

## Petite Etude Hergéenne N° 8: /Little Hergian Study N°8

**Keywords:** Tintin in the Congo, fable, colonial imaginary, reading's techniquess, internal and external readings, obsessive metaphor, autobiographical reading, socio-critical reading, onomastic reading, systemic reading, biblical kings, King Solomon, Georges Remi, Stanley, Boula Matari, red rubber, Léopold II, Chalux, Jean-Marie Apostolidès, Nathalie Tousignant, Colette Braeckman, Jean Bofane, Numa Sadoul, Steven Spielberg.

**History:** This article was first published in French under the title *Pourquoi et Comment lire Tintin (au Congo)? ou Le fantôme du roi Léopold II* [Why and How to read Tintin (in the Congo)? or The Ghost of King Leopold II] on the website (<http://www.onehope.be>). It is republished here in a short version by the translator Patrick McKenna and by Christian Salmon for the supervision.

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La présente étude a été initiée par une communication faite le 19 juin 2009 sous le titre *Why and How to read Tintin in the Congo?* au 6<sup>ème</sup> congrès bisannuel de l'International Bande Dessinée Society (IBDS) à Londres, et ce avec le soutien de la Communauté Française de Belgique (WBI).

Elle a aussi été l'objet d'une communication le jeudi 20 mai 2010 à Grenoble dans le cadre du colloque international intitulé "Lire et produire des bandes dessinées à l'Ecole" organisé par Nicolas Rouvière (Université Stendhal Grenoble). Elle a donné lieu à un enregistrement vidéo disponible sur les sites : <http://vimeo.com/12975580>. (Page consultée le 8 avril 2013).

[Pour toute thématique et/ou période temporelle équivalente, nous recommandons la lecture des articles, des livres et auteurs qui ne nous citent pas.. ]

## Read<sup>1</sup> Tintin<sup>2</sup> (in the Congo<sup>3</sup>)? or The Ghost of King Leopold II.<sup>4</sup>

*'A world without fiction is not free.  
The right to read a novel is a right of man.'*

Pierre Mertens

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<sup>1</sup> About the issue of the reading's techniques, the interested reader will refer to chapter 8 "Une approche systémique du rapport autobiographique chez Hergé" [A systemic approach to the autobiographical relation in Hergé's albums] of our essay "Tintin ou le secret d'une enfance blessée" [Tintin or the secret of an injured childhood]. A more technical approach can be found in the article "Du 'Comment lire?'" de T. Todorov au conte "L'idole" de G. Rodenbach [From the "How to read?" by T. Todorov to the tale "The Idol" by G. Rodenbach"] (accessible on the website <http://www.onehope.be>)

<sup>2</sup> To take to the amount of research work that has been involved in the present study, it would be advised to read the first study elaborated on the album "*Tintin in the Congo*". Then, the reader can refer to the twelve pages written –twenty-five years ago – by Jean-Marie Apostolidès in his essay "Les Métamorphoses de Tintin" [*The Metamorphoses of Tintin*], the forerunner of all the Tintinological studies. Cf. Editions Flammarion, coll. Champs n°727, 2006 (1984 for the first edition) pages 25 to 37.

<sup>3</sup> The first publication was issued in 1930 in the youth supplement from the newspaper "*Le Vingtième Siècle* [The Twentieth Century]". The album appeared in 1931 in a black and white version. The colour version appeared later in the year 1946 under the influence of the publisher Casterman.

<sup>4</sup> The present study was the subject of a document on June 19, 2009 under the title "*Why and How to Read Tintin in the Congo?*" during the sixth biennial congress of the International Bande Dessinée Society (IBDS) in London, and this was with the support of the French Community of Belgium (Communauté Française de Belgique (WBI)).

## Abstract

*Tintin au Congo* has become, at the same time, an emblematic and debatable album. It is not always easy to determine an emblem, indeed a myth and to understand the periodic reappearance of a debate. Nevertheless, the present research has as its goal to better share out the tensions, the link between a work of art and its author, to introduce more analysis where there is sometimes a lot of passion. Then this album would become a film for Steven Spielberg...

Our reading will show that this fiction is addressed to children but, at the same time, it is driven by a number of elements that set up a technique of narration that is more sophisticated and more critical, legible by adults. This structure will become a model for the writing of other Tintin albums.

Hergé is a creator and a free spirit: he is immersed in an era but he is also a critical and harsh observer, but undercover, of this same era, particularly the era of King Leopold II's Congo, and this, while recounting children's stories. In other words *Tintin au Congo* can't be reduced to : 'au schéma traditionnel du scénario humanitaire qui cherchait la redemption, c'est-à-dire la justification de la colonisation ou des actions des colonisateurs, par l'arrivée de la métropole d'un héros qui apportera le salut aux populations africaines en s'opposant aux méchants colons, souvent étrangers.'<sup>5</sup>[to the : 'traditional outline of the humanitarian scenario that was looking for redemption, that is to say, the justification of the colonization or the actions of the settlers, by the arrival from the metropolis of a hero that will bring salvation to the African population while opposing the mean settlers, often foreigners.'] Indeed, according to our hypothesis, in Hergé's case, a precocious critical conscience makes him disguise his true intentions: this critical consciousness takes root in several traumatic family events and in the life of Georges Remi. The autobiography interferes with the fiction.

As early as the cover where we see the hero and his travel companions embarking in a bumpy Ford T (1908 model), it seems as if they will not get very far... In short, we read that it is indeed an old-fashioned vision<sup>6</sup>.

On the other hand, we cannot deny the colonialist mentality that is present in this comic strip and it is also recognized by the author: the idea that whites are "superior" to blacks, is unfortunately persuasive. But beyond the prejudices of the era, there is still the moral idea that there are good and bad people both white and black. In principle, the idea of evil implies a bad man that abuses his power. On the other hand, the idea of good implies an individual will strive to grow and help others who are weaker. And, consequently, the "initial superiority" will work to obliterate itself to the profit of an improvement and an equality of the conditions.

## A Central Problem?

The central problem is the question of why this comic strip is preferred by children<sup>7</sup> of all continents, that is why it appeals to them... We have the innocence to think that this is not the caricature<sup>8</sup> of the Africans that is central to their curiosity but "the confrontation with the

<sup>5</sup> Tousignant N., *Imaginaires coloniaux dans la Belgique «nouvelle» (1999-2004): Enjeux mémoriels*, p.11 [Colonials Imaginaries in the "New" Belgium" (1994-2004): Memorable Issues, p.11.]

<sup>6</sup> The word of warning from the English edition is useful all the more so since as the initial socio-political conditions of colonization are becoming stranger and stranger for us. Let's notice, however, that, faced with the pictures of ancient technical objects (train, car, plane, etc.), this warning may seem optional. We reproduce here the last paragraph of the foreword from the English edition: "In his portrayal of the Belgian Congo, the young Hergé reflects the colonial attitudes of the time. He himself admitted that he depicted the African people according to the bourgeois, paternalistic of the period – an interpretation that some of today's readers may find offensive. The same could be said of his treatment of big-game hunting."

<sup>7</sup> On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, 2007, the RTBF recalled that at the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tintin, the publisher Casterman revealed that "Tintin in the Congo" was the comic strip preferred by children." Cf. [http://www.rtb.be/info/impression/ARTICLE\\_093624](http://www.rtb.be/info/impression/ARTICLE_093624)

<sup>8</sup> Let's reprint here Hergé's words: "My blacks are neither ridiculous nor something to scoff at; if they are, they are certainly not more so than the Whites, the Yellows, or the Reds that I have presented. My characters are caricatures, don't forget! ..." Sadoul N. *Tintin et moi. Entretiens avec Hergé* [Tintin and Me: Discussions with Hergé], Flammarion editions, coll. Champs n° 529, Paris, 2000, p. 88.

animal reign."<sup>9</sup> Besides, beyond the children's fascination, there is the question of whether or not this album can be counted in the list of the "Adventures of Tintin", and therefore, it will come to know whether this comic strip is, through its form and its content, the prototype of the "Adventures of Tintin": would it offer the simplified, indeed simplistic framework canvas of all the other comics strips, even the most accomplished ones? We cannot forget that Hergé wanted this comic strip to be viewed an introduction to his series.

