

The Historical Contextualization and Ethnic Identity of Bakongo People in DRC: Case of ABAKO, BDK, BDM*

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1. Introduction

The Bakongo¹ people have contextualized Bakongo nationalism based on national, linguistic and historical homogeneity in the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, hereinafter DRC), unlike other ethnic groups (Kim 2014: 37, Kim 2015: 4-5). Especially the Kongo Kingdom ' (Kongo dia Ntotila / Ntotela)' is the basis of the Bakongo people's historical consciousness and identity (Kim 2014: 16, 38, Verhaegen 1962: 16-11, Covington 2008: 256). Bakongo nationalism is expressed in the state of Kongo Central and the capital Kinshasa, where the Bakongo people live mainly, and led to the emergence of political, religious and cultural organizations as well as a political party.

The Bundu dia Kongo (hereinafter BDK) was formed in 1969 by Ne Muanda Nsemi, whom the Bakongo believe is a Messiah. BDK is mainly supported in the Kongo Central province, where the Bakongo live mainly. BDK continues its identity from the Alliance des Bakongo (hereinafter, ABAKO) that emerged in 1950 as a political, religious, and cultural organization. BDK aims to unite and unify the Bakongo scattered in Angola, the DRC, the Republic of Congo and the western part of Gabon, and aims to recreate the glory of the Kongo Kingdom that existed in the past (Kim 2016: 265, 271). Muanda Nsemi created a political party known as the Bundu dia Mayala (hereinafter, BDM) in 2008. BDM was legally accredited by the DRC government as a political party on September 30, 2015 and BDK legally appeared on DRC's political stage through BDM, and Ne Muanda Nsemi became a member of parliament (Kim 2017: 28). The DRC has suffered a lot of historical difficulties, and there is no unified national consciousness. It is also composed of diverse ethnic groups, and since one ethnic group does not have dominant powers, it has a background in which various interested parties or political parties can emerge. The study of the ethnic identity of the Bakongo people is of great importance in the history

* This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean Government (NRF-362-2010-1-B00003) and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2018.

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¹ The word "Congo" is used in this paper to describe the pre-colonial era DR Congo or the ethnic groups of DR Congo. The word does not designate the Bakongo or the Kongo People. "Congolese" is commonly used to designate the Kongo People after the independence.

of the DRC, as it is very important to be able to predict how various ethnic groups are being integrated or repelled by the DRC.

The purpose of this article is to examine how the ethnic identity of Bakongo people is historically contextualized by ABAKO, BDK, and BDM. The section 2 discusses the theoretical background of identity politics and the section 3 deals with how Bakongo's organization works. The section 4 examines specifically how Bakongo's identity is contextualized.

This paper is based on four field surveys. The first field survey about ABAKO was conducted with 7 participants from January 25, 2014 to February 3, and the second with 19 participants from July 16, 2014 to August 3, 2014. The third full-scale field survey of BDK was conducted from July 24, 2015 to August 13, 2016 with 66 participants. The fourth field survey about BDM was conducted from August 6, 2016 to August 24, 2016 with 29 participants. Four surveys were conducted in Kinshasa, the DRC capital, and Mbanza Ngungu, Boma, Matadi, Luozi, and Muanda areas of the Kongo Central province.²

2. Identity politics

The case of Bakongo ethnic group can be considered as a good example for studying identity politics. The Bakongo people expresses collective identity based on regional, ethnic, and religious foundations. The Bakongo ethnic group has continually contextualized their national identity based on their historical, cultural, and religious identity, and which can also be called as the Bakongo nationalism. Such contextualization has existed and continues to occur through ABAKO, BDK, and BDM organizations with their historical, cultural, political, and religious hybridity. This is a result of the effective functioning of national identity.

2.1 Identity

The option for Rwanda and Bosnia is justified by the contrasting approaches adopted in the countries, which were, if not the exact opposite from each other, extremely unlike. In this sense, a critical analysis of both models under International Human Rights Law (IHRL) is relevant to determine whether embracing a national unity strategy is an appropriate response to mass atrocities, or whether maintaining the idea of a multiethnic polity is more suitable when it comes to post-genocide societies.

Identity is a fundamental right well established in international law, alongside the right of individuals to identify themselves as belonging to a particular group according to ethnicity, religion or language –

² Fieldwork on the Bakongo was impossible without the help of BDM vice-president and congressperson Matenzolo Diatezua Papy. His help was acknowledged by Muanda Nsemi, the director of BDK and BDM. He promised to actively support my research because it is important to inform the international community about the activities of BDM. I myself and BDM advised that the information I acquire should not be used to degrade the reputation of BDM and should be used for good work. If you use it as a bad intent, your ancestor would punish me. They also asked me to record this fact in our findings on BDM. Matenzolo, Diatezua Papy (Deputy vice-president of BDM and congressperson). Interview with Kwang-Su Kim. Personal Interview. Kinshasa: BDM Head Office, August 19, 2016.

not forgetting that identity is a complex and multifaceted element. Identity closely relates to memory, as “the core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity”.

On the other hand, identity may be linked to group violence and conflict. The rejection of diversity, in its most extreme form, ultimately produces mass atrocities based on notions of superiority of one group in relation to others. Distinguishing ‘us’ and ‘them’ constitutes the first stage of genocide, and the second stage, dehumanization, means that “those deemed to be members of the out-group are denied the status of persons”. Perpetrators of large-scale killings will internally justify their acts by hating their victims, “portraying those they hurt as the embodiment of evil” (Kroetz 2016: 330).

Identity and self-identification are fundamental rights protected by IHRL and relate to individuals and groups. Not only individuals have the right to freely identify themselves as belonging to a group based on ethnicity, religion or language, the group as such is entitled to preservation and promotion of its identity.

Identities are complex and multifaceted, as individuals do not identify themselves as belonging exclusively to a particular group according to one specific feature. Religion, race, gender, culture, language and other elements are a mixture of identities that characterize each one as a unique individual. The complexity of the individual is reflected in the legal protection of identity and self-identification as well as in the promotion of minority and indigenous rights, as intersecting identities may trigger multiple discrimination towards the same person or group based on compound motives, such as race and gender. Regarding the role of intersectionality, Crenshaw observes that “identity politics frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences” (Kroetz 2016: 336-337).

Understanding identity as a single-axis structure overlooks the complexity of the individual and ignores multiple forms of discrimination. In this context, Englund rejects a narrow definition of identity to advocate that each individual accommodates manifold identities, thus the hazards of considering groups as distinct constituents, as such groups “can easily be manipulated to foster intolerance, hatred and violence”. Indeed, static, fixed identity categories that holds with them stereotyping and ‘othering’ tend to be at the root of violence (Kroetz 2016: 351).

Informed by Jenkins’ idea that identity is neither static nor inherent but subject to continuous change, Wielenga suggests that only through dialogue it is possible for a society to surpass rooted divisions that were solidified by nominal identity, thus allowing for “natural development towards different ways of engaging one another, which is necessary in societies recovering from violent conflict”. In this sense, official readings of the genocide, both in Rwanda and in Bosnia, have solidified political identities, strengthening community-level victimization and guilt-by-association, and obstructing the formation of self- identification outside those categories officially sanctioned (Kroetz 2016: 353-354).

Tilly (1995) summarized the concept of the interaction between citizenship and identity. According to him, at least one actor must have a group or organization that has the right to speak authoritatively for the whole. Identity describes an actor's experience of a category, tie, role, network, group or organization,

coupled with a public representation of that experience; the public representation often takes the form of a shared story, a narrative (Tilly 1995: 6-7). He also saw the concept of "identity" as an indispensable concept in political analysis and social history for three obvious reasons. First, the phenomenon of identity is public and relational rather than personal. Second, identity extends from category to organization. Third, any actor has at least one plural identity. Actors have different identities depending on their categories, relationships, associations, groups, and organizations. What others are often trying to identify and explain their identities by choosing one of race, gender, class, occupation, religion, nationality, or anything else is by no means a definitive indication of the unity or evenness of that identity, or even its close affiliation or association (Ibid.).

