



Changing Lusospheres

**Europe, Brazil, Africa. On old and new connections
between centers and peripheries**

*Elisabeth Boesen, Karl Heinz Arenz,
Cristina Donza Cancela & Antonio Otaviano Vieira Junior*

Unearthing Migration Pathways
A journey from Angola, across the Congo to Luxembourg

Kevin Goergen

**Changing lusospheres – Europe, Brazil, Africa. On old and new
connections between centers and peripheries**

Edited by Elisabeth Boesen, Karl Heinz Arenz, Cristina Donza Cancela,
Antonio Otaviano Vieira Junior

Published in Melusina Press (Universität Luxemburg), 2025
11, Porte des Sciences
L-4366 Esch-sur-Alzette
<https://www.melusinapress.lu>

Management:	Niels-Oliver Walkowski, Johannes Pause
Copyediting:	Carolyn Knaup, Niels-Oliver Walkowski
Editorial Design:	Valentin Henning, Erik Seitz
Cover image:	Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

The digital version of this publication is freely available at <https://www.melusinapress.lu>.

Bibliographic information of the National Library of Luxembourg: The National Library of Luxembourg lists this publication in the Luxembourg National Bibliography; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at bnl.public.lu.

Print and Distribution is carried out by BoD - Books on Demand, Norderstedt

ISSN (Web):	2716-7518
DOI (Publication):	10.26298/1981-5708-umpa
DOI (Container):	10.26298/1981-5708
ISBN (Web):	978-2-919815-70-8
ISBN (PDF):	978-2-919815-71-5
ISBN (Epub):	978-2-919844-00-5
ISBN (Print):	978-2-919815-82-1

This work is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. Information about this license can be found at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.de>. The images and resources contained in this work are subject to the same license unless licensed otherwise or taken from another source.





2025



Unearthing migration pathways: A journey from Angola, across the Congo to Luxembourg

Kevin Goergen

Introduction

A micro-historical perspective on migration pathways offers the opportunity to analyze narratives based on the realities and experiences of those directly affected. This approach provides a bottom-up perspective, challenging the master narratives and moving beyond collective interpretations of migration history to explore the individual agency of the actors involved (Cooper 2019; Dewièrè 2023; Marcocci 2023; Ogborn 2008; Otele 2020). Using the case of Amélia Lopes da Cruz-Heinen and her family, this study focuses on individuals who are often mentioned only in passing in official documents, such as women, children and people of color. Additionally, Amélia's migration path represents the story of one of the very few African women who moved to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg during the colonial period.

Such stories, existing in the shadows of the dominant narratives, can be uncovered by finding sources and reading them against the grain. While researching archives for records of so-called “*métis*” (those with one parent of Luxembourgish origin), I discovered the story of Amélia and her family. I encountered the name of Amélia Lopes da Cruz, who was married to the Luxembourger Etienne Heinen. This led me to further documents about Mrs. Heinen and eventually to her children. In this process, the memories and keepsakes of descendants played a crucial role, helping to reconstruct a rich and interesting life story that might never have been intended to be made visible. This paper is dedicated to, and results from,

the personal memories of Raymond Heinen and the collective memories of the Heinen family. The family were in possession of various documents, such as employment contracts, birth certificates, marriage certificates, and letters. Additionally, I had several conversations with Raymond Heinen, who had lived in Africa until he was sixteen years old.

This text aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of trans-imperial migration. By telling this story, we acknowledge the intricate tapestry of human experiences that transcend borders and empires, enriching our understanding of migration, identity, agency, and resilience. The regions discussed here include Cabinda and Kongo Central (formerly Bas-Congo), as well as the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Belgian province of Luxembourg. These regions are not rigidly separated but are interconnected within the context of migration history.

Cabinda

Amélia Lopes da Cruz was born on 23 October 1921, in Makaia (Macaia), District of Cabinda.¹ At that time, the borders of the Portuguese colony Angola were still being defined, and Cabinda, though it was geographically separated by the Belgian Congo, was treated as part of the colony. Portugal's claim to Cabinda dated back to the nineteenth century, and its colonialization of the territory was reinforced by the Treaty of Simulambuco 1885, which made Cabinda a protectorate of the Portuguese Crown.² Portugal thus claimed the territory north of the Congo River, which included the kingdoms of Loango, Kakongo, and Ngoyo.