### About the children's fascination to this comic strip ?

The response appears simple: "It is the "fault" of the big animals of the African savannah; they scare, they are able, by their size, their number and their power, to haunt their night fears, real and imaginary ones, and this is true, whatever the skin color of the young reader. It is important at the outset to know how the hero Tintin and his faithful companion Snowy will "confront" these big animals. What does the vignette on the inside cover indicate without ambiguity, a vignette that we tend to forget? This unique vignette that is found before the sixty-two-page narrative, shows Tintin and Snowy advancing cautiously in the savannah with their backs to a lion and another lion ready to devour them<sup>10</sup>. This is without a doubt proof that the first intent of the comic strip is the encounter with big animals and not with Africans. At this stage, we can already take offense at this goal but it corresponds with the infantile spirit. The album "Tintin in the Congo" is first a narrative of the fabulous bestiary of Congolese Africa, a newer kind of the "big book of the jungle". "Hic sunt liones", "here live the lions", wrote naïvely the cartographers on the big white spaces"<sup>11</sup> of the 18<sup>th</sup> century African continent.

In other words, we formulate the hypothesis that we will have the key to this album if we at first interest ourselves for the animals. Besides, it is possible that the best point of view for understanding the presentation of Africans in this album is precisely their connection to a Nature that is luxurious but also menacing: how do the inhabitants of the Congo, an immense country, confront nature? It permeates their stories and their myths.<sup>12</sup>

### One problem or multiple problems as a starting point?

As for all cultural objects, different readings, different stages of reading can be done. But first, we must begin problem. A problem that can justify our starting point with animals is the connection of another oddity in the animal theme.

Several vignettes in the first ten pages show a systematic<sup>13</sup> aggression of the tail appendix, the white tail of Snowy<sup>14</sup>. It is there we see a sort of obsessive metaphor, according to the phraseology of C. Mauron<sup>15</sup>. We predict that the resolution to this other question, of this

<sup>9</sup> "The confrontation with the animal reign constitutes the essential material." notes B. Peeters on page 100 of *Hergé, fils de Tintin* [Hergé, Son of Tintin].

<sup>10</sup> Suspense is guaranteed in the measure where, in the first vignette on page one, Snowy announces presumptuously to his fellow creatures that he is going to the lion hunt.

<sup>11</sup> Dumont G.H., *"Histoire de Belgique"* [History of Belgium], Editions du Club France Loisirs (Hachette), Paris, 1977, p. 424.

<sup>12</sup> In Koli Bofane and Lev, *Pourquoi le lion... n'est plus le roi des animaux* [Why the lion ... is no longer the king of the animals] Gallimard Youth, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> There are three aggressive animals (parrot, torpedo fish, and mosquitoes), a fourth one caused by the scene in which the door is closed by Tintin on the recently cared-for tail of Snowy, and also an imaginary fifth one by Snowy when a carpenter appears, in place of the doctor onboard, with his saw and tools. Anxiety.

<sup>14</sup> Sadoul, *Entretiens avec Hergé* [Discussions with Hergé], Flammarion, coll, Champs n° 529, p. 142. In the page notes, we find an allusion to these aggressions to Snowy "of which its tail pays the price".

<sup>15</sup> The expression "obsessing metaphor" is linked to the psychocritic by Charles Mauron.

animal oddity that repeats itself past the inside cover, can reveal the underinnings of the fiction.

**Stages of reading for a systemic approach?**

To resolve the two question-problems that have been identified, our method will be systemic. We know that a reading's stage is in itself a sort of distorting magnifying glass that can reveal an aspect of the work but at the same time conceal another. We try not to choose one over the other.

The first one to clear the subject will be a classical narrative outline that will show that the object of the hero's quest gets more and more complex very quickly.

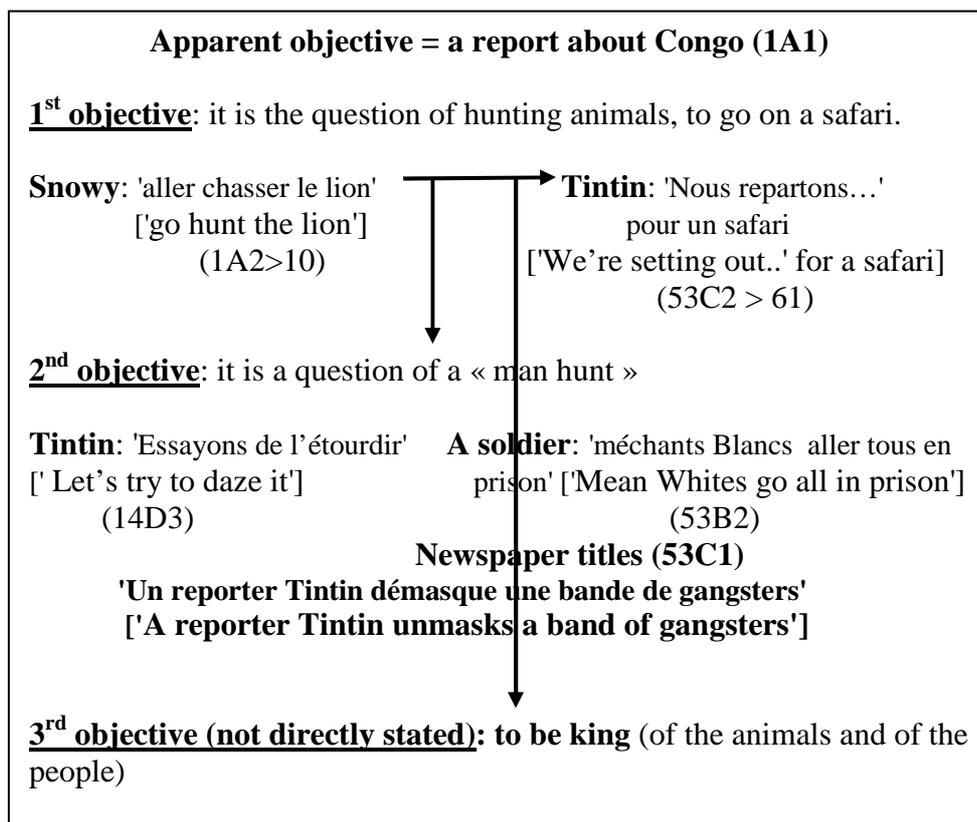
Then, we will take hold again of the fiction by other internal readings in order to show the very cohesion without introducing references to historic or other knowledge. At last, we will arrive to external readings that open to all a series of external knowledge that was able to be as many sources to construct the fiction. That knowledge is geography, history, sociology, literature and the biography of the author, etc. Is it necessary to add that this systemic approach does not try to dissociate the question of the art from the possible political of the eventual reach politics of the work but it aims to situate different levels of reading among them in order to better articulate them afterwards.

**Internal reading**

**First internal reading starting from a narrative scheme**

Let's consider the object of this fiction according to the simplified and traditional gate of a narrative scheme. Our angle of approach will be that of the bestiary.

Let's detail the object:



If we pay attention to it, we have a tale of gangsters inserted in a narrative of a hunt, both with weapons and photographic cameras, among the African fauna: what relationship can there be between the two tales? The transition between the animal theme and the human one resides in a more abstract theme which covers them both, that of kingdom, which would indicate a third object: becoming king, an object which would be fused with the hero's status

**Second internal reading: the theme is focused on the fauna**

A superficial reading of the album shows an impressive list of animals. We have written it down, so as to illustrate their permanent presence. In other words, we see, on the part of Hergé, some concern of referential illusion: the obstacles our heroes meet match a zoological reality. It is precisely the African fauna, the one we meet in the Congo and hence that bestiary gives us a precise context which mediatizes a fiction.

