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[I am sorry, but the in the conversion process the Croatian letter c+accent has been represented as a c. Please read the c in Mikic and Altic as c+accent, PvdK]

Janko Mikic - Croatian cartographer in the service of Henry Morton Stanley

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Abstract

After he explored the whole course of the Congo River during his Anglo-American expedition, Henry Morton Stanley still had a long way to go - to explore a wide area around the river. For that purpose an international Association for the exploration of Congo (*Comité d' études du Haüt Congo*) was established with Stanley as the main explorer. Although Stanley and his senior officers signed a large number of explorations and maps, in this exploration of the Congo area many foreign members participated, amongst whom a few Croats took prominent positions.

Janko Mikic is one of the Croatian explorers who worked in central Africa. In 1882 he joined Stanley's expedition in Congo where he would work as explorer and cartographer until 1885. Thanks to his solid military education, his skill of mapmaking and his knowledge of six languages, Mikic won quick recognition as the most important Croatian cartographer in Congo. During less than four years spent in Congo together with Lieutenant Van de Velde, Mikic mapped a wide area between Kouilu-Niari and the Congo River. Although, Mikic's original map is still considered lost, several colonial maps testify to his important role of his survey around Congo. Based on his field work, several printed maps were produced on which Mikic is mentioned as one of the cartographer who surveyed Kouilu-Niari, an area in today's Republic of Congo.

Janko Mikic – young lover of Africa

Janko Mikic was born in Karlovac (Croatia) on 28th June 1856. After he finished trade economic academy in Graz he joined the military service where he was promoted to position of lieutenant.¹ Mikic was known as a good artist and with the additional measuring knowledge he gained in the army where he very soon became a skilful cartographer. Count Arthur Nugent², who convinced some other young men from Karlovac to join in Stanley's expedition also grabbed the interest of Mikic. In the middle of 1882 Mikic decided to offer his services to the Society for the exploration of inner Congo (*Comité d' études du Haüt Congo*) and take service with at this time the already famous Henry Morton Stanley³. Thanks to a letter of

¹ See local newspaper "Narodni Glas", Karlovac, 12th December 1912

² Count Arthur Nugent was a landlord from Dubrovnik and son of famous Austrian Field-Marshal Laval Nugent.

³ At the same time three other Croatians joined Stanley's expedition: the famous explorer Dragutin Lerman (1863-1918), Napoleon Lukšic (1860-1883) and August von Schaumann (?-1883). While Lerman left important traces in Congo (he stayed there until 1896 and became governor of the Kwango

recommendation which Nugent wrote to the Belgium king to recommend Mikic, he received confirmation about his acceptance to join Stanley's expedition. Very soon, on 8th November 1882, Janko Mikic started his trip on the ship 'Hark a Way' from Antwerp to the Congo. After six weeks of sailing Janko Mikic arrived at Boma on 16th December and put himself at the disposal of the leader of the expedition, Henry Morton Stanley⁴.



Figure 1. Portrait of Croatian cartographer Janko Mikic

In this way Janko Mikic, originally from a small country without any colonial tradition, took service in, at the time, one of the most famous explorers of Africa. When he arrived in Congo, he was 26. His good military education, skills in map

Oriental Province), the permanence of the other two Croatians in Congo was very short. August von Schaumann, about whom we know very little today, fell ill and died very soon after few months in Congo (more precisely he died on the ship travelling very ill to Europe). Marine Officer Napoleon Lukšic, after his arrival in Congo, became chief officer of the ship which travelled between port Inshanglia and Manyaga, but very ill he committed suicide at the beginning of 1883 (compare with "Der Kongo und die Gründung des Kongo Staates", Leipzig, 1885, I, p 516).

⁴ Kempf, Julije: Dragutin Lerman, member of Stanley's expedition 1882-1896, (Dragutin Lerman, clan Stanleyeve ekspedicije 1882-1896), unpublished manuscript, Archive of Croatian academy of science and art.

drawing and knowledge of six languages helped Mikic to become an excellent cartographer and explorer in a very short time.

