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MUKOMBOZI AND THE *MONGANGA*: THE VIOLENCE OF HEALING IN THE 1944 KITAWALIST UPRISING

Nicole Eggers

In February 1944, a revolt erupted in a village called Magoa in the region of Kivu, district of Masisi, in the easternmost part of what is today the Democratic Republic of Congo. The revolt was led by a man named Bushiri Lungunda, who professed himself to be the son of God, charged with the mission of redeeming his African people and relieving them of white rule and oppression. He claimed that his messianic doctrine, a variant of Kitawala, had come to him in a vision in December 1943. As he slept a nine-day-long slumber, he was transported by a white aeroplane to America, where God revealed to him that he was Yesu Mukombozi (Jesus the Redeemer) and that he must ‘complete the work of the first Jesus’ and save the Earth.¹ Shortly afterwards, Bushiri began preaching his message and baptizing his earliest followers into the movement. It was these followers who accompanied Bushiri when, on the eve of 16 February, they arrested a local colonial agent named De Schryver at Magoa and forced him to march along wearing nothing but a loincloth and carrying vines of rubber around his neck. De Schryver’s arrest set in motion the events of the revolt, which lasted for more than a month and resulted in the arrests of two more Europeans, five local agents of the state, and numerous African men and women accused of witchcraft, many of whom were executed. ‘Mukombozi’ and his followers reportedly had plans to capture the 300 whites living in the area and then to attack the city of Costermansville (Bukavu). Before the revolt was forcefully repressed by the colonial army in mid-March, it had involved upwards of 10,000 men, women and children and resulted in hundreds of deaths.²

Bushiri’s uprising – one of the largest in the Belgian Congo’s history – was an event notable, among other aspects, for the form, function and level of violence that characterized it. Much of that violence was perpetrated by the colonial state, which reacted with a fear that manifested in massacre and violent excess.³ But the violence of the uprising was not limited to acts perpetrated by or

NICOLE EGGERS is Assistant Professor of History at Loyola University in New Orleans. She is currently completing the manuscript for her first book, provisionally titled *Kitawala in the Congo: religion, politics, and healing in Central African history*. Email: eggers@loyno.edu

¹‘Comptes rendus d’audience’, Iterbo, 7 August 1944, p. 213, cited in Lovens (1974: 46).

²Numbers are debatable. The estimate of 10,000 is somewhere in the middle of the range given by Lovens, who estimates the number of ‘insurgents’ to be somewhere between 4,426 (1,885 men) and 15,000 (4,700 men) based on desertion reports from C.N.Ki. (Le Comité national du Kivu) posts in the region and reports collected from witnesses after the revolt. For an in-depth discussion of the matter, see Lovens (1974: 23).

³In a single village, Djembe, colonial soldiers, determined to free two kidnapped Belgian mining managers, shot into an unarmed crowd of Kitawalists, killing fifty-three men, women and children and injuring many more. They reportedly shot into the crowd because the Kitawalists were dancing and singing like ‘fanatics’ and had ‘blocked the road’ (see ‘Déposition de Monsieur De Schryver’ 1944).

against the colonial government, for Bushiri's movement was internally quite violent as well. It is unclear how many villagers in the region were arrested and beaten by Bushiri's band for practising witchcraft, but a single testimony – that of Alleloya, Bushiri's right-hand man – documents a minimum of fifty or sixty arrests.⁴ Those arrested were whipped – with a *chicotte* – and more than half of them died in captivity.⁵ The majority of those arrested were women, many of whom were subjected, in addition to whipping, to sexual violence and public displays of humiliation. In one village, Eliba, five male elders were arrested and forced to have sex with five women, also captives, in the public square.⁶ In another village, Taweza, three women were whipped and then hung by their arms from a tree, where they were left to die. There is also at least one eyewitness account of female captives being raped.⁷

Such images of atrocity evoke critical questions about the imaginaries and choreographies of violence at play in that historical moment, and yet the nature and role of violence in the uprising have never really been a subject of historical inquiry.⁸ Given the location of the uprising – the region between Masisi and Lubutu – such oversight is somewhat troubling. Those familiar with the contemporary conflict in Eastern Congo will know that the same area has consistently been at the heart of the ongoing violence in the region. An area rich in productive tin and gold mines, it was and is the scene of fierce competition between various armed groups over the right to control those resources. It has thus been the scene of some of the most spectacular and devastating incidences of violence in the region, including the mass rape of 179 women in 2010.⁹

This geographic overlap brings to mind questions about place and memory, exposing potential threads that might tie such a past to the present. In an article about red rubber, violence and historical repetition, Nancy Hunt has argued for 'the importance of rewriting the standard Congo atrocity narrative in relation to urgent politics of the present'. Bearing in mind Hunt's warning that 'tethering to the present' must not be about 'continuity or causality' but about the ways in which certain modalities of violence are reproduced and somatized over time, in this article I argue for the importance of just such a rewriting of the history of the Kitawalist uprising of 1944 (Hunt 2008: 224, 243). However, this rewrite must not be simply about tethering to the present, but also about tethering to the past, to the imaginaries and modalities of violence that preceded the uprising in the region. Arguing for attention to the deep histories of violence and vulnerability in Central and Eastern Africa, David Schoenbrun writes that 'histories of violence in Africa that take seriously the challenge of specifying the contexts for

⁴See 'P. V. d'arrestation: Mpunzu Mikaeli' (1944). Given the breadth of the uprising, this is likely to be only a fraction of the total number of witchcraft arrests and deaths. I have no account of the number of people arrested in the other major sites of the revolt; this is simply an account of the number of people arrested and punished by the core group in the Masisi theatre of the uprising.

⁵A *chicotte* is a whip made of hippopotamus skin that has been cut into sharp-edged, corkscrew-shaped strips. It was used freely by the Belgian state and became a symbol of the state's excesses.

⁶It is not stated explicitly in either of the testimonies that mention this incident that the victims had been arrested for witchcraft, but it is almost certainly the case.

⁷'Déposition de Monsieur De Schryver' (1944).

⁸The uprising itself has been the subject of two very good studies, although neither of them is particularly concerned with the nature of violence: Lovens (1974) and Mwene-Batende (1982).

⁹For a brief analysis of this incident, see Stearns (2010).

potential acts of violence must depict the theories of action that frame imaginary violence, the ever-present double of “real” violence’ (2006: 743). The centrality of witchcraft discourse in the uprising – discourse related to the moral and immoral use of spiritual power (*puissance/force/inguvu*) – and the imaginaries and choreographies of violence that accompanied that discourse must be understood not as tangential to the larger anti-colonial political struggle of Bushiri and his followers, but central to that struggle and the way in which it manifested in that historical moment.