Page number	Species	
0	A lion, a lioness	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Aggress Snowy's Tail.</p> </div>
1	A spider	
2	A parrot	
6	A torpedo fish	
7	A shark	
10	Mosquitoes	
12	A crocodile	
15	Antelopes	
16	A monkey	
22	A lion	
28	A turtle	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Aggress Snowy</p> </div>
31	A snake	
33	Crocodiles (2x)	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Snowy captures the lion's tail</p> </div>
34	A boa constrictor	
37	A leopard (1x)	
38	An elephant	
41	A monkey	
48	A hippopotamus	
48	Crocodiles (3x)	
54	Leopard (3x)	
54	Giraffes	
56	A rhinoceros	
57	Buffalo	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>- The tamed leopard - The « aniota » - The leopard</p> </div>
62	A pink flamingo	

Let us remark three wildlife images:

- in 28D3, the m'Hatouvou are « the wet chickens »
- in 49B2, « this zebra » about the old Pygmies
- in 51B1, « Gibbon(s) », a “monkey” of Al Capone

This nature is presented, as a whole, as hostile and dangerous for foreigners as well as for natives.

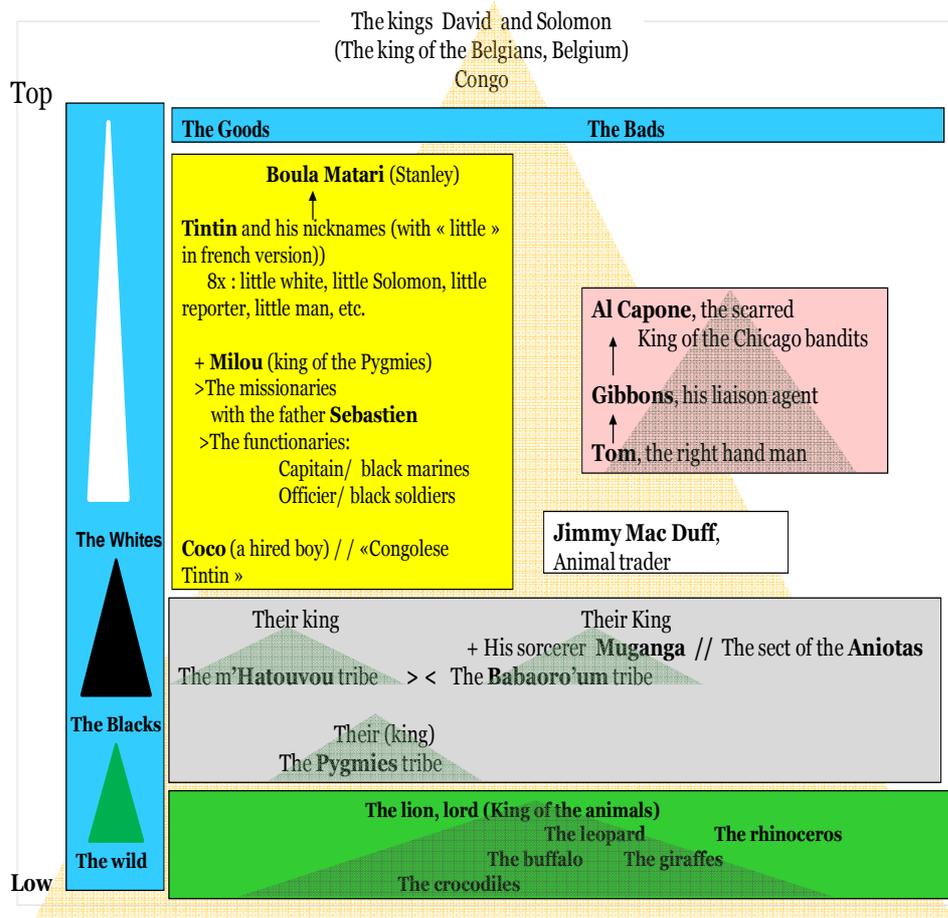
From the time spent on the ship, relations to the fauna appear. We recall here, at the right time, how much Snowy suffers several aggressions in the first ten pages, in particular its tail: the dog is weakened, it is pointed out to the everybody's attention... Now these first aggressions are the fact of small animals. What will happen with the big animals of the African savannah? Indeed, to pay attention to the animal theme implies that we are ready to consider the African fauna and its dietary pyramid.

Once in the Ford T with Tintin and Coco, Snowy will again be the object of several aggressions: the one from a crocodile, which it mistakenly takes for a tree trunk, and the one from a monkey which kidnaps it. Then comes the episode of the lion hunting.

It's after the fixing of the train that Tintin and Snowy are invited by the king of the Babaoro'm [rum baba, in French] to a hunt of "Lord Lion": after all the aggressions from exotic animals already encountered, this episode appears to be a nice revenge, especially for Snowy.

**Third internal reading: an internal hierarchical or socio-critical approach**

The two preceding readings reveal hierarchical situations where the human world and the animal one echo each other. At that level too, it is time to elaborate a hierarchical scheme whose principle consists in placing on a pyramid the power positions of the different characters met in the fiction.



Several pyramids appear in the background to locate local hierarchies. A bigger pyramid also appears in the background; it covers the whole of the local powers so indicates the final references which are the biblical kings.

It is clear that the hero makes himself the master of – successively – the animal pyramid, then that of the natives and finally that of the whites. But when he hastily leaves the African savannah, he doesn't receive the title of king. The hero is no usurper: the biblical kings are really his final references. We must notice this: the Belgian king (be it Leopold II or Albert I) doesn't appear, indeed he is even held in contempt.

Only having recourse to an external reading will allow us to emphasize elements which could explain that silence which, in the original context of the album, should have astonished us.

### External reading

#### **First external reading: an external socio-critical reading centred on the royalty**

Lion hunting is often found in the traditional African culture as an initiating event: this hunt makes the man. Indeed, focusing on the animal theme indirectly suggests that we consider on the one hand, the hierarchy of the wildlife even if it is in the form of a food pyramid: its summit is where we find the large carnivores. On the other hand, from the perspective of a zoologist, there are others, the human projections that correspond to the animals according to the cultures of reference, from the myths to the fables.

#### **The king of the Babaor'om and the reason of the lion hunt**

While inviting Tintin to the hunt of “lord lion”, the king takes indirectly the risk of putting his title at stake and seeing it transferred to Tintin.

We observe that the king has a leopard's skin on his knees<sup>16</sup>, the symbol of African royalty. Before this invitation, it is important to observe that Tintin is the first person astonished by the result of the collision (19D3) with the train: the derailing of the train by the car is the total opposite of reality... this event could possibly have a well hidden symbolic meaning: Tintin harms the powers of “royalty” to exploit the Congolese by the Europeans. This episode should awaken our curiosity because as much as it appears that Tintin is "a good white" according to the king: he did derail the train without intending to repair it himself. Notice that these passengers have all the signs of an acculturation because they copy the western styles in a manner that inconveniences them. Indeed, historically, they underwent a true technological shock and initially they believed that dressing this way would turn them into technicians or military officers.

We will discuss the lion hunt that I previously mentioned. In the episode, it's also shocking that Snowy held a leading role. Considering the number of aggressions that the hero's dog received, it's not an accident; he had a revenge to take...

On his side, as is suggested on the interior cover, Tintin did not see anything coming, he literally threw himself into a lion's mouth (22B1) that unconsciously decided to devour him. It is Snowy that saves him by biting off the lion's tail; the lion brought it upon himself. Shortly thereafter, it is again Snowy that presents himself with the lion's tail between his teeth thus putting an end to the animal king's anger. We have on page 24 (24A) a superb vignette with all the characters face to face with Snowy and the lion. Let us recall that the lion is “king

<sup>16</sup> The Leopard's skin is a typical emblem of royalty in Central Africa. Iconographic documents can be consulted in the catalogue “*Kongo Kingdom Art: from ritual to cutting edge*”, Editor: Marc Leo Felix, Hong Kong, 2003, for example: the photos ill.7, 1b; ill. 7,7; ill. 7, 18b; ill. 7, 20. About these photos, all the kings or chiefs of Congo are photographed sitting on Leopard's skins

of the Savannah”: in “the dismemberment” of his tail, the heroes have for themselves, a kind of symbol to see the sceptre of all (animal) Royalty and by extension, access to the totem and to the position of chief.

