STANLEYVILLE

An African Urban Community Under Belgian Administration

Valdo Pons

AFRICAN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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The members of the committee of an association of *évolués* photographed with their European president. The late Patrice Lumumba, later to become the first Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is on the extreme right

Stanleyville

AN AFRICAN URBAN COMMUNITY UNDER BELGIAN ADMINISTRATION

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FOREWORD

Dr. Pons's book on the social structure of the African community in Stanleyville (now Kisangani) is the outcome of field research which was undertaken in the fifties as part of a project for the development of studies on the extensive social changes taking place in African towns. The accelerated pace of economic development and the changes in outlook and aspirations among both the administrations and urban populations in African territories after the war had made the need for systematic study of social conditions and trends among urbanized and industrialized African populations increasingly apparent. In the quarter of a century that had elapsed since the publication of Orde Browne's *The African Labourer* (1933) and the pioneer enquiry by J. Merle Davies on *Modern Industry and the African* (1933) conducted on the Northern Rhodesian Copper Belt under the auspices of the International Missionary Council, a number of investigations had been undertaken in various parts of Africa. But they had been uncoordinated efforts, very diverse in scope, a few directed to special sociological problems and others to immediate considerations of social welfare and administration. A number of new studies were now being undertaken in several parts of Africa and there was need both for an appraisal of the results and implications of the work already done and for an exploration of the scope and methods of further research that was called for.

The International African Institute discussed with Unesco in 1950 means for furthering and co-ordinating such studies and was entrusted by it with the execution of a series of projects. These were focused on preparations for an international conference of social scientists and others to review the social effects of industrialization and urban development in Africa. This conference was held at Abidjan from 29 September to 27 October 1954, at the invitation of the French Government and in consultation with the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa South of the Sahara. A series of field reports and other studies was prepared in advance, and it provided a first opportunity for a comprehensive exchange of views on the scope, methods and results so far achieved in this field and for the formulation of proposals concerning future research. The preparatory surveys and the papers presented and discussed at this conference were published in *Social Implications of Industrialization and Urbanization in Africa South of the Sahara* (English and French Editions) Unesco, 1956.

The preparatory surveys on the distribution and character of modern forms of production in tropical Africa and on the social effects of economic development, brought out very clearly a number of general consequences of the creation of heterogeneous, largely unskilled wage-earning populations in African towns. They also showed, however, that there were wide differences in the economic conditions and social milieu of such urban populations which had to be taken into

account. It was clear that there was very great diversity with regard to such factors as the recency and rate of urban growth, as well as the strength of indigenous patterns of authority and social control; the range and frequency of migration and the degree of ethnic heterogeneity; the character and variety of working situations and levels of income; the premises and practices of administrations and expatriate entrepreneurs.

All of these had far-reaching effects on the patterns and stresses of urban life. But their diversity and variability had by no means been fully recognized in the more generalized accounts of urban conditions in Africa. Moreover their evaluation in a particular study often presented difficult problems of method. With few exceptions, earlier enquiries into African urban conditions had tended—not unnaturally, in view of the complexity of the situation and the very limited facilities for investigation that had been available—to be confined to some restricted aspect such as material conditions with regard to working conditions and standards of living, or the formal organization of industrial activity, welfare services and administration. Many such studies had practical aims, for example the provision of basic information with regard to development programmes and, while some had more theoretical objectives concerning the nature and determinants of social relations, they often suffered from vagueness of definition or a lack of sufficient data to resolve the problems posed. Another frequent limitation, for the purpose of comparative analysis, was inadequacy of methods of investigation. This was particularly apparent in connexion with techniques of intensive enquiry (open interviews, participant observation, case histories, psychological testing, etc.), the importance of which was being increasingly recognized as essential to the elucidation of social processes. It was clearly necessary to supplement 'social surveys', obtained by sampling for specific information by more intensive studies of social structure and of underlying attitudes. For the interpretations of the quantitative data and of the correlations they suggested often depended on knowledge of social processes and attitudes which such a survey could not itself provide. Furthermore, unless the character and probable interconnexions of significant features of social relations and cultural patterning had been previously ascertained, the selection of the data to be secured by a sample survey tended to be indiscriminate or ill-related to basic problems.

These considerations were borne in mind in planning for a field study of an African urban area to be carried out before the Conference was held and an attempt was made to combine as far as possible the different approaches of earlier studies. To achieve results which would be of both theoretical and practical significance provision was made for a small team of research workers, who, while bringing special skills to the tasks of securing and analysing relevant data in different spheres, would maintain a common approach to the enquiry as a whole.

It was desirable that the study should be carried out in a well-established and diversified urban centre with a considerable variety of full-time occupations and levels of skill. It was also important that the community should not be so large that the research team would find it impossible in the time available to comprehend the society as a whole and establish contact with people and social groups throughout the socio-economic range. Stanleyville in the Eastern Province of the Belgian Congo, with an African population of about 40,000, fulfilled most of these requirements. Long established as a trading and transport centre at the head of navigation on the Congo it had been a railway terminal since 1906, became a focus for road transport in the twenties, and there had been a significant development of light industries since the late thirties. From the point of view of extending the range of African urban studies Stanleyville also presented a useful contrast with several other African urban areas in which studies were being pursued at this time. It differed in its economic functions and its local context from both the 'old' trading towns of West Africa and mushroom mining centres such as those of the central African Copperbelt.

