



COPPER, BORDERS AND NATION-BUILDING

THE KATANGESE FACTOR IN ZAMBIAN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY

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The Katangese Factor in Zambian Political and Economic History

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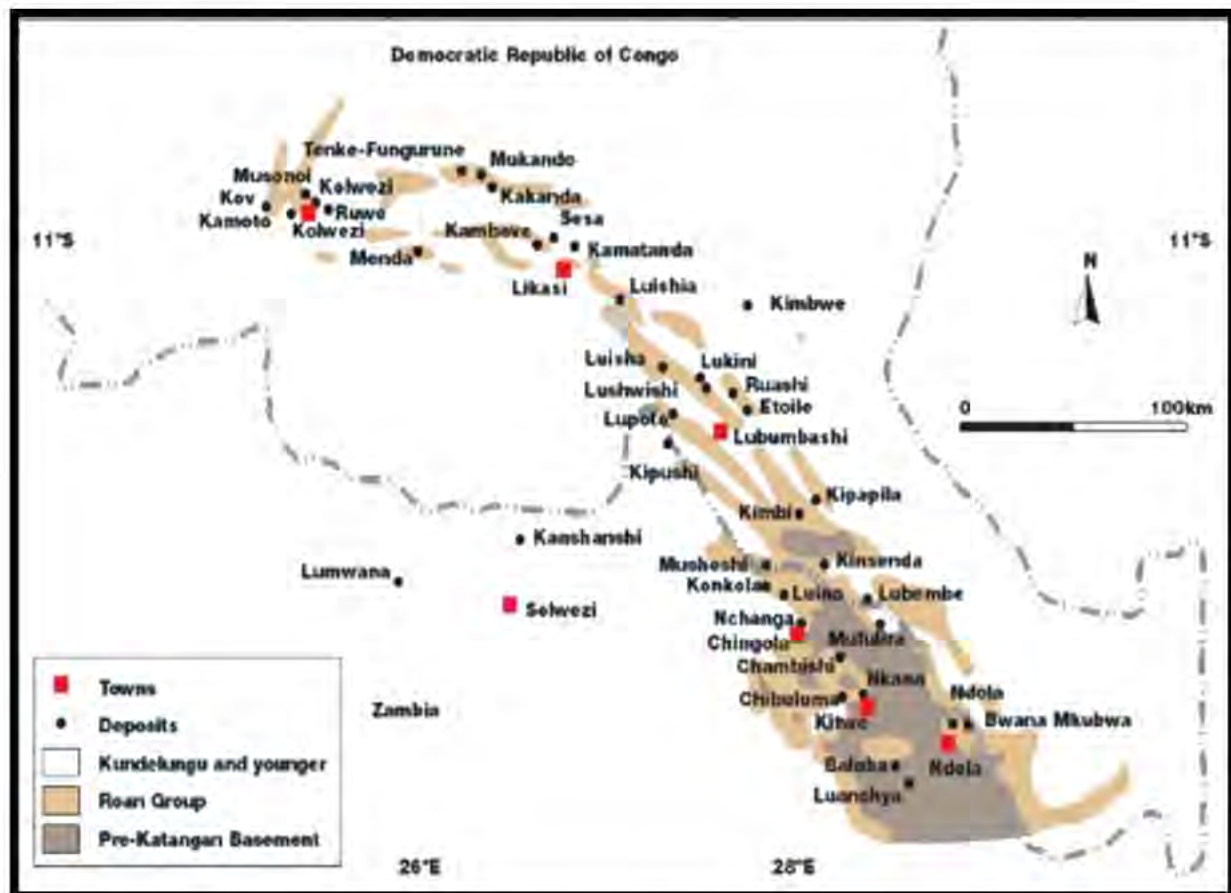
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Introduction

Two Copperbelts, Two Histories?

The Copperbelt, as a geological zone, is known for its copper deposits and associated mining and industrial development. Covering some 450 km in length and 260 km in width, the Copperbelt contains more than a tenth of the world's copper deposits and forms one of the greatest concentration of industry in sub-Saharan Africa. As such, the Copperbelt and its correlated mining industry have, for about a century, formed the economic backbone of the two countries that host them – the Republic of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – representing more than two-thirds of national exports in both cases.



Map 1. The Copperbelt as geological zone

And yet there exists no integrated history of the Copperbelt, its distribution over two countries making it two separate entities in the eyes of many researchers. According to Luise White, this tendency to see the Copperbelt as not one but two entities has to do with two factors: a disinclination to mix the history of Francophone and Anglophone regions, and the fact that the two histories do not provide a good chronological and comparative fit with one another. As a result, the distinct Anglo-Saxon and Belgian practices of knowledge production have shaped our perception of the Zambian and Katangese Copperbelts in a way that obscures the interplay that exists between them. This interplay is what the present thesis will strive to investigate.

1. A Joint History

Even at first glance, it is apparent that, despite their separateness, there are many similarities in the histories of the two Copperbelts. Crucially, both became major economic hubs, though it happened earlier in the case of the Congolese Copperbelt. By the early 1960s, Katanga – the Congolese province in which the Copperbelt is located – accounted for about 8 % of the world's total supply¹ and Katanga's largest company, the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* (UMHK), ranked third among the world's copper producers.² Zambia, far from falling wide of the mark, was leading copper supplier with a yearly output of 633,000 tons valued at £164,300,000 at the time of its independence in 1964.³ A second key similarity, which is not unrelated to the first one, is the fact that both Katanga and Northern Rhodesia (as Zambia was known before independence) started their 'careers' as colonial territories as the property of quasi-state companies rather than a colonial office. When the fearsome Leopold II of Belgium grabbed for himself a territory eighty times larger than his own country, he in fact had few means to administer it properly. He consequently entrusted the administration of Katanga to the *Compagnie du Katanga* on April 15, 1891, and until 1910, it was under the exclusive auspices of this company that mining settlement processes in the Katanga were initiated and carried out.⁴ In practice, this lack of state control resulted in an ambiguous, semi-autonomous status, which endured even after Katanga passed under the responsibility of the Belgian state in 1910. Until 1933, partly because of the lack of adequate communications between the capital (then in Boma) and the interior of the colony, and also because the industrial development of the province necessitated a large measure of decentralisation, the administration of Katanga was entrusted to a Vice Governor General who enjoyed full executive powers.⁵ This allowed Katanga to function as a company territory practically independent from the rest of Belgian Congo. As for Northern Rhodesia, it did not pass under the control of the Colonial Office before 1924. Before that, its administration and the development of its mining potential were entrusted to the all-powerful *British South Africa Company* (BSAC).⁶ If the colonial Secretary of State had considerable power in theory, in practice the imperial government exerted limited influence in Northern Rhodesia. Local officials were appointed either at the BSAC's recommendation or by the BSAC directly.⁷ Finally, also largely thanks to the mining industry and its recruitment policies, both Copperbelts became the home of a 'cosmopolitan' community. By the 1930s, Copperbelt towns in Katanga and Northern Rhodesia were bustling towns bringing together workers from all over central Africa and there was more and more talk of African 'urbanisation' and 'detribalisation'. At the same time, a comparatively large community of independent-minded white settlers also developed on both sides of the border. Although the Katanga was the most thinly populated area of the Congo at the time, with a density

¹ *Le Katanga économique*, p.15.

² The UMHK was also the world's largest producer of uranium and one of the world's biggest producers of cobalt, exporting more than 60 % of the world's supply in 1960. See S. HEMPSTONE, *Katanga Report*, p.53; J. GÉRARD-LIBOIS & B. VERHAEGEN *Congo 1960*, Vol.I, p.223.

³ J. PARPART, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*, p.22.

⁴ *Congo Bulletin*, 1906, FO 367/1/427.

⁵ R. LEMARCHAND, 'The Limits of Self-Determination: The Case of the Katanga Secession', p.409.

⁶ B.J. PHIRI, *A Political History of Zambia*, p.10.

⁷ *Ibid.*

of 3.44 per square kilometre, it was nevertheless the province where European settlers were the most numerous. The Katanga claimed a non-African population of 34,047 in 1956, representing about 31 % of the total European population of the Congo.¹ As for Northern Rhodesia, although it was originally conceived as a tropical dependency rather than a settler colony, the development of the Copperbelt attracted more and more white migrants (many of whom came from South Africa) reaching a total of 65,277 in 1956.² Such overwhelming concentrations of economic and human resources, all of which can be traced to the presence of copper, are far from trivial. They had profound political implications for both Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In fact, copper was the reason why the Copperbelt was split in the first place. The fact that that area of central Africa was copper-rich was well known long before the first European adventurers set foot in it. Copper had been mined for hundreds of years by local African societies and probably provided an important basis for the rise of major centralised societies, most notably the Luba and Lunda empires, which exported copper ingots via Portuguese traders to the Atlantic coast.³ In this context, it was not long before the Copperbelt attracted the attention of non-African explorers and colonists alike and its mineral deposits soon found itself at the heart of a competition between two would-be colonising powers: the United Kingdom and Belgium. The outcome was an artificially-drawn and awkwardly-shaped border drawn across the Copperbelt: the result of a deliberate ploy to ensure that both King Leopold II and the United Kingdom received their 'share' of the copper pie.⁴ Locally the effects of that division were very significant. An article published in the *Times of Zambia*, on November 30, 1964, i.e. just over a month after Northern Rhodesia became an independent nation, sheds some light on why that was so:

'Most of Zambia's tribes came originally from the Congo. The largest group, the Bemba-Lunda-Lovale, arrived here around the beginning of the 18th century from the great Luba-Lunda kingdom of Mwata Yamvo.

At its height, the Luba-Lunda empire controlled most of the Kasai and Katanga provinces of the Congo, and large areas of Angola and Zambia. The Luba, senior partners in the alliance, mined copper at Kipushi, and made the copper crosses that were the first form of coinage in Central Africa.

The name Mwata Yamvo ("Great Chief") was used as a title, handed down from father to son. This is at variance with the present system of inheritance employed by the Bemba, by which brother succeeds brother, and when the generation is extinct, the inheritance goes to their sister's son.

Legend declares that the Bemba were the followers of a certain Mwata Yamvo's sister's son, which may account for the Bemba custom of inheritance. The Lovale system of tracing descent is similar.

The Lunda of Luapula Province are the descendants of the followers of Kazembe Pa Nchinda, the third son of a Mwata Yamvo, who settled in the lands to the east of the Luapula River.

¹ R. LEMARCHAND, 'The Limits of Self-Determination: The Case of the Katanga Secession', p.406.

² B.J. PHIRI, *A Political History of Zambia*, p.12.

³ M. CORNEVIN, *Archéologie africaine*, p.224.

⁴ D. POTTS, 'Counter-Urbanisation on the Zambian Copperbelt?', p.584.

The Lunda of North-Western Province are likewise the descendants of Mwata Yamvo's fourth son. Other sons established groups of Lunda in Angola, near Solwezi and elsewhere.

The Bemba, second largest tribe in Zambia, were led from Mwata Yamvo's domain by a man called Chiti Muluba ("Chiti the Luban"). Later Bemba chiefs were given the title "Chitimukulu" (The Great Tree).(...)

This clearly shows that close contact between the Bemba and the empire of Mwata Yamvo must have existed at one time. Even today, sections of the Bemba, Lunda, Aushi and Ndembu tribes live in the southern Congo.¹

This article suggests two things that will be of great importance in the present narrative. Firstly, it suggests that the creation of the border did not only result in the splitting of a geological 'pie' but also in the splitting of a culturally homogeneous region. Secondly it introduces the idea that migration and population movements are an important feature of the region's history. In fact 'migration' is a word that is closely associated with the Copperbelt. The rise of the copper industry stimulated the emergence of a system of organised migrant labour from relatively remote areas to supply the mines that were, for the most part, located in areas with low population density. For decades, people of all origins crisscrossed the border between Belgian and British Africa in search of waged employment or other options for making money.² Thus the region of the Copperbelt, which had already been the scene of many population movements in pre-colonial times, saw the appearance of new patterns of movement, ones that rested on a purely economic underpinning and therefore brought into contact people who would not have otherwise met.

If the Copperbelt was originally inhabited by peoples who were culturally akin and who shared longstanding trade relationships and if, even when separated, the growing copper industry induced renewed population movements and economic exchange, why are we so determined to see these two territories as separate? Or perhaps the question should be phrased differently: why are we so determined to overlook the links that exist between these two territories? A major part of the answer, as suggested at the outset, must be the fact that, in academia, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo belong to separate (French and Anglo-Saxon) research traditions. Further colouring our understanding is the existence of specific paradigms that were developed at one point in connection with one region or the other and stuck for better or for worse.

2. 'Old' and 'New' Paradigms for the Copperbelt

1. MODERNISM AND ITS FAILURE

According to Deborah Potts, 'Zambia has something of an iconic status in African urban studies.'³ This special interest stems in great part from the work of the *Rhodes-Livingstone Institute* (RLI) set up by the British

¹ 'Origin of Zambia's tribes: Migration from the Congo', *Times of Zambia*, 30 November 1964.

² C. PERRINGS, 'Consciousness and Proletarianization: An Assessment of the 1935 Mineworker's Strike on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt' in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1977), pp.40-41.

³ D. POTTS, 'Counter-Urbanisation on the Zambian Copperbelt?', p.583.

Government in 1937 to undertake social research in British Central Africa. The RLI research that acquired the most visibility was that which focused on the development of urban centres in the Copperbelt region as Africans migrated in to work in colonial mining enterprises. This research consisted of the analysis of the changing relationship between the towns and rural areas on the one hand and in how or whether in-migrants changed their attitudes and perceptions because they were living in urban rather than rural areas on the other. The distinctive approach of the RLI to African urban life was based on a metanarrative of transition, in which tribal rural Africans were swiftly becoming modern, urban members of an industrial society.¹ RLI studies gained momentum at the time of Zambia's independence. In the 1960s, Zambia was emerging as the fastest urbanising – and therefore industrialising and modernising – country in Southern Africa.² Thanks to its growing industrial success, as well as the rapid social and economic transformations that accompanied it, Zambia and its industrial core, the Copperbelt, came to exemplify, epitomise even, 'emerging Africa'. As James Ferguson put it in his influential *Expectations of Modernity*:

'Zambia at its 1964 independence was a highly urbanised nation and newly so. The mining towns that had sprung up on the Copperbelt symbolised newness in a way that older cities could not. Here, unlike many other parts of Africa, the very idea of cities was a "modern" one. And "urbanization" was understood to involve not simply a movement in space but an epochal leap in evolutionary time.'³

And indeed, by 1964, large-scale copper mining seemed sure to propel the nation along the road leading to what was referred to as 'modernisation'. 'Over the heart of a poor and primitive continent, civilisation has laid a finger of steel; it has stirred a hundred tribes together; it has brought them new wealth, new ambitions, new knowledge, new interests, new faiths and new problems', was the way Godfrey Wilson, head of the RLI from 1938 to 1942, put it.⁴

It is easy to forget, because of the long period of unrest that followed, that around the time of independence, levels of optimism were similarly high in the Congo. In the 1950s, the Congo had moved at a very fast pace. From 1950 to 1956, industrial output tripled and annual reports trumpeted, with barely disguised gratification, the colony's rapid economic growth.⁵ Like in Zambia, such rapid industrialisation was accompanied by profound transformation in the society, as Africans moved to towns to work in new enterprises. Although no institution similar to the RLI was set up, the emergence of 'detribalised' Africans was of no less

¹ Ibid, pp.583-585. It should be noted that the RLI-inspired narrative of transition is still contested and has been for over 60 years. As late as the early 1990s, the debate around the Zambian Copperbelt and urban studies in Zambia again emerged over five issues of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* in an argument developed between the anthropologist James Ferguson and the historian Hugh Macmillan. While Ferguson challenged RLI assumptions that urbanisation, industrialisation, economic growth and 'development' were all unilinear processes, Macmillan argued that RLI paradigms were in fact informed by a cyclical view in which the ups and downs of the world economic swings would affect urban trends in the Copperbelt and elsewhere. See J. FERGUSON, 'Mobile Workers, Modernist Narratives: A Critique of the Historiography of Transition on the Zambian Copperbelt', parts 1 and 2; H. MACMILLAN, 'The Historiography of Transition on the Zambian Copperbelt: Another View'.

² By the late 1980s Zambia was among the most highly urbanised countries south of the equator. Over 50 % of its population was urban, living in the Copperbelt towns and Lusaka for the most part. See B.J. PHIRI, *A Political History of Zambia*, p.2.

³ J. FERGUSON, *Expectations of Modernity*, p.4.

⁴ G. WILSON, 'An Essay on the Economics of Detribalization in Northern Rhodesia (part 1)' in *Rhodes Livingstone Paper No. 5* (1941) as quoted in J. FERGUSON, *Expectations of Modernity*, p.2.