Racing against time - Congo between the Conquests of France and Belgium

When in 1877 Henry Morton Stanley finally confirmed a hydrographical connection between the great lakes and the Atlantic coast, during his Anglo-American expedition, it became clear that the River Congo would have a crucial role in the establishment of a trade route between central Africa and its Atlantic coast. Who would control Congo, would also control trade in the whole of central Africa. Although Stanley explored the whole of the River Congo's flow, there was no country which would insure control over the river and the numerous tribes along it. More precisely, Stanley's expedition had no national character (it was financed by two private magazines), and therefore the territory he explored could not be proclaimed as the ownership of any one country. The bases which were established alongside the river had only trade characteristics without any real jurisdiction of territory or control over the native inhabitants. In this sense, the turning point happened with the establishment of a society for the exploration of inner Congo, led by the Belgium king Leopold II. This was actually a trade society owned by the Belgium king whose purpose was the exploitation of the rich basin of the River Congo. The expedition led by Henry Morton Stanley had a role in building of infrastructure which would allow the exploitation of the basin and make agreements with local tribe leaders who would allow control on a wide territory which would be under the leadership of Leopold II. Almost at the same time, France began a very similar programme, they decided to send to Africa their explorer, Count Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza who believed that it would be possible to reach the River Congo across Gabon, avoiding the horrible cataracts of Livingstone. This was actually the start of the race for domination over the Congo River basin under the mask of its exploration.

It became clear that all was about the fight for territory when, at the beginning of 1880, Brazza established the station Brazzaville on the shore of Stanley's lake, exactly opposite the further Stanley's station Leopoldville. In order to stop the expansion of the French colony after the establishment of Brazzaville on the right side of the River Congo, Stanley gathered his expedition under the leadership of the Captain John Grant Elliot who explored the area between river Kuilu-Niari and the River Congo. The main goal of the expedition was to be ahead of Brazza in taking over the right bank of the Congo and establish the infrastructure which would allow permanent control of the conquered territory.

Cartographical understanding of the area Kuilu-Niari before Stanley's expedition

Very little was known about the area of the right bank of the River Congo before 1882 when Stanley enrolled an expedition led by Grant Elliot to explore Kuilu-Niari. In the middle of the 19th century, in the whole of the area north from the river mouth we can only notice mouths of two rivers – the Kuilu and Tschiloanga on the maps from this period. The first systematic exploration of the river banks populated by the Loango tribe and lower flow of the river Kuilu was carried out by dr. Paul Güssfeld (*Loango Expedition*) during 1873-1875. He explored and mapped the river

bank area from the mouth of the Congo to the mouth of the River Kuilu and lower flow of the rivers Kuilu and Tchiloanga⁵. De Brazza also passed through the area between Congo and Kuilu in 1882 when he was on his way back from exploring Congo. Thanks to these two explorers the Loango area was put on the maps of this area in a more accurate way. In this way the mouths and lower flows of the rivers from Kuilu to Congo and settlements of the Loango and Basundi tribes were put on the map in 1882. At the same time, very little was known about the upper flows of the rivers which were deep in the hinterland. In this period there were only presumptions about the upper flow of the river Kuilu-Niari. It was presumed that the river flows deep in the hinterland and in its upper flow deviates straight toward the River Congo. This fact made this river the ideal connection between the Atlantic coast and Stanley's lake. Conquest and mapping of the area between Kuilu and Congo was a strategic question. Janko Mikic was the one who had a significant role in resolving this problem.

Around Kuilu-Niari - Tracing the Rudolfstadt-Brazzaville railway

Soon after his arrival to Congo, Mikic was given a duty in Captain John Grant Elliot's expedition⁶, which on 17th December 1882 started its exploration of the questionable area between the Rivers Kuilu-Niari and Stanley's stations on the River Congo⁷. At the mouth of the River Kuilu-Niari, during February 1883, Mikic worked on the establishment and organisation of the station at the mouth of River Kuilu. He named the station Rudolfstadt (today Bas-Kouilou) after the Austrian Prince Rudolf. After the organisation of Rudolfstadt, Mikic had the command to explore and map the area along the River Kuilu-Niari in order to make a railway route which would supposedly connect Rudolfstadt with Brazzaville via Philippeville (today Madingou) and Stephanieville (today Loudima)⁸. More precisely, the railway would connect the newly established exploration stations with the Atlantic coast and would also have been used as the main resources for the permanent ownership of the conquered areas which belonged to the Belgian King.

The path which Mikic travelled mapping the area of Kuilu-Niari and the direction of the future railway can be found on a few maps as reports about the new exploration of the Congo area. In this way on the map "Das Gebiet der Internationalen Kongo-Gesellschaft", which was published in "Petermanns geographische Mitteilungen" in 1884 (table 12), we can see the marked direction of Mikic's path. We can see from the map that in 1882 Mikic started from Rudolfstadt towards Stephanieville from where he continued towards Philippeville from where he first went to Boma in 1883 and then north-west towards the mouth of the River Chiloango on the Atlantic. He walked this way probably looking for the best direction for the

⁵ The direction of exploration as well as grade of knowledge of the Kuilu-Niari area just before Eliot's expedition can be observed on the map of the equatorial Africa made by B. Hassenstein. This map was published in Petermanns geographische Mitteilungen from 1883.