The scope and objectives of the enquiry were formulated to include an analysis of the contemporary social structure and the roles of various kinds of social grouping within it as well as an investigation of the range of factors contributing to the salient features and current trends in the social system. Thus the enquiry involved study of household, kinship, neighbourhood organizations, cliques, associations connected with recreational, religious, political and other activities, and of social differentiation and mobility as well as patterns of authority within formal and informal groups. This called for discovery and analysis of a wide range of factors, whether deriving from European initiatives or from African traditions, which might prove significant for the social configurations. In other words the character of the technical, economic, political, educational and other forces at work in Stanleyville, and in the hinterland from which its population was derived was to be determined objectively in terms of the relevant institutions and activities, and enquiry directed to their effects as seen in the patterns of social relations and in the attitudes and achievements of various social groups and categories.

An international team of three field investigators, an ethnographer, a sociologist and a psychologist, was appointed for two years' work on the project. These were respectively: M. Pierre Clément, of the Universities of Brussels and Paris, who had carried out field research at Vienne, France, as a Research Fellow of the C.N.R.S.; Mr. Valdo Pons, of the University of Cape Town, who had carried out sociological field research in Cape Town, Zanzibar, and rural England; Mlle. Nelly Xydias, of the University of Paris, Institut de Psychologie, Directrice de Service Psychotechnique, who had undertaken socio-psychological research at Vienne, France, and in industrial establishments in Paris. After 3 months preparatory work in London and a visit

to Brussels for consultation with specialists there the research team worked in Stanleyville for 18 months in 1952–3. A preliminary account of the research procedures and findings was published as Part III, 'Social Effects of Urbanization in Stanleyville', in the volume referred to above (pp. 229–469).

One respect in which the Stanleyville study marked a considerable advance in research on African urban communities was the wide range and thoroughness of the statistically controlled sample surveys which were undertaken with respect to all the main aspects of social and economic life. At the time of the preliminary report the analysis of much of the data and its application for testing hypotheses concerning social processes and categories suggested by more general observation and documentary sources had still to be done. In this book Dr. Pons has now provided one of the very few detailed analyses so far available on the socio-demographic structure of an African urban community. That we have had to wait some time for it and that it relates to the colonial period over a decade ago does not detract from its value. It is not only valuable as a detailed record of the social framework and trends in one Congolese urban community during the later period of Belgian colonial administration. For, despite the new factors that have been introduced into the local situation following political independence and economic dislocation in the Congo, many of the patterns of inter-personal and inter-group relations analysed here have continued to influence the social life of the community. This study also has more than local significance; for the experiments and methods that it records for securing reliable statistical data and analysing these for testing hypotheses concerning social processes in African towns should serve as a model and as a stimulus to further systematic research in this field.

DARYLL FORDE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is based on field investigations conducted in 1952–3 when I was a member of a team of three social scientists appointed by the International African Institute (under the terms of a contract with Unesco) to carry out a wide programme of study in Stanleyville (now Kisangani)* of the former Belgian Congo. I am much indebted to my colleagues Mlle. Nelly Xydias and M. Pierre Clément for the stimulation of daily conversation in Stanleyville as well as for their collaboration and continued interest in my work during the time which has elapsed since we left the field. In Stanleyville we ran a joint household and it gives me pleasure to recall our co-operation as members of the same domestic unit as well as in our roles of colleagues in research. The studies were carried out under the general direction of Professor Daryll Forde who had initiated the project and whose interest and enthusiasm were unfailing throughout. I wish in particular to acknowledge my personal indebtedness to him for his insistence that I write this book at a time when rival interests and pre-occupations were eroding my own enthusiasm for it. The delay in publication is entirely my own responsibility and not that of the International African Institute.

My colleagues and I received hospitality and valuable advice in Belgium from Professor Guy Malengreau then of the University of Louvain, and in the Congo from officials of the Belgian Administration as well as from many private individuals both African and European. In acknowledging their help I wish in particular to record my indebtedness to Monsieur H. Ledoux of the then *Section Statistique du Secrétariat Général* in Leopoldville for advice in planning the social survey and for later supervising the punching and sorting of the Hollerith cards used for the statistical analysis. I also wish to record my thanks to my wife, Ruth, for undertaking a great deal of the day-to-day work involved in supervising the social survey and in checking and coding the schedules as they came into our office.

The tragic events that have taken place in Stanleyville since the time of the study render it impolitic for me to name the seven African clerks who did the interviewing, but I wish to stress that the success of the survey owed a great deal to their enthusiasm and efficiency. Apart from the tragedies of the intervening years, the usual field-work ethic prevents me from acknowledging individually any of the inhabitants of Avenue 21 who not only made my work there possible but also rendered it pleasant and enjoyable. (The names used in the text are, of course, fictitious.)

* Since Independence Day on 30 June 1966, Stanleyville has been officially known by its long-standing African name of Kisangani. I have retained the name of Stanleyville as the present study is entirely confined to the town under colonial rule.

In the years since the field study I have been successively a post-graduate student at the London School of Economics and a member of staff at Rhodes University (South Africa), at Makerere College (Uganda), and at the University of Manchester. I have benefited from discussions on various aspects of the Stanleyville study with friends and colleagues in each of these universities. It was, however, in Manchester that I wrote the book, and I am glad to have the opportunity to acknowledge the influence on my work of Professor Max Gluckman and of the Manchester Seminars. I had been impressed by 'the Manchester approach' to the study of African towns before joining the department and I was particularly pleased to be able to complete the study here.

