

Emblems of the State of Katanga (1960-1963)

Michel Lupant

On June 30 1960 the Belgian Congo became the Republic of Congo. At that time Katanga had 1,654,000 inhabitants, i.e. 12.5% of the population of the Congo. On July 4 the Congolese Public Force (in fact the Army) rebelled first in Lower-Congo, then in Leopoldville. On July 8 the mutiny reached Katanga and some Europeans were killed. The leaders of the rebels were strong supporters of Patrice Lumumba.

Faced with that situation on July 11 1960 at 2130 (GMT), Mr. Tschombe, Katanga's President, delivered a speech on a local radio station. He reproached the Central government with its policies, specially the recruitment of executives from communist countries. Because of the threats of Katanga submitting to the reign of the arbitrary and the communist sympathies of the central government, the Katangese Government decided to proclaim the independence of Katanga.¹ At that time there was no Katangese flag.

On July 13 President Kasa Vubu and Prime Minister Lumumba tried to land at Elisabethville airport but they were refused permission to do so. Consequently, they asked United Nations to put an end to the Belgian aggression. On July 14 the Security Council of the United Nations adopted a resolution asking the Belgian troops to leave the Congo, and therefore Katanga. Mr. Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General, considered the United Nations forces had to enter Katanga. Mr. Tschombe opposed that interpretation and affirmed that his decision would be executed by force if need be. A new resolution appeared on August 8. Article 4 reaffirmed that the forces of the United Nations in the Congo would not take part in an internal conflict, constitutional or other, would not intervene and would not be used to change the outcome of the internal conflict. Mr. Tschombe immediately understood the opportunities offered by that point of the resolution. He allowed United Nations troops into Katanga but under conditions observed in the resolutions. The United Nations troops landed in Leopoldville on July 16 and occupied the whole territory except Katanga.

From July 11 to July 18 1960, the Congolese flag was still hoisted on the parade ground of Camp Massart in Elisabethville to the sound of the Congolese first national anthem *Vers l'Avenir*. On July 16 the locally elected members recognized the Independent State of Katanga proclaimed on July 11 by President Tschombe. The Assembly of Katanga met on Sunday July 17 1960 in Elisabethville² and unanimously voted the proclamation of independence. During a press conference, Prime Minister Tschombe showed the signatories the proposal of a new Katanga flag which would be hoisted the next day, July 18.³



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Mr. Tschombe was elected President of the State of Katanga on Monday August 8 1960 by the members of the Assembly and of the Grand Council composed of 20 members elected amongst the chiefs.⁴ At the beginning of September the Baluba rebelled against the Tschombe regime and the Congolese National Army invaded Katanga. On February 21 1960 the United Nations decided to expel by force the European training personnel of the Katangese Gendarmerie. In June 1961 the paratroopers battalion was created. On September 13 1961, there was a second United Nations military operation which attacked the gendarmerie in order to end the secession. On September 20 a cease-fire was agreed on but fighting started again on December 5. On December 21 1961, the Kitona agreement between Congolese Prime Minister Adoula and President Tschombe was signed. That agreement was rejected by the Katangese National Assembly. On December 28 1962, the third and final United Nations attack against Katanga began. On January 14 1963 at 9 am, the Katangese ministers sent a letter to Mr. Spaak, the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, in that message they said they were ready to declare in front of the world that the Katangese secession was over and to let the United Nations troops move freely through Katanga and that they were ready to return to Elisabethville to settle the modes of enforcement. On January 21, the United Nations troops entered Kolwezi, the last city occupied by the Katangese Gendarmerie and on January 23, the Minister Resident of the Congolese Central Government, Mr. Joseph Ileo, arrived in Elisabethville. The Katangese secession had ended.⁵

The National Flag

The declaration of independence on July 11 and its recognition by the provincial elected members on July 16 was the starting point of a great creative process to assert the Katangese sovereignty: flag, anthem, national bank, currency, constitution, army, police, justice, stamps.