According to Will Herberg's *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (1956) religion had become the most satisfactory vehicle for locating oneself in society and thereby answering the "aching question" of identity: "Who am I?" (Herberg 1956: 24-31, 40-44). Herberg argued that American immigrants have transformed their national identity into an organized religious identity called Protestantism, Catholicism, or Judaism through Hansen's law ("What the son wants to forget, the grandson wants to remember"). In short, Herberg interpreted the whole situation in terms of what was already being called "the search for identity" (Gleason 1983: 912).

Identification understood in this sense is very closely related to role theory and reference-group theory. That is, identification is involved in the process by which a person comes to realize what groups are significant for him, what attitudes concerning them he should form, and what kind of behavior is appropriate. Ralph Linton's *The Study of Man* (1936) introduced role theory, showed how the concept of social role was intimately linked with that of social status, and made it possible for these two concepts to be "systematically incorporated into a developing theory of social structure" (Linton 1936: 113-131). Role theory quickly became a major conceptual perspective for sociology, but as Nelson N. Foote pointed out in 1951, it lacked "a satisfactory account of motivation." To explain why people were willing to be cast in certain roles, accepting the statuses that accompanied those roles, Foote proposed identification as the basis for a theory of motivation in social interaction. Foote defined identification as "appropriation of and commitment to a particular identity or series of identities" on the part of an individual. Identification "proceeds by naming" he added, for to appropriate and be committed to an identity meant that one accepted the name given by others on the basis of family lineage, religion, work activity, and other attributes. Appropriation of these identities by an individual transformed social ascriptions into elements of an evolving sense of selfhood and was experienced as a process of self-discovery and self-actualization. But identities of this sort were not imposed by society in an absolute way, and as one grew older and was exposed to a greater variety of social situations, one could combine and modify identities by conscious choice more effectively than was possible for a child or young person (Gleason 1983: 916-917).

The sociologists, on the other hand, tend to view identity as an artifact of interaction between the individual and society - it is essentially a matter of being designated by a certain name, accepting that

designation, internalizing the role requirements accompanying it, and behaving according to those prescriptions. Foote is explicit here, and Berger asserts not only that identities are "socially bestowed" but that they "must also be socially sustained, and fairly steadily so". He adds pointedly that this sociological view of personality challenges the assumption of continuity in the self. "Looked at sociologically, the self is no longer a solid, given entity. It is rather a process, continuously created and re-created in each social situation that one enters, held together by the slender thread of memory." Another sociologist, acknowledging Coffman's influence, goes even further by equating identity with social relationship. "We have treated social relationship and identity as merely different terms for referring to the same phenomena: the establishment of mutually recognized, expected sequences of behavior in a transaction. Identity refers to the individual's sequence of acts; relationship refers to the ensemble of acts made up by the sequences of acts of all the parties involved" (Gleason 1983: 918).

Francis X. Femminella discussed on "ethnic ego identity....a very special kind of a concept." His purpose was not merely to clarify the ambiguities left by other testimony, but also to refute the claim that ethnic groups could not perpetuate themselves without some degree of self-segregation. He argued that a person internalizes the social heritage of his or her group at so deep a level that it is "damn close" to being "genetically inheritable." For that reason, ethnic communities need not seal themselves off from others; rather, "if that heritage is there, then the ethnic communities will go on irrespective of whether they have a locale" (Gleason 1983: 920).

Herberg, who first stressed the linkage between ethnicity and the search for identity, believed ethnic identities were being replaced by religious identities. The black revolution of the 1960s, and the subsequent emergence of the new ethnicity, changed all that. These movements affirmed the durability of ethnic consciousness, gave it legitimacy and dignity, and forged an even more intimate bond between the concepts of ethnicity and identity. And these developments not only took place against the background of the national identity crisis, they were also dialectically related to it - that is, ethnic or minority identities became more appealing options because of the discrediting of traditional Americanism brought about by the racial crisis and the Vietnam War. As Nathan Glazer pointed out, a situation had by then developed in "the ecology of identities" in which, for the first time in American history, it seemed more attractive to many individuals to affirm an ethnic identity than to affirm that one was simply an American (Glazer 1975: 177-178). The evidence cited earlier from the consultation on Euro-ethnics indicates that ethnic identity is still perceived to be closely related to group concerns and social policy, which supports the contention that the ethnic revival has had the most enduring effect on usage of the term identity (Gleason 1983: 929).

Cultural studies on regional identity do not address the study and cultural characteristics of specific geographical boundaries and community identity, but rather the question of resistance through local or regional cultures. Resistance is a defensive concept of dominant power and can be called a re-definition of identity. The making of local identity demonstrates that its construction involves domination,

adaptation, accommodation, resistance, and rejuvenation. Political and cultural burdens or coercion provide new local resistance. Central government or national policy can be regarded as a source of new definition of local culture. Renationalization then is not only a challenge but also an opportunity for local people to re-conceive their own identity, to come up with something of their own, to think of what makes them unique (Fung 2001: 600).

The Bosnian case used ethnicity, religion, and nationalism as political tools. Politicians continue to make remarks suggesting that they are willing to return to war to protect their national identity or ideals they profess. Religious parties tightened the divisiveness exclusively to certain believers while strengthening their ties with nationalist parties and strengthened the solidarity of their groups (Kroetz 2016: 347).

2.2 Identity and Identity politics

Identity politics is understood as a form of politics stressing collective but malleable group identities as the basis of political action (Brunila and Rossi 2018: 287). This notion of identity politics also allows thinking of identity as intersectional. The notions of identity and identity politics have undergone a sea change within theoretical discussions since the last two decades of the twentieth century and during the first decades of the twenty-first. Initially used as a political, analytical and rhetorical tool by feminists, gay and lesbian activists, and activists of color, the concept of identity has since been subjected to intensive scrutiny and critique. Alongside the fight for women's and minority rights, there has been a discursive explosion around the concept of identity and at the same time, it has been subjected to critical examination (Alcoff et. al. 2006; Brown 1995; Hall 2000; Lloyd 2005, 2007; Rossi 2015). Despite postmodern and poststructuralist efforts to reconceptualize identity as something constructed, temporally mutable and contextual, some thinkers have been adamant about it being always fixed and fixing, foundational, violent and exclusive (Brown 1995; Butler 1990; Davies 1998; Sedgwick 1993). Some criticism raised about identity politics has been related to the ways identities have been considered as deterministic (Lloyd 2005), or desire for recognition has been understood as 'breeding politics of recrimination and rancor,' and as a 'tendency to reproach power rather than aspire to it' (Brown 1995, p. 55). However, it is arguable that neither identities nor identity politics are in themselves positive or negative, but they are politically relevant, and a nodal point by which political structures are played out, mobilized, reinforced, and sometimes challenged' (Alcoff et. al. 2006: 7).

Identity politics is understood, both theoretically and pragmatically, as a form of politics stressing collective group identities as the basis of political action. These groups - for example ethnic minorities, religious groups, feminists, lesbian women and gay men, trans people, disability groups and working-class people - aim for social recognition of their life challenges. This kind of identity politics, emphasizing shared group identity and we-ness, could be considered as counter-politics to the politics of neoliberal individualism. It can also be considered to present defense of the weak against the dominance of the powerful. Furthermore, since human groups change historically, and since all identities are intersectional,

not based on one single aspect (Collins & Bilge 2016), dynamic theorizing of group identities should take this malleability and multifacetedness into account. The notion of intersectionality and social and historical constructedness of both personal and group identities, as well as the notion of non-fixity and non-monolithic nature of identities, offer a useful prism for theorizing education as a decisive factor in this construction process (Brunila and Rossi 2018: 288).