The following have at various times offered helpful suggestions on drafts of one or more chapters of this book: M. Pierre Clément, Dr. (now Professor) A. L. Epstein, Professor D. Forde, Dr. (now Professor) R. Frankenberg, Mr. M. Griffen, Mr. B. Kapferer, Professor J. C. Mitchell, Dr. B. Roberts, and Mlle. N. Xydias. I am grateful to Miss E. A. Lowcock for drawing the maps, and to Mrs. M. Dearden, Mrs. R. Pons, Mrs. D. Sansom and Mrs. D. Shelton either for compiling and checking tables or for typing parts of the manuscript. My thanks are also due to the Director of the Documents and Publications Service of Unesco for permission to quote material originally published in *Social Implications of Industrialization and Urbanization in Africa South of the Sahara* (1956).

VALDO PONS

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POSTSCRIPT ON A RETURN VISIT TO KISANGANI IN JULY 1967

(Written in January, 1968)

In writing up this study from 1964 to 1966, I had to decide whether to try to relate any part of the analysis to the subsequent history of Stanleyville, especially since the Congo's independence on 30 June, 1960. I decided against this mainly because I had not been back since 1953, either before or after independence. In view of the troubled situation in the Congo over recent years, and especially on account of the widespread disturbances in the East and North-East during and after the 'Simba' rebellion of 1964, it was quite impracticable to envisage a return trip for research purposes at any time up to the early months of 1966. And in July 1966 the rebellion of Katangese gendarmes in the ranks of the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* in Kisangani brought new disruption to the town. Early in 1967, however, a return trip once again began to seem practicable: the rebellion of Katangese gendarmes had been quelled by the end of September 1966; the remnants of 'Simba' bands still operating in the hinterland were being systematically reduced by the A.N.C. assisted by small contingents of White mercenaries in the service of the Mobutu government; and there were qualified hopes and predictions that the economy of the region might soon begin to revive as main roads were brought back into repair. Having the opportunity to travel in Africa in June and July, I therefore included a short visit to Kisangani in my itinerary.

I flew from Kinshasa to Kisangani in an Air Congo plane on the morning of Tuesday, 4 July. I had lost all contact with friends and acquaintances in the town, and I had been unsuccessful in my attempts to ascertain whether anyone that I had known in the past was still there, but I arrived with a letter of introduction to M. Vital Moanda, the Governor of the Province. I also had introductions to Dr. John Carrington, who, after working in the region as a missionary for over thirty years, had taken a senior appointment on the staff of the Université Libre du Congo in Kisangani, and to Mr. Bill Gilvear who was a well known member of the local Protestant Relief Mission. Both Dr. Carrington and Mr. Gilvear were recommended to me by members of the British Embassy in Kinshasa as persons whom I might appropriately ask to intercede on my behalf in the event of my presence in the town being questioned by the Congolese authorities. I had been firmly warned that daily life in Kisangani was subject to many irritations and difficulties especially for strangers. In particular, I was told that I was very likely to be watched and perhaps picked up by the *sûreté*. To minimize the chances of being accused of spying I was advised to leave my camera and tape-recorder in Kinshasa. I had equally been warned that in the interests of personal security I should not wander away from

the town centre on my own, and that I should not in any circumstances leave my hotel at night. The seriousness of such warnings was underlined by the murder of an English missionary living close to the town centre by a band of youths a few days before my arrival.

In view of these advices I was naturally apprehensive as I landed at Kisangani airport and booked into my hotel at noon on 4 July. I soon made my way to the Governor's office but found that he was away in Kinshasa. I was also quite unable to find any responsible official willing to take delivery of my letter of introduction. But both Mr. Gilvear and Dr. Carrington arranged to see me without delay and, during the course of the afternoon, Mr. Gilvear drove me to Avenue 21 in Kadondo (formerly Brussels) and to Mangobo (a residential area developed after 1953 to the west of former Belge I). I was also to see Dr. Carrington at the university before nightfall.

By the time I returned to my hotel room in the late afternoon of 4 July I had, without knowing it, already come to the end of my unrestricted time in Kisangani. All hopes and predictions of a period of peace and stability in the town had been either ill-founded or premature for the White mercenary rebellion, led by Denard and Schramme, broke out at 6.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 5 July. With other captive civilians I was to stay in my hotel (the Congo Palace Hotel) in the town centre for eleven days before being evacuated to Kinshasa in a Red Cross plane on the afternoon of Saturday, 15 July. The battle for the airport and town centre of Kisangani lasted from early morning on Wednesday, 5 July, to the afternoon of Wednesday, 12 July, when the White mercenaries and their Katangese supporters finally withdrew from the town. The A.N.C. re-assumed control of the town centre at dawn on Thursday, 13 July. While effectively ensuring the safety of the White civilian population, who had by then mainly congregated either in the Congo Palace Hotel or in a large block of flats in the same area, the officers of the A.N.C. were unable to prevent widespread looting. The greater part of the town centre was once again ransacked by soldiers and civilians alike, and by the time the last Red Cross evacuation plane took off on 15 July, all but a few—perhaps a dozen—of the White residents had once again left the town. Deprived of all possibility of further pursuing the original objectives of my return visit, I took the opportunity of studying captive civilian reactions in the Congo Palace Hotel. (I am at present engaged in the analysis of my observations which I intend to publish in a separate volume.)