This theme of royalty relates back to the African history that we have seen applied to both small and big kingdoms in the Congo. Through this ordeal of lion hunting, a passage to a new theme which hides a major issue is revealed, one of royalty in human societies. This theme of royalty will rediscover itself and will be able to be seen as another obsessing metaphor: how to be the king? How to be worthy of being king? The sorcerer Muganga is not mistaken there, he anticipates the evolution of the story when he declares: “This little white, he has taken too much authority.” (24B2).

### **Tintin as a small King Solomon**

After having “captured” the king of the Savannah and having stopped Muganga’s efforts to frame Tintin as the idol thief, Tintin imposes himself as “the big chief” (24B2). It is no longer about the king of the Babaor’om. The word “king” is not explicitly used here but they do use the wording big chief. Or just after, it is the title of king which is now put in question. Obsessive metaphor?

Actually, it is very much this denomination that is explicitly put into play by the schemes of the hero Tintin. In effect, facing a quarrel for the possession of a hat (who will wear the crown?), Tintin succeeds in making two headbands from it. Snowy, a detached spectator in this episode, says this “Voilà Tintin who plays his small Solomon” (27D2). Despite this ironic reduction that uses the adjective “small”, Tintin plays a part equal to the wisdom of the famous King Solomon. At the time of this scene, in the Bible, two mothers were arguing over a baby.

### **Tintin as king of the m'Hatouvou**

The witch doctor, who doesn't admit defeat, provokes a war between the two tribes, that of the Babaor'om and that of the m'Hatouvou. The hero intervenes and is in no way pierced by the warriors' arrows. Thanks to an electromagnet (29C3; 30B2), coming out of the blue, Tintin is not subjected to the fate of Saint Sebastian (who died as a martyr killed by arrows). This time he ends up as the king of the m'Hatouvou 'The m'Hatouvous are braves warriors and the White-who-is-immune-to-their-arrows' is their king. At this time, after the name of 'small Solomon', Tintin is called king for the second time

### **Snowy as king of the Pygmies**

After a series of events that brings Tintin into contact with the missionaries, he is tricked by Tom, Al Capone’s foot soldier, disguised as a missionary. In the fight that follows, the heroes lose Snowy. He has been kidnapped by a tribe of Pygmies who crown him as king. (50B3) There, we will say: was it not him that domesticated the “king of the Savannah” by taking his “sceptre”? It is a well deserved consecration: Snowy can be king of the Pygmies, the “little men”<sup>17</sup>, for the “tall men”, the crown is reserved for Tintin.

### **Tintin, conqueror of Al Capone, king of the Chicago gangsters**

<sup>17</sup> We find an ironic echo of this episode in “*Les cigares du Pharaon*” [The Pharaoh’s Cigars] where Tintin is designated by Professor Siclone, who has become insane, as the queen of the Pygmies.

After reading the letter found by Snowy, Tintin is in a position to stop Al Capone's men and to make the front page of the newspaper. While being questioned, the local boss of the gangsters, Gibbons, talks about his boss, Al Capone the scarred, as if he was the king of the Chicago gangsters. (52A1) We can say that Tintin made Al Capone's plans fail in Africa; Tintin finds himself like a defendant, the "king" of the Law : everyting marks him out for a trip to America, as a lawman.

### **Tintin and Snowy as heirs of King David**

After taking a little rest, our two heroes set off again in the safari and will have to confront some fearsome buffalo that live in the African Savannah. They will cleverly kill a buffalo with a gigantic elastic made from vegetable rubber; symbolic matter – we will return to this subject in the external reading – of the exploitation of the Congolese people. Snowy poses for a photo on the corpse of the enormous buffalo and suggests, "What do you think of this statue idea? ... David and Goliath"(59B1). The gigantic elastic from the catapult could evoke the weapon of King David. This fifth and ultimate mention of a celebrated king, a conqueror of others that are bigger than he is, giants like all of the big animals of Africa, elevates the legitimacy of Tintin to be a hero, indeed a true king in the "straight" line – for the second time – among the best of biblical tradition (David, Solomon...). Remember that the biggest characteristic of the biblical God is that God allows the victory of the small against the mighty. **For those that will take these biblical references as anecdotic, it is important to know that they had an operational and effective value in the religious History of the Congo.** Thus, Colette Braeckman states that in the history of the Congo, "in 1930 appears Simon Kimbangu, who refuses the colonial order and resorts to non-violence. Evoking the image of David and Goliath, he asks his other compatriots to cease paying the tax, and to stop participating in compulsory cultivation or in chores. [...] Under the name of "Church of Christ on Earth", the kimbanguiste Church is one of the most important in Zaïre."<sup>18</sup> Briefly, the royalty theme is an obsessing metaphor. This metaphor is in line with an echo to three different contexts: nature, the history of the Congo's kingdoms, and biblical tradition, supreme legitimization. Notice that the obsessing metaphor of the royalty is prepared and announced by the obsessing metaphor of Snowy's tail which we understand to be the signalling attribute of the future tail of the lion, itself a symbol of the kings' sceptre. Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that the last qualification for evoking the memory of Tintin in the final village scene will not be that of the title of king but one of the nicknames given to Stanley "Boula Matari". Why? We will return to this.

### **The second external reading, an onomastic reading to verify the issue of the fiction**

Departing from the principle that a true gratitude of the other passes by a recognition of his language, we will verify the issues of our internal reading by using an onomastic approach in our external readings. In Koli John Bofane has his narrator say in his book "Congolese Mathematics": "A name, no one should ever leave it. It is the name that makes the being. It is the name that makes the man."<sup>19</sup> The onomastic approach goes more directly to the heart of a

<sup>18</sup> Braeckman C., "Le Dinosaur" [The Dinosaur], p.130.

<sup>19</sup> In Koli Jean Bofane (2008), "Mathématiques congolaises" [Congolese Mathematics], Editions Actes Sud / Adventure, Paris, p. 231.

fiction than any other technique and it will permit us to thus measure – who knows – the degree of recognition of the natives' culture.

Let us comment on this list of proper names :

### 1/ about the group of “good” whites :

We know Tintin. Let's recall the etymology of his name: tintin, n.m. (XIIIth, “sound of clattering glasses” onomatopoeia). *To do tintin* means to be deprived of something.

This etymology can be paralleled with the African “tintin” who will save the heroes from the sorcerer's claws. By its name and by its etymology, the term Coco is not logically more valorising than the term “tintin”: both have a connection to a common name (tintin; coco).

Actually, Coco can also be related to: 1/ coconuts 2/ the scream of a chicken (onomatopoeia): egg, a term of affection 3/ pejorative: individual (zebra). We will note here that the hero and his African double both have childish names with two times the same syllable. This writing device can also be found in the album “The Blue Lotus” where the young Chinese in charge of defending Tintin is named Didi.

At the same time, it is worth interesting ourselves with the nicknames. Making note of the nicknames shines light on the fact that the hero was qualified as “little”<sup>20</sup> ten times: 2 x “**little white**” (24B2, 24B3), by the sorcerer and by Tom, “**little Solomon**” (27B2), ironically by Snowy; “**the little white**” (30D1) by Tom; “**the little reporter**” (36C1) by a student; “**little man**” (37B2), by a domesticated leopard, an echo from “The Jungle Book”; “**my little friend**” (43B1) by Tom; “**little rascal**” (51B3) by Gibbons; “**little unfortunate journalist**” (52D3), by Al Capone's agents; “**all the little Whites**” (62A), by an African in the village café. The repetition of the adjective “little” is not without its irony with regard to the hero, who is actually a “big” hunter and an ingenious handyman...