Like other European colonial powers, before the twentieth century Portugal controlled *de facto* only a small part of its claimed territory, mainly in the coastal regions (Bender 1978, 97). To strengthen the colonizers' presence, the Portuguese government encouraged emigration and sent exiled people, so-called "*degredados*", to its overseas colonies (Coates 2013). By

1 Private archive, baptismal certificate of Amélia Lopes da Cruz, 1925.

2 Tratado de Simulambuco, 1 February 1885.

1920, approximately 20,700 whites lived in Angola, accounting for less than 0.5 percent of the whole population (Bender 1978, 20).

Amélia would have fallen into the estimated 0.18 percent of the *mestiço* population. She was one of two daughters of Antonio Lopes da Cruz and N'Kezu Graixa.³ Raised by her maternal family in Makaia, Amélia was not acknowledged by her Portuguese father as his daughter, as noted in the records.⁴ The reasons for this are unclear, but it is significant that she bore her father's nationality and his Portuguese surname.⁵ However, giving her a Portuguese name reflects Portugal's colonial policies and its treatment of the *mestiços*, aiming to bind them culturally to Portugal while attempting to abandon or erase their Africanness (Alencastro 2012). One perspective on Amélia's early life is that her mother and family resisted colonial assimilation and a separation from their child, especially given that there were indications that her father intended to take the children to Portugal.

According to the account shared by Amélia and her sister Anna Maria, and passed down by her firstborn, Raymond Heinen, Antonio's unmarried sister in Portugal insisted that he bring the two children with him to Portugal.⁶ However, N'Kezu Graixa hid the children, and Antonio travelled to Portugal alone.

The extent to which Amélia's story shaped her early life and her experiences as a child is uncertain. Nonetheless, her life unfolded in a peripheral region of the Portuguese colony in the 1920s, where the colonial state still lacked the same level of control as in coastal and urban areas. This raises questions about the tensions, interplays, and entanglements among various factors and actors, particularly from a marginalized perspective. The border delineations at the Berlin Conference (1884–1885) and in the

3 Private archive, baptismal certificate of Amélia Lopes da Cruz, 1925.

4 Archives africaines (AA), Gouvernement général (GG) 907 ME AIMO, Dossier 49886, Extraits acte de reconnaissance et de naissance Enfants Heinen: „une mulatresse non reconnue originaire de Kabinda“; Private archive, acte de mariage, 6 August 1955, Thsela: „fille majeure de père inconnu“.

5 Private archive, baptismal certificate of Amélia Lopes da Cruz, 1925: „Esta certidão é válida para provar a sua nacionalidade portuguesa.“

6 Interview with Raymond Heinen on 25 March 2024.

Treaty of Simulambuco (1885) did not necessarily hinder the mobility of locals, as a micro-historical perspective can reveal when analyzing the colonial setting in a trans-imperial scope. The story of Amélia after she met the man who would become her husband, Etienne Heinen, unfolds in the borderlands of Cabinda and the Bas-Congo, at the intersection of the Belgian and Portuguese empires.

Bas-Congo

In 1926, Etienne Heinen, aged twenty-six, arrived in the Belgian Congo from Bissen, a small town in Luxembourg. He initially worked in Tshikapa, located in the province of Kasai, before spending nearly three decades in the territory of Mayumbé until his career came to an end in 1955. He served as a mechanic for the Société de Colonisation Agricole au Mayumbe (SCAM), which managed some of the most significant plantations in the Bas-Congo, and for a short time he worked for the Société internationale forestière et minière du Congo (Forminière).⁷

The 1938 census revealed that there were 1,987 individuals of “European race” in the Bas-Congo district—Etienne was one of eleven Luxembourgers recorded—with the largest group comprising Belgians (1,338), followed by the Portuguese (402).⁸ The Portuguese played a crucial role as traders and merchants in the Belgian Congo, illustrating the interconnectiveness and trans-imperial characteristics of colonial power. In Tshela, the capital of the territory of Mayumbé, many Portuguese merchants were present. This town was the point of arrival for the train from Boma, which had served as the capital of the Belgian Congo until 1929. One notable figure in the city was Fonseca, who owned a hotel and conducted prosperous business there, importing products from Europe and South Africa. However, after the outbreak of the Second World War, a significant influx of Belgian goods entered the region and Portuguese products were less commonly found in the city.

⁷ Private archive, attestation of Etienne Heinen, service for the SCAM, 13 December 1955.

⁸ “Population de race européenne résidant dans la Colonie au 1er janvier 1938”, in: Supplément au Bulletin Administratif du Congo Belge (10.4.1938), No. 7.