From that moment, the architect Louis Dressen realized drafts of flags, sensed the one which would be selected, made it⁶ and put it on display for the admiration of the people walking on Leopold Avenue.⁷ It seems the flag with the crosses was the only one of its kind among all the drafts submitted (Fig. 1). The colours were chosen by Mr. and Mrs. Dressen. Colonel Vandewalle claimed it was the most kept in stock colours in Elisabethville.⁸

The first raising of the colours took place immediately after President Moïse Tschombe and the Council of Ministers had chosen that flag on July 18 1960. It is reported that three attempts were necessary to raise the flag to the top of the pole. Some people saw a forewarning in it: three wars, three years of life... The choice was ratified by the National Assembly following the law voted unanimously on July 28 1960, published in the *Moniteur Katangais* (Official Gazette) N°10 of December 7 1960 (Fig. 2).

The copper cross is a historical symbol in Katanga, the copper country. For a long time the Africans had produced and used the red metal. Their industry was nevertheless rudimentary. They extracted malachite from deposits near the surface. It was melted in clay furnaces. The molten metal was collected in clay bowls and once it had solidified, it was taken to the village. There the metal was refined and cast in moulds carved in termitaries. The ingots obtained had the shape of a St Andrew Cross: it was the “crosses” which were used as currency and which were found throughout black Af-

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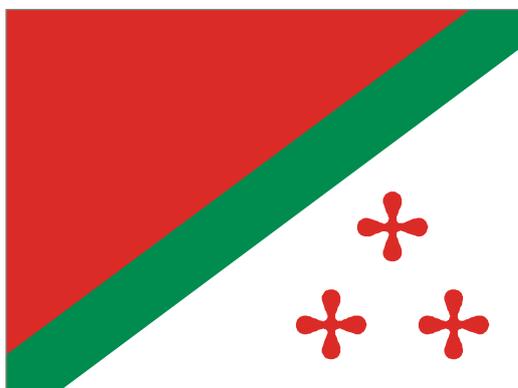


Figure 1



Figure 2

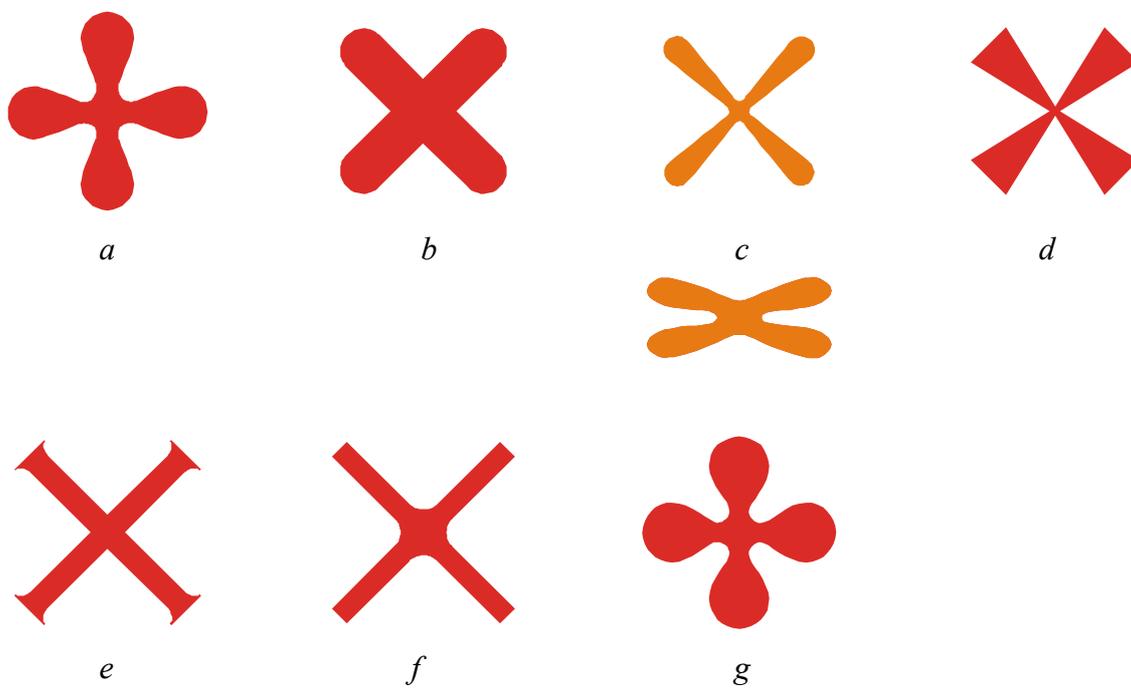


Figure 3



Figure 4

rica, from the Ivory Coast to Mozambique and from Angola to Sudan.