⁶ J. Grant Elliot (1837-ca 1888), Captain of the British Army in charge of the Kuilu-Niari expedition and founder of stations Stephanieville, Franktown and Grantville. Compare: "The Congo and Founding of its free State", p. 470-476.

⁷ Compare: Wauters, A.J. (1888): Carte de l'etat independant du Congo dresée d'apres les derniers renseignements avec un resume chronologique des principaux faits de l'histoire de l'oeuvre africaine 1879 à 1887, p 2

⁸ Compare article "Gradski muzej: uspomeni Janka Mikica" (City Museum: Memories on Janko Mikic), Narodni glas, Karlovac, 12th December 1912

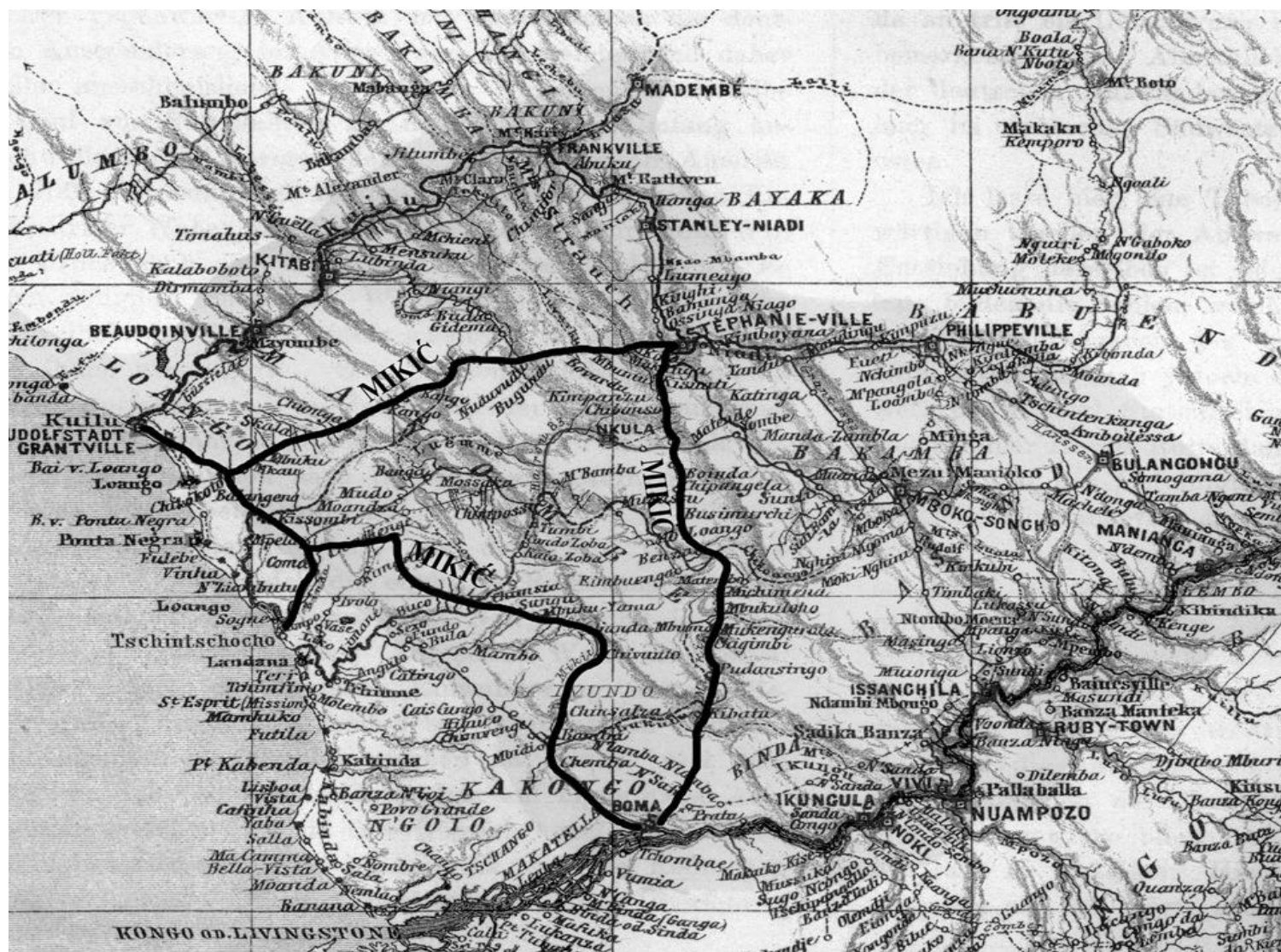


Figure 2. Route of Mikic's field work during 1883 drawn on the map "Das Gebiet der Internationalen Kongo-Gesellschaft"

railway towards the sea. It was obvious that the area around Rudolfstadt was not the best place for the railway to reach the coast because of the very low sandy coast (this is also proved by the fact that the southern railway's direction was removed towards the south because of the same reason).

