

The Congo Curse: From *Heart of Darkness* through
King Leopold's Ghost, *King Leopold's Soliloquy* to *In
the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of
Disaster in Mobutu's Congo*

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Abstract

This article explores the intricacies that have shaped the political and economic landscape of Congo from colonial period to post-independence times. The examination of the situation in Congo is undertaken through the eyes of Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Mark Twain in *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905), Adam Hochschild in *King Leopold's Ghost* (1998) and Michela Wrong in *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu's Congo* (2000). In his novella, Conrad navigates through the Congo River and penetrates into the interior of Congo and ushers us to the emergence of European imperial powers in Africa. In this compelling tale, Conrad explores the European's exploration and exploitation of the Congo under Belgium's King Leopold II. In *King Leopold's Soliloquy* Mark Twain largely satirizes King Leopold's self-importance while plundering Congo while Hochschild in *King Leopold's Ghost* advances King Leopold's state capture of Congo Free

State and making the country his own property. Michela Wrong's *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz* captures Congo's tribulation under Mobutu's regime. Wrong navigates the political journey of post-independence Congo and seems to suggest that the Congolese people are not free from political and economic sabotage from leaders who have personalized the country even after the exit of the white man. This paper therefore examines the personalities of King Leopold II of Belgium and Joseph Desire Mobutu of the independent Congo as projected in the selected texts. The article shows that the Congo curse is deeply rooted in the country's political leadership and examines the insatiable appetite of King Leopold II and Joseph Desire Mobutu for the mineral wealth through the lenses of the four selected texts.

Keywords: colonialism, curse, politics, economy, mineral wealth

1. Introduction

Democratic Republic of Congo is one of Africa's richest countries in terms of mineral resources. While this is so, the country has hardly benefited from its resources; instead the presence of these minerals has become a curse to the Congolese people. This has been enabled by the continued scramble and partitioning of DRC by the West that controls and directly benefits from Congo's natural resources. Locally, the control for the mineral industry has led to insurgence of rebel groups who have mounted large scale civil wars, making the country historically ungovernable by a stable government. The political class on the other hand has also catalyzed this curse, by enriching itself with mineral proceeds at the expense of the Congolese ordinary person. Trefon (2004) describes the country as "a forsaken black hole characterized by calamity, chaos, confusion, and a bizarre form of social cannibalism where society is its own prey" (Trefon, 2004, p.1). The conflict in DRC is largely motivated by the country's minerals because everybody seeks to accumulate wealth through the appropriation of the resources. This paper therefore explores the plundering of the country's mineral wealth by two self-seeking men; King Leopold II of Belgium and President Joseph-Desire Mobutu both of whom set precedence for the Congo curse by seeking to govern the country as a personal property. The "logic of politics for private gains" (Vlassenroot, 2008, p. 4) has persisted in the country to date.

2. Personalities

2.1 King Leopold II of Belgium

In 1878, aided by Stanley, a British explorer, King Leopold II set up the Study Committee on the Upper Congo and in 1879 it was converted into International Association of the Congo. Leopold's shrewdness about the control of the Congo basin happened long before other European nations lay their case on Africa. By the time the Berlin Conference met in 1885 to partition Africa, Leopold II had already annexed Congo Free State for himself. The Berlin Conference thus recognized the independent state of the Congo, with Leopold II as the sovereign and the decision was ratified by the Belgian Parliament the same year and authorized the King to be the Head of State of Congo.

King Leopold II speech at the conference reads:

Reverends, Fathers and Dear Compatriots: the task that is given to fulfill is very delicate and requires much tact. You will go to certainly evangelize, but your evangelization must inspire above all Belgium interests. Your principal mission in the Congo is never to teach the niggers to know God, this they know already...they know that to kill, to sleep with someone else's wife, to lie and to insult is bad...You are not going to teach them what they know already. Your essential role is to facilitate the task of administrators and industrials, which means you go interpret the gospel in the way it will be the best to protect your interests in that part of the world. For these things, you have to keep watch on disinteresting our savages from the richness that is plenty in their underground...Your knowledge of the gospel will allow you to find texts ordering, and encouraging your followers to love poverty, like "Happier are the poor because they will inherit the heaven" and "It's very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God..."use the money meant for the poor, to build flourishing business centres... (King Leopold II, 1883 qtd in Nobles & Okoro, <http://allafrica.com/stories/2005100600035.html>)