In the neoliberal order, certain forms of identity politics have a tendency to enforce the ethos of vulnerability, and this happens more and more in the field of education. This kind of politics of vulnerability, while focusing on the self and on specific cultural and ideological identity groups, makes their claims on rights, status, and privilege on the basis of a victimized identity. McLaughlin (2012) has argued that political claims are increasingly being made on the basis of experienced trauma and inherent vulnerability, while the previous political demand for recognition has resulted in therapeutic solutions. As such, in the current period the demand for recognition seems not only to take on a specific psychological form but it is also framed by a therapeutic discourse of always-already assumed vulnerability (McLaughlin 2012). In such contexts of education as university campuses, the issue of vulnerability and victimhood as the basis of identity politics has gained momentum in recent years (Brunila and Rossi 2018: 288).

It is important to acknowledge that identity politics come with different flavors. It is also important to see that by utilizing different forms of identity politics as their tools, various social movements have managed to raise both the self-awareness of certain groups, and the privileged peoples' awareness of others living in disenfranchised situations. For example, identity politics related to feminists, working - class, sexual and gender minorities, disabilities, and racialized or ethnicized groups have all brought important differences to the fore. They have all widened the scope of human subjectivity - or what is intelligible as being human (Butler 1990).

A critical examination of the neoliberal operationalization of the concept suggests that the ethos of vulnerability in social policy is strongly related to bureaucratic condescension, selective systems of welfare, paternalism, and social control (Brown 2014). Furedi (2004) has argued that the popularity of the notion of vulnerability in Western societies has fostered 'a culture of fear,' where the fear of risk of falling into one of the categories of 'the vulnerable others' has become central to for instance media discourses and thus many peoples' experiences of everyday life. It is therefore arguable that instead of supporting marginalized groups to speak up for themselves (e.g. Marcano 2009), the notion of identity politics in the service of the neoliberal ethos of vulnerability has become a tool for silencing people considered as others by decision- and policy-makers. Or, as Brown (1995, p. 66) has put it, persons are reduced to observable social attributes, and while becoming describable by these attributes, they also become regulated through them. Furthermore, it has been asked whether identity politics will enhance competition between different groups, when the demands by some groups could be considered more legitimate than others. Again, in neoliberal politics and practices, the agency and power to define the level of legitimization has been given to the subjects imposing identities on others, not to those 'others'

themselves (Brunila and Rossi 2018: 289). Along with the nature of vulnerability, the neoliberal order creates a very clear identity politics. This is because human subjectivity in neo-liberal order is not an elaborate ideology, and it is not carefully considering issues such as differences, inequality, class, and ethics (Brunila and Rossi 2018: 295).

3. Organizations of the Bakongo

3.1 ABAKO

3.1.1 ABAKO's Cultural Identity

Since ABAKO started as a cultural organization of the Bakongo people, it is most important to understand the cultural identity of ABAKO to understand Bakongo's identity. In 1950, M. Edmond Nzeza-Nlandu founded ABAKO in Léopoldville (now Kinshasa), the capital of the Belgian Congo. ABAKO soon became the most important organization in the Belgian Congo colony (Verhaegen 2003; Masiala 2008; Lemarchand 1964).³ Although it started out as a cultural organization with a simple purpose of "preserving the language of the Bakongo", it rapidly developed into a political organization that had a decisive influence in advocating the independence movement of the Congo from the rule of Belgium. ABAKO, on the one hand, can be said to have originated from the love and attachment to their cultural heritage, and from the point of view of power. ABAKO is an example of how national identity can play a more important role in national independence than national identity (Verhaegen 1962; Lemarchand 1961).

There is no one who does not know that ABAKO is the first political party of this country. ABAKO led the independence movement. What is most important is that ABAKO conducted cultural campaigns. At that time, the elders felt that people should unite under Kongo Central province to preserve Bakongo language and culture (Kayinua 2004).

Bakongo people's cultural identity can be seen expressed in the symbol of ABAKO, which can be found on the tomb of Joseph Kasa-Vubu in Singingi and in all ABAKO offices. There is a painting of two snails on ABAKO's office wall in Mbanza-Ngungu, which are the symbol of ABAKO, and the date June 30, 1960 was written that is depicted to be the Independence Day of the Congo. The slogan (*un peuple un parti*; one people, one political party) along with "The Way to Independence (*N'songia Nzila*)" and "Bonds like that of family (*Sing'a Kanda*)" were written under it.

Bakongo people think that snails represent unity and strength. The Bakongo are a community that is bound together like a snail and thinks it is protected. The people of ABAKO think that they are the same

³ ABAKO was not the first organization created by the Bakongo. For example, the Bakongo Music Association (AMUBAKO), which was created in 1940, and the Renaissance Bakongo (Renaissance Bakongo: RENAIBAKO), which was created in 1944, are not a regional organization, but rather a Bakongo Cultural Organization. Until now, Bakongo people have been centered in many specific districts, regions and villages, and meetings and associations have been organized for various purposes.

family and started as one people in one kingdom. And they thought ABAKO was an organization that could protect themselves like a snail.

With the protection of Kikongo language, Bakongo nationalism has become one of ABAKO's major goals. Thus, according to Young (1986), rather than a narrow conceptualization of regionalism, nationalism can be described as a "collective goal and an ideology asserting collective and solidarity goals and entitlements for some community" which is in line with this article's assertion.

Bakongo's cultural nationalism led to language and the sharing of the historical consciousness of the Kongo Kingdom and resistance to the colonization of the Congo. In fact, *Kongo dia Ntotila* is a common identity that all Bakongo people feel and can be described as the core (Verhaegen 1962).

3.1.2 ABAKO's Political Identity

ABAKO started as a cultural organization of the Bakongo people but developed into a political organization. At the time of DRC's independence, ABAKO Chairman Joseph Kasa-Vubu became the first president. To see how ABAKO's cultural identity is expressed in politics is an essential part of considering Bakongo's identity.

The Bakongo thought that ABAKO was an organization that could lead their free life away from colonial rule not only politically but also culturally.

Of all organizations, ABAKO was the only the trustworthy one. ABAKO knew where they were headed, and what they wanted. ABAKO argued that they should gain freedom and independence based on cultural self-reliance, self-consciousness, and historical consciousness (Kamufuenkete 2014). Through various ABAKO activities they educated people and taught people what independence means. The word "Independence" was, at the time, a very controversial word (Mahonda 2014).

Covington-Ward analyzed ABAKO's role in Bakongo nationalism by playing an important role in the independence of the country. The first was ABAKO's counter-manifesto of 1956 on August 23, 1956, the second was Léopoldville rebellion of January 1959 on January 4, 1959, and the third was in 1959 In the mid-1990s, the civil disobedience campaign advocated for an autonomous Kongo state in mid-1959, advocating the autonomy of the Congo and opposing the payment of taxes. Through these three events, ABAKO has changed its identity as a political organization (Covington-Ward 2012).

Joseph Kasa-Vubu issued a statement demanding political independence at the ABAKO General Assembly held at Dendale commune in Leopoldville on Thursday, August 23, 1956. Joseph Kasa-Vubu's speech on this day announced the beginning of an independent struggle in the Belgian Congo (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002). In addition, Joseph Kasa-Vubu's speech was also the beginning for Congolese nationalism movement.

Our stance is clear, and we demand. First, political rights. Second, all freedom including freedom of thought, and expression, freedom of individuals for press, religion, union, and conference for self-consciousness (Covington-Ward 2012, Verhaegen 1962).