Bushiri’s uprising was clearly an overt challenge to the legitimacy of colonial rule. However, it was also, more broadly, a challenge to what Bushiri and his followers seemingly perceived as a dangerously imbalanced economy of power (embodied/disembodied, political/spiritual) in the region, which posed a grave threat to social health. The fact that it was a ‘perceived’ imbalance is a key qualification here. The notion that the onslaught of ‘modernity’ caused ‘imbalance’ in African societies is a classical colonial trope that has long been critiqued by historians for implying that there existed a point in time when societies were ‘balanced’. However, thinking about the perception of ‘imbalance’ at a given moment in time is not the same as claiming that ‘imbalance’ was necessarily real. As this article will illuminate, much about the known discourse of Bushiri and his followers indicates that they perceived and experienced ‘imbalance’. Yet, it is also clear from the longer history that the theories of moral action used to address imbalance are deeply rooted, strongly contesting the notion that a time of ‘balance’ ever existed. Nonetheless, it is difficult to deny that certain moments in time are, indeed, materially defined by more upheaval than others, which is in many cases what renders violence in those moments contingent.

The fact that the ‘moral action’ or healing that Bushiri and his followers offered took the form of violence – and violence not just against the state and its agents, but also against those, often quite vulnerable, individuals who were presumed to be possessors and (immoral) wielders of disembodied power (witches) – raises important questions. In particular, it pushes us to interrogate the fraught relationship between healing and violence, as well as between power and vulnerability, in the history of both Kitawala and the broader region. It challenges scholars to see beyond analytical dichotomies that represent violence as either destructive or productive, legitimate or illegitimate.

Bushiri’s uprising has been construed as both. Of course, the Belgians saw it as destructive violence, but so, too, did many within the communities touched by the uprising. One account describes the mothers of the victims of Bushiri’s witchcraft accusations cursing and spitting at him as, in the aftermath of the revolt, he was paraded through villages to prove that he had been captured (Lovens 1974: 116). However, in the larger narrative of resistance against the violent and oppressive colonial state and the illness and discord it inflicted, the uprising seems geared towards productive and legitimate ends, towards ending oppressive and extractive colonial economic practices and reinstating self-rule. Not only does violence manifest on a continuum between productive and destructive that is shaped by historical circumstances (Rueedi, this issue), but its position on that continuum was and is situated subjectively, for questions of ‘legitimacy’ and ‘morality’ are rarely objective (Filippi 2013).¹⁰

¹⁰Filippi (2013) argues that one of the problems with existing theories of violence is that they ‘imply a normative perception on the *legitimacy* of the use of violence’.

It is only by breaking down such dichotomies and highlighting the ambiguous nature of violence that we begin to see how the relative morality of violent acts committed by Bushiri's band was a contentious and negotiated subject within the Congolese communities they affected most directly. Moreover – and this is a central argument – we begin to see how this ambiguity of violence was mirrored in the language of power (*puissance/nguvu/force*) through which it was articulated. For, like violence, power in Central Africa has long been imagined in dualistic terms – destructive/productive, eating/healing – that have rendered its legitimacy a subject of contention and ambiguity. It is by tethering the history of such notions of power and violence to the deeper past in the region that we can begin to interrogate more fruitfully how they were reproduced and reimagined in the colonial context, allowing us, in turn, to more critically tether them to the present.

THE MONGANGA'S TESTIMONY

The arguments I have just articulated hinge on the understanding that the violence of Bushiri's uprising was predicated on what I have termed an imbalance in the economy of power (embodied/disembodied, political/spiritual) in the region. Elsewhere I have suggested using the term *puissance* to refer to this ambiguous form of power that, as Wyatt MacGaffey has argued, in Central Africa 'is necessary to all effective leadership and is a component of all exceptional success, though it is also an instrument of evil (Eggers 2013a; MacGaffey 2000: 2). Of course, *puissance* is but one of a number of cognates for power that circulate in Central Africa – others might include *nguvu*, *force*, *kindoki* and *bwanga* – all of which refer to the form of spiritual power or ability that is understood to be embodied by those who effectively exercise the capacity to lead, to heal, and/or to harm.¹¹ Presumed access to *puissance* is what makes politicians effective, religious leaders charismatic, healers capable, and witches dangerous. Thus, when I use the term, I am evoking this historically and culturally situated notion of power. I am arguing that it was a perceived imbalance in *puissance* that inspired and ultimately shaped the uprising, allowing for its rapid spread and rendering Bushiri's claims to the *puissance* necessary to correct that imbalance – the *puissance* of God, which he embodied as Yesu Mukombozi – at once persuasive and contentious.

To clarify this argument, I turn now to evidence that can better contextualize these claims and further elucidate the nature of the uprising. In particular, I would like to highlight the testimony of Bushiri's second in command, Alleloya, who was a reputed healer or *monganga*. He specialized in a herbal medicine (*dawa*) he called *mataifa* ('nation' or 'people' in Swahili), and he and another healer, Albert, were the most powerful figures in the uprising, next to Bushiri. Alleloya's testimony after his arrest is a particularly rich source for understanding the nature of the uprising, although it was framed by the circumstances that produced it in some obvious ways. Alleloya was arrested and charged with inciting an uprising, and the testimony was his chance to explain his involvement. It is apparent as one reads the source that he was downplaying his own role, insisting that he

¹¹Wyatt MacGaffey uses *kindoki*, which is Kikongo; Johannes Fabian uses *bwanga* (1971), which is Tchiluba; *nguvu* is Kiswahili; and *force* is, of course, French.

was no more than a humble healer, unconnected to the violence. Nonetheless, the testimony paints a vivid picture of the uprising from the perspective of one of its leaders. For that reason, I reproduce it at some length here, narrated in the first person, as it was in the interrogation record, although I have edited it for clarity.¹² I have chosen to interrupt my analysis to present Alleloya's testimony in this narrative form because of the immediacy it lends to the events of the revolt, rendering the violence that characterized it and the notions of power that animated it real and palpable.¹³

Alleloya's testimony

I had worked for years collecting rubber at Angumu. Sometime before the uprising, I became ill, close to death, and God came to me in a dream. In the dream, God gave me the name Alleloya. He then showed me the medicine of *mataifa*, and ordained me to heal the people with the *dawa* produced from the juice of the *mataifa* plant found in the forest. From that day, I took the name Alleloya, stopped collecting rubber and stayed at my home village in Musimia. Whenever there was a sick child, I was called on to help him/her with my *dawa*. In this way, I earned a reputation as a healer.