By focusing on the men on the spot (the actors who were there at the time), we can illustrate the rich tapestry of interactions that provided Etienne with insights into the cultures and dynamics of the region. He interacted daily with a diverse range of people in his professional life, including Belgians, Portuguese, and other Europeans, as well as locals from various regions of the Congo Basin and from Portuguese colonies like Cape Verde.⁹ He was especially well connected with the drivers he trained for the SCAM, who held privileged positions due to their work. Nevertheless, the economic status, profession, and, consequently, the social standing of individuals were linked to racist ideology. Wallerstein referred to the interplay between race and class as “the ethnicization of the world workforce” (Wallerstein 1983, 77).

Amélia’s uncle Joseph, her mother’s brother, worked—at least temporarily—in Tshela, where Etienne resided for a considerable time. This familial connection might have facilitated the meeting between Etienne and Amélia in around 1938.¹⁰ In any case, their children’s birth certificates mention that they had lived together since 1938.¹¹ In most cases, sexual relations between European men and African women during that time were marked by violence and power dynamics, primarily serving the men’s sexual gratification (Hunt 2016, 41–47; Lauro 2005, 34–42). However, there were instances, like Amélia’s, where the relationship with a white man offered a form of refuge and security. Such cases can also be understood as examples of female strategy and agency, where women actively navigated to obtain some measure of safety or stability (Hunt 2016, 41–47).

On 2 April 1939, Amélia and Etienne’s first child, Raymond, was born in Muba (Lândana) in the province of Cabinda.¹² It is reasonable to deduce that Amélia returned to her family for the birth or was simply residing there at the time. Following a complicated birth, both she and her new-

⁹ Interview with Raymond Heinen on 9 December 2024.

¹⁰ Interview with Raymond Heinen on 25 March 2024.

¹¹ AA, GG, 907 ME AIMO, 49886, Extraits acte de reconnaissance et de naissance Enfants Heinen.

¹² AA, GG, 907 ME AIMO, 49886, Extraits acte de reconnaissance et de naissance Enfants Heinen.

born spent their initial weeks with her family in Cabinda.¹³ Their second child, Christine, was born on 29 September 1942 in Kizu (north of Tshela), at the Scheut Mission.¹⁴ Here, the birth certificate issued in Tshela notes Amélia's residence in Muba, Cabinda.

The story of the Heinen-Lopes da Cruz family is characterized by its trans-colonial and cross-border nature. Moreover, examining the family reveals what life was like on the margins of the colony. For example, the couple communicated in Kiyombe, a language spoken in Cabinda and Bas-Congo.¹⁵ Etienne hired a local teacher, Gérard Kuku, to educate his eldest child.¹⁶ From 1947 to 1948, Raymond attended a school in Lândana (Cabinda), where classes were taught to a mixed group of white, Black, and *mestiço* children.¹⁷ His teacher there was Antonio Buiti, a former Angolan seminarian and one of the first Angolan intellectuals, mastering Old Greek, Latin, French, and Portuguese.¹⁸ The following year, Raymond attended a school for Black children in Matadi.¹⁹ A report from that period states that the boy did not speak "either Kikongo or French well enough, which made it difficult for him to engage effectively in the classroom."²⁰ Despite this challenge, he demonstrated considerable talent and received good grades as a result.

In 1949, Etienne intended to send his two children, aged ten and six, to boarding schools for European children in Kalina, Léopoldville (present-day Kinshasa). However, as his children were categorized as "*quar-*

13 Interview with Raymond Heinen on 25 March 2024.

14 AA, GG, 907 ME AIMO, 49886, Extrait d'acte de naissance, 25 August 1949.

15 Interview with Raymond Heinen on 25 March 2024.

16 AA, GG, 907 ME AIMO, 49886, Letter from the Administrator of the Territory to the President of the "Admission des mulâtres dans Écoles pour Blancs" in Léopoldville, 26 October 1949.

17 AA, GG, 907 ME AIMO, 49886, Letter from the Administrator of the Territory to the President of the "Admission des mulâtres dans Écoles pour Blancs" in Léopoldville, 26 October 1949.

18 Interview with Raymond Heinen on 9 December 2024.

19 AA, GG, 907 ME AIMO, 49886, Letter from the Administrator of the Territory to the President of the "Admission des mulâtres dans Écoles pour Blancs" in Léopoldville, 26 October 1949.