Resorting to European techniques, from the use of a rifle to exploding the dynamite and let's not forget the video camera and the magnet, earns the hero two references, one of which will serve as a nickname. The first reference originates from the fact that the hero replaces the teacher Father Sébastien because he is ill. This reference is not without irony: Saint Sébastien died a martyr because he was shot to death by arrows but our hero escapes a similar fate with the help of a magnet; and therefore will not become a “Saint Sebastian”...

The double allusion to Boula Matari, “rock breaker”<sup>21</sup>, the surname given to Sir Morton Stanley for his use of dynamite, places the hero in the line of the fearless explorer and the sensible technician<sup>22</sup>. Placed at the end of the narrative during its second mention, this name puts in evidence a royal qualification that is either European or African that is finally judged pejorative.

### 2/ about the group of “bad whites”:

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<sup>20</sup> Let's remark that by a lack of judgement, the English translation often does not include these adjectives. For this problem, we send the reader back to a work that we have directed: Julian Burnat, “Problèmes de traduction: les injures de Haddock” [Problems of Translation: the verbal abuse of Haddock (in “*Tintin au Tibet*” [Tintin in Tibet]). The text is accessible on the site [www.onehope.be](http://www.onehope.be)

<sup>21</sup> This expression will apply to the Belgian colonial administration that showed stakhanovism.

<sup>22</sup> Emerson B., p. 237 note 10.

All the Anglophone names and first names are given to the bad guys. The Americans are perceived as people without faith (Tom) or law (Al Capone), or past slave drivers (Jimmy), even "wild beasts"(Gibbon(s)). The enemy really seems to be the American capitalist that prefigures the scenario of "Tintin in America", particularly the episode about the Red-Skins' exclusion from their reserve for the benefit of the birth of an ultra modern city.

An explication: with Al Capone the scarred, as the chief of the Chicago gangsters, the Anglophone group becomes Mafioso. On the spot, the mafia chief in the Congo is named Gibbons. If we remove the "s", the surname suggests a long-armed monkey: Gibbons is indeed a liaison agent, a character that "imitates" his boss who has "a long arm" in Africa. We will rediscover the name Gibbons in "*The Blue Lotus*" as "W.R. Gibbons, director of the "Americano-Anglo-Chinese Steel Company" (35B3) concerned with profits and remarks with obvious racism (7A1): "Where are we going if can't even teach these dirty yellows some notions about politeness?... It's enough to put you off wanting to civilize those barbarians!..." As for Tom, he is the right hand man, ready for anything. Etymologically, the name Tom originates from the name "Thomas" which means the "twin", the double who is actually, in the narrative, in turn an illegal passenger, a false missionary, etc. This name can be connected with the apostle that betrayed Christ for money or even evoke the American context of slavery with the famous book "Uncle Tom's Cabin".

There remains the exotic animal merchant, Jimmy MacDuff. The name Jimmy originates from the name Jim, diminutive of James, Jacques. Most interesting of all is his family name: MacDuff comes from Gaelic and signifies "son of Dubh" which literally is the equivalent to "black". The final translation gives us "Jimmy, the son of the black". In the original black and white version (1930), the character is a black American animal trader for an American circus: it is the echo of a descent, of an origin, the one of freed black Americans that devote themselves to business. In the colour version (1946), the character became a white Anglophone who is an animal trader for a European circus but the name Jimmy MacDuff does not change: the denunciation of the pro-slavery period of American history is maintained.

For those who know how to read it.

### 3/ about the group of "blacks":

Beyond the classic use of the African sociological reality that is the presence of kingdoms, tribes, ethnic groups that are very diverse, like the Pygmies, there is, on a linguistic plan, indisputable loans, and therefore, we must pay attention to the natives' language. This step in a permanent trait of Hergé's fictions, it has no anecdotic value but gives place to ironic and humorous transformations in all the albums.

There are six of these linguistic loans, they show Hergé's concern to gather information and linguistically approach the Congolese realities.

1/ There's the very widespread "Boula Matari"<sup>23</sup> that we have already mentioned and that is translated as "the rockbreaker", the nickname given to Stanley.

2/ It is necessary to add the word "m(u)ganga", the sorcerer's name which, translated in Swahili, means "man that heals". When this sorcerer that plotted against our hero becomes sick, Tintin cures him with quinine: the sorcerer's wife calls him a big sorcerer, "Boula Matari".

<sup>23</sup> The English translation in 28B2 speaks of a "big juju man" instead of "boula matari", and on page 62, "boula matari" is found together with the word "all-powerful".

3/ The third linguistic mention omitted by most commentators is the song sung by the rowers in the big vignette (35C). It is one of the best from the album because it uses an authentic traditional Congolese song that is in Lingala, “U-élé-u-éle-u-élé maliba makasi”<sup>24</sup> and this, before an extravagant and questionable praise of the missionaries by Snowy, “What aces, these missionaries!...” (36A3)

4/ The fourth mention is ironic: in the name of two tribes, the Babaoro'm and the m'Hatouvou, the sound “ou” is written “u”: the phonetic translation hides a judgement of value of the extroverted side of the Africans.

5/ The fifth mention is often used against the author: he talks 'pidgin'. We will take the thesis of F. Soumois. For him, Hergé seems to take certain aspects of the African language into account: the inexistence of a plural second person while being polite and the proximity of the two auxiliaries “to have” and “to be”<sup>25</sup>.

6/ The sixth mention is the mention of the Aniotas sect that used to punish the Africans that collaborated with the whites. It is a matter of putting it back in the very technical explanation given by the album in the vignette (30D3). We perceive at this stage that the author has gathered information, and therefore, we have to pass on to another external reading to attempt to explain other cultural and historic elements.

### Third external reading centred on geography and the African culture

In an external reading, we have to find elements that we have read and which we cannot make sense of without external documentary sources and not with general knowledge or a priori, at first glance. This is generally the case for borrowing words from other languages we have encountered, like Boula Matari but there can also be elements coming from other domains: geographic, technical, and animal.

Effectively, Hergé had to do some research; he had to read a reference book as he did for his first album “Tintin in the Country of the Soviets” and also for his third album “Tintin in America”.

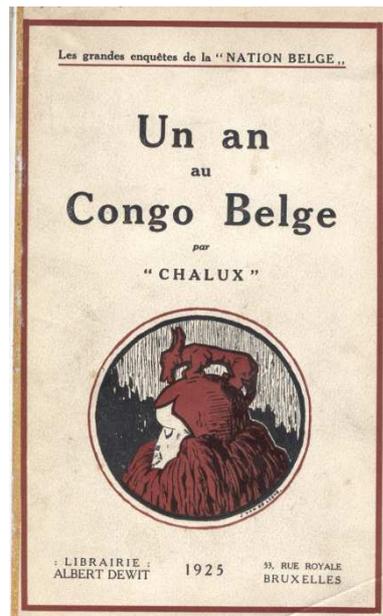
Also, concerning the album “Tintin in the Congo”, we have looked for a reference book. Most commentators (F. Soumois, B. Peeters, M. Farr, et al.) have never mentioned anything else than a visit to the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren; the reading of newspapers from the epoch covering King Albert I's visit (to the Congo) in 1928 or the encounter with some missionaries: is it possible?

We have searched for a book that dates back to before 1930 that recounts a voyage with illustrations. Our research has lead us to a work entitled “A Year in the Belgian Congo”, written by Chalux<sup>26</sup> dated 1925.

<sup>24</sup> The complete text of the song, which is actually quite widespread in the Congo, is the following but there are many variations and additions, because of its broadcasting in all the regions of the Congo, even in Belgium in the youth movements. So the text “U-élé-u-élé-u-élé maliba makasi” can be translated by: “Ulélé! Ulélé! The current is very strong”. The word Uélé presumably means the river Uélé, affluent of the Oubangui that makes up the northern borders of the Congo.