Around this time, I had also been initiated into Kitawala. For several months before Bushiri's arrival, two men named Nziaka and Ndele had been moving through the area, initiating people into Kitawala. It was Ndele who initiated me, though he was ultimately arrested and beaten by Bushiri.

Before Bushiri came to Wenga, I did not know him. I had seen him when we both worked at Angumu, but we had never spoken. When we first heard news of his arrival, all we knew was that there was a man coming to Hunde from Wenga, preaching that the days of working rubber were over. When Bushiri arrived, someone told him that I practised the craft of *monganga* in the region and that I could heal the people with my *dawa*, *mataifa*. So Bushiri called on me to be his healer. I just prepared my *dawa* and I did not beat anyone, but because I was the *monganga*, I was considered as one of the leaders of the movement.

When Bushiri called on me, I went to him. Then I was called back to my village, so I left Bushiri's band briefly, but he soon called me back. By the time I returned, I found that a local clerk with the rubber collection company, Honoré, had been imprisoned and whipped by Bushiri and his followers. They had burned all of his files, but they kept his rubber meter. [Note: There were rumours about Bushiri having a meter, with which he could detect witchcraft. It was said that the meter was in his arm.]¹⁴

Bushiri decreed that people were no longer to collect rubber. Instead, they should cultivate crops (particularly tobacco). They could sell their crops to him or to his friend, 'Merika' [America]. He said he would destroy the areas inhabited by the whites and take them as his own. His goals were to make war with the Europeans, forbid rubber

¹²I have cut out some of the repetition and rearranged and truncated some passages for clarity, but have otherwise kept the testimony largely intact. Interested researchers will find the original French transcript in 'P. V. d'arrestation: Mpunzu Mikaeli' (1944).

¹³John Thornton makes a similar choice in *The Kongolese Saint Anthony* (1998). Johannes Fabian has argued for the importance of focusing on archival and ethnographic texts in many of his works, but particularly in his most recent work, *Ethnography as Commentary* (2008: 144).

¹⁴Bushiri's 'meter' arm emerges in a number of the interrogation records from his followers. See, for example, 'Katshaka Kichuana, audience du 13 juillet', cited in Lovens (1974: 63).

collection, to kill the locals who worked with the whites, and to kill the Wanianga and the Bakusu, who had to be ‘exterminated’ because they ‘practised abortion’.¹⁵ To execute this plan, Bushiri began by imprisoning people accused of witchcraft.

During the uprising, Bushiri took all of the women in the region who pleased him. Their husbands said nothing because they were afraid of being killed and there was no question of *dote* (bride price). Bushiri said that he would take 1,000 wives to demonstrate that he was the absolute master of the land. He promised each of his adepts 100 wives. He also decreed that it was necessary for each wife to have ten children. If a woman was not pregnant within three months of marrying, she would be killed. If her husband remarried and there were still no children, he would be killed.

It was at Magoa that Bushiri’s men arrested ‘Bwana Mzuri’ (De Schryver). The band arrested and punished many people. One man was imprisoned for trying to hide his mother, who had been accused of witchcraft. He was whipped twelve times. The wife of one follower was imprisoned for making difficulties for her husband. She was whipped twenty times. Another man who worked as a policeman for the Belgians, Musafiri, was arrested and beaten. Bwana Mzuri was forced to participate in the beating. Musafiri died after receiving more than 600 lashes with the whip. Before he died he told Bushiri, ‘You can kill me, but the state will avenge me.’ Bushiri told the other prisoners who had worked for the Belgians – Honoré, Leon and Albert – to renounce the state, but they refused, repeating Musafiri’s words.

As we moved between villages, we encountered a number of local notables. Some of them joined us, but others were arrested. We arrested Buhini, successor to the chief of Eliba and he was whipped to death.

In Wenga, five men were arrested for witchcraft. They fled to the forest, so Bushiri put their wives in prison and they were whipped 100 times. At least three of them died. In Abunambao, Bushiri arrested four more women and some of them also died after receiving 100 lashes.

On our way to Maliba, some twenty more people were arrested, many of whom were beaten and killed. An *mfumu* was denounced and killed. It was also near Maliba that the rubber clerk Honoré was ultimately beaten to death.

At Taweza, many more were arrested and beaten. Three women were whipped then tied to a tree, with their arms up. Their limbs were broken and they were left to die. At least a dozen people died at Taweza. When Bushiri classified someone as a sorcerer, their children would say nothing. They just let it happen.

Bushiri sent out a series of letters. He sent letters to the villages ahead of us to tell them to prepare to receive him. But, he also sent a letter to Bribosia, telling him that he would arrest and imprison him, that he alone was master of the land, and that the rule of the whites was over. Bushiri made Bwana Mzuri watch as he cursed the whites. He showed us on his skull where he had a large cross and told us that all of the lands in the four directions of this cross were his and he would not tolerate anyone against him. He said that once he had imprisoned the three white officials in the region, Bribosia, Reiles and Kiesel, all of the other whites would flee. He would install himself in a place called Bulambo, near the river Bilulu. He would build a road that would allow people to conduct trade there.

¹⁵The bulk of those involved in the uprising were Bakumu, although there were other ethnic groups implicated as well, including the Banianga.

When we arrived in Eliba, the same torture as at Taweza was applied to another woman, but she did not die. For fun, Bushiri made five elders have sex with five women in the public square of the village of Eliba. They were then whipped. The rest of the victims were whipped to death or killed with blows to the nape of the neck.

It was in Eliba that we learned that the whites were coming. Bushiri told us to throw down our spears, as he would fight the Europeans himself with his words, which he said would be sufficient to kill them all. We went to the river and sang the '*mataifa*' and the '*alleloya*'.¹⁶ The whites did not come that day and we believed that our songs had made it so that the whites could not cross the river.

Then news reached us that Bwana Mzuri had been returned to the whites and Katshaka had been arrested by them. We asked Bushiri why he did not take the battle to the whites. He told us that he could not take the battle to the whites, because all of the villagers would flee. If they were in the way they would also be killed by his words, which were addressed to the whites. But then the whites came and we all fled into the forest, including Bushiri. I took refuge in the forest outside my village in Musimia. The state police camped out in my village. They told everyone that they were only there to arrest me, so I turned myself in.