20 AA, GG, 907 ME AIMO, 49886, Letter from the Director of the school, 20 January 1950.

terons,” their admission was more complicated and had to go through the Commission pour l’admission des Mulâtres dans les Ecoles pour Enfants Européens (Commission for the Admission of Mulattoes into Schools for European Children). There was an emphasis on proving that the children had received a “European education.” Despite these challenges, Etienne insisted that his children had always lived with him, which was used as evidence to argue that they were being raised in a “European manner.”²¹ In this context, Amélia is portrayed as an inconspicuous woman without a profession.²² Furthermore, the colonial administration questioned whether Etienne had previously married in Luxembourg or Belgium, which was not the case.

The need to assert a “European identity” became especially pronounced in interactions with the colonial state (Hunt 2016, 100). In contrast, during the family’s time in Tshela and Lampa, where they resided, the boundaries of identity might have been more fluid, allowing the family some degree of freedom from the pressure exerted by the rigid societal expectations associated with being European. Raymond’s and Christiane’s experiences in Léopoldville, during their early school years, were marked by exclusion. This was more pronounced for Christiane, while Raymond, according to his own statements, was able to prove himself through his football skills.²³

The documents related to the boarding school application in Léopoldville—Collège Albert I and Lycée du Sacré Coeur (today Collège Boboto and Lycée Bosangani)—also reveal that Etienne was planning to move to Europe with his two children after the next term. This may explain why he officially acknowledged his children at that time, which granted them Luxembourgish citizenship. It is unclear from the sources whether Amélia was included in these plans; what is certain is that Etienne and Amélia were not yet married. However, in 1951, during the Easter holidays, Etienne travelled to Europe with his two children to visit

21 AA, GG, 907 ME AIMO, 49886, Attestation, 26 August 1949.

22 AA, GG, 907 ME AIMO, 49886, Letter from the Administrator of the Territory to the President of the “Admission des mulâtres dans Écoles pour Blancs” in Léopoldville, 3 October 1949.

23 Interview with Raymond Heinen on 9 December 2024.

his sister, Thérèse, who lived alone in Gasperich, Luxembourg. Amélia was not part of the trip; instead, she crossed the border to Muba with their third child, born on 20 June 1950 in Kizu, to stay with her mother N'Kezu. On 8 June 1953, their fourth child was born.

Amélia's life in the Bas-Congo was characterized by the reality that so-called "interracial" households were subject to different conditions. From the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, interracial relationships and marriages were relatively normalized due to the prevailing circumstances (Lauro 2005, Ray 2015). However, this changed dramatically after the 1940s, when interracial sexuality began to be seen as immoral and harmful to the prestige of the colonial state and the ideology of white supremacy (Lauro 2020, 286). The authorities closely monitored the so-called "*ménagères*", yet these relationships were often short-lived, informal, and reliant on the white man. While not prohibited by law in the Belgian Congo, such relationships were discouraged and rarely resulted in official marriages (Lauro 2020, 286–287). However, Amélia and Etienne married on 20 July 1955, just before they left Africa.²⁴

Luxembourg

In September 1955, the Heinen-Lopes da Cruz family, consisting of six members, migrated to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, after Etienne finished his career at the SCAM. Amélia Heinen became one of the very few African women to be brought to Luxembourg by her partner during the colonial period. While long-lasting interracial relationships were uncommon, it was rare for the children—so-called "*métis*" and "*quarterons*"—to be officially recognized. It was even more unusual for the African mothers of these children to be included in their European partners' plans for life outside Africa.

Upon their arrival in Luxembourg, the family resided with Etienne's sister Thérèse in Gasperich for the first eight months. The two older siblings, Raymond and Christiane, stayed at a boarding school in Belgium. Etienne

²⁴ Private archive, acte de mariage, 6 August 1955.

had maintained consistent communication with his sister during his time in Africa, except during the Second World War, when contact between Luxembourgers in the Congo was disrupted. Thérèse, who had lost her partner during the First World War, remained unmarried and provided shelter to the family when they moved to the Grand-Duchy.²⁵

Despite the privileges Luxembourgers enjoyed in Belgium's colonial projects, the Heinen family faced substantial challenges in accessing financial services, such as pensions and family allowances. Etienne had been employed by the SCAM and the Forminière, but the absence of agreements between these companies and the Grand Duchy had left him in a precarious financial situation.²⁶ He was informed that residency in Belgium was necessary to fulfil financial requirements, prompting the family to plan a move. In May 1956, they relocated to a site near Arlon in the Belgian province of Luxembourg, just across the border from the Grand Duchy.