⁵ W. RENO, 'Congo: From State Collapse to 'Absolutism', to State Failure', p.45.

concern to the colonial authorities. In the Congo, this challenge was met by ensuring that a politically contented and economically productive workforce could be integrated into the process of progressive change. This fostered the appearance of an urban elite, called the ‘*Évolués*’, who spoke French, had accepted European values and patterns of behaviour, and usually held white-collar jobs. Members of this growing native middle class were treated as a privileged group by the colonial administrators and out of it came the first rulers of the independent Congo.¹ With rapid industrialisation and a growing middle class, from an aggregate perspective there was good reason to believe that independence would usher in an extended period of economic growth for the Congo. Even the initial period of trouble that Congo went through immediately after independence (about which more will be said in Chapter 4), though it did dampen enthusiasm, did not entirely crush it. Neither did the arrival of arch dictator Joseph-Désiré (later Sese Seko) Mobutu when he seized power in 1965. By 1962 industrial output had recovered to its pre-1960 heights and economic reforms in 1967 and fiscal austerity convinced foreign investors that Mobutu’s state, despite being characterised by clientelism and personal rule, was serious about promoting economic growth, so that by the mid-1960s and into the 1970s the country was once more being held up as an example of rapid modernisation.²

Yet interest in the modernist discourse gradually dwindled to be replaced by ‘Afro-pessimism’ and its grim predictions for the future prospects of the continent. This was due in no small part to the steep economic decline that Africa went through in the 1970s. The collapse of the copper price (twice) in the 1970s, the oil crises, and the almost exclusive reliance on mineral extraction for their economies were key factors in the economic decline of both independent Congo and Zambia. Zambia, despite a post-independence history devoid of bloody conflicts, stood as one of the biggest growth losers for much of its independent history (although things have taken a more positive turn in recent years).³ As Ferguson put it, ‘the script of Zambian “emergence” via industrialization has been confounded by more than two decades of steep economic decline (...) leaving Zambia near the bottom of the World Bank’s hierarchy of “developing nations”’.⁴ As for the Democratic Republic of Congo, the end of its period of economic ‘bliss’ was followed by a period of such economic and political decay that, to this day, it is regarded as a paradigmatic case of state failure. In 2013 Congo ranked second in the Failed States Index, which since 2005 has been published annually by the research institute *Fund for Peace* and the magazine *Foreign Policy*.⁵

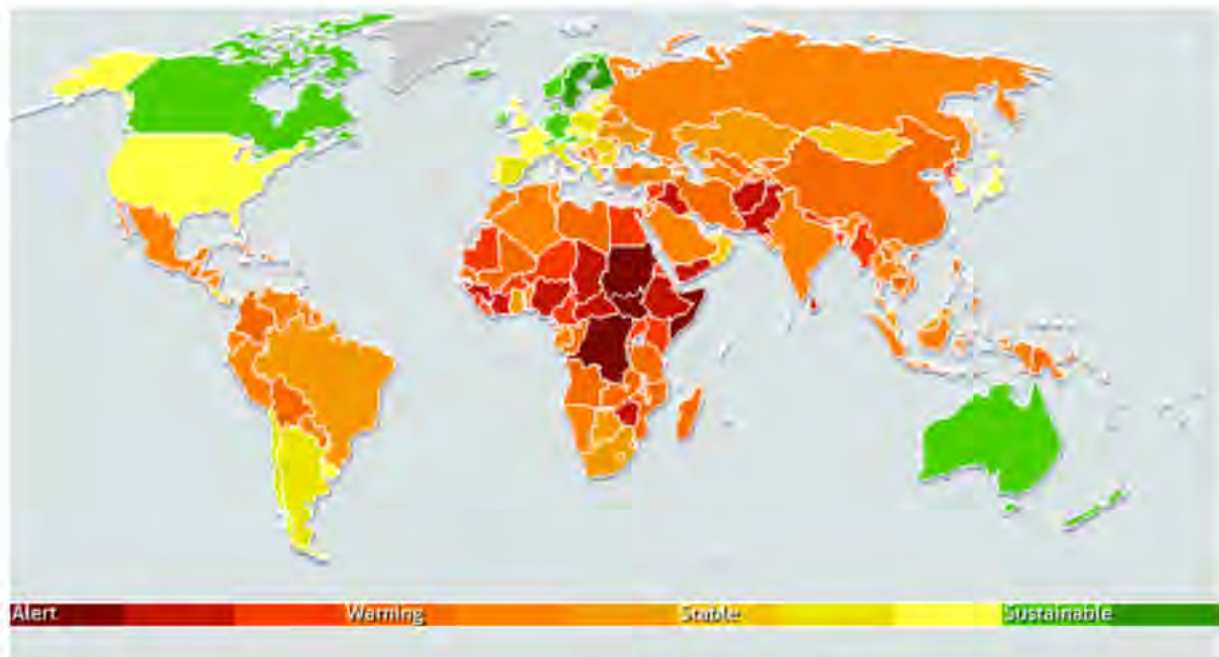
¹ See B. KADIMA-TSHIMANGA, ‘La société sous le vocabulaire : Blancs, Noirs et Évolués dans l’ancien Congo belge (1955-1959) in *Mots*, Vol. 5 (1982), pp. 25-49.

² W. RENO, ‘Congo: From State Collapse to ‘Absolutism’, to State Failure’, pp.46-47.

³ H. MELHUM, K. MOENE & R. TORVIK, ‘Institutions and the Resource Curse’, p.1.

⁴ J. FERGUSON, *Expectations of Modernity*, p.6.

⁵ The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been in the top 10 ever since the list was started and has been in the top 5 since 2009. See The Failed States Index page of the Fund For peace Website, available at <http://ffp.statesindex.org>, [accessed on 29 July 2013].



Map 2. The Failed States Index for 2013.

In addition to that of failed state *par excellence*, other common phrases or ‘labels’ were quickly associated with the Congo, including ‘Absolutism’, ‘State Decline’ (which in the 1990s became ‘State Collapse’). By the 1980s, President Mobutu, the same man supposedly responsible for the great progress of the previous decades, became a paradigm of personal corruption and predatory rule.¹ Paradoxically, therefore, the Congo, which had once been praised as a ‘*colonie modèle*’ and one of the most promising economies in Africa, became known as one of the poorest, most conflict-ridden and most volatile place on the planet.² As such, it was widely seen as the epitomisation of the ‘Paradox of Plenty’ or ‘Resource Curse’, a thesis which posits that states with abundant resource wealth, specifically non-renewable resources like minerals and fuels, tend to perform less well than their resource-poor counterparts in terms of development, economic growth, and peace-keeping.³ Resource abundance and dependence is therefore frequently associated with corruption and weak state institutions, authoritarian rule, as well as general economic decline and poverty, and is also presumed to stir up violence, conflicts and even war.⁴ The Democratic Republic of the Congo has often been held up as the confirmation that such a curse exists due to its constant history of corruption and war, notably from the extended crisis of the 1960s to the protracted conflict, sometimes referred to as the Great War of Africa, that claimed an estimated three million lives between 1998 and 2003.⁵

¹ W. RENO, ‘Congo: From State Collapse to ‘Absolutism’, to State Failure’, p.48.

² D. JOHNSON & C. KAYSER, ‘Democratic Republic of the Congo: Shadow Economies in the “Heart of Darness”’ in M. BASEDAU & A. MEHLER (eds), *Resource Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa*, p.145.

³ M.L. ROSS, ‘The Political Economy of The Resource Curse’, p.297.

⁴ M. BASEDAU, *Context Matters: Rethinking the Resource Curse in Sub-Saharan Africa*, p.54.

⁵ The existence of a ‘resource curse’ is not universally accepted. There is little agreement among economists and political scientists. As Matthieu Basedau contends, potential effects of natural resources on socio-economic development, state institutions, democracy and peace are interrelated and therefore difficult to separate out. If macro-quantitative and country-case studies have proven that resource-rich and dependent countries are more likely to suffer from civil wars, empirical evidence has also shown a highly uneven profile of individual countries in terms of indicators for economic growth, human development, governance, democracy and peace. According to

The point here is not to discuss the validity of such ‘labels’ but rather to point out the powerful paradigms that they created or reflected, and the way they still inform our vision of these countries. According to such paradigms, the history of Zambia can be summarised as that of the failure of modernist revolution, and that of the Congo as the slow disintegration of a promising economy into lawlessness. It is however revealing that, in both cases, main trends of theorisation had a lot to do with mineral wealth and macro-economics. Since mineral wealth stands prominently in the histories of both countries, it is not surprising and neither is it unjustified. Yet, there is a danger that overemphasis of one paradigm, prominent though it may be, might leave little room for nuance or indeed for the exploration of altogether different paradigms. Therefore, though copper and macro-economics will play an important role in the present narrative, the focus will not be on them. Instead, I will be juggling with two main themes: transnationalism and nation-statism.

2. NATION-STATISM AND TRANSNATIONALISM

Perhaps the most important paradigm the present study will strive to challenge is the tendency, in academia but also generally, to think in terms of a ‘nation-state framework of analysis’. Not only do the authority and sovereignty of the nation-state enjoy a near sacrosanct quality internationally, but, in history, and political and economic sciences, the nation-state is more often than not taken as the basis for intellectual enquiry. As W.I. Robinson put it: ‘The nation-state is still taken as the basic unit of analysis, and transnationalism and globalization are seen as merely some new stage in *international* relations or in *cross-national* comparative studies.’¹ In Africa, like in the rest of the world, the nation-state is understood to be living a severe crisis, at the root of which is the supposedly new and worldwide phenomenon of globalisation.² And indeed one can see how, with its emphasis on the idea that national borders should be defined in terms of movement of capitals rather than political boundaries, the concept of globalisation is at odds with that of the nation-state. Yet, according to Frederick Cooper, not only is the demise of the nation-state greatly exaggerated – the resources controlled by governments have never been higher – but one should not assume that in the past, the nation-state enjoyed a period of ‘unchallenged salience and unquestioned reference for political mobilisation’.³ To be sure, for Basil Davidson it is not globalisation that constitutes Africa’s greatest challenge but the nation-state itself, or, to be more precise, the crisis of institutions brought about by the inherent illegitimacy of the African nation-state. “Nation-statism” was a product of the rising nationalism of independence-aspiring Africa. ‘Nation-statism’, Davidson argues, ‘looked like a liberation, and really began as one. But it did not continue as a liberation. In practice, it was not a restoration of Africa to Africa’s own history, but the onset of a new period of indirect subjection to the history of Europe.’⁴ Similarly, I. Ll. Griffiths bemoans the way in which the current ills of Africa – including famine, civil war and boundary bickering, as well as

Basedau, the necessary theoretical explanations for the resource curse, if they are to be materialised at all, are therefore most likely found in country-specific contexts. See BASEDAU, M., ‘Context Matters: Rethinking the Resource Curse in Sub-Saharan Africa’ in N. OPPENHEIMER (ed.), ‘Mining Africa’ in *African Analyst Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2008).

¹ W.I. ROBINSON, ‘Beyond Nation-State Paradigms’, p.562.

² S. BISLEV, ‘Globalization, State Transformation and State Security’, p.281.

³ F. COOPER, ‘What Is The Concept of Globalization Good For?’, p.195.

⁴ B. DAVIDSON, *The Black Man’s Burden*, p.10.Ibid.

plummeting economic performance – are too easily attributed to immediate causes. Instead, he argues, ‘the immediate causes of African misery must be put in the context of basic structural defects, both economic and political, deriving from the comparatively recent and short-lived colonial period when almost the whole of Africa was divided between European powers.’¹ Though he recognises that this context is by no means the sole cause of Africa’s plight, the colonial inheritance is, in his opinion, crucially important and not easily disowned. The key to the impact of colonialism on Africa was the division of the continent into colonial territories. For, when the European powers partitioned Africa between themselves between 1885 and 1914, the partition, solely dictated as it was by European politico-economic interests, was imposed on the continent with little regard to the distribution of peoples or pre-colonial political units. Crucially this European-originated partition survived African independence almost intact, with two basic concepts alien to Africa surviving with it: ‘nation-states’ and ‘boundary lines’.² There have been numerous examples of disputes over borderlines erupting in civil war and violence. One such example was the boundary dispute between Libya and Chad over the Aouzou strip, a region in the north of Chad which is reputedly rich in minerals. When the dispute was submitted to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Judge Ajibola quickly came to the conclusion that the dispute between those two states could be traced to the legacy of artificially delimited boundaries bequeathed to Africa by European powers:

‘For about a century, (...) Africa has been ruefully nursing the wounds inflicted on it by its colonial past. Remnants of this unenviable colonial heritage intermittently erupt into discordant social, political and even economic upheavals which, some may say, are better forgotten than remembered. But this ‘heritage’ is difficult, if not impossible to forget; aspects of it continue, like apparitions, to rear their heads, and haunt the entire continent in various jarring and sterile manifestations: how do you forget unhealed wounds?’³

There is another way in which current interpretations of nation-state and the crisis it is supposedly going through are misleading. By analysing globalisation as a single system of connection that has penetrated the entire globe and by seeing this process as happening *now*, Cooper argues, globalisation theorists have misread the ways in which a 400-year-long process defined both Africa and the Atlantic-centred capitalist economy.⁴ Indeed, according to Cooper, africanists, when discussing processes of globalisation, should be particularly sensitive to their historical dimension, given the manner in which ideas, cultural movement or migrant networks spread across the boundaries of social units in the past. The very notion of ‘Africa’ has never existed in a vacuum, having been instead shaped for centuries by linkages within the continent and across oceans and deserts, by the trans-Saharan and Atlantic slave trade, by various trading and religious networks, and by cultural

¹ I. LI. GRIFFITHS, *The African Inheritance*, pp.1-2.

² Ibid, p.3.

³ Judge AJIBOLA, *(Separate) Judgment, Territorial Dispute (Libya Jamahiryal Chad)*, The Hague: International Court of Justice (3 February 1994).

⁴ F. COOPER, ‘What Is The Concept of Globalization Good For?’, p.189.

and economic connections across the Indian Ocean.¹ Yet, specialists on Africa have been drawn into the globalisation paradigm, positing globalisation as a challenge which Africa must meet, as tensions between ‘a past of territorial boundedness and a present of interconnection and fragmentation’ are supposedly increasingly felt.² In contrast, Cooper contends that historical analysis presents a ‘more back-and-forth, varied combination of territorializing tendencies’.³ In this way, Cooper argues for ‘more modest and more discerning ways of analysing processes that cross borders but are not universal, that constitute long-distance networks and social fields but not on a planetary scale’.⁴ In other words, he argues in favour of a focus on ‘transnational’ relations as a way of thinking about African history in ways that emphasise spatial connection but do not assume the ‘global’.

Transnationalism, however, is somewhat of a multifaceted concept, as it has never been given an adequate theoretical framework of analysis. As Rainer Bauböck describes it: political transnationalism covers ‘a wide range of phenomena and can be studied using a variety of approaches’,⁵ its specificity being the fact that it ‘creates overlapping memberships between territorially separated and independent polities’.⁶ S. Vertovec, in his ‘Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism’, also gives definition a shot, by acknowledging that: ‘To the extent that any single “-ism” might arguably exist, most social scientists working in the field may agree that “transnationalism” broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states.’⁷ In the latter reading, borders must necessarily represent long-established power relations, and transnationalism, as underlined by Katharyne Mitchell, ‘embodies an inherently transgressive quality’.⁸ Regarding migrant flows, it is considered that communities have been able to ‘erode’ inconvenient and artificial borders by developing concrete transnational links across them.⁹ Taking the argument to another level, Bauböck argues that such interconnections affect conceptions of membership as well as the institutions of each interconnected country.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Corrado Tornimbeni warns that fluidity must not be exaggerated, and that the extent to which the presence of an international border has become enmeshed in the social life and in historical developments since the colonial times must not be underestimated.¹¹ As Georges Balandier contended as early as 1951, conquest itself created a ‘colonial situation’, defined by external coercion and racialised ideology within a space marked by conquest boundaries.¹² Underlining the historically artificial nature

¹ F. COOPER, ‘What Is The Concept of Globalization Good For?’, pp.190-191.

² C. TORNIMBENI, ‘Migrant Workers and State Boundaries’, p.107.

³ F. COOPER, ‘What Is The Concept of Globalization Good For?’, p.191.

⁴ Ibid, p.189.

⁵ R. BAUBÖCK, ‘Towards a Political theory of Migrant Transnationalism’, p.700.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ S. VERTOVEC, ‘Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism’, p.447.

⁸ K. MITCHELL, ‘Transnational Discourse: Bringing Geography Back’, p.101.

⁹ C. TORNIMBENI, ‘Migrant Workers and State Boundaries’, p.110.

¹⁰ R. BAUBÖCK, ‘Towards a Political theory of Migrant Transnationalism’, p.701.

¹¹ C. TORNIMBENI, ‘Migrant Workers and State Boundaries’, p.110.

¹² G. BALANDIER, ‘La situation coloniale: approche théorique’, p.44.

of state boundaries in Africa, therefore, does not mean that they never gained significance over time since ‘once conceptualised, [boundaries] are given meaning and sentiment by those who reside within them’.¹

3. *Objectives*

In the light of what has been set out, this thesis will endeavour to put the significance of the Katango-Zambian border in its historical context by retracing how transnational identities developed and consolidated on the one hand (chapters 1, 2 and 3), and by examining the geo-socio-political significance of such identities for Zambian state-building, on the other (chapter 4). It will also be demonstrated that patterns of migration and exchange changed over time, as did their rationale. The copper industry in particular, stimulated a new and politically significant type of migration: *labour* migrations. Not only did its magnitude dwarf any other population movement that had taken place before but it was also entirely economically-induced and therefore transcended cultural boundaries. In addition, it will be shown that it was not only people that transcended boundaries. The various mining companies active on the Copperbelt did not develop separately but were instead linked across the colonial border by their overlapping capital composition, infrastructure and labour practices, making the two Copperbelts economically interdependent.

In this way, although it is not my intention to examine the debate about the contrasting interpretations of borders and border crossing in Africa, I will aim to show how the international boundaries were ‘eroded’ by African migrants while, at the same time, these boundaries came to be of great significance socially, economically and politically. This research is not therefore aimed at minimising the importance of borders but at examining how in the case of Katanga and Northern Zambia, borders were more porous than could be expected and that this had very real practical consequences. This thesis has two (closely interwoven) objectives therefore: one that is purely historical – retracing a history that has been overlooked – and another that is paradigm-based – to challenge conventional ideas about the ‘nation-state’ as most logical framework of study.