THE PROPHET AND THE HEALERS: TETHERING TO THE PAST

There is much to analyse within Alleloya's testimony. It raises questions about the prevalence of forms of violence that both critiqued and mirrored colonial violence, reflecting that violence back on colonial agents, but also directing it towards those deemed dangerous within their own communities. This, in turn, points to the question of women, who emerge at once as powerful wielders of dangerous *puissance*, assumed to be the source of 'invisible' violence (witches), and vulnerable victims of the movement's violence. But before I focus on those questions, I would like to return to the proposition that this Kitawalist uprising was an effort to address the imbalance in the economy of *puissance*. In making this argument, I am placing Bushiri's movement within a long history of other movements in Central Africa that have struggled to confront imbalances of *puissance* within distressed communities: those that have come to be understood as healing movements or associations. These are movements or associations – the Nyabingi cult, *kubandwa*, *lemba*, *ryangombe*, *bwami* – that historically emerged in Central and Eastern Africa to address both bodily and social ills, as well as to protect communities from such ills.¹⁷

The literature on these movements has revealed much that can be of use in thinking about Bushiri and his followers specifically, and Kitawala more broadly, as part of this longer history. In particular, it has highlighted the role that 'public healing' has played in the maintenance and restoration of healthy communities. As Neil Kodesh notes in his recent work about the centrality of *kubandwa* mediumship in processes of state formation in early Bugandan

¹⁶The '*mataifa*' and the '*alleloya*' are Kitawalist songs.

¹⁷On Nyabingi, see Feierman (1999); on *kubandwa*, see Berger (1981), Kodesh (2010) and Schoenbrun (1998). On *lemba*, see Janzen (1982), and on *bwami*, see Biebuyck (1973). For work on healing practices more specific to the region, see Wauthier de Mahieu's (1980) work on *esomba* spirit mediumship and initiation among the Komo (or Kumu, the ethnic group to which Bushiri belonged).

history, ‘the semantic histories of words for medicine, different sorts of spirits, and healing techniques’ in much of Central Africa reveal that ‘historical actors thought about health and prosperity together’ (2010: 20).¹⁸ Thus, public healers, as those charged with creating and maintaining prosperity – or a balance in the economy of *puissance*, as I argue above – were profoundly political leaders, although they did not imagine or articulate their roles in language that can be translated directly into secular–political or purely ‘religious’ functions without obscuring part of their significance. Moreover, it is precisely this connection between prosperity and health that historically made new healing associations – often in the form of what Janzen calls ‘cults of affliction’, claiming access to new kinds of spirits, or new means of accessing older spirits – one of the primary means through which people sought to wield creative power to address imbalances in the economy of *puissance*, in many cases opposing existing instrumental powers.¹⁹

There is ample evidence in Alleloya’s testimony to suggest that Bushiri’s uprising in particular, and Kitawala more broadly, must be understood in the context of such movements and associations. Certainly, the most obvious evidence is the centrality of Alleloya himself in the movement. We know he was a reputed healer who claimed that he had been given the knowledge of a medicine called *mataifa* by God in a dream. It is difficult to know what the medicine was composed of, as Alleloya simply states that it came from the ‘*mataifa* plant’, which could be found in the forest; it is not clear what sort of plant it was or whether it had any biomedical healing properties. In any case, the name of the medicine is perhaps what is most interesting. *Mataifa* means ‘nation’ or ‘people’ in Swahili. Thus, it seems plausible to read the name of the medicine as a sign that it was geared towards curing social ills, the ills of a whole people revealed in the bodies of various individuals, many of whom, Alleloya indicates, were children.²⁰

It is also unclear whether knowledge of this medicine was specific to Alleloya and the region in which he lived, or whether it was a medicine more generally associated with Kitawala. What is clear is that Kitawalists across Congo historically garnered reputations for healing. The prevalence of ‘*dawas*’ within Kitawalist communities can be seen in colonial reports about Kitawala from its earliest manifestations in Katanga.²¹ A particularly rich set of interrogation records from the province of Orientale in the 1940s and 1950s proves enlightening. In these records, a

¹⁸Kodess is writing specifically of the Great Lakes region, but he is building on the work of scholars such as Steve Feierman, who has noted that ‘the number of words for “healer” in many Bantu languages of eastern, southern, or central Africa were used with equal validity for those who worked to make individual bodies whole and those who treated the body politic’ (Feierman 1999: 187).

¹⁹Janzen’s work on *lemba* (1982) and Feierman’s work on Nyabingi (1999) support this assertion, as does Schoenbrun’s work on ‘instrumental’ and ‘creative’ power (1998) discussed in the introduction.

²⁰John Janzen’s work on the healing cult *lemba* would seem to support such a reading. Janzen notes that *lemba*, the medicine after which the cult was named, is derived from the word *lemba-kisa*, ‘to calm’. Since one of the main purposes of the cult was to cure conflict within the community, particularly between the sexes, the name of the medicine, he argues, was symbolic of the larger purpose of the movement. Reading *mataifa* similarly, as indicative of the larger purpose of the movement, then, seems a fair interpretation (Janzen 1982).

²¹On the prevalence of healing in Kitawalist communities in postcolonial Congo, see Eggers (2013a).

man named Yailo reported that he ‘entered Kitawala because they healed him’ by rubbing him with oil. Another man, Akaluko, reported that he had fallen ill and the Kitawalists healed him using ‘plants of the forest’ which were boiled in water and inhaled as a vapour. Another described a medicine called ‘*sango*’ that was ‘put on the body’ when one became ill. He noted that ‘if [the patient] is healed, he/she was in a good relationship with God’. Another man reported going to Kitawala in search of a cure for his daughter’s epilepsy. Yet another told the interrogator that he was baptized very quickly into the movement because he was told that they had ‘an *nkisi* that heals people’ and he had been sick.²²

While there are few similar records detailing the concerns of Bushiri’s followers, it is nonetheless clear that healing was a significant part of the movement, as it was Alleloya’s reputation as a skilled healer that brought Bushiri to his village in the first place and earned him a position of power. Although Alleloya describes his role in the movement as largely passive – Bushiri ‘called him to the movement’ and he ‘just prepared his medicine’ – there is evidence to support the assertion that he was far more central than he admits. Note the following exchange between Alleloya and his interrogator, M. Kiesel, which came at the end of the testimony recounted above:

Kiesel: Before you joined Bushiri, he had not committed any extravagance, though he had been there [in Wenga] for several days. It was only when you arrived that the ‘*danse macabre*’ began. So it was you who called Bushiri into the region or at the very least you knew from the deserters from Semiba that he would arrive soon. There were many places he could have gone to find adepts, but he came directly to you. Explain.

Alleloya: All we knew was that there was a man coming to Hunde from Wenga who said that the days of working rubber were done.