This speech shows a man engaging in religious casuistry and using Christianity as a pre-cursor to colonialism and control of Africa by Europeans. He urges the missionaries not to tire themselves with preaching the gospel but rather prepare the way for colonial administrators by interpreting the Scripture in a Eurocentric way. King Leopold II is categorical that the missionaries should focus on sermons that are essentially of economic gain to the Europeans while making the African not to believe in earthly riches. The King effortlessly cites the Gospel of Matthew, "*Happier are the poor because they will inherit the heaven*" as being very pivotal in the European conquest of Africa. He wants the African to be told that earthly riches do not amount to much because "*It's very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.*" Karl Marx's famous declaration, "Die Religion ist das Opium des Volk", translated to English as "Religion is the opium of the people" is a fundamental principle taken up by the king who is confident that these religious overtures will help subdue the African, who while savoring on a foreign God, Belgium will be taking the Congo's minerals to enrich herself. Sidney Hooks (1936) observes that the beliefs and practices of an organized religion such as Christianity are engineered by bourgeois political organizations and serve to enslave the proletariat masses.

King Leopold II was thus keen to use religion for his capitalist agenda in Africa. While eyeing the prestigious natural resources of Congo Free State, he was cognizant of the fact that, as Marx puts it, 'religion is one of those institutions which are dependent upon the material and economic realities in the society. Marx's assertion is that religion's end goal is economic progression and this is what King Leopold II capitalized on while sending the missionaries on an economic expedition disguised as religious message.

2.2 Joseph-Desire Mobutu

Born on 14 October 1930, Joseph-Desire Mobutu was a Congolese military man and a politician who subsequently became president of Zaire from November, 1965 to May 17,

1997. In his bid for cultural cleansing, he renamed the country from Congo to Zaire in 1971. He went on to rename other towns and cities to Africanize the independent country.

Pre-independence names	Names under Mobutu
Leopoldville	Kinshasa
Stanleyville	Kisangani
Elizabethville	Lubumbashi
Coquilhatville	Mbandaka
Stanley Pool	Pool Malebo
Bakwanga	Mbuji Mayi
Katanga	Shaba

This was Mobutu's vision of authentic Africanism which endeared him to his fellow countrymen. Ikambana (2007) argues that the "authenticity allowed the Zairian people to regain their ancestral pride and cultural heritage. The most significant cultural re-conquest was seen in most areas of Zairian way of life" (Ikambana, 2007, p. 25). He goes on to state that by "renaming the streets, cities and towns, the policy of cultural re-conquest reclaimed the dignity of the Zairian people who had been forced to streets and cities after European princes, kings, queens or colonials" (Ikambana, 2007, p. 25).

Mobutu going forward adopted his self-styled Zairianization philosophy, advocating for an authentic African state. He explained his policy of authenticite which he argued would create new nationalism based on African ideals. Mobutu's zeal and passion for a new Congo, was evident in his speeches:

And you can be sure that this birth of a nation out of the ashes of colonialism, out of the ruins of tribal separatism and fratricidal wars, in spite of the long and sad series of divisions and grievances, this building stone by stone of the great edifice of nationalism in Zaire, is the work of which I shall always remain proud (Mobutu: Dignity, 75).

3. King's Conquest: *Heart of Darkness*

Chinua Achebe (1988) has described Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as a novella that celebrates racism. He particularly traces Conrad's frame of mind in his actual conceptualization of the black person. Achebe argues that "there remains in Conrad's attitude a residue of antipathy to black people which hid peculiar psychology alone can explain" (Achebe, 2016, p. 22). Achebe raises this sensibility in Conrad's own account of his first meeting with a black man. Conrad reports that:

A certain enormous buck nigger encountered in Haiti fixed my conception of blind, furious, unreasoning rage, as manifested in the human animal to the end

of my days. Of the nigger I used to dream for years afterwards. (Conrad, qtd in Baskin, 1971, p. 143)

Conrad's own personal view about the African person is disturbing, and it is when he describes an Englishman that his racist inclination is manifested. He describes him thus:

[his] calves exposed to the public gaze...dazzled the beholder by the splendor of their marble-like condition and their rich tone of young ivory...the light of a headlong, exalted satisfaction with the world of men...illuminated his face...and triumphant eyes. In passing he cast a glance of kindly curiosity and a friendly gleam of big, sound, shiny teeth...his white calves twinkled sturdily. (Conrad, qtd in Meyer, 1967, p. 30)

A comparative examination of Conrad's binary opposition projects him as a frontrunner in racist attacks. He elevates the Englishman depicting him as sophisticated and cultured while describing the black man as uncivilized, uncultured and barbaric.

Achebe (1988) summarizes that Conrad's view about the African person is not only his own perception but the general imagination of the Western world, Conrad being only a mouthpiece. Conrad epitomizes the Eurocentric stance that Europe settles right at the heart of the universe while such regions as Africa occupy the peripheral locales of earth. It is not surprising therefore when Conrad depicts Mr. Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* as a man carrying with himself, a despicable dark heart. Mr. Kurtz is a cunning tyrant whose greed for the Congo minerals empties him of his last remnants of humanity. He subjects the native people to forced labour with low wages in his engagement in empire-building. He is not concerned with the welfare of the native but rather advances the Belgian interest in Congo. Mr. Kurtz therefore epitomizes European imperialism in Africa. He rules Congo through violence and suppression of Africans and his conquest success exposes the evils of European presence in Africa. Marlow is our eye in the novel and sees all the atrocities committed by Mr. Kurtz. At one point, Marlow encounters six chained black slaves and tells us that:

They were dying slowly – it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing early now – nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest... (Conrad, 1899, p.17)

Eurocentric ethos is depicted in Mr. Kurtz's report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Custom. Marlow tells us that:

...it was beautiful piece of writing. The opening paragraph, however, in the light of later information, strikes me now as ominous. He began with the arguments that we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, 'must necessarily appear to the [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings – we approach them with the might of deity,' and so on, and so on. 'By the

simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded'. (Conrad, 1899, p. 57)

Arguably, *Heart of Darkness* fictionalizes the atrocities committed in Congo by King Leopold II of Belgium. Marlow's aunt in the novella speaks of "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways", utterances which according to Zeon are written in a version of King Leopold II speech.

4. Savage King: King Leopold's Ghost

This book explores the literary and political landscape of years leading to Congo's acquisition by King Leopold II and the years following the colony's transfer of Congo to the Belgian government. The 'ghost' in the text's title is symbolic of imperialism in Africa that has continued even in post-independence circumstances. While all African countries, save for Liberia and Ethiopia were colonized, Congo's colonial history is unique – in the sense that it was initially colonized by one man; King Leopold II. In *King Leopold's Ghost*, Hochschild more profoundly crafts two major characters: Edmund Morel the hero in the text and King Leopold II, the villain. This paper examines more specifically part II of the book because it is where much of what Morel "had stumbled upon a secret society of murderers with a King for a croniman" (Hochschild, 1998, p. 181) is exposed.

Casement's revelation of King Leopold II's brutal rule is reported in his daily diary entries of the events he saw while in Congo:

July 25: I walked into villages and saw the nearest one – population dreadfully decreased – only 93 people left out of many hundreds.

August 6: Took copious notes from natives...They are cruelly flogged for being late with their baskets [of rubber]...Very tired.

August 22: Bolongo quite dead. I remember it well in 1887, Nov., full of people then; now 14 adults all told. I should say people wretched, complained bitterly of rubber tax...6:30 passed deserted side of Bokuta...Mouzedede says the people were all taken away by force to Mampoko. Poor unhappy souls.

August 30: 16 men, women and children tied up from a village Mboye close to the town. Infamous. The men were put in prison, the children let go at my intervention. Infamous. Infamous, shameful system. (Hochschild, 1998, p. 101)

Morel on the other hand made a particularly effective use of photography to depict atrocities committed by King Leopold II. Many of his pictures showed mostly mutilated Africans. These pictures were seen by the press and millions of people and provided evidence of the much hidden atrocities perpetuated by King Leopold II regime. Poems were also written to depict the wrath of the King:

No zeal, no Faith, inspired this Leopold,
Nor any madness of half-splendid birth.