KONGO DIETO, one of the most influential newspapers, writes about Manguidi Boniface's "Dear brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters," appeals on the desire for independence.

Let's work hard for our independence and respect it. We must develop our nation. It is our duty to honor our authority. We do not want to be treated as stupid people by colonialists. We need to work together. My brothers and sisters! You must know that independence is a pouring rain for all. We must follow the messages of ABAKO leaders. Congo is our land (André 1960).

ABAKO's first statement can be considered important in the history of the Congolese nationalism. It was a major ideological component that includes the discussions on cultural integration based on the shared history and language of the Kongo Kingdom, new vitality for the Congolese culture and language, as well as the dominion of the former Kongo Kingdom, including the Belgian Congo, French Congo, Portuguese Cabinda and Angola (Verhaegen 2003).

The various materials, events and speeches at that time reflect the fact that ABAKO was a nationalist organization which is based on the first emerging ethnic group, claiming autonomy or independence in which the history and culture of the Bakongo were respected. Lemarchand argued that Congolese nationalism has influenced the past link between the Kongo Kingdom and the Bakongo, their cultural identity, their attitude toward power, their political orientation, their base for collective mobilization, and their common basis for geographic boundaries. He argued that the nationalists wanted to revive the tradition of the Kongo Kingdom (Lemarchand 1961).

Ultimately, the ABAKO leaders thought the Bakongo had a loyalty based on "ethnic, linguistic and historical" homogeneity. The emphasis on cultural identity has become an important factor because ABAKO leaders thought that the traditional heritage of the Bakongo that is embodied in their language, customs and history had been neglected and destroyed by the colonization. ABAKO became an important goal of 'Resurrection of the Kongo Kingdom' or 'Reunification of the Bakongo'. The Bakongo were hoping for an omnipotent 'King' Kasa-Vubu and claimed Bakongo's loyalty considering him as the only person to rule and meet their expectations (Lemarchand 1961).

In the end, the background of ABAKO's identity politicized can be seen as Bakongo nationalism based on the strong historical identity of the Kongo Kingdom. Politicization of ABAKO's identity was only possible since it was based on strong historical identity that is Kongo Kingdom, revealing Bakongo nationalism. ABAKO was a representative organization of nationalism based on ethnic groups in history of the Congo Kingdom. The Bakongo wanted omnipotent 'King' Kasa-Vubu. Cultural solidarity and unity, which was widely proliferated among the Bakongo, was an implicit goal for them to achieve by using all endeavor.

3.1.3 ABAKO and Kimbanguist Church

The Kimbanguist Church which is one of the representative indigenous religions of the DRC and one of the African Independent Churches began in the Kongo Central province, where Bakongo people mainly reside. The ethnic identity of the Bakongo people originated from a deep understanding of indigenous religion and they support the Kimbanguist Church as asserted by Simon Kimbangu. Therefore, it is essential to study the identity of ABAKO to see how it relates to the Kimbanguist Church.

Simon Kimbangu and the Kimbanguist Church had a close relationship with ABAKO and with the fight against the colonization. The Kimbanguist Church has participated in the resistance movement against the Belgian rule.

The Kimbanguist Church deeply influenced ABAKO. The Kimbanguist Church was never too far away from ABAKO, and they fought together. In January 4, 1960, when Joseph Kasa-Vubu was running away from the pursuit of Belgian officer, Loya, a pastor of Kimbanguist Church helped his escape and harbored him. In order to flee, he put on a white make-up like Europeans, wearing pastor's clothes and holding a Bible (Nkunga 2014).

Prof. Matukanga argued that the Kimbanguist Church was important in the history of the DRC because it actively participated in the struggle against the Belgian colonization, as well as in terms of the religiously largest African Independent Church (Matukanga 2014). Independence for the Bakongo was a tremendous event in itself. Simon Kimbangu insisted on liberation, liberty, spiritual liberation, scientific liberation, economic liberation, and eventual political liberation. ABAKO saw that it could do all of these things, and at the same time thought it should be done together. Many people were involved in ABAKO, and ABAKO considered these goals their own (Kamufuenkete 2014).

Simon Kimbangu was killed in 1951 by the Belgian government, but the Kimbanguist Church continued its religious growth and possesses a big church in Nkamba. At the time of independence, the Kimbanguist Church had a lot of influence on the ABAKO. It is understood that it has been directly or indirectly related because it has its roots in the Kongo Central province of the Bakongo.

3.2. BDK

3.2.1 BDK's Hybrid Identity

Although the meaning of BDK cannot be precisely described, it can be summarized as follows based on literature and the field surveys. The etymological meaning of 'Bundu' is "assembly" or "union". The word 'bundu', or 'dibundu' comes from the root verb 'bunda', "to assemble, come together". The word 'Kongo' means 'God with charity and wisdom that made and controls the universe'. Therefore, the name BDK can literally be interpreted as the "Kongo Union" or the "Assembly of the Kongo" (Bernhard 1997, Tazi Kizey 2013).

Professor Tazi Kizey Tien-a-be argues that in order to understand BDK correctly, it is necessary to understand it from the viewpoint of Africans rather than from the viewpoint of the West. The Bakongo

believe that God has chosen them and gave them the ability to rebuild African culture and tradition, to integrate and develop Africa, and to lead the Africans (Tazi Kizey 2013).

Covington argued that BDK's political influence was important, so research about it was essential. In other words, she claimed that it is difficult to understand modern Congo society without studying about BDK. Even though, she did not agree fully with BDK's philosophy, strategy and activities, she supported BDK for the following reasons: their Kongo-focused emphasis on religion, their mission to rehabilitate the use of Kikongo, their need for a history written by and for the Bakongo, their goal of self-government and the erasure of colonial borders, their belief in Pan-Africanism, their recognition of the ill treatment of people of African descent all over the world by Europeans and their descendants including slavery and colonialism (Covington 2008).

The representation of the Triune God and the characteristics of the three major ancestors of the Bakongo are reflected in defining the identity of BDK. BDK has three forms, *Nsaku* meaning the church, *Mpanzu* meaning the science and technology, and *Nzinga* meaning politics (Kabuayi 2006). In the field of religion, the rejection of Christians and Catholics imported from the West, excluding any influence of imported knowledge in the field of science, the resistance and criticism of colonialism in politics, and the negative effects of colonization after independence (Tazi Kizey 2014). Muanda Nsemi wears a red headband on his forehead, indicating that he belongs to the *Nzinga* clan and is a political leader. The reason for using blue and yellow scarves is that he is spiritually strong leader (Covington 2008).

It is worth paying attention to BDK's songs that contain BDK's philosophy and ideology. BDK criticizes the aggression and plundering of Christianity and the Europeans in the theme of its songs. Further, it describes that Africans have suffered from the betrayal and hypocrisy of the Europeans and the nostalgia for the great past of Africa before the arrival of Europeans. BDK points out that deified ancestors such as Simon Kimbangu and Kimpa Vita were unjustly murdered by the Europeans. It also criticizes the Atlantic slave trade, the division of the African continent through the 1884 Berlin Conference, aggression and plundering, violence, exploitation, and long-term colonization. This description shows that Christianity, which is characterized with peace and love, has oppressed Africans in the colonial times with the image of 'Bible and Gun'. The Bakongo are rejecting Christianity, a white religion that oppressed them. The Bakongo believe that white people have looted many resources and have destroyed the Kongo Kingdom (Covington 2008).

During the third field survey, a BDK song book, *Nkunga Mia: Bundu dia Kongo* (1995) published by BDK's branch in Kimpese was secured. This led me to investigate the contents of BDK's songs. The major issues covered in BDK's songs can be summarized by BDK's goals claimed by Muanda Nsemi. Above all, The Bakongo identity represented through BDK's songs has a strong historical consciousness in following the Kongo Kingdom, ancestors, and god of the Kongo. Second, it shows the self-centeredness of the people who were colonized and rejected by foreign countries. Third, it emphasizes the religious, political, social and cultural roles of BDK and expresses Bakongo nationalism by asserting the unity of Bakongo people.