Kiesel’s question suggests that, in the process of their investigation, the colonial authorities may have acquired information placing Alleloya in a far more central role than he indicates in his testimony. The accuracy of their information is, of course, suspect, but so too is Alleloya’s evasive response, as he had every reason to minimize his role. In any case, Alleloya acknowledges earlier that ‘it was because [he] was the *monganga* that he was considered one of the leaders of the movement’. What he seems to be denying in this exchange is that he had any formative or functional leadership role, beyond serving as the *monganga*.

Whatever the precise role Alleloya played in the movement vis-à-vis leadership, it seems clear that he had a reputation for being *puissant* and that Bushiri sought him out – along with Albert, the other healer (*mfumu*) who helped lead the uprising – so that he might bring that *puissance* into his movement, both strengthening and legitimating it. As historians such as David Schoenbrun have demonstrated, this process – whereby leaders (whether political, religious or healing) have historically sought to legitimate their own power by creating alliances with or, alternatively, opposing themselves to other powerful figures – has an extensive history in the region.²³ The centrality of the two healers in the leadership of Bushiri’s

²²Kitawala Interrogations: Ponthierville’ (1947); ‘Kitawala Interrogations: Stanleyville’ (1957).

²³On this phenomenon, see Schoenbrun (1998: 108–13) and also Feerman (1995: 74).

movement must be read as part of that history. But so too must the fact that the movement was directly opposed to other figures presumed to be wielding *puissance* immorally: witches and the colonial state. Let me first elaborate on the latter of these two categories.

THE COLONIAL STATE: HOARDERS OF *PUISSANCE* AND THE ROOTS OF SOCIAL ILLS

The idea that the Europeans possessed an inordinate amount of *puissance* and that the resultant imbalance in the region was the root of social strife was central to the doctrine Bushiri preached and the cure that his rebellion was intended to provide: the redistribution of that *puissance* back to the Congolese people.²⁴ Asked to explain the core of his doctrine during an interrogation, Bushiri highlighted the following three points:

1. It is necessary to love God.
2. It is necessary to fight the Europeans and kill them because it is they who hold all the *puissance*.
3. It is necessary to give the *puissance* to the blacks.²⁵

This hoarding of *puissance* had material symptoms and was neither experienced nor articulated as an exclusively ‘invisible’ form of violence perpetrated by the Europeans. The material grievances of Bushiri and his followers are obvious in the sources. European *puissance* was evident as economic and political dominance, and redistribution of *puissance* quite clearly meant the reversal of that dominance. One of the central claims Bushiri made was that he would end the coercive rubber collection in the region and return the people to other forms of cultivation deemed more productive. He suggested, for example, cultivating tobacco and selling it to ‘Merika’ – or America – which was perceived within Kitawalist teachings as an ally of the Congolese in their struggle against European dominance. Recall, as well, from Alleloya’s testimony that Bushiri promised his followers that once they had rid themselves of the Europeans, he would create a capital and ‘build a road that would allow people to conduct trade there’. In his interrogation, Bushiri directly claimed that one of the goals of his movement was the redistribution of European property to himself and his followers: ‘My people and I will take the autos, the trucks, the houses, the wealth, and the women of the Europeans.’²⁶

To argue that Bushiri’s uprising was about an imbalance in the economy of *puissance* in the region is not to suggest that it was merely about redistributing ‘invisible’ forms of spiritual power from the Belgians, who were hoarding it, to the Congolese, who suffered from this ‘invisible’ form of Belgian greed. Bushiri and

²⁴It is important to note that the image of the Belgians immorally hoarding *puissance* – namely, the *puissance* of the Christian God – and using it to enrich themselves at the expense of the Congolese people during the colonial era was not unique to the Kitawalists (see Eggers 2013b: 80–1).

²⁵‘Procès-verbal d’interrogatoire du prévenu Bushiri, Iterbo, 23 mars, 1944’, cited in Lovens (1974: 149).

²⁶*Ibid.*

his followers, and all of the people in the region, quite obviously experienced material forms of violence and social upheaval inflicted on them by the colonial state. This is made abundantly clear in the work of the Congolese scholar Mwene-Batende, one of the few academics to have worked on the Kitawalist uprising of 1944. In his study, Mwene-Batende reconstructs the political and economic context of the region touched by the revolt (1982: 94–112). He argues that the Kumu – the ethnic group to which Bushiri and the vast majority of his followers belonged – had suffered from the profound and rapid disruption of their ‘ancestral mode of production’, particularly in the ten years preceding the uprising. The Kumu were historically a semi-nomadic group that subsisted largely on hunting in the forests with some seasonal cultivation. With the arrival of the Arab traders this had already begun to change, as the Kumu redirected their productive activity from a largely subsistence-based hunting economy towards supplying the Arab–Swahili caravans with ivory and food, which led to increased sedentariness (Mwene-Batende 1982: 94–9).

Mwene-Batende suggests, however, that the social effects of this reorientation towards trade with the Arab–Swahili paled in comparison to the profound transformation that came, beginning in the 1930s, with the rapid economic development of the region by the colonial government. Although Congo had been claimed by Leopold in 1885 and transferred into the control of the Belgian state in 1908, the remote region between Lubutu and Masisi remained comparatively untouched by colonial exploitation until the 1930s. Even in the years that immediately preceded the uprising, European presence in the region was relatively superficial.²⁷

Then, against the backdrop of the financial pressures of a world depression and an increasing awareness of the resources that existed there, the colonial government pressed for the rapid development of the region in the 1930s and 1940s. Between 1938 and 1944, four major mines were opened in the area. This rapid economic development had been preceded, only five years earlier, by the profound political and administrative reorganization of the region, which had upset the existing clan-based political power structures by transplanting and regrouping villages in more centralized – and therefore more easily administered – political formations and investing state-appointed ‘chiefs’ and ‘*sultanis*’ with political power. These ‘chiefs’ and ‘*sultanis*’ functioned as the local arm of colonial government, and in particular as the implementers of colonial taxation laws. These laws were used to coerce men, who saw their ancestral hunting grounds rapidly transformed into mines, into working in the very same mines that were destroying their means of subsistence (Mwene-Batende 1982: 107–12).

For these reasons, Mwene-Batende is probably correct in his assertion that the effects that these rapid changes had on the well-being of the communities they touched should not be underestimated. The dislocation of male, able-bodied workers undoubtedly affected the gendered division of subsistence labour and probably led to a poorer diet and, by proxy, poorer health.²⁸ It seems that it

²⁷Fournier, an engineer sent to survey the region for the mining company Comité National du Kivu, reported as late as 1936 that the region was ‘unknown, unpenetrated and scarcely populated’ (Lovens 1974: 28). See also the report by colonial agent Bribosia cited in De Ryck (1945).