Cool-eyed, he loosed the hounds that rend and
slay,
Just that his coffers might be gorged with gold.
Embalm him, Time! Forget him not, O Earth,
Trumpet his name, and flood his deeds with
day. (Hochschild, 1998, p. 119)

Morel essentially rallied the entire Europe to stop King Leopold II dehumanizing acts in Congo Free State. His [Morel] attacks on Leopold escalated across Europe. Branches of Congo Reform Association advocated by Morel sprang up in Germany, France, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, United States and other European countries. Pressure was mounted on King Leopold II to relinquish his personal ownership and return the colony to Belgian rule. The problem of Congo did not however end with that kind of transition as colonialism continued, only this time, not under the King. The king's ghost thus continued to live on in Africa. In this book, Hochschild (2005) says:

One reason I wrote this book was to show how profoundly European colonialism has shaped the world we live in...we must speak of neocolonialism as well. The reasons most of Africa has [not evolved] go far beyond the colonial heritage...Another [factor] is the deep-seated cultural tolerance and even hero-worship of strongmen like Mobutu, for whom politics is largely a matter of enriching themselves and their extended clan or ethnic group...Its [Africa's] path will not be an easy one, and nowhere will it be harder than in Congo. (Hochschild, September, 2005)

5. A King on Trial: *King Leopold's Soliloquy*

King Leopold's Soliloquy is a text largely preoccupied with political satire and captures the king's response to his critics about his activities in Congo Free State. It is a monologue comprising the king's defense of his rule in Congo. Nunn (2020) describes the work of art as a "wolf, a human rights manifesto, disguised in the sheep's clothing of a satirical soliloquy from the mouth of a sadistic king" (Nunn, 2020, p.32). This fiction is essentially grounded on literature's role of decrying injustices and Twain uses literary style to expose the ills committed by the king. In this text, Twain thus seeks to convey what Achille Mbembe and Meintjes Libby (2003) call "topographies of cruelty" (Mbembe & Libby, 2003, p. 40) or the systematic subjection of the living to terror. In his case against Leopold, Twain uses photographic journalism to depict the atrocities of the king. Nunn (2020) suggests that, "in the creation of textured, visually irrefutable, and darkly satirical account of human rights abuses" Twain sought to "evoke his audience's empathy by activating their imaginations" (Nunn, 2020, p. 26). The effectiveness of Twain's visual method of telling a story is effective because photographs, as Susan Sontag writes, "haunt us" (Sontag, 2001, p. 6).

The king as portrayed in the text is disgruntled by European Nations and the United States of

America, his “hemispheric army of sworn enemies” (Nunn, 2020, p. 32) who called for the king’s relinquishing of power over Congo. The countries complained of dehumanizing acts of Leopold’s regime; the torture, slavery and forced labour. They accused him of personalizing Congo and agitated expulsion of the king and reverting Congo Free State to a colony and not the king’s personal property. In his scathing response, the furious king recants:

I have spent other millions on religion and art, and what do I get for it? Nothing. Not a compliment. These generousities are studiously ignored, in print. In print I get nothing but slanders – and slanders again – and still slanders, and slanders on top of slanders! Grant them true, what of it? They are slanders all the same, when uttered against a king. (Twain, 1905, p. 5)

He continues:

...they go on telling everything, these chatterers! They tell how I levy incredibly burden-some taxes upon the natives – taxes which are pure theft; taxes which they must satisfy by gathering rubber under hard and constantly harder conditions, and by raising and furnishing food supplies gratis – and it all comes out that, when they fall short of their tasks through hunger, sickness, despair, and ceaseless and exhaustible labour without rest, and forsake their homes and flee to the woods to escape punishment, my black soldiers, drawn from unfriendly tribes, and instigated and directed by my Belgians, hunt them down and butcher them and burn their villages – reserving some of the girls....But they never say, although they know it, that I have laboured in the cause of religion at the same time, and have sent missionaries there, to teach them the error of their ways and bring them to Him who is all mercy and love, and who is the sleepless guardian and friend of all who suffer They tell only what is against me, they will not tell what is in my favour. (Twain, 1905, pp. 9-10)

These recantations of the king speak to his guilty conscience. His frustration and temperament against the accusations makes him vicious and restless. Nunn (ibid) asserts that “Leopold inevitably condemns himself. Through the rhetorical move of paralipsis, or the discussion of a topic only to deny it, Twain imprisons Leopold in his own language” (Nunn, 2020, p. 32).

