

4. Tshiluba, primarily the language of the Baluba ethnic group of Kasai. It is a form of the Kiluba language of the Kivu and Katanga Baluba and is widely used in the southeastern Congo.

The four languages described above are regional, and the total number of people who speak any one of them is a small percentage of the population.

French, introduced by the Belgians, is the only common language of the country. Although it is widely spread geographically, it is spoken only by the Congolese who have had some education. It is the official language of the country.

The population is about evenly divided between Christians and adherents of either traditional religions or syncretic sects. There are approximately 4,000 Catholics and 1,000 Protestant missionaries in the Congo, operating perhaps 700 missions. The traditional religions vary widely among ethnic groups, and none are formalized. They embody such concepts as monotheism, animism, vitalism, spirits, ancestor worship, witchcraft, and sorcery. The syncretic sects are a mixture of Christianity and traditional beliefs and rituals. They often use Christian symbols and titles. Several which gained popularity in the 1920's sprang from Christian sources, and their prophets promised to lead people to a new way of life and a Black Christ. Two of the most popular of these sects became a threat to law and order, and their activities were banned by the Belgian colonial administration. They have gained strength since 1960, and, where they exist, they tend to be identified more with radical political elements than with religious pursuits.

GOVERNMENT

Although the Belgian Parliament, during the colonial period, had the supreme authority for making laws affecting the territory, it seldom exercised this function except to approve the annual budgets. Actual legislative power was vested in the King and was executed by decrees which were made upon the recommendation of the Minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi and the Colonial Council. The Minister was appointed by the King and was a member of the Belgian Council of Ministers. He was President of the Colonial Council, which was composed of 14 members, 8 of whom were appointed by the King, 3 chosen by the Senate, and 3 by the Chamber of Representatives. This very powerful body passed on legislative measures pertaining to the Congo and considered matters referred to it by the King.

The Congo was divided into six Provinces: Léopoldville, Equateur, Orientale, Kivu, Kasai, and Katanga. Since independence the Congolese Parliament has altered the Provincial structure, and there are now 21 Provinces plus the district comprising the city of Léopoldville.

The King and the Belgian Government were represented in the Congo by a Governor General appointed by the King with the advice and consent of the Belgian Parliament. Prior to independence there were no strictly elective bodies, although in 1957 voting took place in three cities for the designation of municipal councilors, subject to official confirmation. The administrative jurisdiction ran from the Governor General to the 6 Governors of Provinces, 18 commissioners of districts, and 123 administrators of territories. There was a government council which met annually at Léopoldville. Its members were appointed. This body had no actual power, and its function was purely consultative.

In May 1960 the Belgian Parliament enacted a bill which provided the basic governmental structure for the future independent Congo. This bill, the fundamental law, served as the constitution of the Congo until June 30, 1964.

The fundamental law did not greatly alter the structure of government as it had existed when the Congo was a colony. However, significant additions were made. Under the fundamental law a parliamentary form of government was provided for. At the national level Parliament consisted of a Senate and the equivalent of a House of Representatives. The executive was a Prime Minister, chosen by Parliament, and a President. All members of the National and Provincial Parliaments were chosen in national elections.

A constitutional commission, made up of representatives of social, political, and regional groups, convened in January 1964, to draw up a permanent constitution for the Congo. The new constitution was submitted to a plebiscite, reportedly approved by 90 percent of those responding, and was promulgated on August 1, 1964. The new constitution provides for a modified presidential form of central government. The position of Prime Minister is retained, but real executive power rests with the President.¹

¹ Military coup, Nov. 25, 1965 (Lt. Gen. Joseph Mobutu): Scheduled 1966 presidential election canceled; basic principles of 1964 constitution confirmed; 22-man civilian "government of national union" embraces all regions and factions. President Mobutu says he plans to rule for 5 years by decrees having force of law unless rejected by Parliament.