²⁸Steve Feierman, among others, has discussed the relationship between colonial labour regimes, women’s labour, food production, malnutrition and health (1985: 99–101).

also had deleterious effects on processes of marriage and reproduction, as migratory young men delayed marriage or spent long periods away from their communities. It is significant that Bushiri and his followers targeted old men for using witchcraft and taking all of the wives as the young men were away working. It is also significant that infertile women were the other main target of witchcraft accusations and executions. Indeed, most of the witchcraft victims of the uprising were sterile women and old men who were accused by Bushiri of, among other things, 'killing small children'.²⁹ While it is undoubtedly true that the colonial state offered new and important opportunities for many Congolese, it is also the case that, for many more, the onslaught of economic and political change in the region created grave social ills, with tangible, material effects.

YESU MUKOMBOZI IN THE ECONOMY OF *PUISSANCE*

Yet the social ills experienced by the people in the region were neither imagined nor articulated in exclusively material, or 'this-worldly', terms. The uprising was as much a reaction to the 'imaginary' violence inflicted by the state (the hoarding of *puissance* and the use of it for illegitimate purposes of political and material accumulation) as it was a response to the state's 'real' violence (forced relocation, forced or coerced labour and economic exploitation). Only by acknowledging the 'realness' of that 'imaginary' violence for those who acted against it can we begin to contemplate the 'theories of action' that guided them.³⁰ In emphasizing *puissance* as central to such theories, I draw on a language that can encapsulate both the material and the imaginary aspects of that violence, bringing them together into the same frame of reference and acknowledging their intimate connection. Calling it an 'economy' of *puissance* emphasizes the fact that the field of *puissance* was broad and there was a myriad of actors perceived to be operating within that field, each making claims to legitimacy or illegitimacy, or sometimes being accused of operating within that field independent of their own claims (as with people accused of witchcraft).

Bushiri was just one actor in that economy, but he was offering access to a particularly potent form of *puissance*: as Yesu Mukombozi, he laid claim to the *puissance* of the Christian God. And his claims to that *puissance* – bolstered by the allegiance of the *puissant* healer figures of Alleloya and Albert – clearly had currency, given the rapidity with which he amassed followers. When the territorial administrator Bribosia visited one of the Catholic missions in the region at the beginning of the uprising, the priests running the mission at Mutongo told him that there were rumours of a '*mufalme ngufu* (*puissant* king/leader) with 400 warriors'. A group of schoolchildren were forthcoming in their assessment of Bushiri:

He is really the son of God. He is all-*puissant*. He has the gift of omnipresence. He has a black head, a steel chest, and white legs. He baptizes his followers and is a friend to the missions. He draws his *force* from himself and his followers and he wants to relieve the poor blacks from rubber collection. He doesn't want to kill the whites, but just to arrest them. (Bribosia 1944: 2–3)

²⁹'Comptes rendus d'audience', Iterbo, 7 August 1944, p. 159, cited in Lovens (1974: 55).

³⁰I borrow the terms 'theories of power' and 'theories of action' from David Schoenbrun (2006: 743).

Furthermore, the Father Superior informed Bribosia that he had encountered ‘much trouble convincing his flock that Catholicism and Kitawala [were] not compatible’ (*ibid.*). This final point suggests that the Father Superior’s ‘flock’ saw Kitawala – and Bushiri’s movement in particular – as one potentially potent source of *puissance* in the larger economy, not necessarily incompatible and perhaps even complementary with others (namely, Catholicism).

Thus, Bushiri tethered his claims of *puissance* to the past, not through a bounded set of ancestral practices and beliefs, but through the evocation of a dynamic theory of power. And that dynamic theory of power allowed for innovation, for the embodiment of *puissance* from a relatively new source that had proven formidable – the Christian God – in order to correct the imbalance in the community. And when Bushiri entered into the economy of *puissance*, claiming that he embodied that power as Yesu Mukombozi and that he could correct the imbalance at the root of their social ills, people believed him and they followed him – whether this was out of fear (because he threatened to kill all those who did not follow him) or from a genuine desire for the social healing he promised (the vanquishing of witches and the overturning of the colonial order) and the hope that he could provide this healing. Ultimately, as the children Bribosia spoke with so wisely observed, he drew his power – ‘his *force*’ – from those who followed him. One of Bushiri’s captains reportedly echoed this sentiment: ‘Bushiri was powerful because he was followed.’³¹ His claims to *puissance* were rendered true because people believed his claims and followed him. But they followed him because he drew on theories of power, or *puissance*, that they recognized at a time when colonial imposition left them feeling vulnerable. Thus, Bushiri’s ‘imaginary’ power and his ‘real’ power were one and the same. But there was a darker side to Bushiri’s *puissance*, the violent side of his healing, which needs to be interrogated.

WIVES AND WITCHES? WOMEN, *PUISSANCE* AND VULNERABILITY

As Alleloya’s testimony makes clear, the brunt of the physical violence of Bushiri’s uprising was borne by those accused of witchcraft and those who represented the state. Of those who were accused of witchcraft, the majority were women, although men were also accused. As noted above, the accused tended to be old men charged with immoral accumulation – ‘eating’ the resources of the community (particularly wives) – and sterile women who were charged with harming others out of jealousy, usually by killing their children or hindering their ability to reproduce. As in most of Africa, there is a deep relationship between communal prosperity or health and fertility in Central Africa, and issues relating to infertility – high child mortality (often due to malnutrition, which, as noted above, was exacerbated by the colonial situation), sterility, and generally poor maternal health – had caused palpable problems within the communities in the region of the revolt. Women, therefore, often found themselves in a precarious position. They were often assumed to be potent wielders of *puissance* at the precise moment when they were most vulnerable. When witchcraft is thought to be prevalent in communities – which, for the reasons outlined above, is increasingly common in times of

³¹‘Chef Kahombo Mbokani, audience du 4 juillet’, cited in Lovens (1974: 62).

deprivation and social upheaval – this fraught relationship between *puissance* and vulnerability is exacerbated. This was the case with Bushiri's uprising, and it is still true in Eastern Congo, as in much of Africa, today.³²

Yet I would like to caution against seeing women only as victims of the uprising. Looking at the archival evidence, this presents a challenge. In Alleloya's testimony, we can see women emerging only as victims of witchcraft accusations, wives of men accused of witchcraft who are punished in the place of their husbands, and women who are coerced into marrying Bushiri and his followers. Bushiri, Alleloya reports, planned to marry 1,000 wives and give each of his followers 100 wives, and over the course of the revolt, we are told, he seized numerous women for himself and his followers. De Schryver reported that Bushiri had a 'harem of some 20 women'.³³ De Schryver also reported at least one rape of a woman who was taken captive and Alleloya himself reported the incident of the five men and women forced to have sex in the public square. There is also Alleloya's report of the women – accused witches – who were whipped and had their limbs broken and then were tied to trees and left to die. In short, the imagery of women as passive figures and victims in the archive is strong.