On my eventual return to Britain I was to find that on 14 July, when I was still in the Congo Palace Hotel, the *New Statesman* had published an article entitled 'In the North-East Congo' by Miss Gloria Stewart. Had I read and believed such an account before planning my return visit, I might well have been dissuaded from it. Commenting on the outbreak of the mercenary rebellion, Miss Stewart,

an English journalist who had spent six weeks in Kisangani and its region in April and May 1967, wrote in the following terms:

On the surface, the present troubles in the Congo spring from the machinations of Moise Tshombe and his mercenaries. But the malaise is, of course, much deeper-rooted. . . . Life [in the N.E. Congo], for Europeans and Congolese alike, is desperately difficult and dangerous. It is almost impossible to imagine the extent of mismanagement, corruption and foolishness. . . . While I was in Kisangani I met a French teacher who had not been paid for eight months. Saddest of all, the only person who seemed likely to get his pay was a mercenary. Mercenaries do get paid. They are luckier than the Congolese troops, many of whom have not been paid for four months and longer. . . . The mercenaries, regrettably, are crucial to the continued existence of any kind of law and order. . . . when there is trouble, most of the casualties are caused by random shooting by the Congolese troops, who feel they have to fire their guns. . . . Bullet holes can be found in most unlikely places—at the top of six-storey buildings, as well as in the backs of harmless Congolese citizens. Then the looting starts. . . . The town fills up with hordes of people who break in the steel-barred shop windows and steal whatever is going. The shops nowadays have very small stocks and the bank keeps almost no money on hand. It is strange that there are still Europeans in the North-East. . . . From time to time the Congolese authorities say they intend to confiscate all short-wave transmitters held by foreigners—a serious threat for the telephone rarely works and telegrams have only a 50–50 chance of arriving. Even planes are completely unreliable. Scheduled aircraft may or may not take off; often the time-table has been arbitrarily changed—the plane you expected to catch left yesterday. . . . The actions of the Congolese authorities increase the sense of insecurity and fear. One day your documents are in order and the next, for no discernible reason, they are not. . . .

Without necessarily endorsing any of Miss Stewart's particular claims (some of which strike me as possibly exaggerated and biased), I am in no doubt from my few unrestricted hours in Kisangani, as well as from talking to fellow captives in the Congo Palace Hotel between 5 and 15 July, that the general tone of her comments is fully in keeping with the views and attitudes held by many local Europeans. Most Europeans in the town undoubtedly lived in a constant state of fear and apprehension. The White population, which had risen to over 5,000 before 1960, was only about 400 in mid-1967. Some of the Whites—missionaries in particular—lived there out of a sense of duty and commitment; others were persons who, having spent the greater part of their lives in the town, no longer had roots anywhere else, either in Europe or Africa; others were only there for relatively short periods in the hope of making large and quick profits. One young Greek told me that he and his brother had, in two and a half years in Kisangani, made as much for themselves as they could possibly hope to make in a lifetime of hard work in Greece. 'But', he added, 'we are like mercenaries; it is dangerous to be here'.

My own experience of present-day Kisangani beyond the walls of the Congo Palace Hotel is necessarily very limited. But, meagre as my

evidence is, it suggests that despite the impressions of 'chaos' and 'disorganization' understandably created in the mind of a visiting European journalist, there are, within the local African community, important elements of cohesion and even of continuity between the situation of pre-independence years and that of the present time. Driving through Kadondo with Mr. Gilvear on the afternoon of 4 July, I was struck by the familiarity of the scene. I was told that Kadondo had been the scene of a great deal of fighting on several occasions since 1960, but the scars of battle were not visible on the native-type houses in this area as they were on the large modern buildings of the town centre. More significantly, I did not see any outward signs of general neglect or of dwelling compounds being abandoned by their residents. The avenues of Kadondo seemed to me just as lively and populated as at the time of my study. And I was later to gather several opinions that the African population of the town as a whole had continued to rise throughout the post-independence years. From its total of some 40,000 persons in 1952/53, it had, we know from the statistics of the Belgian administration, risen to over 70,000 by 1959, and it is now undoubtedly well over 100,000. Although some residents have, during the years of upheaval and disruption, fled to their villages, many have not done so, and others have come to Kisangani for the first time finding it more secure than some of the villages in a hinterland that has in many areas been even more disrupted than the town.

Despite the far-reaching damage to the economy of the town, and despite very high unemployment, *some* important avenues of employment have remained open throughout the years of political upheaval and intermittent hostilities. The drastic fall in the number of Europeans in the town cannot be taken as an accurate index of the decrease in local employment opportunities and resources. The army and the cadres of Congo government officials have in themselves continued to create a demand for various goods and services and have brought a steady flow of money to the town from central government funds. Similarly, schools, missions, hospitals, and the newly-established university have up to a point brought in money from foreign sources. *Some* factories, such as the brewery and mineral water company, have never closed for more than a few days at a time; *some* buildings in the town centre have been abandoned and are now derelict, but a surprising number are still occupied, and a few have actually been built since 1960 (e.g. the buildings of the university which first opened in 1963). I do not have the information to sketch, even in the roughest outline, what has happened to the economic structure of the town since 1960. Nor do I deny that some sections of the African community have suffered actual or near starvation at some periods. I merely suggest that an appreciable proportion of the population has manifestly continued to live off wages earned in the town. This point is important in relation to the next.