With the “Katangamania”, several types of crosses appeared. There is no correct drawing of the cross. The expression “stylized crosses” leaves a clear field to all kinds of crosses (Fig. 3). Nevertheless, we can note the following evolution: From left to right: a) Mr. Dressen’s design; b) 18 July 1960; c) two different versions in 1960; d) beginning of 1961 — only on the Gendarmerie Colours; f) July 1961; g) only on a post-card printed stamp.⁹

The cross became the Katangese symbol par excellence, it appeared on many documents, loincloths, etc., without forgetting the alb of the Little Singers with the Copper Cross! However it had already been used before independence for example as on the green patch with orange (copper) crosses of the first St Peter and Paul scout unit in Elisabethville¹⁰ (Fig. 4).

It is clear that the design created by Mr. Louis Dressen (St George’s crosses) was not adopted. However the Information Secretary of State published on January 11 1961 a paper with the original drawing and the crosses of St George¹¹ (Fig. 1) while they were already in use in the St Andrew’s shape. The original drawing also appeared on the pilot’s licence (Katangese Military Aviation) held by Flight Lieutenant Claude Berteaux and on some stickers.

It is curious to note the Katangese flag looks like a draft proposed as the Congolese national flag at end of May 1960. In May 1960, during a meeting of the executive Federal College in Bukavu (Kivu), Mr. Patrice Lumumba suggested a flag with a great star and six small ones to represent the provinces, on a blue background. The official decision of the Executive College was adopted on May 21 1960. After his return in Leopoldville, the position of the College was attacked by representatives of political parties and there were some problems: the opponents wanted a white, green and red flag with diagonal stripes and a special emblem for each province, the star being reserved for the central State (Fig. 5). That proposal was not accepted for a simple rea-

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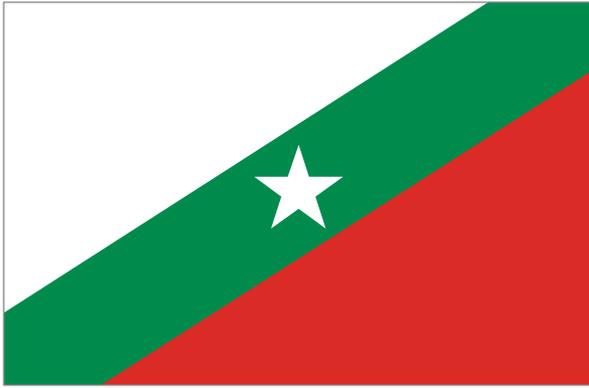


Figure 5



Figure 6

son: the Administration had already ordered flags and the first seven stars already flying on some buildings.¹²

Later, during the creation of the national anthem, the National Education Minister, Jean-Baptiste Kiwele gave the symbolic meaning of the flag in his third verse: "Our banner in the wind, symbol for all those who rejoice at its rich crosses and its green youth and its red strength too".

The flag was incorporated in a shield to form the State Coat of Arms. That shield is *de facto*, no official text has ever ratified it. That shield is described as follows: "Per bend sinister gules and silver, with bend sinister, vert, brocading on the partition, pointed with three crosses, gules" (Fig. 6).¹³ The seal used by the Permanent Representative of the State of Katanga in Brussels had only a cross in its centre. The Minister of Information printed stamps with the map and the national flag and the words *Katanga Atawina; Le Katanga vaincra* (Katanga will overcome).¹⁴ President Tschombe used a car flag attached to the bonnet front of his car.

The blue helmets arrived in Katanga on August 12 together with the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld. Mr. Tschombe was waiting for Mr. Hammarskjöld and during the parade, the Secretary General hesitated when going past the national flag of Katanga, not immediately realising the trap of the protocol but he finally stopped and saluted the Katangese colours.¹⁵

The Secretary-General had nevertheless his revenge when President Tschombe sat in a beautiful car next to the Secretary-General, an officer of the suite of Mr. Hammarskjöld quickly put a United Nations flag at the front of the car!¹⁶

If the Katangese secession was brought to an end on January 17 1963, the Congolese flag was not hoisted on the Presidential Palace in Elisabethville in place of the Katangese flag before May 24 1963.