Nonetheless, one must try to read against the archival grain. The numbers that Maurice Lovens presented in his study of the uprising suggest that anywhere from one-half to two-thirds of those involved were women and children (Lovens 1974: 23). In the wake of the massacre at Djembe, noted above, 120 women and children were arrested along with 160 men. They were integral to the 'singing and dancing' that so frightened the colonial soldiers that they opened fire on the unarmed crowd. In short, women were there and they were not there by force. They were purposefully participating in the movement, and it is therefore unreasonable to assume that they were all coerced into joining or somehow passive victims. This raises the question of what their role might have been within the movement. There is little evidence in the archives relating to the revolt that can definitively answer that question, but there is some oral evidence, collected during my fieldwork in 2010, that is suggestive.

In today's Kitawalist church – for it still exists – women hold a central role in what Benetta Jules-Rosette has called 'ceremonial leadership' (1979: 127–44; see also Hoehler-Fatton 1996: 99). They are the 'mamas of the prayer chambers' and it is they who lead prayer ceremonies in which God and the ancestors are evoked in order to heal people. Two elders of the church in the territory of Fizi in South Kivu explained why women have this central role:

Kibasomba-Wakilongo: You know that if we look at the history of prophecy, the mamas have 80 per cent of the *nguvu* (*puissance*) of the heavens. The men have just 20 per cent. You don't know that all *nguvu* is women?

Mama Amisa: It is the mamas who give birth. Everything is the mamas. The babas [men] are just helpers.³⁴

³²Reports of witchcraft accusations and violence are commonplace in Eastern Congo today, as in many parts of Africa. In March 2013, the non-governmental organization SOS Femmes en Danger reported that three women from a single family in Uvira, South Kivu, were publicly burned to death for witchcraft. Personal communication, Amisi Mas, Field Director of SOS Femmes en Danger, 14 March 2013.

³³'Deposition de Monsieur De Schryver' (1944: 4).

³⁴Interview with elders of EDAC, 12 December 2010.

In a separate exchange, further south in Northern Katanga, in Kalemie, a regional leader of the Kitawalist church, Kabanga Kamalondo, explained the significance of women in the history of the church as follows:

Those who were arrested were mostly men, because they were the ones who were in conflict with the Belgians. But the mamas, they were praying in the prayer chambers. When someone was arrested, the mamas came together to pray that they would find success. So they created that '*pouvoir*' within the prayer chambers. They were doing very powerful evocations. They were doing evocations so that we would defeat the Belgians. A man would go into the chamber, he would get the power to be victorious [*ushindi*] and he would go. Since the beginning women were in the church, until today. When the men were dying in the prison camps, the women were there doing evocations for them.³⁵

As Kabanga Kamalondo explains it, women played an indispensable role in the church as they were the ones who ritualistically evoked the *puissance* that allowed men to resist the Belgians. But this was the kind of role that was fulfilled in the secrecy of a prayer chamber, not in the public space of a revolt. It is arguably possible that the women who followed Bushiri exercised a similar function. Moreover, if they did, it should not be entirely surprising that they do not appear in the archives: such forms of power would undoubtedly have been invisible to colonial officials. Even the Belgian researchers sent to study Kitawala in the wake of the revolt would not necessarily have seen such roles.³⁶ For as Maman Kalema, a Kitawalist healer I met in South Kivu, once told me: 'Such knowledge is the domain of women.'³⁷

The purpose here is not to 'prove' that women held such roles as ceremonial leaders in Bushiri's uprising, but to problematize the archive, which represents them largely as victims, and to suggest that they might have been something more. Such assertions are based not only on the oral evidence presented above, but on the significant body of research that highlights the important role of women as wielders of 'creative power' in healing movements and independent churches in African history.³⁸ We know that Bushiri claimed to draw on the *puissance* of God in order to correct the imbalance in the economy of *puissance* caused by both the colonial state and the witches presumed to be sowing harm within communities. But we also know that he drew *puissance* from his followers. It is arguable, then, that just as some men were deemed moral wielders of *puissance* and drawn into the movement by Bushiri (the healers Alleloya and Albert, for example) while others were considered immoral and became the victims of the movement's violence, some women may have been drawn into the movement as moral wielders of *puissance* who could strengthen Bushiri and his followers by performing evocations in prayer chambers, while other women were punished violently as they were thought to be immoral wielders of *puissance*.

Juxtaposing this discussion of women as healers and wielders of creative power with that of women as wielders of immoral power and victims of witchcraft

³⁵Interview with Kabanga Kamalondo, 19 October 2010.

³⁶See Gérard (1956) and Philippart (1954).

³⁷Interview with Maman Kalema, 18 April 2010.

³⁸See Berger (1981), Hoehler-Fatton (1996), Jules-Rosette (1979) and Schoenbrun (1998).

accusations highlights the ambiguous and duplicitous nature of *puissance*. Indeed, it underscores the reasons why one must think about Bushiri's uprising not in terms of an anti-colonial or political movement, a healing movement, or even a prophetic movement, but as a movement concerned with restoring a balance in *puissance*. It was all of those things – prophetic, anti-colonial, political, healing – but it was more than each of those things alone. It is particularly important when tethering movements such as Bushiri's to the past not only to recognize the language of healing at work, but to move beyond thinking of that language in terms of 'healing', as this can have a tendency to create a positive moral valence that obscures the violent side of such movements, just as thinking of them exclusively in anti-colonial or political terms obscures their healing side. But perhaps most importantly, it obscures how ambiguous, volatile and contested the theories of *puissance* that Bushiri and his followers drew on could be.