On my way to Avenue 21, which had been studied in detail in 1952–3, and on finally locating Lusaka whom I had set out to find, I was to gather that, whatever other effects the recent years of strife may have had on Kadondo, the 'community' of the township with its intricate networks of communication and associaton had clearly survived and perhaps even gained in cohesion. Before reaching Avenue 21, Mr. Gilvear introduced me to an elderly resident who is a minor official in the *Commune* of Kadondo. In the course of twenty minutes of conversation and questioning, I was able to gather news of seven or eight former Brussels personalities who were, or had been, common acquaintances of my informant and myself though he and I had never met before. Moreover, when my informant did not personally know individuals of whom I enquired, he undertook to let me have news of them within a few days. His knowledge of the fate of some, and his obvious confidence that he could quickly ascertain news of those not known to him personally, make my point. He had in effect told me that the 'community' I once knew continued to exist. He was, however, unable to give me news about any residents of Avenue 21. I therefore proceeded there in search of Lusaka.

From my knowledge of Lusaka and from the few insights I had just gained into the local situation, I thought it very unlikely that he would have left the town; I felt certain that, if he were still alive, I would be able to find him. On reaching his former compound I was told by the first resident I met that he was now living in Mangobo. The man to whom I spoke obviously knew him very well and immediately offered to guide me to his home. We drove in almost complete silence. I was increasingly confident that I was back in a familiar environment, but I did not wish unnecessarily to question my companion—whom I did not know—about people with whom I had been acquainted long before the strife of recent years. On eventually finding Lusaka, I was able to stay with him for only a few minutes owing to my appointment at the university. I therefore arranged to spend the following day with him but, as things turned out, I was to leave Kisangani eleven days later without seeing him again.

During the quarter of an hour I had with Lusaka, I heard of the death of his mother, Samenyao, of the birth of his first grandchild to his daughter, Safi, and of Safi's own subsequent death. I gathered that his half-brother, Kisubi, had left Kisangani some years ago but was still alive and hoping to return soon. I also gathered that his 'trial marriage' with Bernadette had only lasted about eighteen months. I noticed that Lusaka's house was larger and better furnished than the one he had had in Avenue 21; and he told me, to my surprise, that he was still working for the same firm as at the time I knew him. In these and other ways, I gathered that he had come through the ordeals of recent years more fortunately than most of the former residents of Avenue 21. He told me that 'with all our recent happenings here, you will only find a few men you knew in the avenue.' He added that

Limela had 'died' when Kisangani was retaken from the 'Simbas', and he went on to mention two leading personalities of Avenue 21 who were still there.

The point of general interest is that Lusaka clearly continued to be in close touch with Avenue 21 and that, whatever changes had overtaken the town of Kisangani, his own life was apparently still set, at least in part, within a series of social networks rooted in the past. If I had been able to speak to him at length, I have little doubt that I could easily have ascertained the basic facts required to sketch out the development of his social connexions since 1952–53. I am equally confident that, on the basis of such knowledge for a number of people, it would be possible to formulate working propositions concerning the impact of the drastic changes of the intervening years on the nature of domestic, neighbourhood, and community relations. The 'chaos', the 'disorganization', and the far-reaching changes in the political control of the town may well not have been matched by social disorganization or even by marked social change at the grass-roots level of the community.

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

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I

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

I

For many years interest in the sociology of African towns lagged far behind that accorded to the institutions of African tribes. This was perhaps natural as long as colonial policies tended to restrict the African's role in economic development to peasant agriculture and to low-paid manual work in other industries. African towns remained essentially European—and in some regions partly Asian—centres. They did of course have some permanent African urban-dwellers but in most regions of sub-Saharan Africa the truly permanent townsman was the exception rather than the rule, and the vast majority of new immigrants normally returned to their tribal areas after varying periods of wage-earning in town. Under these circumstances African urbanism attracted little systematic study. A few pioneer urban studies were conducted by social anthropologists in the 1930s and these have often been cited. But they were exceptions.

During and after World War II the situation changed rapidly. By the mid-1950s urbanization was, in the considered opinion of Davis and Golden, 'probably going ahead faster (in Africa) than anywhere else in the world'.[1] Many African urban-dwellers were still essentially migrant labourers, as indeed many are today, but substantial communities of permanent and semi-permanent town-dwellers were growing rapidly at the very time that the African colonial world was becoming increasingly involved in a spiral of economic expansion and momentous political change. This naturally led to a much greater interest in African towns. A number of social anthropologists followed the lead given by the few who had pioneered urban studies in the 1930s, and they were in turn joined by numbers of social surveyors, sociologists, political scientists, labour economists, urban geographers, and others. As a result the literature on African towns grew rapidly in the 1950s and, as early as 1958, it was possible for Denis to compile a bibliography of nearly 400 items on one or other aspect of urbanization in Central Africa alone.[2] Moreover, since the early 1950s we have had periodic attempts to assess the progress made and to compare reports from different regions of the continent.[3]

In spite of this increased interest, however, Epstein's assessment of African urbanism as largely virgin territory is to some intents and purposes almost as valid today as it was ten years ago.[4] There are two

[Footnotes are given at the end of each chapter.]

main reasons for this. The first is simply that Africa is large and diverse. A significant piece of analysis in one region may provide valuable insights and stimulus to research workers in another, but it also often serves to remind us how varied conditions are and how much exploratory work remains to be done. Secondly, progress has often appeared to be slow partly because much of the work conducted in the past consisted of social surveys which were often designed to do little more than gather basic data which sociologists in more 'advanced' countries do not normally have to collect for themselves.[5] Yet there is some definite progress. As the more significant studies make their appearance, particular problem features of African urbanism are more clearly specified. It then becomes possible for investigators to select problems more meaningfully and thus to study problems of general relevance rather than simply to describe particular communities.