<sup>25</sup> Soumois F. *Dossier Tintin*, p. 35.

<sup>26</sup> Chalux, “Un an au Congo belge” [A Year in the Belgian Congo], Librairie Albert Dewit, Brussels, 1925, 725 pages. “Chalux” is the pseudonym of a Belgian journalist; a marquis named Roger de Chateleux. He worked for the newspaper “La Nation Belge” [The Belgian Nation] which sent him to the Congo to cover the local authorities at length. A “Tintinian” photo of the author with his colonial hat and his “loyal Friday” will be found on the next page.



On page 698, we find a “tintinian” photo of the author with his colonial hat and his loyal “Vendredi (Friday)”... This photo and its commentary from 1925 say a lot about the “good conscience” of the colonial mentality from the time.

Whatever might be said about it, we will not find a pure transposition of the iconic arrangement of the characters from the album: even if he is smaller than the hero, Coco is never seated at Tintin’s feet, they are always standing or sitting facing one another. For example, they share the same meal and he is sitting in the Ford T like a co-pilot (but only after the 1946 colour version).



Nevertheless, with the help of these iconic connections, we have succeeded in making a more systematic and conclusive reading of the text but unfortunately, we cannot prove it in this paper.

### Third external reading: the passage from the socio-critical to the biographical

It is surprising to find the absence of the founding king, Léopold II in this commissioned story.

We must recall here that in 1885, The Congo had been recognised as the private property of King Léopold II after the conference of Berlin. This personal proprietorship provides a place for scandals (including chopped off hands and others) denounced at the time by Sir Edmond Morel's *Congo Reform Association*<sup>27</sup>. Only the suspension of the Congo in 1908 and the administration by the Belgium state could "save" it from an international trusteeship.

Also, in a propagandist paper about Belgian colonisation in full evolution, Hergé, a young 23-year-old cartoonist, could not become involved in a reminder of the Leopoldian times without "discovering" the Crown and its reprehensible historic blindness like, in particular, the rubber scandal and the acceleration of its exploitation with the help of a railway. The problem for the writer became this: how could he write about the Congo and mention nothing of Léopold II? Or better, how could he talk about Léopold II without it seeming so? As a young employee, Hergé could not "discover" the Crown in this product, commissioned in 1930 by his religious director, it was necessary for him to disguise this matter if he wanted to evoke the figure of the founding king. But did he have a reason to disguise his purpose, to speak of the problematic Léopold II, and to stand up for the small against the big as he was urged to do by the biblical tradition of kings David and Solomon?

### From the political context to the biographical context: socio-critical approach

Besides the historical context of the compilation of this album and the frustrating fact that instead of choosing America as a destination for Tintin (it would have been a nicer effect after the adventures of "Tintin in the Country of Soviets"), the Congo was imposed on him, it seemed to us interesting to verify if Hergé did not have some closer connections with the Congo; perhaps even biographical, with the Congo.

The answer is "no", but perhaps there is something interesting about the family life of the Remis. In fact, in the "mythology" of Georges Remi's family, it is mentioned that his paternal grandmother became a single mother who gave birth to twins; the future father and uncle of Georges. In her unhappiness, this single mother was helped by a generous and great countess, Marie-Hélène de Dudzele: these two elements suffice to create a story, a mythology, an authentic "family novel", or even royal<sup>28</sup>, to which his family had subscribed: to have a prestigious ancestry... Add the well-known escapades of king Léopold II and you have a possible illegitimate birth that must be recognized or at least avenged...Voilà, this could be the base of a surprising bias in the thoughts of a little Belgian bourgeois to denounce the abuse of a "royal" colonisation but considered as "normal for the epoch" by the common man. The problem will therefore be to speak about the abuse of power or at least make a face at the king without "discovering the Crown". This could be a "personal affair" that the artist should settle.

<sup>27</sup> *Léopold II, génocidaire?* [Leopold II, genocidal?] We can read Philippe Maréchal's article "*La controverse sur Léopold II et le Congo dans la littérature et les médias. Réflexions critiques*" [The controversy about Leopold II and the Congo in literature and media] which shows the state of the question about the book "*King Leopold's Ghosts*" by the American journalist Adam Hochschild who compared Leopold II to Hitler and Stalin... in Catalogue "*La mémoire du Congo. Le temps colonial*" [The memory of the Congo: The colonial times], Editions Snoeck/ Musée Royal d'Afrique Centrale, 2005, Brussels, p. 43-49.

<sup>28</sup> We will refer to the transgenerational set of themes explored within many works by Sergé Tisseron. His most successfully completed and explicit work is "*Tintin et les secrets de famille*" [Tintin and the Family Secrets].

### Which historical hints and which masks are possible?

> One of the most surprising hints is the episode of the train, which has already been brought up. In fact, the part that deserves to shock and offend us when the little train is derailed is the comments to the Africans in a pure colonialist context. There is still the fact that it is not normal to see the train knocked over by an ordinary car: the first surprised is first not only the hero and then all the passengers.

Let's underline here that this knocking over, this inversion, this illogical phenomenon could denounce the train as the principal vector of the exploitation of the Congo's resources, which is a proved historic fact.

Let us first make a geographical precision. The construction of a railway was essential because between the basin of the Congo River arriving at Leopoldville and the estuary of the Congo River, the river is impracticable<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, the construction of a three hundred and eighty kilometre railway in a hostile environment was vital and therefore had to take over the river way: the construction of the railroad implied a considerable human cost<sup>30</sup>.

### Stanley's role in the construction of the railway

After his explorations, in 1878, Stanley "had a very clear view on the manner of how to develop the Congo basin. He wanted to create a railway and a finance company<sup>31</sup>." "Without a railway, the Congo is not worth a penny." Stanley declared.

But before the construction of the railway, he had to construct a track between the estuary and the navigable basin of the river. Starting in 1892, Stanley passed two years to obtain permission from the local chiefs, to trace a track, and to organize the work.

Besides the use of dynamite to break the rocks, a grotesque usage of which we find in the episode of the rhinoceros, another fact maybe inspired Hergé in the episode where the hero uses an electromagnet during the tribal conflict between the Babaor'om and m'Hatouvou kings.

G.W. William says that "Stanley and his white assistants resorted resources to make various ruses.

For example, to influence the African kings to renounce their land in writing in favour of Leopold, they made the Africans believe that the Whites possessed supernatural powers.<sup>32</sup> "A certain number of electric batteries were bought in London and, once attached to the arm underneath a jacket, they were linked to a piece of ribbon passing under the palm of the white brother, and when he cordially squeezed the hand of a black brother, the black brother would be very surprised to find his white brother vigorous enough to make him fall down.

But there is worse. Thus, we can read: "In general, the direct and indirect consequences of the colonial penetration revealed itself far more expensive in human lives than the slave round up."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The interested reader can refer to the explicit outline on page 41 of the work of Marc Léo Felix, *Kongo Kingdom Art from ritual to cutting edge*.

<sup>30</sup> "Much toned down, the official figures give nonetheless as a statistic of the deceased: 132 whites and 1 800 non-whites." p. 288 in Hochschild A., *Les Fantômes du roi Léopold. La terreur coloniale dans l'état du Congo 1884-1908* [King Leopold's Ghosts: The colonial terror in the Congo 1884-1908]. Editions Tallandier, coll. Texto, 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Emerson B., p; 87.

<sup>32</sup> In "*Les métamorphoses de Tintin*" [The Metamorphoses of Tintin] about the album "*Tintin in the Congo*", J.M. Apostolidés indicates on page 27: "The technique is rarely understood in its rational aspect; Tintin masters it in an absolute manner, without having ever learned; he uses it as a magic power." This topic, which wants to be critical, in fact corresponds to a desired historical usage and therefore, finally, it has nothing to do with a clumsy placement in the frame of this album in particular.