TETHERING TO THE PRESENT: CHOREOGRAPHIES OF VIOLENCE AND THEORIES OF POWER

Thinking back to Alleloya's testimony, I would like to conclude by considering the choreographies of violence that were at play in the uprising, returning to the questions of memory, somatization and reproduction that were raised in the introduction. One of the most significant aspects of the violence as described by Alleloya and other witnesses is the extent to which it both reproduced and overtly critiqued colonial forms of violence. The prevalence of whipping with the *chicotte* – one of the most wretched icons of colonial dominance – is striking. As is the fact that Bushiri claimed that he could detect witches and other *puissant* deviants with a meter in his arm – an instrument of colonial domination, used by its agents to weigh and process any number of things, including rubber. Bushiri used it to 'test' the morality of people. Also notable is the image of De Schryver, the embodiment of the colonial state, stripped naked and forced to porter rubber, subjected to a humiliation that had long been borne by Congo's colonial subjects. The choreographies of each of these forms of violence were written by the colonial state long before Bushiri and his followers performed them, and their use during the uprising was a mirror held up to the colonial government, which largely failed to recognize in it the reflection of its own brutality, the choreography that it had written.³⁹ One recalls Jean-Paul Sartre's words in his preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*: 'For it is not first of all *their* violence, it is ours, on the rebound, that grows and tears them apart' (1961: lii).

It is undoubtedly true that the choreography and the context of the violence performed by Bushiri and his followers were in many ways a reflection of the violence created by the colonial state. But if, as Nancy Hunt argues, 'it is no longer tenable to imagine that one can write an urgent, effective history about violence and ruination ... without tethering it to the present', the question remains of how and to what it can be tethered (2008: 243). One might attempt to tether the history of Bushiri's uprising to the present by looking for the reproduction of choreographies of violence first performed by the colonial state. Looking at the ways in which

³⁹I am drawing here on Taussig's notion of the 'colonial mirror' (1984: 494).

violence against women emerged in Bushiri's uprising – rape, torture, forced public performance of sexual acts – it is possible to see that such choreographies were a repetition of modes of violence condoned and perpetrated by the colonial state and its agents. Hunt very clearly outlines the prevalence of such forms of violence in Leopold's Congo, a history she quite rightly suggests has been silenced for too long.⁴⁰ And it seems fair to suggest that the repetitions of such forms of violence in the present might, indeed, be tethered to the colonial past, where they were first choreographed by the colonial state, only to be mirrored by Bushiri and his followers, and then again in the contemporary conflict.

But if we are going to tether violence in the colonial era to the present, then we must also consider the ways in which much older imaginaries of violence and power can be tethered both to the colonial context and to the present. Of course, one must not give currency to 'essentializing notions of Africa's past as one soaked in blood' by suggesting that Central Africa has a 'culture of violence' (Schoenbrun 2006: 742). But nor did Central Africa have a history devoid of violence before colonialism. As this article has endeavoured to demonstrate, the imaginaries through which violence was articulated prior to colonial occupation did not disappear with the colonial era, and nor should we assume that they have disappeared since then. In the region of the 1944 Kitawalist uprising, as in most of Central and Eastern Africa, violence and its relative legitimacy have been imagined and articulated historically through the ambiguous and contested language of *puissance*. In that language, violence can be healing, and healing can be violent, particularly when an imbalance in the economy of *puissance* has resulted in grave social ills. In a contemporary context where Mai-Mai soldiers make claims to potent *puissance* in the form of various *dawa*, one cannot help but recall the image of Bushiri's claim to the *mataifa* medicine of Alleloya. In the image of contemporary armed groups perpetrating violent acts in the name of protecting particular segments of the population, one cannot help but recall Bushiri and his men, claiming to protect the Kumu from the Wanianga, the Bakusu and the Europeans. In the image of a population experiencing grave social ills, but fearful and unconvinced by the legitimacy of emergent leaders perpetrating violence in the name of their protection, one can see the image of mothers of daughters murdered as witches spitting in the face of a captive Bushiri. Yet, at the same time, one sees the language of *puissance* reflected in Fizi and Kalemie, where the mamas of the prayer chambers evoke the *puissance* of God and their ancestors to heal people who come to them looking for relief from the ills inflicted on them by structural violence.

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⁴⁰This is the crux of Hunt's article, which is about the silence surrounding sexual violence condoned by the colonial state and its repetition in the present (Hunt 2008).

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- Maman Kalema, field notes, Uvira, South Kivu, DRC, 18 April 2010.

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the fraught relationship between violence and healing in Central African history. Looking at the case study of one of the largest uprisings in the colonial history of Congo – the Lobutu–Masisi Kitawalist uprising of 1944 – the article asks how the theories of power that animated the uprising might help better illuminate the nature and role of violence not only in the uprising itself but in the broader history of the region. Drawing attention to the centrality of discourses that relate to the moral and immoral use of disembodied spiritual power (*puissance/nguvulforce*) in the uprising, the article evokes critical questions about the deeper history of such discourses and the imaginaries and choreographies of violence that accompanied them. Thinking about violence in this way not only breaks down imagined lines between productive and destructive/legitimate and illegitimate violence by highlighting that such distinctions are always contentious and negotiated, but also demonstrates that the theories of power animating such negotiations must be understood not as tangential to the larger anti-colonial

political struggle of Bushiri and his followers, but as central to that struggle. Moreover, it paves the way towards thinking about how these same theories of power might animate negotiations of legitimacy in more recent violent contexts in Eastern Congo.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine la relation malaisée entre la violence et la guérison dans l'histoire de l'Afrique centrale. À travers l'étude de cas de l'un des plus grands soulèvements de l'histoire coloniale du Congo, la révolte kitawaliste de Lubutu-Masisi de 1944, l'article s'interroge sur la manière dont les théories du pouvoir qui ont animé la révolte pourraient aider à mieux mettre en lumière la nature et le rôle de la violence non seulement dans la révolte elle-même, mais aussi dans l'histoire plus large de la région. Attirant l'attention sur la centralité de discours se rapportant à l'utilisation morale et immorale du pouvoir spirituel désincarné (*puissance/nguvu/force*) dans la révolte, l'article évoque des questions essentielles sur l'histoire plus profonde de tels discours et sur les imaginaires et les chorégraphies de violence qui les ont accompagnés. Cette manière de penser la violence non seulement élimine les lignes de démarcation imaginées entre violence productive et destructive/légitime et illégitime en soulignant le fait que ces distinctions sont toujours controversées et négociées, mais aussi démontre qu'il faut comprendre les théories du pouvoir qui animent ces négociations non pas comme tangentes à la lutte politique anticoloniale plus large de Bushiri et de ses disciples, mais au centre de cette lutte. De surcroît, elle ouvre la voie à une réflexion sur la manière dont ces mêmes théories du pouvoir pourraient animer des négociations de légitimité dans des contextes violents plus récents dans l'Est du Congo.