The above remarks are directly relevant to the aim and scope of the present study. The original field data used in this book were gathered in Stanleyville in the early 1950s either before or about the same time as researches such as those of Balandier and his associates in parts of French Africa, of Epstein and Mitchell on the Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), of Mayer in East London, South Africa, and of Southall in Uganda. The Stanleyville investigations carried out by my colleagues and myself were thus inevitably launched with very limited guidance from past work. We had certain notions of African urbanism derived from a few of the earlier studies such as Hellman's and Wilson's.[6] Valuable as these were, however, they could not in the absence of other studies give us much sense of direction in approaching an urban situation which clearly differed very appreciably from a slum yard in Johannesburg or a mining compound in Northern Rhodesia. Moreover, not only had Stanleyville itself never before been visited by a sociologist, but its immediate hinterland had received virtually no attention from professional social anthropologists. We thus knew little about the main tribes in the town. As can be seen from our early field reports, we reacted to the difficulties confronting us by launching a series of investigations which struck us as obvious starting points.[7] Our principal objective was to conduct a general community study involving research into household, kinship, and neighbourhood groupings, into associations connected with recreational, religious, political, and other activities, into the work situation, and into social mobility and social stratification.[8]

The present volume uses some of the data previously published by my colleagues and myself, but it is not an attempt either to re-analyse or to bring together all our findings. Nor is it an attempt necessarily to fill in any particular gaps. It is, more specifically, a study of the social implications of some prominent features of Stanleyville as it was in the early 1950s and an attempt to interpret these features of Stanleyville under colonial rule in the light of work reported from other regions of the continent since the time of our study. The main features

of the town to which the study draws particular attention are its extreme tribal heterogeneity, the rapid growth of its immigrant population, and the system of urban administration established by the Belgians in centres specifically designated as *centres extra-coutumiers*. All three features struck us forcibly as we began our researches and each clearly had far-reaching implications in all spheres of community life.[9]

Though focusing more particularly on the social implications of selected features of Stanleyville, I try throughout this book to maintain the 'community study approach' which was central to the original investigations. Although I do not attempt to give a comprehensive account of the community I constantly relate the observations reported to their overall community context. To enable me to do this, I devote the first chapter of Part II to a general description of the nature and growth of the town with special reference to the conditions under which Africans lived and worked, and in the remaining chapters of Part II, I concentrate on the analysis of a series of social and demographic data drawn from a random sample of the entire African population of the town.

Part III consists mainly of an account of certain aspects of social relations in one corner of the town. This account is in effect a small-scale community study on its own, though even here I do not attempt to give a detailed description of the 'whole' of social life as is commonly attempted in community studies. Instead I dwell primarily on the nature of social relationships *between men*. As explained in Chapter VII, however, relations *between men* were very directly affected by relations *between the sexes*. In Chapter VIII, I therefore analyse the salient features of the way in which men and women were paired in the town. To do this I once again use data gathered from a sample of the entire population and am thus brought back to the community as a whole and to a further comparison of the neighbourhood studied in detail and other parts of the town.

Parts II and III of the book are thus distinct but complementary. They can, I believe, be read independently of each other and in either order. They are linked by their common interest in tribal heterogeneity, in the rapid growth of numbers, and in the system of urban administration, but each is concerned with social phenomena of an intrinsically different kind. Part II is historical, demographic and sociographic; Part III is sociological and it studies aspects of the system of social relations. In Part II we are simply laying bare the way in which certain characteristics of the population were associated with each other; in doing this we are progressively defining the overall situation within which social relations were enacted, but we are not focusing on the nature of urban social relations as such. Data gathered by survey methods do not easily lend themselves to analysis of day-to-day behaviour. To move beyond the sociographic level we have to use field materials of a different kind; we need information not on the characteristics of individuals but essentially on their behaviour and on the

build-up of incidents in day-to-day life. Part III is thus based largely on direct observations and on case histories, and its focus is not so much on categories of persons as on categories of social relations and of situations.

Finally, in Part IV, I attempt to bring together the main findings of Parts II and III and to assess some of the general features of social relations in the wider urban community.

II

The starting point of the study lies in the every-day observation that the population of Stanleyville was extremely heterogeneous in its tribal composition. At the beginning of the field work it was immediately apparent that this heterogeneity had a far-reaching influence on the system of social relations in the community. At the same time it was equally apparent that this influence was closely interrelated with other influences, and particularly with social differentiation seemingly based on education, occupation, and other experiences and achievements in the urban world. Following the usage of Mitchell in *The Kalela Dance*, I employ the terms 'tribalism' and 'class' to refer to these two broad principles of differentiation, but it will be seen that in the course of the study I tend to discard 'class' altogether and in many instances use 'tribalism' only as an indication of a general kind of differentiation. At the present stage, however, the use of the two terms is convenient.