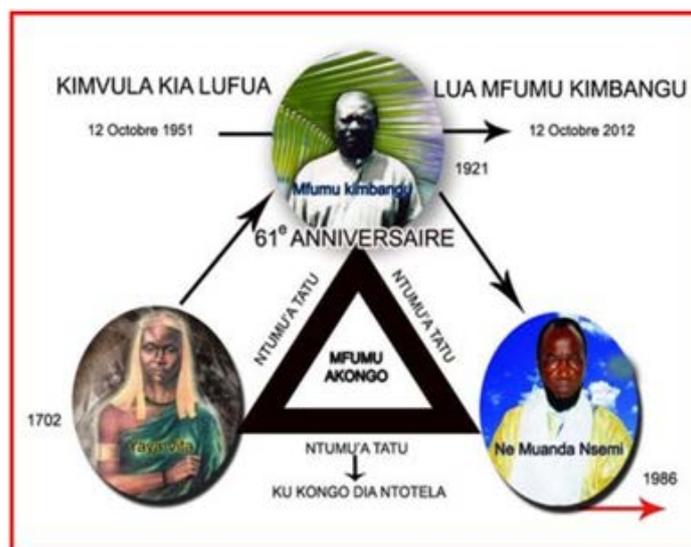
BDK believes that the invasion and dominion of the West have taken away all the past glory of the Bakongo. They claim that the independence of the soul must be done first, and all religions and artifacts of the West should be excluded and returned to the pre-colonial times.

3.2.2 BDK and Muanda Nsemi

Muanda Nsemi⁴ is the founder and spiritual leader of BDK and is not well known to many (Bernhard 1994). He was born in 1945 in Luozi, Kongo Central province, and majored in physics and chemistry at Lovanium University (now University of Kinshasa: UNIKIN). When Joseph Kasa-Vubu, the first president of the Bakongo, died in 1969, Bakongo people's ancestor, *Muela Kongo*⁵, gave him reader's authority. The Bakongo believe that the archangel has given him a sacred mission for social reform in Central Africa. And the archangel asked he should possess a combined character of Kimbangu and Joseph Kasa-Vubu. Muanda Nsemi became the large Master of wisdom (Kabuayi 1995, Tazi Kizey 2014).

He is believed to have inherited the lineage of *Yaya Nzinga* and *Mpanzu*, the son of the light of the *Kongo dia Ntotela*. This was a special identity given to Kimpa Vita⁶ and Simon Kimbangu. Muanda Nsemi received a spiritual call to continue to follow Simon Kimbangu's mission (Bernhard 1997; Ne Nsemi 2004).

<Diagram 1> The relationship of Kimpa Vita, Simon Kimbangu and Muanda Nsemi



⁴ "Muanda" means "spirit". "Nsemi" means "creator" that is derived from the verb "sema" meaning "to create". So his name means "Creative Spirit" or "Spirit of the Creator".

⁵ The information surveyed in the field survey is as follows. The word '*Muela*' means the Kongo soul in Kikongo. *Muela Kongo* believes that 72 ancestors are included.

⁶ It is also called Kimpa Vita or Dona Beratrice. Bakongo people prefer what they call Yaya or Mama Vita Kimpa. She led the Catholic faith and the campaign against the Europeans and was burned alive by Portugal on July 2, 1706. Muanda Nsemi commemorates her death annually. In 2016, *Yaya Vita Kimpa* (2015) was published, commemorating her 310-year anniversary.

Muanda Nsemi argues that the continuing revelation and the long tradition of the history and culture of the Kongo Kingdom needs to be realized in terms of traditional religious beliefs and Christian practices. Kimpa Vita, Simon Kimbangu, as well as other Bakongo prophets (Covington 2008).

The Bakongo refer Muanda Nsemi or Kimpa Vita as *mfumu*, which means 'King' or 'God'. They believe that God and divine ancestors gave them power and revelation. They believe that the suffering and pain of the Bakongo will be healed, whenever they pray and call the names of messiahs and prophets (Covington 2008).

The Bakongo believe that Simon Kimbangu is a great prophet and a miracle man. He led a religious movement of the Congolese struggle for freedom during the colonial times. During the colonization period, Kimbangu led 'prophetic movements', which are also known as the 'bangunza movements' in Kikongo. Indeed, Kimbangu did not say anything about this, but it was immortalized in Bakongo people's memory as well as testimonies of witnesses, colonial government documents, song lyrics from the Kimbanguist Church and BDK's booklets (Covington 2008).

According to the survey of this study, Muanda Nsemi is being revered in the same way as the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and the Tibetan leader the Dalai Lama. The Bakongo called him a prophet or an Apostle of Jesus and recognized him as having the same level as Jesus. A close analysis shows that there is a close relationship between Bakongo people's Messianism and BDK's movement (Kim 2016).

In 1969, Muanda Nsemi announced himself as *Ne Muanda Kongo*, representing the best souls of all communities in *Ntimansi Union*, the federal state of Central Africa. Muanda claimed that the archangel has given him this particular task. In 1986, he began his official activities on BDK. He described himself as a man of spiritual, scientific, and political power. He argued that through his moral and political influence he would be the leader of Africa and the world.⁷

In the political doctrine of the religious political movement "BDK" the form of the state is unquestionably federalism and fighting against any idea of political centralization. Indeed, the writings of Muanda Nsemi exerted to prove the superiority of federalism on Unitarianism. Furthermore, the doctrine of the religious political movement "BDK" indicates that the main cause of bankruptcy in Central Africa and especially in the DRC and its mismanagement is due to the form of the government (Tazi Kizey 2013). The political project of the movement politico-monk, BDK, is the reconstitution of the Kongo Kingdom and especially in cultural dimensions.

3.2.3 BDK's Political Activities

BDK clearly states that it is going to achieve its goals through political activities. BDK argues that after the Berlin Conference in 1884, the borders that Western nations have arbitrarily imposed are acts of anarchy and madness that have scorned the historical and cultural values and consciousness of

⁷ "Bundu dia Kongo," <http://bundu-dia-kongo.org/about/index.html> (accessed September 22, 2015).

Africans and the African continent. Thus, a new border line must be created, and the evidence must be based on the borders of the former Kongo Kingdom. BDK argues that federalism was the most natural form of a state that existed before colonial times (Tazi Kizey 2013, 2014).

Nicholas Argenti suggested in his study *The Intestines of the State: Youth, Violence, and Belated Histories in the Cameroon Grassfields* (2007) that it is possible to achieve political goals and hegemony through religious authority. In the case of DRC, BDK's movements could be considered as such cases. Although not covered in this article, we can see that Simon Kimbangu and the Kimbanguist Church have already tried to gain political power through religious activities during the Belgian colonialism.

BDK's goal to reintegrate the Bakongo insists that it creates a single nation with the will of God, who created a single Bakongo people by eliminating the arbitrary boundaries divided by the colonial forces. Sovereignty is the biggest problem for BDK, and The Bakongo want to rule their land directly. Bakongo people is still part of the DRC, and people from other states are not "real Bakongo people (*Bena Kongo*)" and they are opposed to trying to take Bakongo's power. Culturally different 'strangers' think they are incompetent people who do not speak Kikongo and do not understand how to govern the Congo Central province. That is why Bakongo insists their political authority is not acknowledged (Covington 2008).