The Katangese Gendarmerie

During the second part of 1960, the Katangese government had to face three successive military dangers which forced it to adopt three different defence plans.

First the mutiny of the Public Force which was defeated with the collaboration of



Figure 7

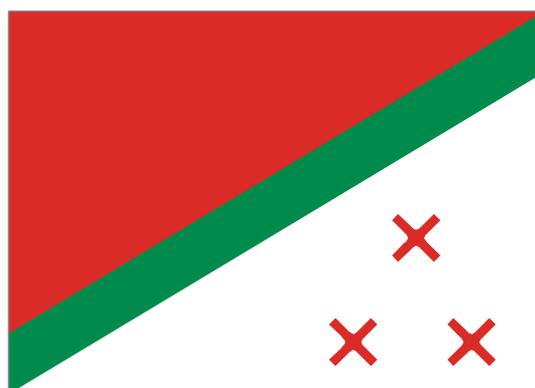


Figure 8

the Belgian troops based at Kamina. Those Belgian troops occupied all Katanga in July, expelled the mutinied forces but had to leave in August under the United Nations pressure.

At the end of August 1960, Katanga prepared itself for an invasion of the Congolese National Army. With the help of Belgian military advisers an embryo of Katangese Gendarmerie, 200 men coming from the former Public Force, was organized and assisted by volunteers from the ethnic groups Lunda and Yeke close to the government. Their commanders were Belgian officers. The Government armed and trained warriors of the faithful chiefs, political and military advisers helped them. The invasion began at the beginning of September but the Congolese left on September 18 due to a cease-fire declared by President Kasa Vubu.

The third danger was the revolt of the Baluba in North Katanga which began at that time. At the end of December the whole north of Katanga was under the control of the rebels. Against that danger the Katangese authorities recruited European mercenaries known in French as the *affreux* who had to organize the repression.

The Gendarmerie was modernised to develop its mobility: helicopters, lorries, jeeps, etc., with the help of official and non-official networks. At the beginning of 1961, the Katangese Army was divided into three parts: gendarmerie, soldiers and European mercenaries. The units of the Katangese Gendarmerie were granted flags with thin orange crosses (Fig. 7).¹⁷ These flags appeared in October 1960 and were still in use in April-May 1961. It is not a mistake of the manufacturer but the concern to have crosses in copper. That wish reached the company "Air Katanga" which pressed buttons pin's with orange crosses. It was short-lived, they quickly came back to the red colour, it was not so expensive.

We can see those flags on photographs showing gendarmes of mobile troops C standing at ease in Lubudi before operation *Banquise* (ice field) flag displayed by the armoured platoon in Kamina under the command of flying officer Servais; flag displayed on a jeep of mobile group B of Lieutenant Jacobs in Albertville;¹⁸ and by mobile group C of lieutenant Cuvelier in Bukama during the visit of President Tschombe on 16 February 1961.

In 1962 new flags were granted to Katangese Units, among which the group *noir* (black). These flags had red crosses with square ends (Fig. 8).¹⁹

The standard of the Katangese Gendarmerie appeared at the beginning of 1961. The style of crosses is the same as the one imagined for the national orders of the Ka-



Figure 9

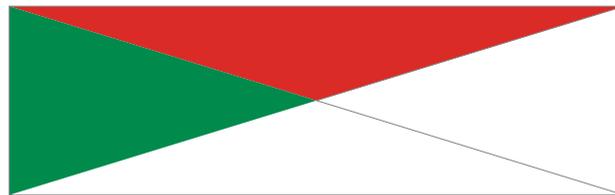


Figure 10

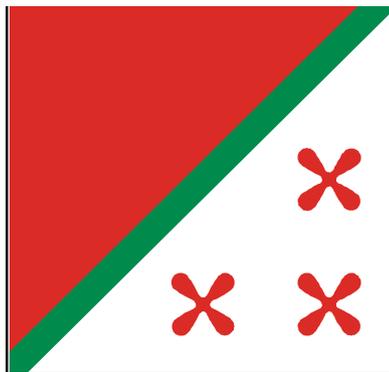


Figure 11

tangese Merit. On the green diagonal the word “Gendarmerie” is embroidered, while the glorious name of *Lubunda* and *Luika*, two victories won by the mobile group *Tschene* against the Congolese Military Army in September 1960, are embroidered in the red triangle (Fig. 9). The Presidential Horse Guard used pikes with a swallow tailed flag (Fig. 10).