¹ L. BASCH, N.G. SCHILLER & C. SZANTON BLANC, *Nations Unbound. Transnational Projects, Postcolonial predicaments and Deterritorialized nation-States* (Reading, 1994) as quoted in C. TORNIMBENI, ‘Migrant Workers and State Boundaries’, p.110.

CHAPTER 1

The Setting

‘Lorsque les premiers explorateurs blancs découvrirent cette partie de l’Afrique que l’on nomme le Katanga, ils y trouvèrent 3 monarchies qui étaient non seulement unies par des liens familiaux, économiques et sociaux mais aussi, et ceci est de loin le plus important, dont le destin historique était lié depuis des siècles. ... Lorsque les Belges et les Anglais, les uns au nord et les autres au sud, essayèrent de faire main basse sur le Katanga, les chefs des Balubas, des Lunda et des Bayeke, solidaire face au nouveau danger qui menaçait leur souveraineté, luttèrent de toutes leurs faibles forces.’¹

Extract from the speech of Moïse Tshombe, President of the short-lived secessionist state of Katanga (1960-1963), made at the occasion of the second anniversary of Independence on July 11 1962.

Needless to say, the above-quoted statement has strong political connotations. President Moïse Tshombe means to imply the durability and endurance of the Katangese nationalist sentiment and does so by emphasising not only the cohesion of the region but also the ‘ancientness’ of that cohesion. Yet, for all his aplomb, Tshombe’s assertion is also a wishful, not to say risky, one since the only statement that can be made with confidence about pre-colonial central African history is that it is not well known. The rarity of written testimonies and the exclusive reliance on sources such as oral tradition and archaeology make its study a rather delicate matter. Jan Vansina himself, who is generally regarded as the foremost authority on the pre-colonial history of the peoples of central Africa, had to admit in the introduction chapter of his influential *Kingdoms of the Savanna* that: ‘the gaps in the data are little short of appalling and because of that any synthesis is out of the question.’²

Until the 1870s and 1880s, the central African interior escaped any direct contact with the slave and ivory trade moving in from both the Atlantic and Indian coasts. This means that the pre-colonial history of Katanga and Zambia is as ‘African’ as the history of any region located deep in Africa’s interior can be. But it also means that it escaped the attention of literate observers. As a result, for all but the past century and a half, written records are few and far between. From the end of the seventeenth century there are occasional reports from Portuguese traders, and for the nineteenth century there are some travellers’ books, such as David Livingstone’s, but even for that period, written African records are virtually non-existent.³ This dearth of written accounts throws the historian back upon a diverse set of sources and the use of methodologies that are comparatively new and still subject to debate. Paramount among those is the pioneering treatment of oral traditions by Jan Vansina, who, in his *Oral Tradition: a Study in Historical Methodology* published in 1965, offers a guide on how to collect and criticise different types of African traditional stories. In this book, he

¹ President Tshombe’s Speech of July 11 1962 as quoted in R. YAKEMTCHOUK, *Aux origines du séparatisme katangais*, pp.24-25.

² J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.v.

³ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, pp. xi-xv; T.Q. REEFE, *The Rainbow and the Kings*, p.197.

describes African traditions as ‘unwritten sources couched in a form suitable for oral transmission’, and therefore as ‘not necessarily untrustworthy’ historical sources despite their ‘special nature’.¹ There has been much work done on oral tradition since – Vansina himself published a substantial revision of his own views – and the debate on the validity of oral tradition as valid historical sources will probably never be entirely settled. Unfortunately there is no space here to go over this complex debate, but nor is it the point of this chapter. Suffice it to note that for certain points in history in that particular area of the world, these stories akin to myths are virtually the sole source of information available to the historian and that one has to make do with what is available. Even oral tradition, however, only goes so far back in the past. It is only from around AD 1500 that, through the study of oral and cultural traditions, as well as linguistics, main outlines of political and social change begin to come into focus. And it is not before around AD 1700 that a chronology of events can be fleshed out in any detail from the same sources. For earlier periods the historian is almost entirely dependent on archaeology, which, though useful to trace changes in material culture, is not usually enlightening as far as social and political organisation is concerned.

What follows, therefore, is a summary of the broad processes of interactions, in terms of the movement of peoples, cultural diffusion, commercial exchanges and state expansion, that took place in and around the Copperbelt region from the appearance of stratified societies to the eve of European penetration in the late nineteenth century. In other words, this chapter will strive to explore how far the description of Katanga – and by extension northern Zambia – as an interconnected whole, consisting of kingdoms ‘united by familial, economic and social bonds’ as Tshombe so confidently claimed, is justified.²

1. The Archaeological Evidence

Archaeological evidence suggests that the area that is now divided between Katanga and north-eastern and central Zambia was not only occupied from an early date but also showed a substantial degree of homogeneity in terms of pottery and economic practices, characterised by the cultivation of crops, the herding of cattle and the use of metal artefacts.³ Unfortunately, the archaeology of central Africa has not been thoroughly investigated. Most of our knowledge about the early occupation of the region comes from a series of cemeteries, notably Katoto in the valley of the upper Lualaba in Zambia and Sanga in Katanga. The cemetery at Sanga is one of the most excavated and best-known Iron Age sites in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is located near the lake Kisale in the Upemba Depression, a 200 kilometres long basin located in southeast Democratic Congo. The Upemba Depression is notable for bearing witness to continuous socio-economic and political developments reaching as far back as the fifth century AD. But it is even more notable for providing convincing evidence for the emergence of kingship, or at any rate a marked degree of social stratification, early in the second

¹ J. VANSINA, *Oral Tradition*, p.1.

² It should be noted that the present chapter will not be bringing forward any new information. For a more comprehensive overview on the present state of knowledge on the history of pre-colonial central Africa, please see the works of Andrew Roberts, Jean-Luc Vellut as well as the extensive list of publications by Jan Vansina on the subject.

³ D.W. PHILLIPSON, *African Archaeology*, p.249.

millennium.¹ Significantly, the Upemba Depression is also where certain oral traditions have placed the origin of Katanga's very first kingdom and oldest culture: that of the Luba. In turn, the Luba kingdom and culture is where many kingdoms of the central African savanna trace back their origin.² Consequently it figures prominently in the history of central Africa as well as in our own modest story.

Excavations run in Sanga provided possible evidence of early chieftainship in central Africa. The excavations undertaken in 1958 revealed a series of tombs, dated to the late first millennium, in which copper, iron and ivory jewellery often adorned the deceased. Weapons, pottery, tools and the remains of animals would also often accompany them.³ The presence of such items in burials is of some significance. For one thing they indicate that the occupants of these tombs belonged to a society of hunters whose economy was able to support highly skilled craftsmen in ceramics and metallurgy. For another they suggest that these goods came to serve a purpose that surpassed their purely practical function. They seem to have become associated with one's position in society and therefore imbued with status and meaning. Furthermore, the same 1958 excavations revealed fragments of single iron bells, dated to between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries,⁴ as well as iron gongs and ceremonial axes, all of which have long been known in the Congo basin as symbols of chieftainship. Similar bells have been found in two other sites: Ingombe Ilede (Zambia) and Great Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe). These two southern sites are dated to a somewhat later period, around the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and include extended burials and a mass cemetery of a type that calls to mind the cemeteries of Sanga. For these reasons, Andrew Roberts argued, the distribution of iron bells and other 'prestige' grave goods may be taken as evidence for the diffusion of some sort of chieftainship.⁵

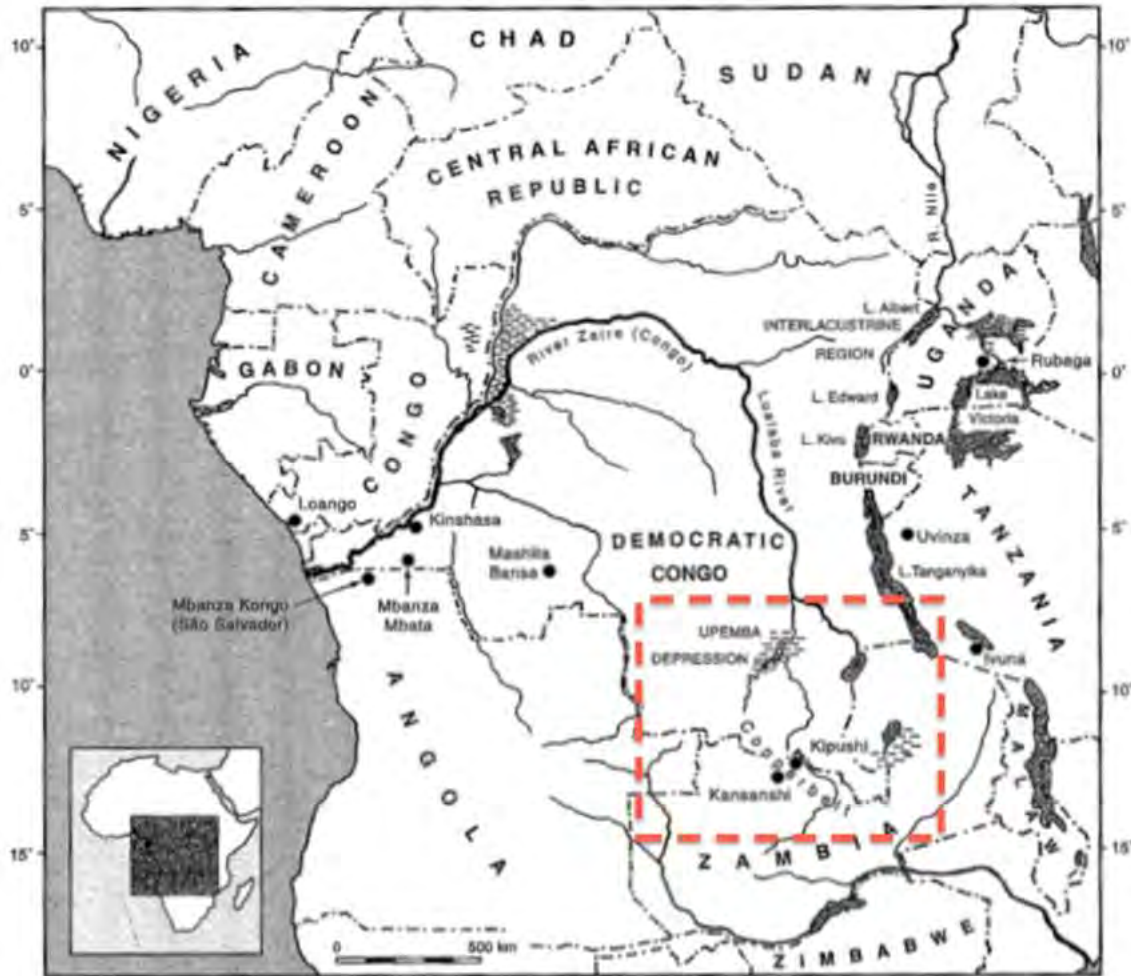
¹ P. DE MARET, 'Chronologie de l'Age du Fer', Vol. 2, p.358.

² G. CONNAH, *African Civilizations*, p.273; P. De MARET, 'Sanga: New excavations, More data and Some Related Problems', p.321.

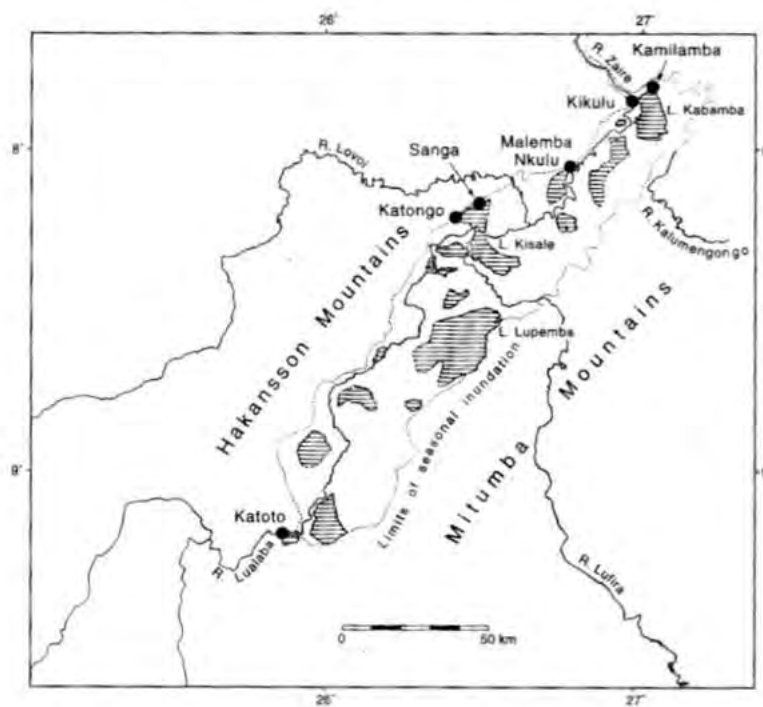
³ M. CORNEVIN, *Archéologie africaine*, p.221; P. DE MARET, 'Sanga: New excavations, More data and Some Related Problems', pp.322-323.

⁴ P. DE MARET, 'Sanga: New excavations, More data and Some Related Problems', p.334.

⁵ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.83.



Map 1. Archaeological sites in central Africa.



Map 2. Archaeological sites in the Upemba Depression

The bells were not, however, the only grave goods that suggested the widening of the Upemba Depression's sphere of influence. Besides the chiefly symbols, the burials yielded at least two more type of goods that are worth mentioning. First of all, during excavations run in 1975 in Kamilamba (another Upemba Depression site) the archaeologist Pierre de Maret identified an Early Iron Age pottery tradition that dates from the middle of the fifth century AD to the beginning of the ninth century AD and has close affinities with the Chondwe ware of Zambia: an Early Iron Age pottery tradition which can be found along the Copperbelt and south to the Zambezi river. This suggests that the culture of the Upemba Depression was propagating southwards from as early as 450 AD.¹ Second of all some later burials, dated to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, yielded a great number of copper crosses of the type that had become a form of currency by the sixteenth century.² Their presence, alongside that of some cowries and glass beads, in a wide range of places is a useful testimony to the development of interregional trade. The fact that the oldest specimens were found in Kasanshi and Kipushi on the Zambia/Congo border, which are both close to copper mines, could further suggest a cause/effect relation between the presence of resources, trade and state-formation.³



Fig. 1. Sanga, Classic Kisalian Burial 172. (1) copper necklace; (2) iron bracelets and one copper bracelet; (3) beads made of *Achatinidae* shells; (4) iron pendants on the waist; (5) animal bone; (6) copper band around a staff; (7) goat's cannon bone; (8) ivory pendant.

¹ P. DE MARET, 'Chronologie de l'Age du Fer', vol. 2, pp.243-258; P. DE MARET, 'Sanga: New excavations, More data and Some Related Problems', p.329; M. CORNEVIN, *Archéologie africaine*, p.223.

² T.N. HUFFMAN, 'Ceramics, Settlements and Late Iron Age Migrations', p.171.

³ P. DE MARET, 'Sanga: New excavations, More data and Some Related Problems', pp.334-335.

What all these elements taken together – bells, copper crosses, pottery – may well be evidence for is the early southwards diffusion of an improved iron technology, trading contacts and political symbolism.¹ The origin of that diffusion may well be the Upemba Depression since, like T.Q. Reefe suggested in his study of the Luba kingdom, it is likely that ‘in a situation of continuity and slow historical evolution, what occurred in the Upemba depression influenced the evolution of adjacent dry-land societies’.² The spread of the remains, including high skill copper work, that occurred in the early millennium BC strongly suggests that 1) by this time the area was indeed dominated by some sort of wealthy ruling group, and that 2) the influence of this group was spreading southwards.

Interestingly, the eleventh century saw accelerated cultural change in the interior of central Africa, marked by a series of pronounced and apparently sudden changes in pottery styles. It is believed that this change is linked to the establishment of several major kingdoms in the interlacustrine region further to the north and the new diffusion stream that it might have put into motion.³ Zambia, interestingly, seems to have escaped the spread of that eastern pottery style, though sharp changes in pottery did occur. By the twelfth century, central and north-eastern Zambia was dominated by a people whose pottery belonged to a common ‘Luangwa’ tradition, the outlook of which represents a sharp break with the Early Iron Age pottery that previously dominated the area.