<sup>33</sup> Hochschild A. *Les Fantômes du roi Léopold* [King Leopold's Ghosts], p. 188-189.

It was necessary to have obedient workers, and a lot of them. But the capable men had been decimated from the transportation.

For the construction of the railway, the Belgians called for native handy men from West Africa; the Barbades and Zanzibar. We even made Chinese coolies come.”<sup>34</sup>

**While replacing all these historic elements in comparison to the episode of the narrative constructed by Hergé, we can say that by the knocking down of this train, a symbol of European penetration, Tintin can appear to be a liberator that defends the Congolese while putting out of service this essential tool for the exportation of the natural resources of the Congo to the Occident.**

> **Second hint:** It is the mentioning of rubber. Hergé could have told his story without evoking “the rubber tree”. Yet this is not the case.

To mention it, even playfully, is to draw the reader's attention, to lift the corner of the veil, which, if it can be linked to other elements, will change into indictment.

Firstly, let's remember how the king will strive to reimburse himself and to profit from his Royal Domain that is the Congo. The immediately exploitable resources will be ivory, then vegetable rubber, which will take the name of red rubber or red gold because at a certain moment, it was worth more than gold. This peak is explained by the fact that “As the rubber tree plantations did not exist yet, rubber at this time was considered like a miracle product: Hadn't we, in Europe, just discovered tyres, launched the first cars, popularized bicycles?”<sup>35</sup>

As for its qualification of “red”, it is due to the scandal of chopped off hands: employed by the chiefs of the European posts incited by a system of premium commission based on the quantity<sup>36</sup> of rubber produced, foremen were “strangers to the region, they practiced a custom inherited from the Zanzibarites and following a Muslim law: they cut off the right hand of the native rebels or the uncooperative and dip the arm in boiling tar to heal the wounds. [...] As more years passed, the system worsened [...] Denounced by the British, among them the consul of Goma, Roger Casement, by missionaries and by journalists, this scandal of red rubber and of chopped off hands ended up being known in Belgium where it caused indignation in the public.

> **Third indicator:** Hergé takes care to put the story of the revolt by the Aniotas into his narration and to recall that the Aniotas<sup>37</sup> are “a secret society to fight against Whites” (30C3). Such a detour tells us that not all of the Congolese had accepted to be colonised: some of them were capable of revolting prematurely, a revolt that is nevertheless doubly indirect because on **the** one hand, the revolt would punish the Africans that collaborated with the Whites and on the other hand, it would leave the tracks of a leopard attack.

> **Fourth indicator:** Hergé continues his narrative with a confrontation of the hero with two more leopards. Thus, we can wonder, after the Aniotas episode, if the leopards aren't there for someone else: from Leopold to leopard, the phonetic short cut is tempting, possible, and

<sup>34</sup> On this subject, we can relate it to the work of Colette Braeckman (1992), *Le dinosaure. Le Zaïre de Mobutu* [The Dinosaur. Mobutu's Zaïre], Edition Fayard, Paris, p. 108. The work “*Kongo Kingdom Art from ritual to cutting edge*” by Marc Léo Felix proposes on pages 94-95 three documents about the unfortunate presence of 529 coolies in the Congo in 1893 who were used to build the railway line crossing the Monts de Cristal. This railway had a considerable cost in human lives.

<sup>35</sup> Braeckman C. “*The Dinosaur*”, p. 110-111.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, p. 111.

<sup>37</sup> We must underline that even if the dispute of the Aniotas was done under the cover of an animal aggression, it is the sign, the proof of a Congolese revolt against European power. Later, this revolt will take, for example, the shape of a religious dispute: the kibanguism persecuted without success by the colonial power and that ends up in military mutinies and an open political dispute, that directly **led** to the political speech of Patrice Lumumba on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 1960.

would offer a timely semantic coincidence, which Hergé, a former boy scout, can make a track mark of for his narrative<sup>38</sup> ... Let's verify this hypothesis.

### Under the skin of the leopards, Leopold II?

The support for this hypothesis comes firstly from the episode of the Aniotas from which Hergé drew the idea of the mask<sup>39</sup>, the ruse we find in the episodes where the hero disguises himself as a monkey and then as a giraffe so that he could approach animals.

Next comes the fact that in the African culture, the leopard is an animal that is considered "royal". It is finally the common point of these two leopards encountered by the hero, the tame one and the wild one: they are the only animals capable of speech<sup>40</sup>, with the exceptions of Snowy, a parrot (repetitive), and a monkey (imitation).

The first leopard that arrives in the narrative comes and interrupts the calculation course that Tintin gives to a class of students from the Mission. How can we tell that this leopard is domesticated? How can we know that behind this fearsome animal hides a master that could give it orders? This master is an American named Jimmy MacDuff. We have shown in the onomastic study that the association of a first name and an American name could be read as an indirect denunciation of Americans who practiced enslaving Blacks until the American Civil War (1865)<sup>41</sup>. But if the final scapegoat here is America, Belgium is not far away. Actually, the black and white version supplied an episode abundantly denounced as colonialist, with the famous passage: "My dear friends, I will speak to you about your motherland: Belgium!..." (77B1). But that vignette was followed by another "that we do not see", the vignette (77c2) where Soumois finely spotted a matter as "revealing a Freudian slip"<sup>42</sup>: we read here that "Belgium is what we call... a leopard!". This Freudian slip lets us hear that Belgium with its king Leopold in particular... was more than probably a "dangerous, fearsome animal." The variation in the colour version did not erase this "tripping up" even if it reduces the colonialist cliché, a reduction due to political evolution (the calling into question of colonialism at the end of the Second World War).

A brief analysis of this variation shows that the course given by the "missionary" Tintin is no longer about the geography of "Belgium, your motherland" but on a more neutral subject, arithmetic "Two plus two equals?..." (36D1). This expression becomes "two plus two makes?... A leopard!!!" (36D2). This transformation allows the apparition of a Freudian slip to know that "the calculation makes the beast, the voracity (of king Leopold)." Consequently, the disappearance of the mention of colonialist "Belgium, your motherland" offers an additional opportunity to stigmatize once again the behaviour of King Leopold II. This thought is reinforced by the fact that the animal has been tamed by the Anglophone Jimmy MacDuff. Though this last character has nicely been "whitened" and Europeanised: he still has the same name that we have translated as "son of black" American and with that, it indicates that the animal rests "radio-controlled" by the Americans.

<sup>38</sup> Here, we send the reader back to our *essay "Tintin ou les secrets d'une enfance blessée"* [Tintin or the Secrets of an Injured Childhood], and particularly to chapter 2 with the emphasis on this "happy coincidence" between the hero Tchang and an alcohol made from Nepalese rice, tchang. The term "happy coincidence" was used by Hergé in his interview with P. Hamel and B. Peeters, in February 1977.

<sup>39</sup> In "*Tintin in the Land of the Soviets*", Hergé constructs an entire episode of an animal fable where Snowy finds himself again disguised as a tiger and is part of a ridiculous confrontation with all the farm animals, a wink to Benjamin Rabier.

<sup>40</sup> The wild leopard is endowed with the power of speech only in front of a mirror (54C2).

<sup>41</sup> Let's recall that in the black and white version, the owner of the leopard is explicitly a black American. The character's skin colour is in fact a more obvious hint for the scope of the name and first name except if we do not read them

<sup>42</sup> Soumois F., *Dossier Hergé* [Hergé dossier], p. 30 note (1).

The second is a wild leopard and is therefore more fearsome than the preceding one: it has no master. The only hope of stopping it is to make it become aware of its ignominy. It is the mirror<sup>43</sup> that will play this role: the animal sees itself like a “horrible beast” (54C3), then it runs away. But in reality, it is only a human being that is capable of being conscience of itself and again... Was this the fate of Leopold II<sup>44</sup>? We can doubt it.