Flags with red crosses were granted to the shock troops of the Gendarmerie: mobile troops B, C, and D and the armoured platoon of Kamina. It is not certain that the distribution was done to all units of the Gendarmerie, no evidence has been found.

The band of the Gendarmerie is the band of the 1st group of the Public Force. The different music instruments were decorated with small flags (Fig. 11).

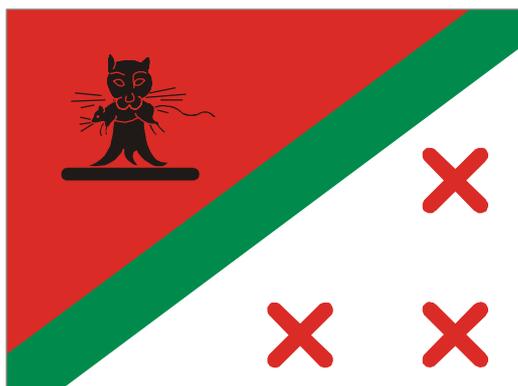


Figure 12

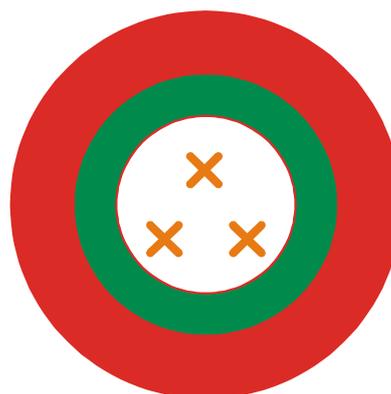


Figure 13

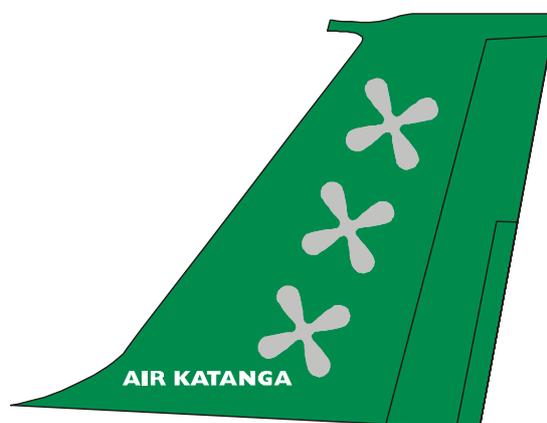


Figure 14

The Katangese Air Force

The air force was composed of armoured cars and helicopters. The flag of the Fouga Magister flight, indeed the Katangese Air Force (Fig. 12) was an idea of Flight Commander Jan van Risseghem de Santieron de Saint Clément, commander of the flight squadron. The black cat crunching a mouse comes from the coat of arms of the noble family of Portarlinton from which the Commander was descended. The roundel was red, green and white with three orange crosses and the Katanga flag as fin marking (Fig. 13).²⁰

Air Katanga

Air Katanga used three silver crosses on its green empennages (Fig. 14).

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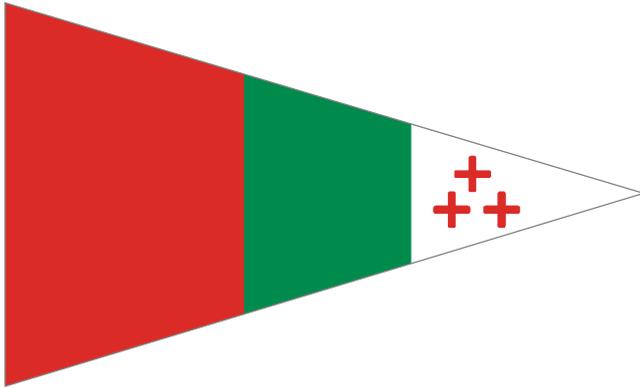