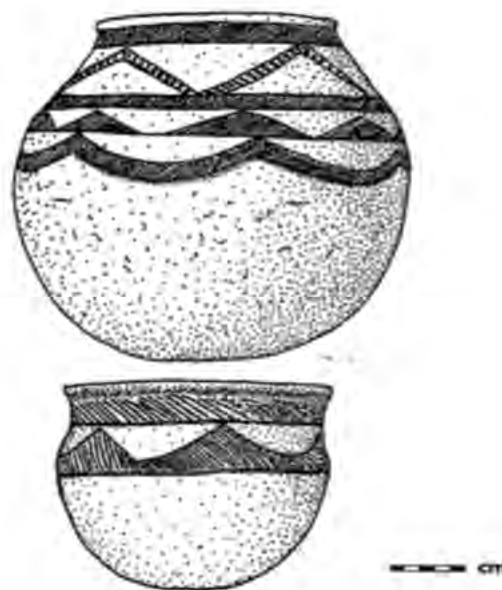


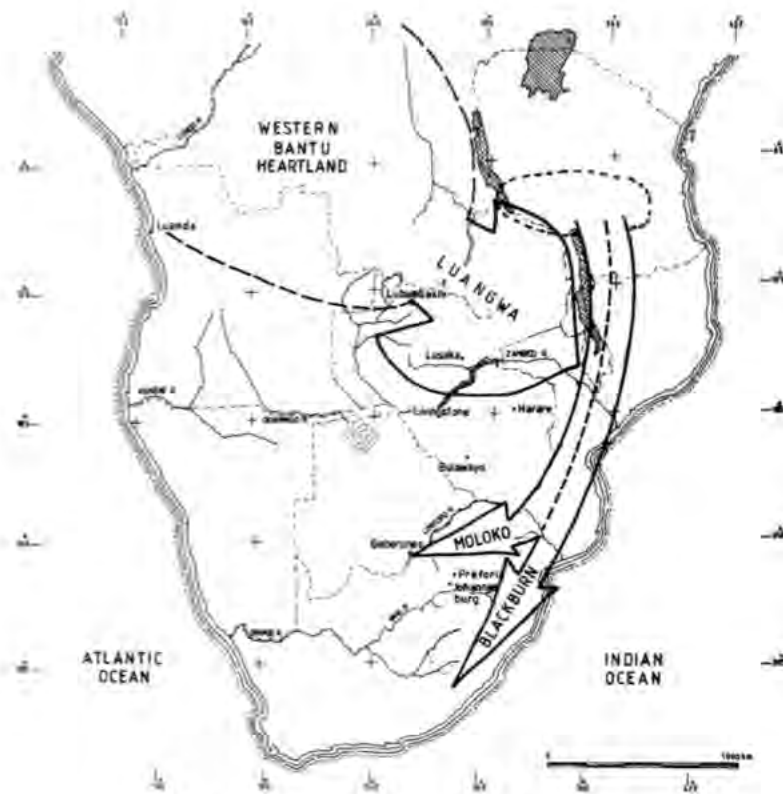
Fig.2. Luangwa-Tradition Pottery

It has been suggested that the makers of this Luangwa pottery belonged to a distinct group of people, who had entered the country from elsewhere. In turn, the archaeologist D.W. Phillipson argues that the differences

¹ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.83.

² T.Q. REEFE, *The Rainbow and the Kings*, p.71.

³ D.W. PHILLIPSON, *African Archaeology*, p.292.



Map 3. Late Stone Age pottery diffusion, AD 1000 to 1200

¹ D.W. PHILLIPSON, *African Archaeology*, pp.251-252.

² T.N. HUFFMAN, 'Ceramics, Settlements and Late Iron Age Migrations', pp.178-9.

³ D.W. PHILLIPSON, *African Archaeology*, pp.294-295.

⁴ See A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.38.

Three important points emerge from this discussion. One is that the southern Congo basin seems to have contributed significantly to the cultural development of a very large part of central Africa during the second millennium AD, and that seems to be particularly the case in Zambia. This view is supported by oral traditions, which, as we will see in the next point, derive the ruling dynasties of many states in Zambia and adjacent regions from a Congo basin origin. The second is that the centralisation of political authority, the spread of its imagery and the interplay of several cultural traditions may be seen as both local and ancient processes. Although natural resources and economic potential were diverse, particular and widespread emphasis appears to have been placed on the working of metal and its use not only for everyday utilitarian objects but also for items intended for display, symbolism, and exchange. Lastly is the fact that these are only snippets into very ancient and ill-known processes. No amount of literature can conceal the fact that, in reality, very little is known about the early occupation of central Africa. Archaeology for this period remains virtually unknown. What is more, there is little archaeological evidence that can be dated later than 1500 or so.¹ However, for this later period we can begin to make some use of the evidence preserved by human memory and of Jan Vansina's pioneering methodological treatment of oral history.

2. The Luba and Lunda according to Oral Tradition

1. THE BIRTH OF THE LUBA AND LUNDA 'EMPIRES'

According to oral tradition, the area between lake Tanganyika and the upper Kasai was originally organised into a multitude of smaller chiefdoms, among which were the Bungo, the Bena Kalundwe, the Kaniok and the Hemba.² At one point in the mythical past, Luba traditions have it, an immigrant called 'Kongolo' appeared in the area and became the founder of the 'first Luba kingdom'.³ Kongolo's origins are unknown, but whoever he was, it would appear that he and his successor, Kalala Ilunga, embarked on a policy of expansion, subduing the southern part of their kingdom. Kalala Ilunga's accession to the throne and his vast programme of campaigns inaugurated what has been called the 'second Luba Kingdom'.⁴ At its apogee in the mid-nineteenth century, the Luba would control most of the region between the Lubilash river and lake Tanganyika and between the forest and the northern part of the Copperbelt.⁵ After Kalala Ilunga, however, fraternal struggles for the 'throne' seem to have become rife. Expansion continued albeit at a slower pace, and seems to have consisted more in the slow absorption of communities standing in the periphery of Luba influence than in actual campaigns of conquest. No real attempts at expansion are recorded before King Mwene Kadilo, who is thought to have reigned around 1700. The recorded sources do not enable us to see why the drive for expansion slowed

¹ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.63.

² J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.71.

³ T.Q. REEFE, *The Rainbow and the Kings*, p.24.

⁴ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.72.

⁵ A. WILSON, 'Long-Distance Trade and the Luba Lomami Empire', p.575.

down.¹ It may be that the Luba kingdom now had to contend with the influence of a new state, both a neighbour and an offspring: the Lunda kingdom.

Oral tradition indicates that the cradle of the Lunda nation was an area in the valley of the Nkalaany, or upper Bushimaie, River in the west of Katanga. It seems that in the mythical past, Lunda land was already a loose but single political unit, administered by a succession of generations of brother-sister ruling couples. Some sort of dynastic chronology only appears with a man whom Edouard Bustin refers to as the man 'who may be said to serve as a bridge between the myths of origin and the "historical" past': Mwaaku or Mkwaakw.² Mkwaakw had a son named Nkond. Nkond himself had three children: two sons, Kinguri (also spelled Cinguud or Tshinguli) and Cinyama (also spelled Cinyaam or Tshiniama), and a daughter Rweej (also spelled Lueji). Kinguri and Cinyama were cruel and lazy, and quarrelled with their father. Because of this quarrel (the nature of which vary according to different accounts), the latter named Rweej his heir as ruler of the Lunda instead of his sons. Rweej became queen when he died and married a Luba hunter named Cibinda Ilunga, who also happened to be the brother of the then Luba king, Ilunga waLwefu. Cibinda Ilunga then became the rightful king of the Lunda by virtue of marriage.³ It is generally recognised that this story metaphorically portrays some kind of Luba influence on the Lunda state, with the marriage of Rweej to Cibinda Ilunga symbolising the introduction of Luba forms of political authority in the budding Lunda statehood. According to Vansina, this myth is almost certainly a euphemistic description of the conquest of the area by the Luba kingdom, a hypothesis he sees strengthened by the fact that 'many Lunda titles are derived from Luba land'.⁴ The Lunda kingdom, however, functioned as a kingdom on its own right and its construction as an 'empire' took place under the successors of Cibinda Ilunga. Cibinda Ilunga's grandson, mwaant Yaav Naweej, pursued a deliberate policy of expansion and consolidated court organisation to such an extent that his personal name became a generic title for Lunda kingship, as *Mwaant Yaav* or *Mwata Yamvo*. Under his reign, the Lunda kingdom expanded from the valley of the Nkalaany to the whole area between that river and the Kasai in the west to the springs of the Lulua in the south.⁵

The interpretation of these stories and the dating of the actual events they describe (or are metaphors for) rest on rather shaky ground. The drawing of a chronology for Lunda history after the reign of Naweej, for instance, is crippled by the important irreconcilable discrepancies that are present in sources for that period.⁶ But it is the date of the creation of these kingdoms and of the appearance of kingship that is especially disputed. Kongolo's foundation of the Luba kingdom has been dated to c.1500 and Kalala Ilunga to c.1600, with Vansina placing the conquest of the Lunda area by the Luba kingdom in or around AD 1600.⁷ These dates are calculated

¹ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, pp.156-159.

² E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.6.

³ See E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.7 and J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.78; J.C. MILLER, 'The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central African History', pp.553-554.

⁴ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.78.

⁵ E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.10.

⁶ See E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, pp.11-12 and J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.79.

⁷ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.78.

from the sum of kings's reigns (approximated to 20 years for each king), counting back from the only event whose date is known with some certainty. This single datable event occurred early in the seventeenth century when Lunda-led armies of trained warriors called 'Jaga' or 'Imbangala' swept over the Mbundu regions of northern Angola, an event recorded by Portuguese observers (see point 2 below).¹ However, according to J.C. Miller, the dating of the origins of Luba kingship to the sixteenth century is based on too literal an interpretation of the traditional evidence. Instead he strongly argues that greater sophistication is needed in inferring chronology from such tradition of origin. According to him, not only should many of these stories be taken much more metaphorically but most names mentioned in traditional stories are more likely to refer to titles rather than actual persons, in which case one name could actually refer to multiple people. Reinterpreting the traditions as chronicles of named positions rather than individual rulers significantly alters the dating of the entire complex of early Lunda and Luba states in Katanga and would push the beginnings of kingdoms in this part of Africa to 'the thirteenth century or perhaps long before'.² This, incidentally, would coincide with the evidence of the Upemba Depression. Even if one could spend endless time discussing what the concepts of kingship and kingdoms really mean in this case, Luba stories of their first kings could nevertheless be regarded as representing memories of political structures far older than their royal genealogies would suggest.³

2. MIGRATIONS OF LUNDA GROUPS

The Lunda influence did not stay limited to its traditional heartland in western Katanga but sparked off the appearance of a series of smaller Lunda-ised groups with ramifications spreading far and wide. Oral tradition suggests that much of the initial Lunda expansion towards eastern Angola and northeast Zambia in the seventeenth century took the form of migrations involving segments of the original population (under circumstances that remain far from clear). These migrations supposedly found their origin in the fact that Rweej's two brothers, who had not objected to her becoming queen, refused to plead allegiance to the newcomer. As a result, they left Lunda land to migrate in different directions.⁴ Kinguri's migration eventually led to the foundation of the Kasanje kingdom, home to the Imbangala, on the Kwango in Angola, and to contacts with the Portuguese. Though Kasanje is of lesser interest to the history of the Lunda, as it never really fell within Lunda's orbit, it provides our first tentative correlations with Western chronology and allows us to place Kinguri's original departure from Lunda sometime around 1490.⁵ For his part, the second brother, Cinyama, migrated to the south, into the area situated between the upper Kasai and upper Zambezi, in modern Zambia, to bring Lunda rule to the Lwena. This second thrust is even less documented than that of Kinguri as its

¹ The descendants of these invaders, known as 'Imbangala' rather than 'Jaga', claimed to have reached Angola under the leadership of a man called Kinguri. Kinguri is supposedly Rweej's brother. See point 2.2. J.C. MILLER, 'The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central African History', p.549.

² J.C. MILLER, 'The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central African History', p.573.

³ For more discussions on Central African chronology based on Imbangala history, see J. VANSINA, 'La fondation du royaume de Kasanje' in *Aequatoria*, Vol. 2 (1962); J.C. MILLER, 'The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central African History' in *Journal of African History*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (1972); David BIRMINGHAM, 'The Date and Significance of the Imbangala Invasion of Angola' in *Journal of African History*, Vol. VI (1965), pp.143-152.

⁴ E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.6.

⁵ J.C. MILLER, 'The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central African History', p.571.

inland direction made it escape the attention of external observers.¹ Other groups believed to have departed at or about the same time are said to be the ancestors of the Cokwe, the Minungu, the Shinje and the Songo,² although here again there is considerable uncertainty as to whether or not these migrations are part of the two major currents of dispersion identified above, or indeed if they took place at all.

Yet another migration, some traditions have it, involved some of the Luba followers that Cibinda Ilunga brought with him from his native Luba land when he married Rweej. These followers, after considerable peregrination, reportedly founded the Bemba nation and settled between lakes Tanganyika, Mweru and Bangweolu where they set out to subdue different parts of the country. In that particular instance, therefore, it is difficult to identify the origins of the Bemba as either Luba or Lunda (a fact that gave rise to some quarrelling among students of Bemba tradition). At several points on the way, several parties decided to stay behind and to leave the bulk of the group to move on by themselves. These split-away groups founded the Bisa and Lala chiefdoms.³ In this way, new 'tribes' and chiefdoms were established through a common process of settlement by 'Luba' immigrants but with no mass migration having taking place.⁴ This has led Vansina to argue that 'the names of the present day "tribes" may reflect not any real cultural differences but the vicissitudes of the implantation of chiftainships'.⁵ A similar evolution, he says, occurred in all other parts of eastern Zambia and Katanga.⁶

This, then, is the summary of the first Lunda expansion over wide parts of Africa through extensive migrations. What emerges from the conflicting oral traditions, is that, beginning in the first half of the sixteenth century, a continuous stream of Lunda/Luba migrants moved westwards and southwards from the heartland until they had gradually occupied or brought under control large portions of territory. The story of these migrations is a rather tangled one. For one thing, it is possible that migrations, as suggested by archaeological evidence, had taken place before. For another, instead of two migratory thrusts led by the two brothers, there would have probably been several, none of them involving large numbers (maybe a hundred at a time or even less).⁷ For yet another thing, they might not have been migrations at all. At least not in the sense in which this term is usually understood. There has been a tendency, especially among historians of the 1960s to read traditional migration stories quite literally and to ascribe political and cultural change that occurred in one or another specific place to population movements. This has led to a tendency to view African state-formation as depending 'on the arrival of skilled outsiders who imposed fully-developed state institutions on less skilled peasants with little subsequent alteration in the basic political structures established at the 'conquest.'⁸ This tendency has since then been widely criticised being described as 'part of an intellectual tradition that sought to

¹ E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.10.

² Ibid.

³ For more details on the origins of the Balala, see L. VERBEEK, *Filiation et usurpation*, pp.229-251.

⁴ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, pp.88-92; E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.10.

⁵ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.92.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, p.85.

⁸ J.C. MILLER, *Kings and Kinsmen*, p.5.

explain cause and effect by discrete, discernible events, denying the complex interplay among processes that are quite impossible any longer to give shape to.’¹ Since the early 1970s, the migration hypothesis has been replaced by an emphasis on local developments and innovation. In the case of the Lunda expansion, ‘migration’ might have consisted in the transfer of the Lunda title from one neighbouring state to another without necessarily involving any Lunda individuals.² If it did involve individuals, their ‘migration’ would have taken a much longer period of time and followed a more complex evolution than the conventional model of a ‘migration’ by a single group of people going from a point A to a point B. Migrating groups would have split, settled, integrated some of the elements of the culture that they encountered, then split again, moved on again having acquired a slightly new identity. These migrations therefore did not necessarily imply an extension of political control from the Lunda heartland over the far-flung areas that came into its sphere of influence. They represent instances of cultural diffusion. In any case, by the turn of the seventeenth century, the grasslands south of the Katanga lakes and the north Zambian plateau were occupied by a number of peoples with very similar cultures who shared a great many clans among them. Most of them, regardless of historical facts, traditionally claim Luba origins.³

3. THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: TWO MIGRATORY THRUSTS

The first half of the eighteenth century saw two further instances of Lunda expansion, which will be described as ‘thrusts’ for lack of a better word. One ‘thrust’ took place in a southerly direction and supposedly involved three ‘Lunda-ised’ chiefs, Musokantanda, Kanongesha, and Shinde, each of whom carved out for himself a chieftainship in the upper basin of the Zambezi.⁴ In that area were a number of smaller kingdoms akin to those of the Luba, including Lwena and Kaonde.⁵ Musokantanda subjugated the Kaonde. Kanongesha established himself in the area of Mwinilunga and Shinde settled farther to the south. These ‘Lunda-ised’ intruders called themselves Ndembu, a name quickly adopted by their subjects too, so that they collectively came to be known as the Ndembu. Though the Ndembu regarded the Mwata Yamvo as their ‘overlord’ and sent him tributes,⁶ in effect the Mwata Yamvo eventually had to create the office of *sanama* or governor for the newly acquired lands to the south for it could not be controlled properly from the capital.⁷

It was, however, in the Luapula valley, about 800 kilometres east of Mwata Yamvo’s capital, that the Lunda empire made its greatest impact on Zambia. Lunda expansion to the East was arguably a little like a ‘thrust’ in the sense that it was relatively abrupt and conquering in spirit.⁸ This eastwards thrust, which seems to have owed its first impetus to a search for salt, eventually resulted in the foundation of two semiautonomous kingdoms: one on the upper Lualaba (Kazembe of the Lualaba), which controlled salt and copper deposits, and

¹ D. HENIGE, *Oral Historiography*, p.61

² J.C. MILLER, ‘The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central African History’, p.552.

³ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, pp.86-91.

⁴ E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.12.

⁵ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.164.

⁶ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.94.

⁷ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, pp.160-162; E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.13.

⁸ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.36.

the other on the Luapula (Kazembe of the Luapula), a much more extensive state which later entered into contact with the Portuguese and reached its maximum expansion between the mid-eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century.¹ This thrust was conducted under the leadership of a man called Nganda Bilonda, who was rewarded with the honorific title of 'Kazembe'. Around 1740, his successor as Kazembe, Kazembe II, invaded the lower Luapula valley and made a capital for his new kingdom near the south end of the lake Mweru.² With increasing instability and a dynastic feud raging in the Lunda heartland, the then Mwata Yamvo, king Mukanza, eventually had to recognise the virtual autonomy of the Kazembe, thereby giving the latter all the regions of Lunda conquest east of the Lualaba and making him his near equal. More than its southwest counterpart, the effect of the Lunda eastern thrust was quite quickly felt. As an independent state, according to Vansina, 'the kingdom of Kazembe was probably the greatest in size and the strongest kingdom of all the Luba and Lunda states. From 1750 to 1850 it was paramount in southern Katanga and parts of the northern Zambian plateau. It brought security to the local populations, who suffered from raids by the Luba clans established further north, and it brought change and novelties to the area'.³ These two thrusts are of great importance in Zambian history as they constitute the first real penetration of Lunda power in the territory of what is now modern Zambia. In this way they greatly contributed to the shaping of what would be the political landscape of the North-Eastern, Copperbelt and North-Western provinces (see Appendix 1 and 3).