Until 2007, BDK has legally been involved in political activities through BDM, but in 2007 there were about 300 casualties in a bloody conflict with the government in Matadi, Boma and Muanda areas of the Kongo Central province. Prior to this incident, there were many large and small conflicts between BDK, the police, and the army and casualties occurred (Covington 2008; Mabandu 2008; Mona 2007).

Simon Mbtashi Mbatshia run for the Kongo Central province governor's election in 2007 along with his running mate, Deo Nkusu, for the deputy governor's position. Fuka Unzola and Muanda Nsemi run in the election representing BDK and declared that they were winning by a very slight margin (Mona 2007). This caused a conflict between BDK and the police, and more than 100 people died between late January and early February 2007. Another collision ensued, causing 22 deaths in Luozi at the end of February 2008 (Mabandu 2008). The most important political victory for BDK was gained in 2006, when Muanda Nsemi was elected as a Parliament member representing Luozi.

3.3. BDM

3.3.1 BDM's Formation

After the ouster of Mobutu Sésé Seko by Laurent-Désiré Kabila in 1997 and the assassination of Laurent-Désiré Kabila in 2001, a transitional government was formed and Joseph Kabila took over the regime. Since then, the DRC has gained relative political stability compared to the past. The DRC had its first democratic presidential election in June 2006 after its independence on June 30, 1960. This new political environment has created new opportunities for various organizations to emerge as political parties. As a result, 267 political parties have emerged and each political party has been working on suggesting their political strategy and vision to solve the many problems faced by the DRC (Covington 2008). Before BDM was registered as an official political party, the members of BDM used 'Congo Pax',

a political party, to be politically active (Matenzolo 2016).

Marie Terese Nlandu,⁸ the daughter of former ABAKO president Joseph Kasa-Vubu, has appointed Muanda Nsemi as vice-president of the Congo Pax where she was the president, and helped him to become a presidential candidate. It can be considered that she gave power to Muanda Nsemi because she wanted to support the activities of BDK and Muanda Nsemi, who has inherited ABAKO's identity, by considering them as Bakongo nationalist activities (Kim 2017).

The apparent reason why the government delayed the approval of BDM was not because it did not comply with party regulations or because it had been illegal. Rather the DRC government is afraid that BDM will have political power. The ultimate reason was that BDM could claim the ethnic and regional interests of the Bakongo people in the Kongo Central province and harm the state's sovereignty. BDM continues to insist on federalism and local autonomy, not the central government (Matenzolo 2016).

3.3.2 BDM's Political and Cultural Identity

During the survey of this study, BDM members explained the meaning of BDM as follows. 'Bundu' means a "Black God", while 'Mayala' indicates the "Creator God" (Kim 2016). The name BDM is said to have a clear purpose and identity. BDM was created in 2008, but it was not approved by the government as a political party until 2015. BDM has had many difficulties to get approval after its creation, and the government has challenged the name BDM and has not accredited it.

Government officials wondered why BDM insisted on the name Kikongo. We need to know that if we want to dominate people, we have to take three things. They must take away their culture, language, and land. If you do not have culture, language, and land, you do not exist anymore. This is why we named BDM in Kikongo, one of the DRC languages (Matenzolo 2016).

Muanda Nsemi is very proud of naming the political party with the African language of Bakongo. Like the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in South Africa or the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) in Tanzania, it claims to be a party that respects African people and their cultures (Ne Nsemi 2016).

In 2002, Muanda Nsemi reminded collective memories by claiming that the name Bas-Congo province, which the Bakongo mainly live in, was formerly called Kongo Central province. At the time of independence, in 1962, the DRC was called "Kongo Central" which was later changed to "Bas-Congo". On July 22, 2002, Nsemi held the 40th anniversary of the Kongo Central province. He argued that those who advocate neo-liberal democracy are not teaching Africans the true history of Africans. He pointed out that BDK, which calls for a change of name, promoted division and destruction and turned it into an organization that threatened the security of the nation and politically oppressed it (Ne Nsemi 2016). BDM argued that the problem of naming the Bas-Congo was also one of the causes of the 2007 turmoil (Matenzolo 2016).

⁸ "Who is Mrs Marie Terese Nlandu?" (2011). <http://congopax.webs.com/> (accessed September 20, 2016).

In the interview, BDM members described various examples of African values. They claimed that Africa had many cultural values, which was aggressed by Western influences, and it had now many immoralities that had never existed before. BDM members point out that Africans and Congolese are losing their culture and wandering. BDM argues that people need respect for the past and a sense of community consciousness, fraternity and mutual help for lost Africans. They argue that they have not be able to develop because they left the values the received from ancestors of the past before the West came in (Mboko 2016).

They thought it was a western colony because of the destruction of the Congolese and African traditions. Therefore, it was argued that the destroyed traditional culture should be restored to before colonization (Ntezolo 2016). BDM interprets that all political struggles seek to secure a cultural realm. Culture is seen as a human soul. If culture is suppressed or destroyed, it is like taking human life (Ntiakulu 2016). BDM is an organization of politics and religion and it should be understood that it places emphasis on culture, ethics, and morality (Madembo 2016).

Muanda Nsemi defined the identity of BDM in a publicity brochure as follows:

1. BDM is a political party named after African culture.
2. The ideology of BDM is African consciousness.
3. BDM is an African Renaissance party.
4. BDM is the avant-garde's⁹ Pan-Africanist party (Ne Nsemi 2016).

Therefore, BDM can be described as a political party claiming African renaissance based on African identity. The key words that explain BDM are African culture, African Renaissance, and Pan-Africanism. But I think that the identity of BDM is broader than this and unclear.

BDM's official paper indicates that BDM's ideas are mixed with "Pan African Party" or "African Socialism"(Ronald 2016). Content of the interview shows that, the Pan-African Socialist Party is based on African partnership (Ndunga 2016). The reason why these claims are mixed is that the identity, culture, and community consciousness of Africans are emphasized. This is the value of Africans and the value of Bakongo people is no different from other races (Matingu 2016). BDM claims that politics is about solving problems based on peaceful communication. It also argues that good politics is providing a platform of communication where every member of society can talk about their problems, in their own cultural ways (Malungidi 2016c).

3.3.3 BDM's Political Activities

Currently, BDM has political branches in the five provinces of Kongo Central, Kinshasa, Kasai, Bandundu, and Équateur. BDM has more powerful political activity and influence in Kongo Central

⁹ Muanda Nsemi's use of the term 'avant-garde' seems to have been used in the sense that it denies existing ideas and values and creates a new wind of change.

province, where the Bakongo are mainly residing. To date, BDM is the most likely regional and ethnic political party in Kongo Central province (Matenzolo 2016).

The most important political activity of BDM is also the political movement of Muanda Nsemi. Muanda Nsemi has a similar 'political trip' to the convention to keep his political position on a regular basis. The most recent case was a visit to Muanda from August 17-18, 2015. Prior to his visit, BDM's branch in Muanda sent a letter of cooperation to the military commander of the Kitona military base and the commander of the Banana Navy Base of Muanda in line with his visit. (Phuati 2016). In addition, Kimpese held the first congress for BDM youth on Friday 15th to Saturday 17th July 2016. He organizes these political activities and is trying to explain the purpose and vision of the party. We are also working to open branch offices of BDM. On May 2, 2016, Luozi's Territorial Committee appointed Koba Ntima as BDM Director of the Mongo Luwala sector and the Mbanza Mona sector to expand BDM's membership and educate BDM's political philosophy (Malungidi 2016b).