Amélia had to make significant personal sacrifices during this transition. She had left her mother in Angola, her sister in the Congo, and her friends behind. The family's adjustment to their new surroundings was compounded by tragedy: on December 18, 1957, Etienne passed away unexpectedly. This loss thrust Amélia into a challenging position, requiring her to secure her pension and financial support while caring for her children. These difficulties unfolded in an unfamiliar country, amplifying the complexities of the family's situation. To address their financial concerns, the family sought assistance from the colonial association LUXOM, which advocated for Luxembourgish colonial veterans and their families. Records of "Mrs. Etienne Heinen" in the LUXOM archives revealed the family's efforts to clarify their entitlements.²⁷ By the mid-1960s, the family began to stabilize, and Amélia received her widow's pension and additional support.

25 Interview with Raymond Heinen on 9 December 2024.

26 Private archive, Letter from the Fonds de Pension du Personnel of the Frominière to Etienne Heinen, 3 February 1956.

27 Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLUX), FD-237–238, Fonds pension.

Conclusion

Amélia's life was marked by her movements within border regions, reflecting the fluidity and complexity of colonial identities and experiences. The family's final relocation to Belgium was a strategic decision to access essential financial resources, highlighting the economic pressures that shaped their lives. In 1975, Amélia acquired Belgian citizenship and renounced her Portuguese citizenship. This decision underscores the complex interplay of familial ties, economic necessity, and colonial legacy in shaping individual lives.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg was able to pursue most of its colonial ambitions in Belgium's overseas territories. Luxembourg, including its citizens, government, economy, and church, benefited from privileged access to the colonial periphery through Belgium. This allowed Luxembourg to reap the economic and strategic benefits of colonialism without directly managing the complexities and challenges associated with colonial governance. The Luxembourgish state did not have to address the colonial issues and problems that arose, such as the concerns of former officials and employees—especially after Congo's independence. In addition, the matter of children with a Luxembourgish parent who were not acknowledged by their fathers was largely ignored.

However, Amélia's journey exemplifies the challenges and strategies of individuals and families in the colonial context. Her ability to adapt and secure a future for her children amid the shifting political and social landscapes of the time is a testament to her resilience and agency. The family's experiences offer a poignant lens through which broader historical narratives can be understood, shedding light on the often-overlooked stories of those who lived on the margins.

References

- Alencastro, Luiz Felipe de. "Mulattos in Brazil and Angola: A Comparative Approach, from the Seventeenth to the Twenty-First Century." In *Racism and Ethnic Relations in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, edited by Francisco Bethencourt, and Adrian Pearce, 71–96. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Bender, Gerald J. *Angola under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
- Coates, Timothy J. *Convict Labor in the Portuguese Empire, 1740–1932: Redefining the Empire with Forced Labor and New Imperialism*. Boston: Brill, 2013.
- Cooper, Frederick. *Von der Sklaverei in die Prekarität? Afrikanische Arbeitsgeschichte im globalen Kontext*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019.
- Dewière, Rémi. "The Slave and the Scholar: Representing Africa in the World from Early Modern Tripoli to Borno (N. Nigeria)." *Journal of Early Modern History* 27, no. 1–2 (2023): 32–58. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700658-bja10061>
- Hunt, Nancy Rose. *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Lauro, Amandine. *Coloniaux, ménagères et prostituées au Congo Belge, 1885–1930*. Loverval: Editions Labor, 2005.
- Lauro, Amandine. "Femmes, sexualité, métissage: les sujets 'tabous' de la colonisation?" In *Le Congo colonial. Une histoire en questions*, edited by Idesbald Goddeeris, Amandine Lauro, and Guy Vanthem-sche, 279–90. Waterloo: Renaissance du Livre, 2020.
- Marcocci, Giuseppe. "Portuguese Mercenary Networks in Seventeenth-Century India: An Experiment in Global Microhistory and its Archive". *Journal of Early Modern History* 27, no. 1–2 (2023): 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700658-bja10058>

- Ogborn, Miles. *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1550-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Otele, Olivette. *African Europeans: An Untold History*. London: Hurst & Company, 2020.
- Ray, Carina E. *Crossing the Color Line: Race, Sex, and the Contested Politics of Colonialism in Ghana*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Historical Capitalism*. London: Verso, 1983.