Map 4. The peoples of Southern Katanga and Zambia in 1800

¹ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.94; E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.12.

² Ibid.

³ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.174.

3. *The Socio-Political Organisation*

Traditional stories therefore suggest that chieftainship was well implanted in Zambia by the sixteenth century and that this owed something to influences emanating from the Luba and Lunda. Yet, if these stories are likely to contain a kernel of truth, they should not be taken at face value. As Hugues Legros put it: ‘ces récits doivent être considérés comme des “clichés”. Ils prennent la forme d’épisodes stéréotypés qui renvoient avant tout à la manière dont la société produit et pense son passé.’¹ Consequently, he continues, these stories should be thought of as ‘mythes de transfert’ which could refer to a ‘véritable migration, mais aussi à des transferts d’idéologie ou d’identité ou à des contacts politiques ou commerciaux entre deux régions.’² Similarly, Andrew Roberts points out that the main purpose of these myths ‘is not to record what really happened, but rather to explain and justify the customs and institutions of the present day’.³ In that sense they are meant to help to provide a sense of community and political identity more than they are meant to preserve the memory of real historical events. Undeniably all customs found in northern Zambia are suspiciously similar to those of the Lunda/Luba traditions. For one thing there is a great number of technical similarities ‘in the vocabulary of political institutions, and in the insignia of chieftainship, such as iron bells and bowstands, and wooden slit signals, or ‘talking drums’.⁴ But more importantly, there are many similarities in *political ideas*.

Luba political organisation is not well known and only a rough sketch can be drawn. The most important political idea of the Luba was their approach to kingship and authority. Luba kingship was based on the concept of *bulopwe*, an inborn and sacred quality which was vested in the blood – it was transmitted from father to son – and gave chiefs legitimacy as rulers.⁵ In addition, around the king was developed a form of government that combined a central government and some degree of decentralisation and flexibility in incorporating foreign leaders within its ranks. Of this system, tribute exchange and control of redistribution were cornerstones.⁶ Another important particularity of Luba history is the development of an ideology and institutions that were exported to clients all over the kingdom and which enabled the king to claim a degree of loyalty from them.⁷ In broad terms therefore, the main concepts introduced by the Luba were loosely centralised *kingship* and mechanisms of *integration* of alien groups in the Luba structure. In contrast to the Luba, the Lunda placed much less emphasis on royal blood as a qualification for political office. Instead they found ways of associating non-royal officials with the royal family and giving non-Lunda subjects key positions in the Lunda kingdom. This, they achieved thanks to two central concepts: one was the clear-cut distinction between rights in land and authority over men, and the other, the interacting notions of ‘positional succession’ and ‘perpetual kinship’.⁸ The notion of perpetual ‘kinship’ and the related custom of ‘positional succession’, perhaps the most important concept introduced by the Lunda, was the idea that a chief, or any other figure of authority, was considered a kin

¹ H. LEGROS, *Chasseurs d’Ivoire*, p.9.

² Ibid.

³ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.63.

⁴ Ibid, p.82.

⁵ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.74.

⁶ T.Q. REEFE, *The Rainbow and the Kings*, p.5.

⁷ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, pp.72-74.

⁸ E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.2; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.85.

of all other chiefs and figures of authority, regardless of their cultural or familial affiliations. In this way, when a chief or headman succeeded to a title, he regarded certain other title-holders as ‘father’, ‘brother’ or ‘son’, regardless of their actual relationship to him. Thus the Lunda kingdom consisted of a web of titled positions, linked in a hierarchy of perpetual kinship.¹ Secondly, an important feature of Lunda politics, which was in fact originally a Luba idea, was the clear distinction made between land and political chiefs. When a Lunda kingdom took over a territory, its chief might be left in control of his own chiefdom as an ‘owner of the land’ on condition of swearing allegiance to the higher authority of the Mwata Yamvo and paying him tribute. Whether peaceful or forcible, the integration of the various villages – or *Ngaand* – into the Lunda political network took the form of the dispatching to a given area of a political administrator, the *cilool*, whose primary role was that of a tax collector and who had no authority over the land itself.² Therefore, the chief of a local chiefdom, though nominally no longer the highest authority, could still in practice act as the absolute boss of his own domain. As a result, these two concepts, if made to work together, offered the opportunity to assimilate strange and distant group within Lunda society while minimising the possibility of conflict with local traditions. This made assimilation into the Lunda political and tributary network relatively easy to accept. In the words of Jean-Luc Vellut, extended Lunda society was an:

‘ensemble complexe où l’on peut distinguer deux niveaux d’organisation économique et politique : celui des communautés villageoises groupées autour de l’un ou l’autre lignage, parfois mais non nécessairement Lunda, et celui de la superstructure politique présente à des degrés divers dans tout l’empire, et dont l’expression la plus pure est la cour .’³

The kingdom of Kazembe is an illustration of the efficiency of these tactics. Between the mid-eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, all the peoples of the lower Luapula valley and the westernmost reaches of the easterly plateau were incorporated into the emerging kingdom of Kazembe.⁴ The important ethnic cleavages present within this territory created high potential for tension and the sheer size of the kingdom meant there was no means to enforce Kazembe’s authority, militarily or otherwise. Kazembe was essentially a conquest state, which made it necessary for its rulers to perform a ‘travail de légitimité’ or, in other words, to make Lunda overrule acceptable to local populations. To achieve this, the rulers of Kazembe drew on the Lunda cultural resources and elaborated ‘a complex set of institutions of peripheral rule’.⁵ Kazembe kings deployed representatives to their subjects, the *bacilolo*, whose job was to propagate Lunda government principles and symbols to their designated districts. The *bacilolo* expropriated Luapulan *bacilokwe* of their former right to allocate land to new villages and settlers but at the same time respected the original occupants of the valley as ‘owners of the land’, endowed with special ritual competences over their districts.⁶ In this way, as summarised by Cunnison, ‘wherever governors went, a system of communications and tribute was set up between the

¹ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.85.

² E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, pp.2-4.

³ J.L. VELLUT, ‘Notes sur les Lunda’, pp. 61-166 (70).

⁴ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.79.

⁵ Ibid, p.67.

⁶ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.91.

outlying capital and the metropolis (...) each district capital was a centre of Lundahood'.¹ In addition, the intruding Lunda also adopted the Bemba speech of their subjects, though Lunda survived as a court language,² while at the same time a the production and diffusion of a Lunda-centred history and ideology contributed to bind foreign rulers and subject peoples.³ In this way, despite its great extent, the kingdom of Kazembe achieved a greater measure of cohesion than its western Lunda counterpart. Its structure resembled that of Mwata Yamvo's but co-existed with, and contributed to, the continuing diversity among Kazembe's people.

The existence of such flexible structures explains the breadth that the Luba and Lunda influence was able to reach (by the nineteenth century, Lunda/Luba governmental patterns were disseminated over an area ranging from Angola to Malawi). In fact, the term 'empire' that is usually attached to the names of Luba and Lunda, is in itself misleading. 'Empire' implies the existence of clearly defined boundaries and a strong central state endowed with an equally strong state apparatus exercising tight control over its territory. In reality all Luba, Lunda or Lunda-ised states consisted rather of a nucleus which was tightly controlled by the central government, while in outlying provinces, the authority and power of the central government faded away more and more the farther one went from the centre. At some point one would reach a point far enough from the nucleus for Luba/Lunda hegemony to be more cultural than actual. And even the term of cultural hegemony, which I have just most consciously used, is to a large extent misleading. It would be erroneous to think of the origins of chieftainship, or any other custom or institution, simply, or exclusively, in terms of diffusion from somewhere else. As Roberts pointed out: 'however important outside influences may be, they are unlikely to take roots unless local conditions are favourable.'⁴ And indeed, the fact that even at the height of their power, the Lunda were not able to subject the few groups that challenged their authority – as was the case with the Kongo or Sala Mpasu in the north in the mid-nineteenth century – goes some way to show to what a great extent conquest depended on the acquiescence of the conquered.⁵

Therefore, we should think in terms not so much of invasion and conquest, but rather of newcomers acquiring authority by virtue of techniques and ideas which were found to be both attractive and adaptable. And attractive and adaptable Lunda governmental practices were indeed. So attractive and adaptable that Jan Vansina was able to argue that:

'The crucial event in the earlier history of central Africa has been not the creation of a Luba kingdom by Kongolo and Kalala Ilunga but the introduction of Luba principles of government into Lunda land under Cibinda Ilunga and their transformation by the Lunda. The new political pattern which evolved around 1600 in the Lunda capital could be taken over by any culture. Its diffusion was to condition

¹ I. CUNNISON, *The Luapula Peoples*, p.180.

² A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.96.

³ For more details on the mythological narrative that underpinned the cohesion of the Kazembe Kingdom, see Chapter 1 of D.M. GORDON, *Nachituti's Gift: Economy, Society and Environment in Central Africa* (Madison, 2006).

⁴ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.84.

⁵ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.162.

until 1850 the history and the general cultural evolution of a huge area. Even now its effects on the peoples of central Africa are still discernible.’¹

4. The Importance of Trade Networks

In her review of the excavations carried out at Sanga in 1991, Marianne Cornevin noted that ‘malheureusement la tradition orale se borne à transmettre des noms et, dans les meilleurs des cas, des événements d’ordre militaire ou politique; elle « oublie » les facteurs économiques qui sont généralement à l’origine des transformations socio-politiques.’² Yet, from other evidence, it appears that trade played a vital role in state expansion and cultural diffusion, and perhaps even in the emergence of specific types of state organisation. Trade, in central Africa, was plentiful, varied and operated at several levels. Vansina distinguishes three different types of trade: the local trade (from village to village within a given population); the regional trade (between culturally different peoples within a single state) and the long distance trade, which was introduced with the arrival of European traders in the fifteenth century.³ Richard Gray and David Birmingham, on the other hand, contend that it is difficult to distinguish the different phases of trade primarily on the basis of geographical scale or the distances and commodities involved. For if one tries to draw such distinctions, they contend, ‘the distinction between village and regional trade, defined by Vansina, becomes blurred right at the start.’⁴ Instead, it seems that all sorts of commodities were moving across large distances and being exchanged between all sorts of communities from an early stage. Therefore Gray and Birmingham prefer instead to distinguish ‘subsistence-oriented trade’ from ‘market-oriented trade’,⁵ which allow for flexibility of interaction between several types of trade. ‘In practice,’ they add, ‘the populations of central and eastern Africa lived in varying degrees of dependence on subsistence production and market exchange, and subsistence-oriented trade often continued to co-exist with an incipient, developing commerce.’⁶

1. PRE-LONG-DISTANCE TRADE IN CENTRAL AFRICA

It has too often been supposed that trade in Africa only began with the export of gold, ivory and slaves that was introduced by the Portuguese in the late fifteenth century.⁷ In reality, when the Portuguese arrived at the mouth of the Congo, they stumbled upon a developed and centralised commercial system, operating a complex currency system: the Kongo kingdom.⁸ The Kongo kingdom was by no means an isolated case. To many central African societies, including that of the Luba and Lunda, the Long-Distance trade was simply the latest stage of a long process of economic interaction between African societies. It has been noted, in the first section of this chapter, that archaeological evidence points at the existence, at least from the beginning of the

¹ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.97.

² M. CORNEVIN, *Archéologie africaine*, p.224.

³ J. VANSINA, ‘Long-Distance Trade-Routes in Central Africa’, pp.375-376.

⁴ R. GRAY & D. BIRMINGHAM, ‘Some Economic and Political Consequences of Trade in Central and Eastern Africa in the Pre-colonial Period’ in *Pre-Colonial African Trade*, p.2.

⁵ *Ibid.* p.3.

⁶ *Ibid.* p.5.

⁷ P.D. CURTIN, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, p.15.

⁸ J. THORNTON, ‘Early Kongo-Portuguese Relations’, p.183.

second millennium, of extended regional trade systems thanks to which subsistence and prestige goods travelled widely. In turn, this extended regional trade seems to have facilitated the appearance of a high degree of specialisation and a complex system of tribute.¹ What is more, the importance of certain commodities, such as iron and salt, may explain why the expansion of certain states took a specific axis or why certain states became more centralised than others. Katanga, where – perhaps not so incidentally – the comparatively highly centralised Luba state emerged, possessed three valuable raw materials that were in strong demand all over central Africa: iron, salt and copper, all highly-prized ‘prestige’ goods. It was thus no wonder that Katanga should be highly coveted. The eastwards expansion of the Lunda in the early eighteenth century and the related growth of the kingdom of Kazembe were in part determined by the ambition to secure access to the mineral resources of southern Katanga. At least, this is what is suggested by the fact that traditional accounts attribute great importance to the salt-producing district on the upper Lualaba River.² The salt-pans were located all around the Katanga lakes, and at Kiburi on the Upper Lualaba and Mwashya on the Upper Lufira. These were controlled first by the Mwata Yamvo, then by the Kazembe, whilst the salt and mineral mines north of the lake were under Luba control. From these Lunda and Luba strongholds, salt from the Mwashya and lake salt-pans was apparently exported to eastern Katanga.³ As it happens, the main deposits of copper were located in the same area, at Mwilu near the salt-pans of the Lualaba. The principal copper mines belonged to chief Katanga (after whom the province of Katanga was later named), and copper was exported in the form of bars or crosses, northwards, to the Luba, and southwards, to Kazembe.⁴ And indeed most of the copper found by archaeologists in Zambia came from Katanga,⁵ while the archaeological record of the Upemba Depression testifies to the northwards spread of the trade. In fact, as Vansina argues, the fact that copper was in use across the whole area suggests strongly that all of central Africa between the Kasai, the Zambezi and the great lakes had a single net of interlocking regional trade systems.⁶

2. THE LONG-DISTANCE TRADE IN CENTRAL AFRICA

The first European contact with African shores south of the equator was made when the Portuguese discovered the kingdom of Kongo in 1482. Trade started sometime after 1493,⁷ but it was not until the eighteenth century that the search for commodities such as gold, ivory and slaves was carried into the unknown country north of the middle Zambezi. By the 1650s, traders had reached Kasanje, the capital of the Imbangala near the upper Kwango. There traders exchanged European goods for ivory and slaves with the Imbangala, who themselves organised caravans to the capital of the Lunda kingdom, and vice-versa.⁸ Meanwhile, while contact

¹ T.Q. REEFE, *The Rainbow and the Kings*, pp.93-96; A. WILSON, ‘Long Distance Trade and the Luba Lomami Empire’, p.579.

² G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.44.

³ J. VANSINA, ‘Long-Distance Trade-Routes in Central Africa’, p.387.

⁴ Ibid, p.386.

⁵ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.104.

⁶ J. VANSINA, ‘Long-Distance Trade-Routes in Central Africa’, p.387.

⁷ J. THORNTON, ‘Early Kongo-Portuguese Relations’, p.183.

⁸ The western trade route occasionally bypassed the western Lunda kingdom, especially when Kasanje was replaced by Bihe, capitals of the Ovimbundu as main trading town in the West around 1850. By 1795 a new pattern of long-distance trade passing through Bihe, rather than Kasanje, was well established and extended as far as Cokweland, their direct neighbour, and made contact with the Lwena.

was established between the main Lunda kingdom and the Atlantic coast, Kazembe was already in contact with the eastwards trade route and the Indian Ocean. The Kazembe kingdom had been involved in long-distance trade since its inception in the earlier seventeenth century, collaborating for that purpose with neighbouring peoples, mainly the Bisa and the Yao. The Yao, who lived on the eastern side of Lake Malawi were by then well established as the leading African traders in east central Africa.¹ At the same time, from the moment Kazembe's suzerain had secured regular access to European goods, which happened around 1740, some of these were carried eastwards to Kazembe's capital on the Luapula, where they were exchanged for salt and copper. By the later eighteenth century, Kazembe was also sending slaves to Mwata Yamvo, who exported them northwards to the lower Congo. In this way then, the east and west trade routes linked up at Kazembe's and formed a single trade route that crossed the whole continent from east to west. The linking of the eastern and western trade routes was only made possible by the fact that the vast territories of the Lunda empire were connected by deeply ingrained tributary/trading networks and the fact that these were successfully recycled for the purpose of the long-distance trade. Since these tribute/trade routes also ran through the salt- and copper-producing districts of Katanga where they linked up with the regional networks of the Luba area,² these items were easily available for the international market. In this way, the two networks of economic exchanges interpenetrated and fed upon each other. If it is problematic to postulate a clear-cut separation between regional and long-distance trade, it is however probable that the incorporation of the former in the latter boosted the regional networks' capacity and reach and therefore stimulated the traditional economy.

3. TRADE AS CATALYST FOR CULTURAL AND POLITICAL EXPANSION

Trade seems to have had a fluctuating effect on, and a polyvalent relationship with, the politics of central Africa. The Bisa and the Yao, for instance, though they were eminently successful trading peoples, never created any centralised states.³ The kingdom of Kazembe and the main Lunda kingdom, on the other hand, are typical examples of important states that derived their strength from their commercial position. The Lunda empire grew to become one of Africa's main suppliers of slaves to the outside world in the eighteenth century while Kazembe was the strongest power to reckon with in southern Katanga and northern Zambia for most of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There are several factors that could explain this disparity, but the most significant one must be the nature of the commodity that was traded. The trade in minerals, in particular, probably required a high degree of organisation and control. Mining being a located activity, the trade to gold, copper, or salt mines could become the focal centre of rapidly growing economic and political power. This could explain the centralised quality of the Luba state.⁴ The extending regional trade did not foster further expansion of the Luba state, but it did lead to improved communication between peoples and polities, thereby

By 1835 they had reached Loziland (western Zambia), the southern Lunda states and Katanga. See J. VANSINA, 'Long-Distance Trade-Routes in Central Africa', pp.382-385.