Major foreign political activities of BDM include political rallies in the Kinkenge area on April 23, 2016, and the Inclusive National Dialogue¹⁰ which were said to have been considered important (Kirby 2016; Malungidi 2016b). Muanda Nsemi again held the Inclusive National Dialogue on June 3, 2015 to insist on discussing the DRC's political situation (Africanews 2014). During a meeting with Catholic, Protestant, Kimbanguist and Muslim leaders, he requested for a forum to be organized for public discussions. He pointed out that the government is responsible for the thorough preparation of the electoral roll and election timetable for the 2016 election. Nsemi also insisted that he will get ready for the election and also for the problems that may arise after the election. The main opposition party viewed Muanda Nsemi's remarks as suspicious. However, Nsemi claimed that some opposition parties, as well as the EU, the United States, the United Nations, the AU and even the Catholic pope, have agreed and supported his claims (Ne Nsemi 2016).

During the event, which was held in the form of a national forum, it was argued that all DRC political organizations and civil society should participate and discuss about the presidential election scheduled for December 2016. Muanda Nsemi proposed to make an agreement on the postponement of the election to make it more credible, transparent, and peaceful. He also insisted on ending the betrayal, frustration, dissatisfaction and disputes that weakened the unity and integration of the people. Nsemi argued that this meeting could correct the past mistakes and solidify the Congolese political will and develop the nation's future. He voiced his support for the 2015 UN Security Council Resolution 2211, 2277, along with support the activities of the United Nations and the DRC UN Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO) to prevent fragmentation after the election (BDM Bureau Politique 2015; UN Security Council 2015).

¹⁰ Inclusive National Dialogue is also known as Inclusive National Political Dialogue, Inclusive Political Dialogue or National Dialogue. It is also supported by the US and AU. What is important here is to discuss voter registration so that the December 2016 presidential election can be held in accordance with the Constitution. In the end, we are dealing with the issue of DRC's electoral timeline and its first democratic transfer of power.

BDK and BDM have a close relationship. BDM thinks religion and politics are one. Based on this, BDM argues that the religious head in the African tradition was the political ruler. BDK is an organization that works for spiritual happiness and BDM works for material happiness. Unfortunately, Africans claim to imitate a European system that separates religion and politics. The African tradition is that the political leader (*Mfumu*) was the religious leader (*Nganga*) and the religious leader was the political leader (Ntedika 2016).

Matenzolo explains the two goals of BDM as a political party. First, like any other political party, BDM has the goal of regime acquisition. Second, BDM is fighting against unfairness. Unfairness always insists that people want to create a party that supports people so that they can regain their rights and self-determination, making them frustrated. He explained that these rights are guaranteed by the United Nations (Matenzolo 2016).

BDM thinks that the government of DRC is not distributing the rich resources of the country fairly to all the provinces. The central government takes all the benefits and is not interested in local development. In order to correct such discrimination and unfairness, it is necessary to have a federalist policy to guarantee local autonomy against the centralization of government (Matenzolo 2016).

The idea of BDM is to establish the identity of the Bakongo who are discriminated without proper treatment (Mamtomoso 2016). The goal of BDM is therefore to be fair to all Congolese. The Bakongo think that they have been abandoned without being treated fairly. This shows a relatively strong consciousness of damage compared to other ethnic groups. Bakongo people's rituals can be really damaging to them, or they might be trying to gain power. Bakongo people have been taking over the identity of ABAKO, who has always reproduced the glory of the Kongo Kingdom or who has produced President Joseph Kasa-Vubu (Ndunga 2016).

The reason for BDK to make the BDM party is due to the continuous monitoring of BDK's activities and pressure through legal provisions by the DRC government, as BDK's activities and goals are considered to threaten the government. Therefore, BDK's goal and BDM's political goal are basically the same. However, the official party activity of BDM is now only one year or so, and it will be necessary to study further how BDM will look like in the future. Since the political base of BDM is BDK, BDM seems to try to protect the interests of BDK. This phenomenon can be understood as BDK's political limit and vision to realize through BDM party (Kim 2017).

4. The Identity of ABAKO, BDK, and BDM

ABAKO was commenced as a culture organization for the Bakongo to defend their language, culture and tradition, but it developed into a political organization and led the independence movement from Belgium. ABAKO can be said to be based on the historical identity of the Kongo Kingdom, and Bakongo people's historical consciousness was expressed as a cultural identity seeking movement to protect language and culture. The purpose of protecting Bakongo people's historical and cultural heritage was to act as a powerful force to change into a political organization while facing the real problems of the

Belgian colonization and the independence of the entire Congo. Bakongo people's historical and cultural identity was one of the many ethnic groups in the DRC, where The Bakongo first created an organization called ABAKO to initiate a movement to protect cultural identity. ABAKO members regarded the ethnic, linguistic and historical homogeneity of the Bakongo as an important identity.

BDK can be described as a religious, political, socio-cultural organization and advocates Bakongo nationalism. BDK is organized by the Bakongo people, the descendants of the former Kongo Kingdom (now Angola, the DRC, the kingdoms in the western part of Congo and Gabon), with the aim of reviving the Kongo Kingdom.

The following factors were involved in BDK's hybrid identity formation. First, the most important national identity plays an important role. The Bakongo are a major ethnic group in the DRC and have a common historical and cultural identity. Especially the identity of language and culture is strong. Second, the religious beliefs of Kimpa Vita and Simon Kimbangu, who resisted the colonization, had a significant impact. Third, it is based on strong historical consciousness and identity of the Kongo Kingdom that the Bakongo built. Fourth, ABAKO, which appeared in the process of resistance and independence to the colonization, also had an important influence (Kim 2016).

The advent of BDM is a political act based on the identity of the Bakongo, who are perceived collectively by experiencing unfair treatment. Identity politics is based on the perception of repression of collective identity. In other words, the Bakongo recognizes that their identity is fixed, changed, and politically ineffective. Therefore, it can be said that they are fighting political struggle that clearly expresses their ignored and repressed identity. However, BDM has a different appearance because its manifestation of political action is connected with Messianism (Kim 2017).

The identity of BDM is hybrid because history, culture, religion and ideology are mixed together with national and regional backgrounds. In order for BDM to evolve into a political party, it needs a unique and consistent identity that can be supported by the DRC people. It is important to note that BDM is following BDK route but is trying to act as a political party. To date, however, the situation can be interpreted as ethnocentrism and exclusive nationalism.

The future of BDM, an organization which is based on regional, national and religious foundations, depends on the ability of BDM to present a vision of how it can develop into a national party that can appeal to the public. It is certain that other regions and ethnic groups will support the political activities that BDM claims are directly related to their interests, and it is certain that BDM will raise a voice about political issues that may attract more national interest.

5. Conclusion

The Bakongo continued to contextualize their national identity based on historical, cultural, and religious bases, which can also be called the Bakongo nationalism. Such contextualization has and continues to exist through the organizations of ABAKO, BDK, and BDM which have historical, cultural, political, and religious hybridity. This is a result of the effective functioning of national identity.

Historically, Bakongo people have been following the identity of the Kongo kingdom. The Bakongo descendants of the Kongo Kingdom, are people who set up the Kongo Kingdom in the past and have a strong historical consciousness other than other ethnic groups. As a result of the Berlin Conference in 1884, they were forced to live scattered in Angola, the DRC, and Republic of the Congo. They want to maintain their culture and identity, and have political unity through unity and harmony.

Culturally, the Bakongo have strengthened their identity through language, culture, and symbols. ABAKO, BDK, and BDM have always emphasized the importance of culture for the basis of national identity and unity. ABAKO has developed into a political organization based its activities on preserving the language of the Bakongo, and BDK and BDM are also advocating the protection of their language and culture. ABAKO emphasizes the importance of Bakongo people's traditional culture and African culture. BDM advocates Socialism, Pan-Africanism, and African Renaissance as its ideologies, and this ideological background is based on the community consciousness that has been most important in African traditional society. They argue that the restoration and revival of African traditional culture can lead to the development of Africa.