Figure 15



Figure 16

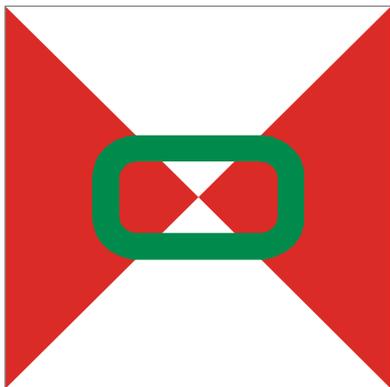


Figure 17

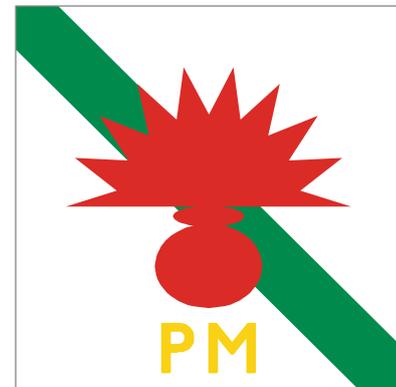


Figure 18

The Coast Guard

Two flags were used by the Company of Katanga Coast-Guard commanded by Lieutenant Charles Houart. Those flags were used on Tanganyika Lake. One has a triangular shape and vertical stripes (Fig. 15). The other is square with a green anchor and the yellow inscription *Flotille Tanganyka* (Flotilla Tanganyika) (Fig. 16).

The Armoured Battalion

The pennant of the Armoured Battalion, made up of four mobile groups and of the armoured platoon of Kamina, was white and red with a green central emblem (Fig. 17). In a documentary on the Jews of Rhodes filmed by chief rabbi Levy, we can see the flag of the Military Police Battalion (Fig. 18).



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22

The Police

The city police of Elisabethville used a white and red flag with the city coat of arms²¹ and the inscription *Police Communale Elisabethville* (City Police Elisabethville) (Fig. 19). The coat of arms of Elisabethville was granted by letters of patent by King Baudouin dated December 20 1954. Description: "silver, chevron gules, charged by a printed roman "E" and a royal crown, all silver with three monetary Katangese crosses, gules". The motto, which does not appear on the flag, is *Ex Imis ad Culmina* (From the most humble to the summit).²² The Katangese National Police used the national flag with the Police badge in the centre, in the canton the words *Police Nationale Katangaise* (Katangese National Police) (Fig. 20).²³

Variations of the National Flag

At the end of September 1960 flags with the crosses "b" were seen (Fig. 21). Small flags were distributed or sold, these were put on car aerials (Fig. 22). In 1961 in Elisabethville an international fair took place which was the occasion to put flags out everywhere (Fig. 23).

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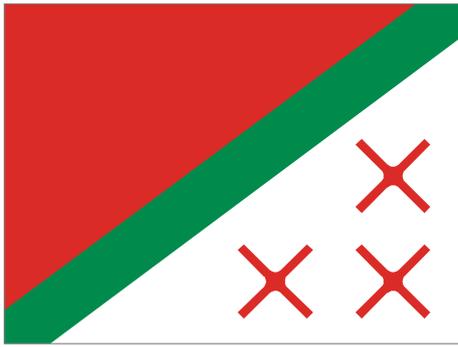


Figure 23

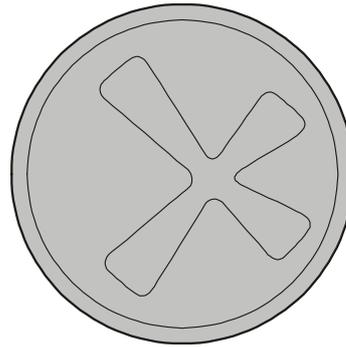


Figure 24

Currency

On October 31 1960 the National Bank of Katanga issued banknotes of 100, 500 and 100 Katangese Franc, on 10 November a banknote of 50 Fr, on 21 November a banknote of 20 Fr and on 1 December one of 10 Fr. A banknote of 10 Fr with the effigy of President Tschombe and the national flag should have been put in use in 1960, we can see it in currency catalogues but with the caption “not issued”. A second set of banknotes was issued in 1962: 1000 Fr (February 26), 500 Fr (April 17) and 100 Fr (May 18). On January 9 1961 coins were introduced in Katanga. Copper coins of 1 and 5 Fr were issued as well as a 5 Fr gold one. These coins had on the obverse a banana bunch, in the outer circle two crosses looking like a Christian cross; on the reverse a large Katangese cross with unequal arms (Fig. 24), the words *Banque nationale* (National Bank); *1961* and *5 Fr*.