The initial questions which struck me concerning 'tribalism' and 'class' in Stanleyville can be explained very simply by imagining two observers being conducted on casual visits to two different neighbourhoods in the town. One observer could well have been taken to an area where there was a marked tendency for members of the same tribe to live next to each other. Most of his observations here would have suggested the existence of discrete tribal neighbourhoods each with a relatively self-sufficient social life. Thus, for example, he might well have been told that the incidence of 'mixed' or non-tribal marriages in the area was low and that the inhabitants tended to organize the greater part of their neighbourhood and other leisure-time activities on a largely exclusive tribal basis.[10] He might also have noticed that people habitually conversed in their tribal vernacular, and that at least some white-collar employees tended to mix casually with illiterate migrants and to participate with them in a whole series of encounters as diverse as casual drinking and gossiping in a bar to tribal dancing on the occasion of a mourning ceremony. On the basis of such observations our first observer could well have thought that 'tribalism' remained the predominant influence affecting day-to-day life in town.

The second observer could, however, have been taken to a neighbourhood where there was no readily discernible evidence of ethnic residential concentration, and where members of many different tribes lived

side by side and commonly shared the same dwelling-compounds, and sometimes the same houses. Here he would have heard most inhabitants conversing in one or both of the *linguae francae* of Swahili and Lingala (and occasionally in French) and he would have seen people mixing in public places, such as bars and dance halls, where the use of a tribal vernacular would have sounded quaint. On inquiry he would have discovered that in this area the incidence of non-tribal marriages was high and that informal friendship groups and formal voluntary associations commonly consisted of members of different tribes. Moreover, in such a neighbourhood he might well have encountered a measure of anti-tribal sentiment and perhaps met people ready to argue that in *Kizungu* ('in the place of the Europeans') 'tribe counts for nothing', or that, 'unlike our fathers, we no longer look at tribe nowadays'. This second observer could thus understandably have come away with the impression that the principle of 'tribalism' was no longer of major importance in the community. Indeed, he might well have been struck by quite another feature, namely the differing ways of life of French-speaking *évolués* and of the relatively uneducated masses of manual workers.

In general, then, our two observers might well have formed seemingly contradictory impressions concerning the importance of 'tribalism' and 'class'. Had they been given the opportunity to wander around the town for any length of time, however, they would have been compelled to modify their first impressions. The fact is that the manner and the extent to which 'tribalism' and 'class' operated to bring people together or to set them apart varied markedly within the community. We are thus naturally led to enquire into the nature of these variations and, ultimately, to ask ourselves how the two principles of 'tribalism' and 'class' operated simultaneously within the same community. From the detailed observations reported in Parts II and III, it will be seen that the high rate of immigration and various features of the urban administrative system were important factors influencing the interplay of 'tribalism' and 'class'. The significance of these and other factors influencing social relations can, however, only be assessed through the use of concepts and methods which allow us to distinguish between several different aspects of the processes of association and division.

We may start from the simple notion of approaching the study of 'tribalism' (or, equally, of 'class') by conceiving of the community as made up of a series of individuals each with a unique set of interpersonal relations, and of examining the tribal components of each of these sets of relations. We could then conceivably proceed to classify each member of the community according to the ratio of social relations he or she maintained with fellow-tribesmen to relations maintained with non-tribesmen. If we had been able to gather the requisite information for all the inhabitants of Stanleyville we would certainly have found wide variation from the cases of people with virtually all

their social relations within one tribal colony to cases with highly diverse sets of relations. And there can be no doubt that the distribution of persons along this scale or continuum would have been far from random.

There are several factors which even casual observation revealed as being associated with 'pure' and 'mixed' or tribal and non-tribal sets of inter-personal relations. Firstly, as implied in the impressions attributed to our two casual observers, the extent to which an individual was in contact with fellow-tribesmen and non-tribesmen varied appreciably from one area of the town to another. And we shall see in detail in Part II that there were some 'natural areas' in the town whose inhabitants were very heterogeneous in tribal origin, others which were largely homogeneous, and others still—by far the majority—which fell between these two extremes. Secondly, there was marked variation between particular tribes. Some tribal colonies were relatively 'closed'—in the sense that members tended to restrict their personal relations within their own group—while others were by comparison very 'open'. Thirdly, status in terms of age, sex, occupation, and education was commonly associated with lower or higher degrees of tribal or of non-tribal participation. Thus an educated white-collar worker was, other things being equal, more likely to have a non-tribal set of social relations than, say, an illiterate migrant labourer.[11] Similarly, men were likely to maintain more non-tribal relations than women if for no other reason than that their work roles brought them into more frequent contact with people of other tribes than did the domestic roles of their wives. And so on.

