities in the view towards mixed persons and tried to draw parallels with the situation in other colonial empires.

In the fourth chapter, the commissions and organisations which dealt with the metis were described. Already in 1911, the first session of the *Commission Permanente pour la Protection des Indigènes* debated about the issue of the metis. In 1937, the *Commission ministérielle pour l'étude du problème des mulâtres* was held. This was the first commission that only talked about metis. A number of politicians, academics and religious actors were brought together to talk about the metis problem. The commission gave a couple of recommendations, but eventually no real decisions were taken. The fact that the commission was held, illustrated the growing worry of the colonial state. This commission and the others that followed did not make influential decisions but were nonetheless meaningful in theorising the metis problem. The topic of education and the legal status of metis were often discussed during these discussions. Apart from the commissions, several charity organisations concerned with the fate of the metis have been founded over the years. The first one was *l'Œuvre de la Protection des Mulâtres* (later A.P.P.M.), founded in 1932. Some influential religious fathers and politicians tried to bring the story of the metis under the general attention of the Belgians by founding this organisation. The A.P.P.M. and other similar organisations were also represented during the commissions on metis. Apart from commissions and organisations dealing with the Belgian metis, there were also more international gatherings. There was for example the *Comité Européen de Protection des Mulâtres* which facilitated the cooperation between different

European colonial powers on the metis problem. The amount of commissions and organisations is an indication of the importance attached to the metis problem and the difficulties to find solutions.

In the fifth chapter, the gender aspect in the metis story and the gender policy related to them was analysed. The gender aspect applied for both female metis and their mothers. African women took on a marginalised position in colonial society. They were both black and female and were discriminated on both aspects. In the early days of colonialism, the practice of concubinage was widespread and even encouraged. With the change to a policy of adaptationism in the 1910s, interracial relationships were no longer accepted and concubines were viewed very negatively. The negative view towards their mothers, resulted in an equally worsened view towards the metis themselves. Especially female metis were thought to have inherited the licentiousness of their mothers. According to the Belgian colonisers and religious mission institutions, metis girls should be protected from both white and black men. Religious boarding schools reserved for metis could provide this kind of protection. Because of the intermediate position of metis in the colony, most actors involved in the metis problem were of the opinion that inter-metis marriages were best. The special metis schools worked together to bring metis boys and girls together and arrange marriages between them.

The sixth chapter placed the metis problem in the colonial system. The colonial issue of the categorisation of metis caused problems on a whole range of aspects of the colonial state. I have focussed on the problems that the metis posed for the organisation of education and employment, healthcare, and spatial planning. These four important aspects of social life were all based on the existence of a colour bar in the Belgian Congo. Europeans and natives occupied separate places in the colony. There were separate schools for natives and Europeans, separate hospitals and separate neighbourhoods. The metis posed a threat to this system of racial segregation. Because the colonial authorities did not agree on one clear policy towards the metis or changed the policy regularly, every of the aforementioned aspects had to be discussed separately and a decision had to be made. The commissions on metis were influential in the debates about spatial planning, education, and healthcare of the metis. This chapter has shown the extent of the metis problem and the far-reaching impact the metis had on the colonial society. The difficult place the metis had in the society is an indication of the rigidity of the system of racial segregation.

Chapter seven of this thesis dealt with the relation between metis and *évolués*. *Évolués* were natives who, according to the colonial authorities, had reached a certain level of civilisation and were therefore treated under the Belgian code of law. This gave them some extra rights compared to the other Congolese. Because both metis and *évolués* took on an intermediate position in the colony, they were often placed in the same category. Both groups had characteristics of both whites and blacks in the colony and both groups were not really accepted by both the whites and the blacks. Because of this link, some colonial actors concerned with the metis proposed to give the metis the legal status of *évolué*. This would legalise their intermediate status. Apart from metis and *évolués* being linked in the legal domain it also proved interesting to look at accounts of *évolués* about metis. Most sources about metis coming from the colonial period are written from a Western point of view. *Évolués* certainly did not represent the average Congolese society but their opinions are nonetheless interesting. Some *évolués* understood the connection the colonial authorities made and identified themselves with the metis. A big part of the *évolués*, however, did not like the metis and saw them as the representation of all what was wrong with colonialism.

This master's dissertation has contributed to unravelling the stories of the metis and finding explanations for the way they were treated in the Belgian Congo. The complete *problème des mulâtres* can be brought back to the racial segregation on which the colonial Congolese society was based. One of the most important aspects of the metis of the Belgian Congo has proven to be the number of actors involved in making decisions about their lives. Politicians, academics, religious actors, philanthropists and *évolués* were all involved in their lives. Another striking observation is the international basis of the metis problem. Because of their intermediate position, the colonial society created a whole new identity for the group of metis. This external identity construction had a huge impact on their lives and how they viewed themselves in postcolonial DRC or Belgium. The impact of the constant change in policy towards the metis was noticeable in every chapter.

This analysis has relied on archive sources from the Africa Archive in Brussels and KADOC in Leuven. Some of the sources which I refer to have never been used in this context before and can have an impact on further research on the metis of the Belgian Congo. A disadvantage of this research is the fact that I was not able to search these archives very thoroughly and that I only rely on sources from two archives. In all probability, the Africa Archive and KADOC house more

sources about metis than I have been able to locate. There are definitely also other archives, in both Belgium and the Democratic Republic of Congo that contain sources about metis.

In recent years, the research about metis of Belgian colonisation has increased but there is still a lot to be discovered. More research is needed on the topic of metis to fully understand the position they occupied in the colony and how they were treated by different actors. I believe that every theme of this thesis can be further elaborated on into a whole new research. Especially the link between *évolués* and metis can be further examined and the opinion of other Congolese towards the metis could also be interesting in this topic.

It is important to be aware of the fact that black and mixed persons still experience discrimination and racism today. Studies like this one can help in exposing the roots of the discrimination and racism experienced by people of colour today. Knowledge about past abuses and discrimination can educate new generations to do better in the future.

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