Stamps

The first stamps were issued in 1960, they were Belgian Congo and Republic of Congo stamps with a surcharge *Katanga* or *11 juillet, Etat du Katanga* (July 11, State of Katanga). In 1961 a set of 14 stamps “Modern Indigenous Art” was issued, three crosses appear in the corners. The same year, on July 11, a set was issued to commemorate the first anniversary of independence, it was the Katanga flag fimbriated in gold with the effigy of President Tschombe. The same year two other sets were issued on the occasion of Elisabethville’s International Trade Fair and for Air Katanga. In 1962 the last set commemorated the Gendarmerie. All these stamps had the three crosses.²⁴ A post-card with a printed stamp with the cross of type “g” (Fig. 3) was issued.

Acknowledgements

I have to thank for their collaboration:

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Mr. Graham Bartram who drew all the flags, except for figure 13 which was drawn by Jan Oskar Engene.

Mrs. Paulette Willame who corrected my English translation.

Mr. Roger Baert who gave authorization to use his personal information.

Notes

¹ The *Libre Belgique*: Tuesday July 12 1960, page 1.

² Now Lumbumbashi.

³ The *Libre Belgique*: July 18 1960, page 6.

⁴ The *Libre Belgique*: August 9 1960, page 4.

⁵ J. Gerard-Libois: *Sécession au Katanga* in *Les Etudes du C.R.I.S.P.*, Brussels 1963.

⁶ Work of Mrs. Dressen.

⁷ Testimony of Mrs Noella Dressen.

⁸ Letter from Mr. Daniel Despas dated July 31 2000.

⁹ Communication of Mr. Daniel Despas dated August 11 2000.

¹⁰ Author's collection.

¹¹ Lucas Samalenge, Secretary of State for Information of the State of Katanga: "Forms, colours and sizes we have to respect to draw and make the national flag of Katanga."

¹² Roger Harmignies: "*Histoire du drapeau du Congo, de l'Etat Indépendant à la République Démocratique*" in: *Recueil du I^e Congrès International de Vexillologie*, Zürich, 1968, pages 49-50.

¹³ Roger Harmignies: "*Drapeaux et armoiries du Congo*" page 158 in the *Parchemin* N°64 from December 1960.

¹⁴ Author's collection.

¹⁵ Photograph in the *Libre Belgique* dated August 15 1960, page 1.

¹⁶ Pierre Davister: "*Katanga, enjeu du monde*" Editions Europe-Afrique, Brussels 1960, p. 151/152.

¹⁷ Communication from Mr. Daniel Despas, July 31 2000.

¹⁸ Now Kalemie.

¹⁹ Flag granted by Lieutenant Massoels commander of Group "*Noir*" to Mr. Daniel Despas. Communication July 31 2000.

²⁰ John Cochrane and Stuart Elliott: "Military Aircraft Insignia of the World". Airline Publishing Ltd, Shrewsbury, England, p. 36. Also communication from Roger Beart dated August 24 2003 concerning roundel seen in a photograph published in *Europe Magazine*, probably in 1961 or 1962.

²¹ Cover with coat of arms from luxury edition "Elisabethville 1911-1961"; photograph of the flag by Pierre Promil.

²² Extract from "*Elisabethville 1911-1961*". Editions L.Cuyppers, Brussels 1961.

²³ Document INFORKAT of September 5 1962 showing President Tschombe giving salute to the flag of the Gendarmerie. Patch, collection Mr. Philippe Jacquyi.

²⁴ Author's collection.

About the author



Michel Lupant from Belgium was born on 1st August 1944. He got married in 1970 and has four children, three daughters and a son. Michel Lupant is a teacher of geography since 1964. He worked 4 years in Africa (Guinea and Congo) and since he came back to Belgium he has worked in the same secondary school in Genval (Belgium). Michel Lupant likes to travel around the world not only to view landscapes but also to research material on flags and to establish relations with local flags collectors and authorities. Lupant is the founder of the Belgian European Flag Studies Centre (CEBED). Michel Lupant was elected FIAV President in 1997 during the Cape Town Congress. He is also a member or associate member of almost all vexillological associations in the world.

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