In Part II (and also in sections of Part III) I present several sets of sociographic data which confirm the illustrations given above. But even complete information on the affiliations of all the persons with whom each inhabitant of the town was in personal contact would yield only a partial analysis of the interplay between 'tribalism' and 'class'. We have to carry the study beyond the sociographic level to an assessment of the differing significance of tribal and non-tribal relationships in various situations and, equally, to the analysis of various sets of social relations within which tribal and non-tribal contacts took place. From various incidents and situations reported in Part III it will be seen that a man's tribal affiliation may be a decisive factor in leading him to associate with fellow-tribesmen in one situation but not in another. At the same time, even in a situation in which he unhesitatingly opts or, in some cases perhaps simply accepts, to associate with non-tribesmen, his tribal affiliation may affect his behaviour towards those with whom he is in contact. Or again, we have to bear in mind that a man sometimes opted to associate with fellow-tribesmen on one occasion and with non-tribesmen on another somewhat similar occasion, and that on some occasions his behaviour in relation to others was governed by the same set of norms and values and on other occasions by a different set. We thus have to consider a variety of possibilities in numerous

differing situations, and we need a conceptual formulation which allows us to focus our analysis while yet being sufficiently flexible to enable us to take account of the wide ranges of variation in day-to-day life.

The conceptual formulations of Mitchell and Epstein in their respective studies on the Copperbelt were devised to deal with this kind of problem. My analysis derives from their work as well as from subsequent related developments in the work of Mayer. In *The Kalela Dance* Mitchell sees 'tribalism' and 'class' as 'categories of interaction' operating 'to mediate social relationships' in a 'predominantly transient society', but he stresses that it is impossible to generalize about the operation of the two principles without reference to the specific social situations in which interactions take place.[12] He is thus inevitably led to be critical of formulations of the problem which tend to assume—often implicitly rather than explicitly—that, as 'class' becomes more important in modern Africa, 'tribalism' must necessarily become less important as if the change from a 'tribal' to a 'class' society were a unilineal process. 'The evidence we have from Northern Rhodesia', Mitchell writes, 'is that in certain situations Africans ignore either class differences or tribal differences (or both), and in other situations these differences become significant.'[13] He therefore suggests that in approaching the interplay of 'tribalism' and 'class' we invoke the principle of 'situational selection' previously applied in studies of modern African society by Gluckman in his analysis of aspects of social relations in Zululand,[14] and subsequently also used by Epstein and Mayer.[15]

In Stanleyville, as on the Copperbelt, much day-to-day behaviour could readily be analysed in terms of Mitchell's formulation. This is, I believe, abundantly illustrated in Part III of this study and especially in Chapter VI. We have made a useful start when we are able to specify the social relations affected by one or other principle and to indicate differences between situations in which different principles of association operate. But the general problem posed by the interplay of 'tribalism' and 'class' does not end there. In a development and elaboration of Mitchell's formulation, Epstein suggests that we must try to go beyond specifying *where* 'tribalism' and 'class' are 'categories of interaction in day-to-day intercourse' to an assessment of the *way in which* the two influences pervade the overall system of social relations. 'In the common connotation', he writes, '"tribalism" tends to become an unitary concept, and carries the implicit assumption that, because the evidence points to the persistence in the towns of strong tribal loyalties, those loyalties will operate with the same strength over the total field of social relations . . . But this difficulty is avoided if we approach the town as a field of social relations which is made up of sets of social relations of different kinds, each of which covers a distinct sphere of social interaction, and forms a sub-system . . .; each set may have a certain measure of autonomy so that the tempo and character of change are not evenly distributed over the whole field'.[16]

Epstein's elaboration has very clear advantages over any tending to conceive of interactions as taking place within a series of specific situations in which 'tribalism' is sometimes the decisive principle of association with 'class' or some other principle 'taking over' at other times. Firstly, by distinguishing between different sets of social relations we can begin to consider not only whether 'tribalism', or 'class', or another principle, is decisive in particular interactions, but also the extent to which different principles pervade analytically separable systems or sub-systems of social relations. Secondly, the formulation enables us to conceptualize change over time in the influence of 'tribalism' and 'class'. So it is that Epstein suggests that we attempt to look at the possibly changing interrelations between different sets of social relations; that we may for analytical purposes need to regard different sets of social relations as partly autonomous; and that we try to assess whether the tempo and character of change perhaps varies from one set to another. Epstein was led to this elaboration of Mitchell's formulation partly through the need to find a way of analysing *changes over time* in the pattern of African leadership on the Copperbelt.

It will be seen that the main data presented in the present study do not have the same time depth as some of Epstein's recorded historical materials. We are thus not in a position to 'test' or develop some major aspects of his formulation in any direct way. Yet his approach has influenced my interpretation in several general respects. Firstly, his suggestions have led me to pay particular attention to the possibility that differences in the social configuration of various tribes (and, equally, of various 'natural areas') in the town were not basic or essential differences between them but simply manifestations of different stages reached by various tribal colonies (or 'natural areas') which were, and had been, developing over time. Similarly, Epstein's formulation led me to dwell on the evidence I have that the small-group interactions I observed in one neighbourhood were, in effect, embedded in a process of adjustment over time between sets of social relations that existed in an overall context of change.

Secondly, Epstein's elaboration implicitly directs us to examine the content of 'tribalism' as an influence on social relations. Indeed, in parts of his formulation this is explicit, and it is clearly a question which must arise as soon as we lay stress on the tempo and character of change, or when we specifically set out to compare the influence of 'tribalism' on sets of relations enacted in distinctively different spheres of social life.

Finally, Epstein's suggestion that the overall urban system be delineated as a developing set of interrelated, but perhaps partly autonomous sub-systems of social relations, has influenced my approach to the town as a whole. In attempting to order my field observations I came in the first instance to see social relations in the African residential areas as constituting one of three broad sets of relations which together made up the overall urban system. The first major set which