¹ A. WILSON, 'Long Distance Trade and the Luba Lomami Empire', p.579; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, pp.109-110.

² J. VANSINA, 'Long-Distance Trade-Routes in Central Africa', p.382; T.Q. REEFE, *The Rainbow and the Kings*, pp.162-168.

³ R. GRAY & D. BIRMINGHAM, 'Some Economic and Political Consequences of Trade in Central and Eastern Africa in the Pre-colonial Period' in *Pre-Colonial African Trade*, p.13.

⁴ *Ibid*, p.16.

strengthening Luba authority in the region. In the case of the Luba therefore, trade and politics interacted, feeding upon one another.¹ Similarly, the growth of the Lunda kingdom did not take off until it was supported by a strong commercial network. The centralisation of the Mwata Yamvo's authority and the political expansion of Lunda influence mainly took place in the eighteenth century, which means that it coincided with the expansion of trade to the Atlantic Ocean.² It is easy to see how trade could be a channel for expansion and centralisation. Regional circuits were dependent upon, and limited by, the existing political structures. There were no regular markets, but the court of chiefs could serve as centres for redistributing the varied tributes levied from their subjects.³ Rulers usually tried to keep a tight monopoly on trade. In exchange for guaranteeing order and law on the routes and market, they levied transit tolls and market taxes⁴ from which they derived wealth and prestige. This wealth and prestige they invested in the strengthening of their political positions. The first Portuguese traders to come to see Kazembe's capital were impressed by the size and variety of the Mwata Kazembe's possessions and noticed that the latter 'was very generous at times in giving slaves and pieces of cloth to his vassals.'⁵ Most of these exotic goods obtained through trade constituted a capital which the king spent with a view to strengthening links of political subordination and patronage. Since cultural and political symbols were no doubt exchanged along with trading goods, the route joining the Lunda heartland and the Luapula River no doubt enhanced the prestige of the rulers of the kingdom of Kazembe and contributed to maintain them 'au sein des différentes communauté participant a la Grande Tradition Lunda.'⁶ Thus the dynamics of commerce and politics are hard to disentangle. The political history is very important for an understanding of the trade, while conversely the trade helps to explain certain relevant aspects of the political structures or even some actions of external politics, such as the seizing of a region where valuable materials were to be found. Not only did trade foster the establishment of a complex web of tributary networks but it also, at various points, served as catalyst for expansion.

5. The Crumbling of States (1840-1900)

After the middle of the nineteenth century the patterns of history in central Africa changed suddenly. Instead of the uniform succession of rulers at the head of a set of stable kingdoms semi-isolated in or around the vast Lunda Empire, there now appears a pattern of increased violence and instability. The origins for these new patterns must be sought in the fact that in the middle of the nineteenth century, the peoples of Zambia and Katanga were exposed to important changes both in the nature and direction of the region's external contacts. Previously, the main line of contact of the area with a wider world had taken the form of trade but those contacts

¹ T.Q. REEFE, *The Rainbow and the Kings*, p.102.

² Although the initial political impulses from Luba probably reached the Lunda country in the first half of the sixteenth century, and although some external trading may have begun at a similar period, the Lunda kingdom did not emerge as a structured state before 100 years after that. See R. GRAY & D. BIRMINGHAM, 'Some Economic and Political Consequences of Trade in Central and Eastern Africa in the Pre-colonial Period' in *Pre-Colonial African Trade*, p.20.

³ J. VANSINA, 'Long-Distance Trade-Routes in Central Africa', p.388; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.101.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.134.

⁶ J.L.VELLUT, 'Notes sur les Lunda', 61.

had mainly taken place through the intermediary of go-between groups. From 1840 onwards there was a variety of new external pressures, coming from both west and east, in the form of newcomers, some of whom turned out to be conquerors. Incidentally, this period of violent convulsions coincides with the beginnings of European exploratory interests in the region. By the time the first Europeans effectively worked towards effectual penetration, they encountered a different balance of power that had thus far existed. In 1800, there had been four main 'centres of authority' in central Africa: the main Luba kingdom, the main Lunda kingdom, the kingdom of Kazembe and the Lozi kingdom (a kingdom located on the upper Zambezi, in the West of what is now Zambia, which only had tenuous link with Mwata Yamvo¹). By 1900, all these kingdoms had, to all intents and purposes, fallen.

1. IN THE WEST: THE COKWE

The Cokwe are responsible for the overthrow of the traditional patterns of life in the western half of Katanga, in Kasai, and in the southern parts of the Kwango-Kasai area. In a very short period from about 1852 to 1887 they had overrun all the Lunda groups everywhere. Yet until 1850 they were almost unheard of.² They were originally a small group of nomadic peoples who lived near the headwaters of the Kwango, Kwilu and Kasai rivers. They had been engaged in hunting, collection and trading of ivory and wax, gun-running and other related activities under the political supervision of Lunda chiefs. In the process they had been extending their control over an ever-increasing area, their expansion following the lines of the trade routes on which they were active.³ By the mid-1860s advanced parties had penetrated deep into Kasai and the Cokwe were *en marche* in several directions. Within little more than a decade, they virtually controlled a large corridor extending as far north as Tshikapa (Kasai) and thus effectively cut off the Mwata Yamvo from the westernmost portions of his empire. The Cokwe expansion into the Lunda homeland proper began in the 1870s when they took advantage of the dynastic struggles among the Lunda aristocracy that were taking place at the time. While Lunda trade continued to expand, the Lunda king was facing the growing insubordination of Mdumba, the then *sanama* (governor of the southern Lunda provinces). Mdumba eventually had the Mwata Yamvo killed, took his place and, with this act, inaugurated a period of dynastic strife and violent convulsions. These culminated with the Cokwe invasions of 1885-1888, the complete collapse of the Lunda state, and the taking-over of its territory, capital and trade networks by the Cokwe.⁴

2. IN THE EAST: THE YEKE

At the same time as the Cokwe were advancing in the west, both the authority of the Luba king and what remained of the Mwata Yamvo's control over the Kazembe eastern domains were being shattered by the ruthless empire-building activities of a new group: the Yeke. Projected practically out of nowhere into the midst of the intricate web of kingdoms and chieftaincies that was Katanga at that time, the Yeke established a

¹ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, pp.96-99.

² J. VANSINA, 'Long-Distance Trade-Routes in Central Africa', p.384; J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.216.

³ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.216; E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.15.

⁴ E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, pp.15-18.

kingdom which, though short-lived – it existed from about 1856 to 1891 – became for a while the most powerful state in south-central Africa.¹ The Yeke were originally Nyamwezi traders who came to Katanga from their native northwestern Tanzania presumably to buy ivory to bring to the east coast.² By 1800, some Nyamwezi had already found their way to Kazembe's capital, and from the 1850s onwards, one of these Nyamwezi traders, Msiri, obtained permission to settle permanently in Katanga. Once the permission was granted, Msiri and a band of followers made alliances with local neighbouring chiefs and soon started to extort ivory from them, eventually seizing control of the copper mines. Msiri also established close trade relations with the traders of both east and west coasts, which allowed him to be constantly well supplied with firearms.³ Thus armed, Msiri's armies were able to incorporate all the possessions of Kazembe west of the Luapula into the new Yeke state between 1865 and 1871 while tribute collectors were placed next to all major Luba kings and chiefs.⁴ In this way, Msiri had obtained near absolute political power and a kingdom of his own. His was a new type of kingship, one that no longer rested on a ritual or magical underpinning but on commercial supremacy and military abilities, used to maintain a strong centralised and hegemonic state.⁵ From 1884 to 1887 Msiri was at the height of his power and his capital, Bunkeya, became a major centre of trade as well as a large urban agglomeration.⁶ For the Luba empire and what remained of the Kazembe kingdom, the growth of Msiri's conquest state was very bad news. Msiri had established his conquest state in southern Katanga, close to the southeastern frontier of the Luba empire, at a time when the Luba were coming under increased pressure from various sources. The Luba empire had not been seriously affected by the development of a world economy, for it was located too far in the interior to be touched directly by this trade before the nineteenth century.⁷ Yet international trade was the reason for the Luba kingdom's ultimate collapse as traders gradually chipped away at the empire's most distant client states. First, Arab-Swahili slave and ivory traders from the east African coast moved into the eastern regions of the Luba empire, as well as into its north-eastern frontier zone, undermining the authority of the centre in those areas. Then Ovimbundu slave and ivory traders coming from Angola did the same as they were penetrating the empire's heartland from the southwest.⁸ As a result of all these processes, by the time the first Belgian-led expeditions reached Luba in 1891, the empire's frontiers and heartland had already been dismembered.⁹ As for the Kazembe kingdom, it too entered into conflict with its greedy neighbours. Not only had the Yeke's invasion considerably reduced the territorial extent of the kingdom and effectively cut off Kazembe's links with the Mwata Yamvo and Angola, the remnants of Kazembe's territories were being further encroached upon by some of his former allies, trading partners or tributaries. In the northwest, Kazembe's access to copper and ivory started being challenged by the Luba kingdom, which in a last-ditch attempt for

¹ S. HEMPSTONE, *Katanga Report*, pp.22-23.

² A. WILSON, 'Long Distance Trade and the Luba Lomami Empire', p.581.

³ T.Q. REEFE, *The Rainbow and the Kings*, pp.172-180.

⁴ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, pp.230-234.

⁵ H. LEGROS, *Chasseurs d'ivoire*, p.197.

⁶ T.Q. REEFE, *The Rainbow and the Kings*, p.181.

⁷ H. LEGROS, *Chasseurs d'ivoire*, p.108.

⁸ A. WILSON, 'Long Distance Trade and the Luba Lomami Empire', p.587.

⁹ T.Q. REEFE, *The Rainbow and the Kings*, p.159.

survival, was seeking to obtain greater control over trading routes.¹ Meanwhile, to the south, the Bemba were also agitating. The Bemba, by contrast to other groups, had done very well out of the east African trade. Their infertile homeland had nothing to offer in terms of minerals or agricultural products but they hunted elephants and by 1880 they also exported slaves. This allowed the Bemba kingdom to become at once larger and more closely knit together by ties of royal kinship, thereby making it difficult for a weakened kingdom of Kazembe to prevent Bemba slave-raiders from encroaching upon the north-eastern plateau.² Thus the Kazembe kingdom, which in 1800 had been the most extensive and powerful in Zambia, had by 1870 been greatly reduced and its authority greatly diminished.³

3. *DISRUPTED AND YET NEVER SO INTERCONNECTED*

By 1890, practically the whole of central Africa had been drawn in some way into the world economy. For old kingdoms such as the Lunda's and Luba's, the result was disastrous as they found themselves seized between what Edouard Bustin calls 'the advancing tentacles of two giant exploitative systems reaching at them from opposite ends of the globe'.⁴ Yet, as was mentioned in the previous section, the long-distance trade had the effect of broadening, rather than weakening, the processes of interaction that were already in place, at least until the Yeke invasion of the late nineteenth century. Until the mid-nineteenth century, Katanga had still not been entirely integrated into long-distance networks, even if part of its economy and production had already taken an orientation that went far beyond pure subsistence economy. Commerce was dominated by salt and copper and was structured along two main routes: a north-south one dominated by the Luba kingdom, and a south-west one, dominated by Mwata Yamvo on the Atlantic side, and by Kazembe on the Indian side. Therefore, if Katanga had been introduced to international commerce, the latter only had a limited distribution in the interior as these three main axes worked quite independently from each other.⁵ In turn, the long-distance trade contributed to the intensification of contacts between the groups controlling these axes. The rulers of the Kazembe kingdom, although politically independent and well beyond the reach of the Mwata Yamvo, kept in constant communication with the Lunda heartland throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a fact that is certainly due in no small part to the long-distance trade. The Portuguese trader Caetano Pereira noted in 1796 that Mwata Kazembe III Lukwesa Ilunga continued to send tribute to his "father" in the form of slaves and copper from southern Katanga.⁶ As late as 1868, Mwata Kazembe VII Muonga Sunkutu planned to send a 'tribute of slaves' to his 'paramount chief, Matiamvo',⁷ while the latter reciprocated with a flow of trade items such as mirrors, cowries, and beads.⁸

¹ A. WILSON, 'Long Distance Trade and the Luba Lomami Empire', p.587.

² A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, pp.120-123.

³ E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.17.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ H. LEGROS, *Chasseurs d'ivoire*, pp.107-108.

⁶ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.43.

⁷ D. LIVINGSTONE (ed. H. Waller), *Last Journals of David Livingstone* (London, 1874) as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.43.

⁸ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.43.

The arrival of the Yeke had a profound impact on the way commerce and trade were approached in Katanga. The very foundation of the Yeke kingdom was commercial, and it actively participated in the long-distance trade. The Yeke connected their newly conquered region to all the international trading networks that were operating at the time in their original Tanzanian region and they tapped into the local exchange networks they stumbled upon to cultivate these connections. Through their settling in the Copperbelt region, they found themselves at the hinge of both east and west trade and progressively passed from the eastern zone of influence to the western one. In this way, they established the necessary connections between long-distance trade networks which, until then, had remained separate. Consequently Katanga found itself integrated into a structure essentially oriented towards the international market of which the long-distance trade was the principal component.¹ In the first phase of their occupation, which lasted from c.1855 to c.1870, the Yeke busied themselves co-opting traditional Katangese trade based on salt and copper. During that phase the copper trade expanded considerably. By 1867 the leading Bemba chiefs bought copper from visiting Yeke traders from Katanga. Thus north-eastern Zambia kept receiving copper, even though Kazembe had lost control of the Katanga copper trade by this time.² In the second phase of Yeke occupation, which culminated in the 1870s, copper was supplanted by slaves and ivory. These new products imposed new constraints which were diametrically opposed to those imposed by the copper trade. Mobility became more important than localisation. To hunt for slaves and ivory required the availability of great stretches of land in which there was no political, social or economic opposition to tackle. Unsurprisingly therefore, the adoption of the ivory and slave trade by the Yeke coincides with their expansionary thrust in the 1870s.³ Resulting the growth of the international trade and the arrival of intruders, therefore competition to capture or retain the lucrative new trade increased and many regions were brought in closer touch. The long-distance trade acted as a magnifier for cultural, political and economic exchanges of all kinds across the continent. This phenomenon led Andrew Roberts to argue that the later nineteenth century saw:

‘a marked expansion in the scale of social and political relations, in so far as peoples were drawn into the structures of larger kingdoms, and came within the orbit of long-distance trade. (...) Ideas and skills circulated widely. (...) The lines of division between peoples were less marked than ever before; their political and cultural identities were increasingly merged in wider groupings. Yet there was no single focus for such imitation and assimilation; instead there were a number of different spheres of influence, which were linked to the outside world by routes which led in all directions.’⁴

Conclusion

It is almost a truism at this point to say that a lot more research will be needed before any historian can hope to sketch a more precise picture of pre-colonial central African history. But several factors can be inferred

¹ H. LEGROS, *Chasseurs d'ivoire*, pp.109-118.

² A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.145.

³ H. LEGROS, *Chasseurs d'ivoire*, pp.123-124.

⁴ Ibid.

from what *is* known, not the least of which being the fact that virtually all inhabitants of the studied region share many cultural ties whose origins stretch back centuries. All the available evidence, in any form, points to that fact. Archaeological research shows that the area that is nowadays bisected by the Katanga-Zambia boundary has been occupied from an early date. The Upemba Depression, especially, bears witness to the early developments of chieftainship, as well as the wide diffusion of cultural and commercial exchanges. Unfortunately, there is only so much that archaeology can tell us, and, on its own, it is certainly not enlightening when it comes to the sketching of a timeline of events. A considerable amount of research has been undertaken on the oral traditions relating to the kingdoms that flourished in this area but it is not easy to correlate these results with those obtained by archaeologists. Many ‘tribal histories’ or ‘myths’ exist in Katanga and Zambia, most of which describe how a ‘tribe’ was founded by an adventurers (or several) arriving from Luba or Lunda country. However, there are limits to what can be inferred from genesis myths. Mythical stories of origins and migration are often to be interpreted as exactly that: mythical stories. They should not be taken as narratives about historical events and characters, nor can they automatically be taken to indicate the routes of previous population movements, however plausible they might sound. A story of founding individuals migrating from Katanga may well be true in so far as it reflects the spread of peoples and ideas from that region, but it may also well telescope into a single episode events and processes which spanned decades or even centuries.