### Number 1385?

We note that Tintin is victorious every time in his confrontations with the leopards and everything that is hidden behind them (the sorcerer, the American, King Leopold II<sup>45</sup>).

But the major element that will confirm this animal image as an image of King Leopold II's ferocity – remember Stanley's words “The king is unbelievably ravenous”<sup>46</sup> – lies in a number, the one that we see on the license plate of the hero's Ford T: 1385.

This number “1385”, shown more than once in the comic strip, points, properly speaking, to nothing in particular, except if we complete the '3' with an inverted '3' along a vertical axis of symmetry, which gives us an '8'.

“1385” becomes “1885”. “1885” is the very year of the Berlin conference that granted King Leopold II the Congo as his personal property.

If “1385” is encrypted as “1885” and if we link it with the episode of the train falling over, Tintin becomes a “zorro”, a “zorrino”<sup>47</sup>, a dispenser of justice who comes to the Congo to contest the behaviour of the rapacious and cruel Sovereign. This kind of encrypting is frequently used by Hergé<sup>48</sup>. There is therefore a masked accusation of the colonisation policy of King Leopold II, the “founder” of the Congo. It is necessary to add that the registration “1385” is on a car that was American manufactured, the Ford T<sup>49</sup>. The coupling of Leopold II/ the Americans foreshadows what we find in the episode at the school with MacDuff's leopard.

In short, from our point of view, the author gives a narration with several different levels because he is pursuing several different goals and it is probably this perspective that complexifies the fiction and gives it a larger psychological reach once we look at it closer. For the hero, it is a matter for him to challenge the big animals, but behind that, it is a matter for Hergé on the one hand, to denounce the rapacity of a king, and on the other hand, to recover the honour of an aristocratic descent in which this same king would have – in the family mythology – illegitimately wronged his father.

<sup>43</sup> On the topic of the mirror in the constitution of the subject with Lacan, the reader can refer to our literary research of George Rodenbach's masterpiece *Bruges-la-Morte ou comment échapper au miroir?* [Bruges the Dead City or How to Escape the Mirror?]

<sup>44</sup> A sentence from the notebooks of Stanley is terrible: “The sovereign is of an enormous voracity” in Braeckman C. (1992), *Le dinosaure, le Zaïre de Mobutu* [The Dinosaur, Mobutu's Zaïre], Edition Fayard, Paris, p. 111.

<sup>45</sup> Clearly, the leopard has a place uncommon in the imagination of the Africans. We remark that President Mobutu still exploits the popular mythology connected with the leopard. Thus we can read in *The Dinosaur*: “Drawing on tradition, Mobutu has his particular look out of nothing. He wears a leopard's hat, while firmly holding his chief's cane and likes sitting on a leopard's skin, a symbol of power.” In Braeckman C. (1992), *The Dinosaur*. “The Zaïre of Mobutu, Edition Fayard, Paris, p. 154.

<sup>46</sup> A quote that is found once again in Colette Braeckman (2004), *Le procès de Léopold II, roi du Congo* [The Trial of Leopold II, King of the Congo] in the newspaper “Le Soir” on Thursday, April 28, 2004.

<sup>47</sup> In Spanish, “zorro” means fox; “zorrino” is a diminutive. The second expression, “zorrino”, will become the name of the little Inca that helps Tintin in *Le Temple du Soleil* [The Temple of the Sun].

<sup>48</sup> Here, we send the reader to have a look at number “20a” of Snowy's sarcophagus in *Les cigares du Pharaon* [The Cigars of the Pharaoh]. For more details, the reader can take a look at chapter five of *Tintin ou la nostalgie d'un amour perdu* [Tintin or the Nostalgia of a Lost Love] in our essay.

<sup>49</sup> Let us not forget that the production of vegetable rubber was essentially bought by the Americans (Goodyear) and the English (Dunlop).

Nevertheless, we can observe that the reading paths are intertwined, particularly with, at the end of the album, the return to the safari theme. It is again about the safari animals (giraffe, leopard, rhinoceros, buffalo). The bestiary retakes its rights but there is no reason to exclude the fact that there could still be other symbolic issues, for example in the scene of the dynamiting of the rhinoceros.

## Conclusion

If we attempt a global synthesis at this stage of the analysis, we can say that in this fiction, we have more than the art of an “artistic childhood” situated in a precise historic period. We have more than the artistic product of a young Belgian belonging to the little bourgeoisie (a catholic boy scout) dreaming of exoticism and depending on the colonial prejudices of the civilizing Europeans.

We have a 23-year-old individual in 1930, Hergé and Africans, the Congolese people, who both have some griefs (for Hergé, his family, for the others, socio-economic ones) in opposition to the abuse of power on the part of King Leopold II “a voracious beast”. These two historic figures find themselves discreetly united –would we dare to say reconciled? – in **a fiction, almost a critical fable where the hero Tintin refuses to become “king” at all the levels while dethroning the kings but not anyhow: his ultimate references, as he goes to the Congo, are the missionaries and the biblical kings. He ends up fleeing the hostility of the fauna... but while leaving the population to its traditional imagination.**

**The question of a fair power remains open: beyond the colonialist attitude, the issue is the control and the mastery of the inhabitants of a vast country with a natural environment full of riches, this issue leads to possible feuds where we quickly leave a master for another one (traditional king, Occidental king, “ubuesque” dinosaur<sup>50</sup>, red dragon?).**

**Briefly, “Tintin in the Congo” is, by the major role played by the African wildlife, a kind of fable<sup>51</sup> that denounces the abuse of royal power, be it either in nature, in the African culture, or internationally.**

**Despite its appearance, “Tintin in the Congo” is a complex album and its creator reveals himself not simply a reflection of his time.**

Moreover, because of the detailed analysis of this first album and of the same systemic methodology, we can put forward two rules, two “laws of composition” for Hergé’s work to consider as pertinent a reading of the work and particularly each album from “The Adventures of Tintin”:

a/ All of the albums contain at least three levels of reading (fiction, culture, autobiography).

Hergé speaks of his life in all of his albums.

b/ The vignette found in the interior cover of the album has nothing anecdotic: it offers the main key for the decoding, the reading of the album<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> Jansen P. (1997), *À la cour de Mobutu* [At the Court of Mobutu], Editions Michel Lafond, Paris.

<sup>51</sup> We cannot forget that Hergé was very impressed during his youth by the illustrations of Benjamin Rabier about the fables of La Fontaine. So, in pages 128 to 130 de “*Tintin au Pays des Soviets*” [Tintin in the Land of the Soviets], we recognize a staging of the animal world from the fables: the riches of the African wild is again the occasion of a “mise en scène”, an echo of this world of fables.

<sup>52</sup> If this theory is exact, the analysis made by B. Peeters of “Les bijoux de la Castafiore” [The Castafiore Emerald] misses its objective, it must be reviewed and it clearly deserves more than the short mention on page 115 of his essay “*Lire Tintin Les bijoux ravis*” [Reading Tintin: The Stolen Jewels]. This reanalysis will be the subject of our little hergéenne essay number 11.

Beyond these theoretical predictions, we hope that by our analysis, “Tintin in the Congo” can become a story for adults, an educational story, a manner of “deconstructing” the colonial way of thinking while indicating – according to the comment of Alain Mabanckou – that this is not “the whole Occidental way of thinking”.

To sum it all up, with “The Adventures of Tintin”, the reader must always come back to their first reading, a little like Célio, the hero of his novel “Congolese Mathematics” by In Koli Jean Bofane, who was able to do so for the Congolese politics with a short guide to mathematics: “Everything was there, it was only necessary to read between the lines.”<sup>53</sup> Clear lines.

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Special thanks to Mr Thibaut Chatel who allowed us to reproduce photos from his grandfather’s book “Un an au Congo belge” (1925) by Chalux.

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<sup>53</sup> Bofane I. K. J., “*Mathématiques congolaises*” [Congolese Mathematics], Editions Actes Sud, Adventure Series (Série Aventure), April 2008, p. 30.