6. Tracing Mobutu: *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*

6.1 Post-Independent Congo’s False Start

The political landscape in Congo started on the wrong note right from independence. The conflict between Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and President Joseph Kasavubu began almost immediately after independence. Backed by Soviet Union, Patrice Lumumba was poised to take over the country’s leadership away from the United States backed Joseph Kasavubu. Wrong captures in his book that this escalating political relationship between a Prime Minister and a President led to bizarre and absurd occurrences with each announcing to over the radio that they had sacked each other. Mobutu, who was an army chief all this time,

and politically neutral was at a loss when he was ordered by both men to arrest their rival. But Mobutu slowly grew impatient with this in-fighting of postcolonial leaders who swam on squabbles instead of steering the country out of colonial yoke. CIA agent, Delvin saw the Russians as ignorant allies of Lumumba who did not understand the historical workings on the Congo. On his part Mobutu was wary of the Russians and advised Lumumba to keep them away. Desperate on clinging to power, Lumumba continued to fraternize the Russians. These deeply irritated Mobutu who told him: “I did not fight the Belgians to then have my country colonised a second time” (Mobutu: Wrong, 2000, p. 69).

6.2 Mobutu's Congo

On 14 September 1960, Mobutu neutralized both Lumumba and Kasavubu in a bloodless coup arguing that the action was necessitated by the need to give the “civilian leadership a chance to calm down and settle their differences” (Wrong, 2000, p. 70). Consequently, Mobutu expunged Soviet personnel from Congo much to the exuberance of the United States.

CIA agent, Larry Delvin describes Mobutu to Michela Wrong:

What you must never forget is that there are many periods to Mobutu. You saw the pitiful end. But he was so different at the start. I can remember him as a dynamic, idealist young man who was determined to have an independent state in the Congo and really seemed to believe in all the things Africa's leaders then stood for (Devlin: Wrong, 2000, p. 65).

Wrong's book describes Mobutu as a tough leader with a cunning understanding of human behavior. The fact that Mobutu never completed his formal education or went to the university made him not to possess the “analytical intelligence of the academic” (Wrong, 2000, p. 91) but he remained streetwise. His outright limitation however was in the field of economics:

Official after official attests to the fact that when the subject of economics came up, Mobutu's attention would wander, his eyes glaze over. He knew how much his country was worth, but he had no idea of the processes required to realize that value. (Wrong, 2000, p. 91)

One such economic misreading by Mobutu happened when he decreed that foreign owned farms, plantations and commercial enterprises be returned to the Congolese people. This Zaireanisation policy, believed by Mobutu to be the authentic philosophy for economic prosperity of the African person backfired:

It was an approach to economic management so naively simple in its conception, so shoddily applied, that it was doomed to fail. Many of the new owners, busy forging their careers in Kinshasa, found they had never the skills nor the interest to run their new toys...the new owners pocketed savings, sold herds, dumped equipment on local markets and ripped up bushes...ordinary Zaireans, supposed beneficiaries of the process watched in shock as businesses closed, prices rose, jobs were doled out...and shelves emptied. (Wrong, 2000,

pp. 97-98)

This economic scenario is well captured by Ikambana (2007) who states that:

During Mobutu's Second Republic, the national bank, state-led institutions, and the national treasury were placed under the exclusive control of political injunctions. The national treasury department was at the service of the national party, which used the national bank as the source of its revenues. Individuals in charge of the bank and the treasury were political appointees who had no control over the revenues...this comes as no surprise in a country where the only legal obligation was to the president's imperatives (Ikambana, 2007, pp. 31-32).

Delvin calls Mobutu "a political genius, but an economic spastic" (Delvin: Wrong, 2000, 92). Mobutu a novice who barely understood economic computation and his economic policy was thus largely based on ignorance. Democratic Republic of Congo has not come out of this economic miscalculation to this day because as Jerome Chevallier, a former World Bank resident representative puts it, Mobutu "killed that economy" (Chevallier: Wrong, 2000, p. 98).