By the eighteenth century, in the area occupied by the Luba and Lunda in Katanga and Zambia, several ‘larger’ kingdoms had emerged or were in the process of doing so. Prominent among those, in both size and sphere of influence, were the Luba kingdom, the Lunda kingdom of Mwata Yamvo, and the kingdom of Kazembe. It is tempting to interpret the history of these kingdoms as a long process of the extension of their domination and a balance of power between them. However this interpretation simply does not square with the evidence. As Vansina argues convincingly: ‘There was no balance of power, there was no over-all domination of one state, there was no dichotomy between the states in a system of alliances – in other words, the area was not one supranational field for power competition.’¹ The Luba, Lunda and Kazembe kingdoms were not really ‘kingdoms’ in the sense that they were not endowed with clear boundaries nor with a ruler with all-encompassing authority over his lands and subjects. The expansion of these states was more cultural than imperialistic. This is not to say, however, that there was no formal system of interaction between different groups, nor that there was never any rivalry between them for a piece of land or access to certain resources. From the early Iron Age onwards, trade had become an important feature of the region’s landscape. The tools, weapons, and basic condiments of many homesteads were often indirectly obtained from an area far beyond the social and political horizons of the peoples that used them. The growing importance of trade soon took on a political dimension as ‘prestige’ goods were increasingly imbued with symbolism and used in the perpetuation or strengthening of relations of subordination. At the same time, their wide circulation made sure that increasingly wider regions of central Africa were put into contact. For this reason the trade routes help to explain the great cultural similarities between different peoples of the savanna south of the equatorial forest;

¹ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.155.

with the goods travelled customs and ideas. But the trade routes are only partly responsible for this phenomenon. Migration and political expansion also account for such similarities, at least in part. The phenomenon cannot be understood if one of these two aspects is taken out. As a result, as Vansina continues, ‘boundaries between the states were vague, sometimes even overlapping, and there was little conflict of power between the states (...) Yet (...) they shared common cultural and economic ties and probably influenced each other in other respects than purely political ones.’¹ Even the disruptions and violence of the nineteenth century did not really change this logic of flexible interaction that had existed for centuries. If anything, the Atlantic and Indian trades could even be credited with the broadening and quickening of those exchange processes. Even the short passage of the Yeke, with extremely centralised kingship based on the military control of people and territory, did not change the essentials of the regional dynamics that existed. The Cokwe, for their part, did not even bother to alter the organisation of the Lunda kingdom, limiting themselves to replacing the Lunda ruling aristocracy with their own. So, if early central African history remains confusing, tangled and at times quite simply obscure, the picture that emerges is one of constant movement for the earlier centuries and one of a complex mosaic of states with adaptable organisations and flexible interrelations for later ones. It is certainly not one of hegemonic domination by one dictatorial state. Neither is it that of a tight web of kingdoms united in their fight against intruders, as was promoted by Tshombe.

But, in the meantime, elsewhere, the mechanisms of conquest were already working, ticking... in the shadowy corridors of a Berlin palace. While these developments were taking place in central Africa, and without the knowledge of its inhabitants, statesmen gathered in Berlin had partitioned a land which only a handful of white men had ever seen. And later, in the early twentieth century, when the Lunda were finally able to retrieve their homeland from the Cokwe invaders, the ‘splendour’ of the old Lunda kingdom could not be restored. For that part of central Africa had acquired new masters.

¹ J. VANSINA, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, p.156.

CHAPTER 2

The Division

Between November 15, 1884 and February 26, 1885, representatives of all the major European powers, the Ottoman Empire and the United States, attended a conference held in Berlin. The purpose of the Berlin Conference was to lay down the rules for European partition of the African continent, or the ‘gigantesque gâteau africain’ as King Leopold II of the Belgians colourfully put it.¹ It was also where and when the contours of what would become the infamous Congo Free State were defined. It was decided the territory should incorporate the entire Congo River basin, which made a territory of some two million square kilometres the property of one man: Leopold II.² The Berlin Conference was immediately followed by a period of rapid invasion, occupation, and colonisation of African territories by European powers. Some thirty years after the end of the Conference, the final political boundaries of colonial Africa emerged while most pre-existing forms of African autonomy and self-governance had been eliminated. This period of heightened colonial activity became known as the ‘scramble for Africa’. According to Andrew Roberts, this comparatively sudden desire for African colonies can be seen as ‘the result of two distinct but converging processes: growing rivalry among the major states of Europe as they became fully industrial powers, and their increasing need for cheap raw materials from the tropical worlds’.³ The partitioning of Africa therefore was to be dictated by the presence of resources and scant regard was paid to the continent itself or its inhabitants. This particular fact was often the object of ‘dinner jokes’ among European statesmen. Lord Salisbury, at the occasion of a lecture he gave in 1890 at the Royal African Society, observed in jest that:

‘We are engaged in drawing up maps where no white man ever trod; we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by a small impediment that we never know exactly where the mountains and rivers were.’⁴

And indeed, J.W. Donaldson argues in his comprehensive study of the demarcation of the Anglo-Belgian boundary that boundary demarcation, which was by no means a systematic or standardised process, was instead ‘contingent on the way territory itself was perceived by the imperial powers who claimed sovereignty, most importantly through economic lenses’.⁵ As we saw in the previous chapter, Katanga and Zambia were being drawn, during the late nineteenth century, into a number of external spheres of influence: the Yeke, the Arabs and Swahili, the Portuguese, to name only a few. All of these ‘intruders’ had come to this area of the world in search for resources, mainly ivory and minerals. European interest in the same area was sparked for no other reason. In other words, to understand the motivation behind the drawing of the border between the Congo Free

¹ J. STENGERS, ‘Leopold II and the Association Internationale du Congo’ in F. FORSTER, W.J. MOMMSEN and R. ROBINSON (eds.), *Bismarck, Europe and Africa: The Berlin Conference*, pp.229-246.

² J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.100.

³ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.149.

⁴ H.S. WILSON, *The Imperial Experience in Sub-Saharan Africa*, p.95.

⁵ J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.96.

State and Northern Rhodesia, one must take two aspects in consideration: the wider scene of European interests and rivalries in Africa south of the Equator on the one hand, and the growth of British and Belgian interests in this specific region on the other. This chapter presents the story of that division and will explore the motivations and methods by which the partition of colonial Africa, both on paper and in reality, was constructed. It will be seen that the presence of copper played a pivotal role throughout the entire process.



Fig. 1. Leopold II, King of the Belgians from 1865 to 1909.

1. The Scramble

British interest in central Africa was first aroused by David Livingstone's *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*. In this account of his journey across Africa from 1853 to 1856, Livingstone made several references to the copper wealth of Katanga, describing the use of copper rings as ornaments by both men and women who were 'otherwise in a state of frightful nudity'.¹ A few years later, in 1873, the explorer Verney Lovett Cameron noted that:

'Copper is found in large quantities in Katanga and for a considerable distance to the westward (...) The natives too know of the gold, but it is soft and they did not value it, preferring the red copper to the white.'²

But the mineral wealth of Katanga was in great part popularised –one could use the word 'mythologised'– by the Plymouth Brethren missionaries. One of them, Frederick Stanley Arnot, was the first westerner to dwell for an extended period of time in Bunkeya³ and in 1889, he published the story of his 5-years long stay in the Yeke kingdom under the title: *Garenganze or Seven Years Pioneer Mission Work in Central Africa*. Arnot's *Garenganze* paints an almost idyllic picture of Katanga, thereby contributing considerably to consolidating all

¹ D. LIVINGSTONE, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, p.276.

² V.L. CAMERON, *Across Africa*, pp.475-476.

³ For a detailed description of Arnot's stay in Msiri's kingdom and the impact of the Plymouth Brethren missionaries on the latter, see R.I. ROTBERG, 'Plymouth Brethren and the Occupation of Katanga, 1886-1907' in *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1964).

the rumours that already existed on the subject. Arnot describes Msiri's welcome as 'hearty',¹ the sights of mountains and rivers in Katanga as 'majestic',² the 'amount of peace and quietness that reigns' over the kingdom as 'remarkable'³ and also notes that 'copper, salt, ivory and slaves' are available in abundance in Bunkeya.⁴ The publication of Arnot's book fuelled growing interest for Katanga in Great Britain, where an image of Katanga as a new 'El Dorado', overflowing with ivory, copper and gold, was gaining momentum. As a result, many in governing circles were keen to see it integrated within the British sphere of influence.⁵ The General Act of the Berlin Conference and the 'Declaration of Neutrality of the Independent State of Congo' that followed, had made Katanga an integral part of the Congo Free State, which although it was recognised as a sovereign state, was ostensibly run by King Leopold II who privately funded its administration.⁶ The fact that Katanga was officially an integral part of Leopold's territory did not dampen British enthusiasm since one of the principal stipulations of the Berlin Conference General Act was that sovereignty over an area of Africa could only be claimed through 'effective occupation'. 'Effective occupation' meant the presence of government officials, missions, traders, settlers etc, none of which the Congo Free State could claim to have in Katanga in 1885. Up to then any right claimed by the Congo Free State over Katanga existed mainly on paper. Consequently if some British adventurer was to plant the British flag in these regions, not only would his action be legal, it could also establish a title that it would have been no easy matter for Leopold II – or anyone else for that matter – to dispute.⁷

In its quest for Katanga's treasures, Great Britain found a powerful torchbearer in the person of Cecil Rhodes, a millionaire turned Empire-Builder. Rhodes, who had originally travelled to South Africa for his health, soon became aware of the profits that could be made from prolonging his stay in this part of the world. His rise was meteoric; by the 1880s, he dominated the South African diamond industry,⁸ and in 1890, he was prime minister of the Cape colony.⁹ The wealth that he accumulated thanks to his South African ventures soon allowed Rhodes to pursue still greater power, both financial and political. He had a vision of British expansion northward for which he had two main incentives. For one thing he was spurred by his infamous 'Cape to Cairo' dream: he wanted to contribute to the expansion of the British Empire by planting the British flag right across Africa, from the Cape to Cairo.¹⁰ For another he also wanted to extend his control of African mineral resources, which he knew to be present further north. In 1887 he invested heavily in gold mines on the Rand, which turned out badly, but he did succeed in securing access to the goldfields north of the Limpopo river, in what is now

¹ F.S. ARNOT, *Garenganze or Seven Years Pioneer Mission Work in Central Africa*, p.175.

² Ibid, p.176.

³ Ibid, p.193.

⁴ Ibid., p.235.

⁵ H. LEGROS, *Chasseurs d'ivoire*, p.138.

⁶ J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.101.

⁷ H.M. HOLE, *The Making of Rhodesia*, p.249; B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, p.16. For a more detailed discussion on the legal basis on which a new contestant could have claimed Katanga, see H. LEGROS, *Chasseurs d'ivoire*, p.139.

⁸ By 1888, Rhodes had obtained complete control of Kimberley. A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.156.

⁹ H. POWDERMAKER, *Copper Town*, p.55.

¹⁰ E.L. BERGER, *Labour, Race and Colonial Rule*, p.3; H. POWDERMAKER, *Copper Town*, p.55; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.156.

Zimbabwe.¹ In addition to the 'second Rand' he was hoping to find in that territory, Rhodes was rather keen to lay his hands on Katanga's famed copper.² In 1889 Rhodes created the *British South Africa Company* (BSAC) and was able to persuade the British government to grant a 'Royal Charter of Incorporation' to his newly formed company. By virtue of this charter, Rhodes was allowed to use the authority of the British government to stake out claims to territory in the interior at the expense of other European powers. Once these territories were secured, the BSAC was to undertake the supervision of their finance and administration on behalf of the British government in return for extensive economic privileges. This was to be achieved through the signing of treaties of 'protection' with African rulers, the stipulations of which would also determine the precise limits of the British 'zone of influence'.³ In other words, the Charter of the *British South Africa Company* did not specify a northern limit to the Company's area of operation.⁴ Within months of Rhodes obtaining the charter for his company, the Congo Free State and the chartered Company were engaged in a headlong race for Katanga. Rhodes, especially, had no time to lose. Not only was the mineral wealth of the country well known and coveted, but every delay increased the risk of the Belgians, Germans and Portuguese sealing off the British possessions from expansion to the north.⁵ If his 'Cape to Cairo' dream was ever to come true, Rhodes urgently needed to press his company's claims as far north as possible. In 1890 Rhodes sent out a number of expeditions to forestall the advances of Leopold and the Portuguese. Three of these were concerned to secure territory north of the Zambezi as far as Katanga. In August 1890, Johnston, Rhodes's ally and the British consul in Mozambique, entrusted a man named Alfred Sharpe with the task to travel to Katanga and make treaties with the principal African leaders whom he would come across along the way.⁶ Sharpe reached Bunkeya in November of the same year but failed to reach an agreement with Msiri, whom Arnot had warned, not without ground, against concession-hunters.⁷ Reportedly, the proposal to 'sign papers (...) was the cause of a fit of anger on the part of Mshidi'.⁸ Despite his lack of success with the Yeke king, Sharpe did however establish satisfactory treaties over the whole of the districts between the lakes Nyasa, Tanganyika and Mweru, and had thus added to the British flag the major part of what would be North-Eastern Rhodesia.⁹ Most importantly Sharpe had secured the inclusion of the eastern half of the Kazembe Kingdom within the British sphere of influence by signing treaties with the then Kazembe Kanyembo Ntemena, who hoped for British support against Lunda rebels and their ally Msiri. Through the two treaties he signed with Sharpe, Kanyembo promised to remain at peace with 'the subjects of the Queen of England' and to respect their freedom of movement and

¹ This was known as the Rudd Concession. See A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, pp.156-157.

² F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, p.1; G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.162.

³ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.157; G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.161.

⁴ The company's sphere of operations was defined as the 'region of South Africa lying immediately to the north of British Bechuanaland and to the north and west of the Portuguese Dominions'. See F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, p.2; E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.38.

⁵ The Portuguese were active in Angola and Mozambique; the newly formed Congo Free State technically belonged to Leopold II; and the Germans were claiming East Africa. See A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, pp.156-159; F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, p.1.

⁶ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.162.

⁷ H.M. HOLE, *The Making of Rhodesia*, p.245.

⁸ Sharpe to Johnston, March 4 1891, encl. in Johnston to FO, May 6 1891, PRO, FO 84/2114 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.162.

⁹ H.M. HOLE, *The Making of Rhodesia*, p.246.

trade¹ and pledged to acknowledge the British jurisdictional superiority.² In virtue of the agreement, the BSAC acquired exclusive mining rights within the king's territory and a series of related economic prerogatives. In return, the Company undertook to 'protect the said King and nation from all outside interference or attacks.'³ Meanwhile, neither of the two envoys that Rhodes had sent to the upper Zambezi managed to reach Katanga but secured a series of other treaties. Frank Lochner signed a treaty with the Lozi king, Lewanika, thereby securing what would be North-Western Rhodesia. Rhodes' third envoy, the explorer of East Africa Joseph Thomson, had to turn back before going anywhere near the Yeke king because of the bouts of smallpox he and his porters were plagued with. He collected instead treaties from various chiefs among the Bisa, Aushi, Lamba, Lenje and Lala.⁴ In this way, Thomson's expedition, which could be described as failed but by no means fruitless, had linked up the districts secured by Sharpe with outskirts of Lewanika's possessions.⁵

As for Leopold II, he too had been shocked into a sudden sense of urgency. The granting of a royal charter to the *British South Africa Company* with powers of government over a huge area and with a northern limit left undefined, had revealed the full scope of the threat to the Congo Free State's southeastern portion. Leopold II was now aware he was facing a formidable opponent. In Edouard Bustin's words: 'The stakes were Katanga, the adversary was Cecil Rhodes – and behind Cecil Rhodes was Great Britain.'⁶ Therefore he made strenuous efforts to convert his paper sovereignty into a real one. Immediately after Sharpe's departure, a strong expedition was despatched to Msiri from the Upper Congo under Lieutenant Paul Le Marinel. Le Marinel failed to sign a treaty.⁷ A second venture under the command of M. Delcommune early in 1891 suffered a similar fate. The third expedition, led by an officer of the British army, Captain William Grant Stairs, led to a violent argument at the end of which Msiri was shot dead by one of the expedition's members.⁸ When Msiri died his tribute and trade empire disintegrated almost instantly,⁹ leaving a power vacuum that was seized on by Leopold's men.¹⁰ In this way, after more than two years and six expeditions (three Belgian and three British), it became obvious that Rhodes had lost the race to the mineral wealth of Katanga. It had irrevocably fallen in the grip of King Leopold, and by extension the Belgian state to whom the Congo was eventually handed over in 1908. Nonetheless the bickering over border issues however was far from over.

¹ Treaty between Kanyembo Ntemena and the BSAC, Appendix to Sharpe to Johnston, March 4 1891, encl. in Johnston to FO, 6 May 1891, PRO, FO84/2114 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.162.

² BSAC to FO, 5 August 1892, FO Print 6337, p. 342, as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.163.

³ Ibid.

⁴ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.159; H.M. HOLE, *The Making of Rhodesia*, pp.245-249.

⁵ H.M. HOLE, *The Making of Rhodesia*, p.252; Northern Rhodesia Mineral Rights (Copperbelt), 1949, PREM 8/1066 (Kew).

⁶ E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.41.

⁷ Le Marinel was however allowed to establish a small military post nearby. See, R.I. ROTBERG, 'Plymouth Brethren and the Occupation of Katanga', p.292.

⁸ The argument pertained to the fact that Msiri was only willing to accept an English banner, not the flag of the Congo Free State. Stairs nevertheless planted his flag on a high hill overlooking Bunkeya and ordered Msiri to 'obey the white men'. Thereupon a physical altercation erupted between Msiri and Stairs' envoy Captain Bodson ending with Bodson shooting Msiri and Bodson himself being mortally wounded by one of Msiri's bodyguards. See R.I. ROTBERG, 'Plymouth Brethren and the Occupation of Katanga', pp.292-293.

⁹ D.M. GORDON, 'Owners of the Land and Lunda Lords', p.320.

¹⁰ H.M. HOLE, *The Making of Rhodesia*, pp.249-250; J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.103; B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, p.17.

2. *The Demarcation of the Border*

Once the British had staked out claims to exclusive rights over central Africa, they now had to secure the agreement of other European powers. This, they obtained between 1890 and 1894 through a series of international treaties which largely determined the present borders of present-day Zambia. In 1890 Britain and Germany, who then ruled what is today Tanzania, settled their various differences.¹ In 1891 Britain concluded a treaty with the Portuguese, which gave birth to Mozambique and Angola.² Negotiations for the border with Katanga proved considerably trickier. It also proved to be a considerably longer process. Negotiations over the Belgian-Congo/Northern Rhodesia border spanned three decades, and spurred the appointment of two international commissions, numerous survey teams, the signing of several agreements, while the proximity of an utterly artificial border generated constant tension between British and Belgian officials.

