

# CUSTOMARY AUTHORITY AND STATE ADMINISTRATION IN HAUT-UÉLÉ

## BETWEEN INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

👤 Baudouin Mena Sebu

### Abstract

Customary authorities are the lowest level of public administration in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and closest to the population in rural areas. However, post-colonial governments tried several times to exclude them from public administration. As a result, different laws (Law 73/015; Law 73/250) were voted in their disadvantage. Yet, chiefs managed to remain in the state administration and continue to provide public services in the countryside. My research illustrates, based on ethnographic fieldwork in Haut-Uélé province between

2021 and 2022, how chiefs managed to persist in the state administration. Thus, my argument has two parts: first, chiefs managed to stay in the administration thanks to their adaptive capacity. Second, the absence of the state in Congolese rural areas, in this case Haut-Uélé, played a major role in chiefs' ability to remain in the state administration. These arguments build on a wider literature on chieftaincy, and local governance, in Africa.

### Keywords

1. Customary Authorities
2. Local Governance
3. Ethnographic Fieldwork
4. Democratic Republic of Congo
5. Haut-Uélé



### Contact & more information

✉ [Baudouindavid.menasebu@uantwerpen.be](mailto:Baudouindavid.menasebu@uantwerpen.be)

🌐 [https://www.africamuseum.be/en/research/discover/projects/prj\\_detail?prjid=717](https://www.africamuseum.be/en/research/discover/projects/prj_detail?prjid=717)

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