After he was made the chief of Beaudonville station in 1884, Mikic continued with mapping the last part of the railway between Philippeville and Brazzaville. This was the final mapping of the largest part of the direction for the planned Rudolfstadt-Brazzaville railway. The urgency to compete with Brazza which was imposed on Stanley's team in the conquest of this area, urged Mikic to map and mark more than 450 kilometres of the future railway as well as a part of the wide area between the railway and the River Congo. During his work in the Kuilu-Niari area he made 15 treaties with local tribe chiefs who allowed rights to Belgium in the wide area between Boma and Rudolfstadt⁹.

⁹ The treaties are kept in the African Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade in Brussels.

Cartographic heritage of Janko Mikic

Mikic created a few maps of the area between the River Kuilu-Niari and River Congo based on his field research during his stay in Congo. From Mikic's diary which he wrote during his stay in Congo we can understand that he sent maps to Stanley¹⁰. One map of the whole of the area of his exploration was sent to his sister in Vienna, but it was lost. Therefore there are no original Mikic sketches or maps which could directly prove his cartographic work. Numerous original manuscripts of maps, including the project for the railway, are today considered as missing. But, the results of his hard work on the mapping of the Kuilu-Niari area are not completely lost. His data helped the creation of at least two printed maps of Congo where it is emphasised that Janko Mikic, the cartographer, had conducted the measurements of the Kouilu-Niari area.

The first of them is the map "Le Congo depuis l'Equateur jusqu'a l'Ocean et la vallee du Niari-Kwilu" published in 1884 by the Institute National de Geografique in Bruxelles¹¹. The map was made in 1:1,400,000 scale and under the leadership of the Captain Grant Elliot and Lieutenant Jean Van de Velde¹². Although there are no names on the map of any of the authors and there is only the name of the *Association Internationale du Congo*, we can read from the report in *Petermanns geographische Mitteilungen* that together with Grant Elliot and Van de Velde the measurement of the area Kuilu-Niari was also carried out by Janko Mikic, Eugéné Hanssens and Lieutenant Harou. More precisely, inside the area represented on the map, the measurement of the flow of the river Kuilu-Niari and from Philippeville to Ishanglia was carried out by Grant Elliot, the measurement of the area alongside the River Congo was carried out by Van de Velde, Hanssens carried out the measurement of the source area of the River Kuilu-Niari and the area between Philippeville and Manyaga, Harou carried out the measurement of the small part around the River Luemme and Mikic carried out mapping of the wide area between the River Luemme, Stephanieville, Boma and Rudolfstadt. This meant that Grant Elliot, Van de Velde, Eugéné Hanssens, Harou and Janko Mikic were actually authors of the mentioned printed map published in 1884.

The mentioned map was the first one created by Stanley's expedition and was published as a special edition (before there was only a published overview map of the central Africa as addition to the Stanley's book "Through the Dark Continent"). The map was created in very modest conditions and with speed. The map was based on the measurements carried out mostly using the pocket compass. This method of work caused a whole range of problems in on the grid of the map as well as in defining the positions of some exploration station. According to the review published in *Petermanns geographische Mitteilungen*¹³, the major mistakes could be observed north from Stanley's Pool whose position was based solely on Stanley's written

¹⁰ Mikic's dairy is unfortunately lost. At the beginning of the 20th century the dairy was kept by his sister in Vienna. From the same period are some data about the context of the dairy and its maps which he created during his stay in Congo and which were published in the local newspapers of the city of Karlovac.

¹¹ The map was printed in multicolour lithographic technique in the dimension 56.9 (width) and 54.3 (high) cm.

¹² Liévin Jean Van de Velde (1850-1888), Captain of the Belgian Army. He became commander of Vivi station and in 1882 led the expedition to the Kuilu-Niari area where he founded five stations and made treaties with local chiefs which guaranteed the possession of the area. He died in Congo. Bulletin de la Société royale de géographie d' Anvers, 1908, p 139-147.