Religiously, it has the identity of the Kimbanguist Church and African traditional religions, which are also known as African Independent Churches (AICs). The Kongo messianism is closely related to the identity of BDK and BDM. Muanda Nsemi is a beloved Messianic man of the Bakongo. He is revered as the Messiah of Bakongo people. Muanda Nsemi argues that he should realize the continuing revelation and long tradition of spreading the Kongo culture and history in terms of religious beliefs and Christian practices based on tradition. So, he claims to be the Messiah after Kimpa Vita and Simon Kimbangu. BDM argues that the head of religion is also the political ruler in accordance with the theocracy society of the African traditional society.

The political situation of the DRC since 2016 has had a significant impact on Bakongo people's political activities. The presidential term of DRC was until December 20, 2016. The election scheduled for November 27, 2016 was not held as planned and hence the presidential term was extended. President Joseph Kabila has been in power for two successive terms, so he cannot keep the presidency for the third term unless the constitution is amended. Due to political instability of the DRC, such as the volatile rebellion in the eastern provinces, it is expected that election may not take place and the ruling will be prolonged unaffected indefinitely. DRC's Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) announced on 29 September 2016 that it will postpone the presidential election until 2018, but the Constitutional Court ruled against postponing the election. Currently, DRC's election is expected to take place between April and July 2018.

In the political context of DRC, where more than 260 political parties representing various interests such as region, ethnicity, religion and ideology are active, the political activities and cases of BDM can be an indicator of the political situation of DRC. Joseph Kabila could create a legitimate reason to stop the emergence of a massive opposition party and extend the regime by suppressing the activities of small parties like BDK and BDM.

Due to the numerous historical difficulties faced by the DRC, there has been no unified national consciousness. Its large size and diverse ethnic groups has made the way to the appearance of various interest parties. In addition, since there is no one ethnic group that does have a dominant power, a national ideology or philosophy is needed to integrate all the people of the Congo.

Although the Bakongo contextualize their identities in political and non-political ways through unity based on their national, regional, historical and religious identity, this can be viewed as ethnocentrism or egocentricity of a local ethnic group. This situation is condemned by the government or other ethnic groups, causing conflicts among ethnic groups or regions, and further falling into national conflict or civil war. DRC's worrisome political situation in 2017 is demonstrated by the government's repression of BDK and BDM. As long as political instability persists, repression of the Bakongo will be further strengthened, and Bakongo people will be forced to resist.

For democratization of the politics in DRC, one alternative is to choose a system of federalism and local autonomy to develop into an integrated nation while protecting the interests of each ethnic group. However, the present situation is very important in terms of the political development of the DRC as well as the contextualization of the ethnic identity of each ethnic group of the DRC as to how the Bakongo-created organization or political party survives in the political situation of the DRC.

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콩고민주공화국 바콩고인의 민족정체성과 역사적 맥락화: ABAKO, BDK, BDM을 중심으로

바콩고 족은 지역적, 민족적, 종교적 기반을 바탕으로 집단적 정체성을 표출한 정체성 정치(Identity Politics)의 사례로 볼 수 있다. 바콩고 족은 역사, 문화, 종교 정체성을 바탕으로 역사적 상황에 맞추어 자신의 민족적 정체성을 지속적으로 맥락화했으며 이는 바콩고 민족주의라고 말할 수 있다. 그러한 맥락화 작업은 역사, 문화, 정치, 종교적 혼종성을 가진 ABAKO, BDK, BDM 등의 조직들을 통해 이어져 왔으며 지금도 계속되고 있다고 할 수 있다.

바콩고인의 민족적 정체성은 다음과 같은 요인들에 의해 맥락화되었다. 첫째, 바콩고인은 역사적으로는 콩고 왕국(Kongo Kingdom)의 정체성을 따르고 있으며 다른 민족집단과 다른 강한 역사의식을 갖고 있다. 둘째, 바콩고인은 언어와 문화, 그리고 상징을 통해 자신의 정체성을 강화하였다. 아울러 아프리카의 문화에 대한 중요성을 강조하고 있다. 셋째, 종교적으로는 아프리카독립교회(African Independent Churches: AICs)인 킴방구 교회(Kimbanguist Church)와 아프리카 전통종교의 정체성을 갖고 있다. 콩고인의 메시아 신앙(Kongo messianism)이 BDK와 BDM의 정체성에 긴밀하게 연관되어 있으며 네 무안다 은세미(Ne Muanda Nsemi)는 바콩고인의 메시아로 추앙받고 있다.

BDK는 2007년과 2008년 정부의 탄압으로 시위와 폭력이 발생하였고 많은 사상자가 발생했다. BDK는 2008년 정치정당인 마알라연합(Bundu dia Mayala: BDM)을 창당하였으나 7년만인 2015년 9월 30일 DRC 정부로부터 정당인가를 받았다. 그러나 2017년 DRC의 정치상황은 BDK와 BDM에 대한 탄압으로 이어졌고 바콩고 족의 민족적 정체성의 맥락화라는 측면에서 매우 어려운 상황을 맞고 있다.

바콩고인이 만든 조직이나 정당이 변화하고 있는 DRC의 정치상황 속에서 자신들의 민족적 정체성을 역사적으로 어떻게 맥락화 또는 재맥락화 하는지 고찰하는 것은 다음과 같은 이유때문에도 매우 중요하다. DRC의 다양한 민족 집단들이 자신들의 정체성을 어떻게 맥락화 또는 재맥락화하는지 고찰할 수 있을 뿐만 아니라 DRC의 민주주의와 정치발전이라는 측면에서도 매우 중요한 사례가 될 수 있기 때문이다.

<국문핵심어>

콩고왕국, 바콩고, 바콩고동맹(ABAKO), 바콩고 민족주의, 네 무안다 은세미, 콩고연합(BDK), 마알라연합(BDM), 콩고민주공화국

<Abstract>

The Historical Contextualization and Ethnic Identity of Bakongo People in DRC: Case of ABAKO, BDK, BDM

The case of Bakongo ethnic group can be considered as a good example for studying identity politics. The Bakongo people expresses collective identity based on regional, ethnic, and religious foundations. The Bakongo have continued to contextualize their national identity based on their historical, cultural, and religious identity, which can be called the Bakongo nationalism. Such contextualization has occurred in the past and continues to occur through the organizations of ABAKO, BDK, and BDM with historical, cultural, political, and religious hybridity.

The Bakongo ethnic identity was contextualized by the following factors. First, the Bakongo people historically follow the identity of the Kongo Kingdom and has a stronger sense of history than any other ethnic group. Second, the Bakongo people strengthened their identity through language, culture, and symbolism. They also emphasize the importance of African culture. Third, religiously, they have the identity of the Kimbanguist Church which is part of the African Independent Churches (AICs) and traditional African religions. The Kongo messianism belief is closely related to the identity of BDK and BDM, and Ne Muanda Nsemi is regarded as the Messiah of the Bakongo people.

BDK's protests and violence in 2007 and 2008 were caused due to the repression of the government, which resulted in many casualties. BDK created Bundu dia Mayala (BDM) in 2008, which is a political party that received approval from the DRC government seven years after its formation on September 30, 2015. However, the political situation of the DRC in 2017 led to the repression of BDK and BDM, and the contextualization of the Bakongo tribal national identity has faced difficulties ever since.

It is also important to consider how the organizations and the political party formed by the Bakongo historically contextualize or re-contextualize their national identity in the changing political context of the DRC. In addition to being able to consider how various ethnic groups of the DRC are contextualizing or re-contextualizing their identities, it can be a very important example in terms of democracy and political development of DRC.

<Key words>

Kongo Kingdom, Bakongo, Alliance des Bakongo(ABAKO), Bakongo nationalism, Ne Muanda Nsemi, Bundu dia Kongo(BDK), Bundu dia Mayala(BDM), Democratic Republic of Congo