...in the generalized climate of impunity created by this botched economic experiment, sleaze – whether practiced by the lowly bread-seller or the Mercedes-driving Big Vegetable – was about to become the most striking characteristic of the Zairean society. (Wrong, 2000, p. 99)

The rampant impunity and corruption is cited by Kim Jaycox, World Bank's former maestro who says that "Mobutu was milking money and sending to these guys (regional governors]. It was a very expensive business" (Jaycox: Wrong, 2000, p. 305). In Mobutu's Zaire, sharing of the national cake was far from reality. The eaters of the cake were his loyalists and sycophants who danced to his tunes, even if for not anything else, creation of own wealth.

While Zairians remained poor, Mobutu went on to acquire vast wealth, especially from proceeds of minerals. He owned large trucks of lands and build massive homes across the country. Just like King Leopold II, Mobutu took Zaire hostage, taking it as his own personal property. For a man who loved fine things, Mobutu exported clothes and champagne, travelled on a personal Concorde flight, built airport at his ancestral town and lived large while Zaire's population lived from hand to mouth in abject poverty. For instance, his Les Miguettes farm house settled in a five-hectare compound and thirty rooms was estimated to be worth five million US dollars. He stashed ill-gotten wealth in foreign bank accounts under pseudonyms to avoid tracking of his wealth. "Mobutu certainly avoided using his own name when it came to sending money out of the country, often opening accounts and establishing shareholdings in the name of trusted relatives, employees and friends" (Wrong, 2000, p. 303).

6.3 Mobutu's Decline

By late 1996, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the liberation of Congo-Zaire led by Kabila sends signals to the international media that they would march all the way to Kinshasa.

Journalist at first laughed off the claim because there had existed other rebel groups before with such like claims. As it would later emerge, Alliance des Forces Democratiques pour la liberation du Congo-Zaire (AFDL) proved a strong force. Mobutu promised a serious counter attack that never materialized and soon, “town after town ‘fell’ to the AFDL” (Wrong, 2000, 252). They were capable of neutralizing Mobutu forces because, “whatever Big Vegetables in Kinshasa came to believe, the AFDL’s lightning advance was not the result of massive logistical support from Anglophone Western nations determined to destroy their former ally. Zaire’s security system was collapsing like a maggot-eaten fruit” (Wrong, 2000, p. 253).

According to Wrong, while the army was Mobutu’s pride and joy, something had terribly gone wrong during his last days as president of Zaire. One thing, according to Ngbanda that led to the army’s weakening was Mobutu’s retiring the old officers who had helped him seize power. With that, “the army lost a huge swathe of its brightest and best trained” (Wrong, 2000, p. 256). Mobutu woes continued when his allies, Belgium and US publicly disengaged their support for the Zaire president while French involvement to rescue Mobutu was cancelled exposing Mobutu to ultimate danger of the advancing AFDL. Desperate Mobutu turned to African allies in his last attempt to save his face. Nigerian military leader, Sani Abacha offered to help but nothing came out of his plan. The “region itself had decided the era of the dinosaur was over” and:

By March 1997 the AFDL had taken Kisangani, a military turning point. The following month came Mbuji Mayi, then Lubumbashi, where Kabila received a warm welcome from his fellow Katangese. As FAZ pulled back, leaving the itarahamwe and UNITA rebels to do the real fighting, Kinshasa was being cut off from the country’s mineral resources, a capital with no hinterland. (Wrong, 2000, p. 266)

7. Conclusion

Mobutu’s system of governance was no different from King Leopold II totalitarianism as presented in the texts. They both directly accumulated huge personal fortune from proceeds of mineral economy and impoverished the ordinary person. And even long after the king’s and Mobutu’s cruel regimes, the Congo curse lingers on. The Democratic Republic of Congo is still ravaged by a bewilderingly complicated civil war and continued economic decline. The warlords prefer “a cash-in-suitcase economy to a taxed and regulated one that would give all citizens a real share of the profits from natural resources” (Hochschild, 2005, p. 18).

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