¹³ Petermanns geographische Mitteilungen, 1884, p 112.

reports. The deviations in longitude are more noticeable than deviations in the measurements in latitude which are less noticeable on the map. Comparing this map with modern maps of the same area, we can notice that the whole of the meridians grid was moved about 20° minutes in the geographical longitude towards the east¹⁴. For example the mouth of the River Luemme which is on the 12° of the eastern geographical longitude, here was put on the 11° and 40'. Going towards east, deviation from the geographical longitude is less (for example near Philippeville there was almost no deviation). Manyaga was on 14° 40' on the map from 1884 and today is on about 14° 30' while Leopoldville was on the same map on 15° 30' and today is on 15° 25'. Deviations are more noticeable going towards north-east towards the middle flow of the Congo where the position of Stanley's equatorial station was represented with a deviation of more than one degree of the geographical longitude.



Figure 3. Detail of the Kuilu-Niari map: lower and middle course of the Kuilu-Niari River

Anyway, despite all the mistakes in the mathematical construction of the map, this was the first detailed representation of the area between the Congo and Kuilu-

¹⁴ According to the starting Greenwich meridian.

Niari. For the first time, a map showed all of the 27 stations which were established at that time (marked in red). As well as exploration stations, there were also marked numerous local settlements (more than 100 of them) the majority of them were being marked on a map for the very first time. On the map were also marked names of tribes which lived west from the River Congo. Quite detailed was the representation of the



hydrographical net. In this way, for the first time here was the whole flow of the River Kuilu-Niari and its tributary rivers as well as the flows of the Rivers Luemme and Chiloango. The weakest characteristic of the map was the relief which was represented in very schematic way of shadows (the only oronym on the map was Strauch's Mountains). The measurements of the high were not carried out and the relief was represented using the method "*a la vue*".

Figure 3 Kuilu-Niari area between Stephanieville and Boma mapped for the first time by Janko Mikic

The second map where Mikic's measurements were applied was Stanley's map added to his book "The Congo and the Founding of its Free State". In the legend of

Stanley's map under the title "Karte der Kongobeckens"¹⁵ we can read the note that the area of Kuilu-Niari on this map was represented according to the measurements of Lieutenant Van de Velde, Lieutenant Destrain, Spencer Burns and Lieutenant Janko Mikic. For the first time this map also encompassed the results of Mikic's measurements which he carried out during 1884 around the upper flow of Kuilu and the River Djoué. In this way the map was upgraded with numerous new toponyms for the area of Kuilu-Niari. The hydrographical net was also upgraded with new data, especially the area of the River Djue and its tributaries. So, this map contained more information of the area of Kuilu-Niari, although the measurement of this map was smaller (1:2,900,000) than the map from 1884. Also here were corrected some of the mathematical mistakes of the previous map but the vision of relief was not included which meant that the measurements of the heights were also made *2a la vue*². This new data was the result of Janko Mikic's and Van de Velde's work as well as that of Destrain and Spencer Burns who joined these first two in creating a map of the mentioned area during 1884.

Epilogue

The area around the River Kuilu-Niari, in whose mapping Mikic participated, was put under French government after the Berlin Congress of 1884-1885 when the Belgian and French Congo were formed, despite Stanley's efforts to establish the control on the right bank of the Congo. This was the reason for the collapse in the plan for the railway in which Mikic participated. The Belgian king finally moved the railway towards the south in the real Congo and the railway was made from Matadi to Leopoldville (1890-1896). Nevertheless, Mikic's cartographic work had long-term effect in the development of Congo Brazzaville and today's Republic of Congo. More precisely, French really did build the railway alongside the valley of the River Kuilu-Niari to Brazzaville, only 40 years later. In the period between 1921 and 1934 the railway known as the Congo Ocean Railway was built, but with some change in direction with its starting station at the port of Pointe Noire. Despite lesser changes, the direction of the final railway is in the main the same as Mikic's project and his maps were used while the railway was being built. This railway is still in use. In this way Mikic's hard cartographic work became useful for the cartographic knowledge of the River Kuilu-Niari and in the building of the railway which today still has a crucial importance in the development of the Republic of Congo. Mikic left Congo at the end of 1885 and never returned to Africa again¹⁶. For his work the Belgian king awarded him with a medal for his merit ('Etoile de Service') on 30th January 1888.

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¹⁵ ¹⁵ The full title of the map in German version is: "Karte des Kongobeckens und der Angrenzenden Gebiete, Zugleich Darstellung der Ausdehnung des Kongostaates". It is printed in multicolour lithographic technique in the dimension 53 (width) x 90 (high) cm.

¹⁶ Very soon after his return to Europe, in 1890, Mikic went to American state of Texas where he worked in Houston as cartographer for the local railway. He died in Austin, on his 41st birthday on 28th June 1897.

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