1. *THE 1894 AGREEMENT*

Although Kazembe continued to resist BSAC administration occasionally until 1899, by 1890 the BSAC and British government presumably felt that their claim to sovereignty over Kazembe's Lunda kingdom was strong enough to negotiate a bilateral boundary treaty with the Congo Free State.³ In reality, at the time when these negotiations were taking place, the major kingdoms along the border of the BSAC's newly acquired northern territories – including the Lozi, the Bemba and Kazembe – had not yet yielded to European authority.⁴ Notwithstanding, in 1890 the BSAC made an informal agreement whereby their border with the Congo Free State was to run eastwards along the Zambezi-Congo watershed up to the exit of the Luapula from lake Bangweolu. This was given sanction by the Anglo-Belgian boundary settlement of May 12, 1894. This treaty defined the boundary as follows:

‘The frontier between the Independent Congo Free State and the British sphere to the North of the Zambezi shall follow a line running direct from the extremity of Cape Akalunga on Lake Tanganyika, situated at the Northernmost point of Cameron bay at about 8° 15' South Latitude, to the right bank of the river Luapula, where this river issues from lake Moero [Mweru]. This line shall then be drawn directly to the entrance of the river into the lake, being however deflected towards the South of the lake so as to give the Island of Kilwa to Great Britain. It shall then follow the thalweg of the Luapula up to its issue from lake Bangweolo [Bangweolu]. Thence it shall run southwards along the meridian of Longitude of the point where the river leaves the lake to the Watershed region between the Congo and the Zambezi, which it shall follow until it reaches the Portuguese frontier.’⁵

¹ According to the treaty, the frontier between German East Africa and the British sphere ran more or less directly from the south end of lake Tanganyika to the north end of lake Malawi. The same treaty met the German request for access to the Zambezi from South-West Africa by allowing them the ‘Caprivi Strip’ along the Chobe river. See A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.161.

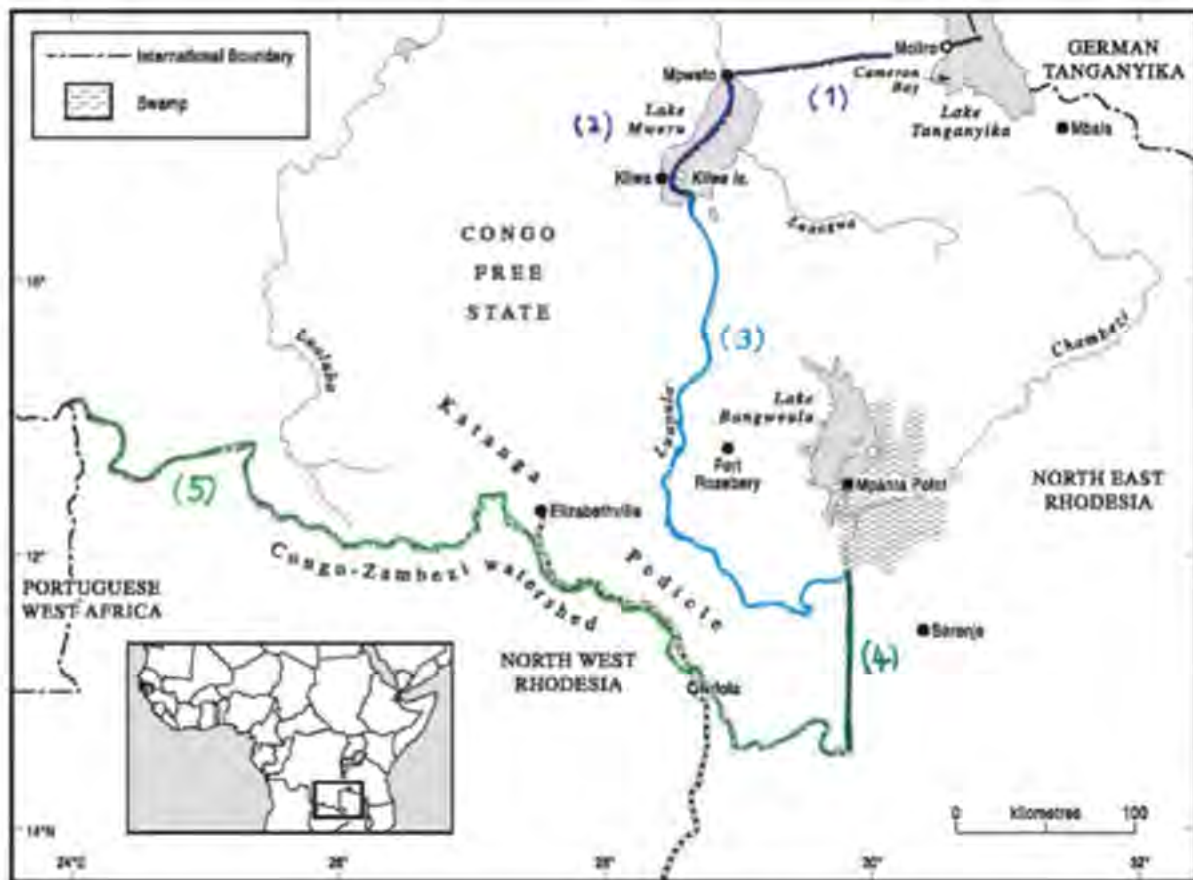
² B. FETTER, *Colonial Rule and Regional Imbalance in Central Africa*, p.84.

³ J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.103.

⁴ B. FETTER, *Colonial Rule and Regional Imbalance in Central Africa*, p.84.

⁵ E.R.L. PEAKE, ‘Northern Rhodesia-Belgian Congo Boundary’, p.263.

This geographical jargon should not obscure the actual simplicity of the border's outline. To put it in simpler terms, the boundary effectively comprised five distinct sections: (1) the Mweru-Tanganyika strip; (2) Mweru Lake; (3) the Luapula River; (4) the Mpanta Meridian Section; (5) the Congo-Zambezi Watershed Section.



Map 1. Belgian Congo-Northern Rhodesia Boundary in 1894

The boundary defined in the 1894 Anglo-Congolese treaty was nearly identical to the territorial limits outlined in 1885.¹ The real novelty lay in the fact that the 1894 treaty provided binding *de jure* delimitation of a linear, fixed and bilaterally agreed boundary between two recognised sovereigns. Perhaps the most important effect of this border agreement was to create the 'Katanga pedicle', a long arm of Congo territory which effectively split the upper part of the BSAC territory, from then on known as Northern Rhodesia, into two sections. This would hamper transport and communication between the eastern and western areas of the Company's sphere.² While the 1894 Anglo-Belgian treaty established a legal territorial boundary, known only to those very few in power, it was far from a reality on the physical landscape. There was no visible mark on the ground that could have indicated to the people living on either side of that imaginary (as well as poorly defined) line that they were now members of different countries.

¹ The only differences between the boundary outlined in 1885 and that outlined in 1894 were the specification of the section between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Mweru, the deflection around Kilwa island in Lake Mweru and the naming of the Luapula river as the watercourse uniting Lakes Mweru and Bangweulu. See J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.104.

² J.W. DONALDSON, 'Pillars and Perspective', p.473; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.162.

2. *THE FIRST ANGLO-BELGIAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION (1911-1914)*

Once the border was positioned, there was little European activity or administrative control along the Anglo-Congolese boundary prior to 1900. Problems arising from both this lack of presence and the artificiality of the new territories' delineation, though sporadically reported, did not gain much attention. A handful of reports in 1903 suggested there were administrative problems identifying villages along the boundary when Northern Rhodesian villages near the border were raided by Congo Free State Police.¹ In April 1907 a local Congo Free State official accused the British assistant magistrate of the Serenji district south of Lake Bangweulu of harassing several local chiefs on the Congolese side of the boundary.² In this way, uncertainty as to the actual boundary position became increasingly problematic for local administrators in the border areas, as each side accused the other of territorial violations. Yet, until the summer of 1910, government attention to this issue remained almost non-existent. On June 28, 1910 the BSAC made a dramatic appeal to the Colonial Office:

‘Mr. [L.A.] Wallace [acting administrator of North Western Rhodesia and former surveyor general] states that it is particularly desirable that frontiers which are described as parallels of latitude and meridians, or as straight lines between known points, should be demarcated and beacons since until this is done it is impossible for officials of the Administrations concerned to know with any accuracy the limits of their respective territories. Uncertainty as to boundaries is liable at any time to cause friction between neighbouring administrations, and the existence of considerable areas which must be regarded as debatable territory has a tendency to unsettle the minds of the natives who inhabit these districts.’³

The British Foreign Office contacted the Belgian Foreign Ministry on July 26, 1910 and, after discussions, an Anglo-Belgian Boundary Commission was appointed in 1911. The commission was composed of five officers and five non-commissioned officers on both sides and was given the task of surveying and demarcating as accurately as possible the parts of the Belgian Congo-Northern Rhodesia boundary that were subject to contention.⁴ The commission was instructed to survey a width of 10 km along the full length of the boundary, but only demarcate the watershed section (5) since the government were still negotiating potential adjustments in other places, particularly the meridian section (4) and the Mweru-Tanganyika section (1). Along the watershed, the commission was to erect ‘at such spots as the Commissioners shall deem necessary of beacons indicating the direction of the frontier line adopted.’⁵ By the time the commission's work was interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War, the commission had conducted enough triangulation and survey work to produce maps covering much of the boundary. But they had failed to complete demarcation of the easternmost

¹ Reports to R. Coddington on raids by the Congo Free State Police, 1903, NRA 3/3/1 Vol. I (NAZ). as quoted in J.W. DONALDSON, ‘Pillars and Perspective’, p.474.

² Letter E. Wangernicé to Codrington, 4 April 1907, NRA 3/3/1 vol. II 3950 (NAZ) as quoted in J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.109.

³ Letter from D.E. Brodie BSAC to Under Secretary of State CO, 28 June 1910, NRA 1/4/4/3 3936 (NAZ).

⁴ J.W. DONALDSON, ‘Pillars and Perspective’, p.475; M. MUSAMBACHIME, ‘The Influence of Copper Ores in Delimiting the Rhodesia-Congo Boundary’, pp.16-17.

⁵ H.W. Just, Letter to the BSAC, dated 29 March 1911 accompanying a translation of the Belgian Memorandum on the delimitation of frontiers 30 March 1911, A SEC 3 291 (NAZ).

portion of the watershed while the Mweru-Tanganyika and the Meridian sections had, as planned, only been topographically surveyed but not demarcated.¹ This caused little concern among British government officials. The Director of Military Operations, Major General Wilson, had commented to the Colonial Office in May 1914 that the 'country [where demarcation was not precisely undertaken] is uninhabited and covered with bush. It cannot be a matter of great importance to define the boundary on the ground with great exactness.'²



Fig. 2. One of the 1913 boundary marks on top of an ant hill

And indeed, to anyone standing on the ground, even right next to one of the 46 pillars erected between 1911 and 1914, the exact position of the boundary would have been impossible to visualise.³ According to J.W. Donaldson, 'the work of the 1911-1914 Anglo-Belgian Boundary commission along the Belgian Congo-Northern Rhodesia boundary was indicative of other inter-colonial boundary commissions across southern Africa at the time, in that rigorous demarcation was much less a priority than survey and mapping.'⁴ This tendency to prioritise mapping over demarcating was symptomatic of the overall development of geographical knowledge as a tool of the British Empire. The boundary could only be known by those who possessed and could read the maps on which it was inscribed. In that reading, mapping and gaining cartographic knowledge of the Belgian Congo-Northern Rhodesia boundary was a sufficient expression of sovereignty, known and recognised by the neighbouring imperial powers. In that sense, the drawing of African boundary might be

¹ E.R.L. PEAKE, 'Northern Rhodesia-Belgian Congo Boundary', p.263.

² War Office, memo to H. Lambert (Colonial Office) dated 16 May 1914, NRA 1/1/13 (NAZ) as quoted in J.W. DONALDSON, 'Pillars and Perspective', p.476.

³ E.R.L. PEAKE, 'Northern Rhodesia-Belgian Congo Boundary', p.266.

⁴ J.W. DONALDSON, 'Pillars and Perspective', p.477.

identified as the pinnacle of what John Pickles has called ‘cartographic hubris’ whereby maps facilitated the domination of the interests of a few over many.¹

3. THE SECOND ANGLO-BELGIAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION (1927-1933)

Once the First World War was over, it became increasingly obvious that the vagueness of the border outline continued to create embarrassment on the ground. The pedicle was a particularly bothersome nuisance in that it impeded the increasing transport and communication between the eastern and western halves of Northern Rhodesia territory.² As a result, the BSAC continued, largely unsuccessfully, to lobby the British government to make adjustments to the boundary. The all-powerful Belgian Company *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* was similarly dissatisfied with the work of the first Anglo-Belgian Boundary Commission. As a company expanding quickly, it was crucial for its directors to know the extent of the territory on which they could prospect. At the same time, the BSAC gave license to prospecting companies, such as the *Rhodesia Congo Border Concession Limited* (RCBC Ltd), to investigate the Northern Rhodesian side. As prospecting work progressed along the watershed section of the border (5), the RCBC Ltd found it increasingly difficult to locate the boundary between the Congo and Northern Rhodesia. The boundary line established by the 1911-1914 commission was overgrown with grass and trees and was therefore no longer recognisable.³ In August 1923, a RCBC spokesman brought the issue forward to the Northern Rhodesia survey department: ‘We cannot’, he said, ‘determine from any map or data in our possession the exact location of any boundary beacons of the Rhodesian-Congo boundary (...) There are some rich mines on the Congo side, apparently very close to the border and the importance, therefore, of knowing the actual location of the boundary opposite to them is self-evident.’⁴ It was then found that the only available map of the watershed boundary section was one produced by the Belgian contingent of the 1911-1914 boundary commission since the British map had not been completed.⁵ This fact did not fail to raise a few eyebrows, especially as it appeared that ‘the Belgians had taken full advantage of the situation so as to place the Border Congo as far south as possible at points where minerals were known to exist.’⁶ *Minerals Separation Ltd*, of which the RCBC was a subsidiary, was particularly unimpressed with the situation, and its chairman Francis Gibbs sent a sternly worded letter to the Colonial Office on March 14, 1924. The relevant paragraphs of his letter are worth quoting:

‘The whole question of the boundary between the two countries is one of greatest importance from an Imperial point of view as well as from the point of view of my Company holding as it does a Concession of all the mineral rights in Northern Rhodesia. (...) Several of the valuable mineral discoveries made on the Belgian Congo side undoubtedly run into Northern Rhodesia and now that my

¹ J. PICKLES, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-Coded World* (London, 2004) as quoted in J.W. DONALDSON, ‘Pillars and Perspective’, p.477.

² M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, ‘Military Violence Against Civilians: The Case of the Congolese and Zairian Military in the Pedicle 1890-1988’, p. 652.

³ M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, ‘The Influence of Copper Ores in Delimiting the Rhodesia-Congo Boundary’, pp.17-18.

⁴ R. Brooks, Rhodesian Congo Border Concession Ltd to the Chief Surveyor in Livingstone, 16 August 1923, A SEC3 291 (NAZ).

⁵ L.S. Amery to Downing Street, 30 June 1925, A SEC3 291 (NAZ).

⁶ H.C. Hawkins (Mineral Separation Ltd., Letter to the Colonial Office dated 29 November 1923 in A SEC3 291 (NAZ).

Company have fortunately been able to place before the Colonial Office our knowledge regarding the potential mineral resources of Northern Rhodesia, it seems very necessary that the boundary should be so definite that an absolutely fair division between the two countries should be arrived at (...) [to avoid] a dispute arising as to where the boundary between the two countries actually is.’¹

And indeed, the presence of copper outcrops along or close a boundary line that was not clearly marked was recognised by at least one Government official as a recipe for conflict. On April 6, 1926 the Director of Survey backed mining companies pleas for further delimitation work:

‘I consider there is every likelihood of difficulties arising on the question of ownership of minerals owing to the lack of a well defined boundary between the territories. The question of restricting new mining development in the vicinity of the supposed watershed boundary defined by the existing pillars is a difficult one to decide and it would be most probably a serious matter for the Mineral Companies concerned if such a restriction were to be made over a tentative strip and for any length of time. (...) Steps should be taken at the earliest to have the border properly demarcated and beacons.’²

Accordingly, since the presence of huge copper deposits made every square inch of territory valuable, clear demarcation of the watershed line suddenly became a stringent priority. In late 1926, the British government approached its Belgian counterpart, whom agreed that a new arrangement regarding the frontier would be ‘advantageous to both countries’.³ At a meeting held on March 16 and 17, 1927, Belgium and Great Britain agreed to appoint a joint Anglo-Belgian Boundary Commission scheduled to begin work on July 15, 1927.⁴ The Commission was given two tasks. The first was to make the adjustments to the boundary line along the watershed ‘as are necessary to avoid the troubles that might arise from a literal interpretation of the treaty [of 1894]’.⁵ And the second was to accept the position of the boundary pillar lying further than 200 metres from the ideal watershed and allow errors of position up to 500 metres in areas ‘of no particular known economic value’.⁶ Wherever there was encroachment, the commissioners were to be guided by the following principles:

- (i) Properties and enclosures which lie athwart the ideal watershed shall be left undivided as far as possible whether they be state, corporation, tribal or individual character and
- (ii) The good faith and economic importance of an encroachment shall be taken into account.⁷

From 1927 to 1933 the second Anglo-Belgian Boundary Commission undertook some of the most rigorous boundary demarcation in colonial Africa, and perhaps even worldwide, at the time. Not only did the boundary

¹ Letter Gibbs, Minerals Separation to the CO, 14 March 1924, A SEC3 291 (NAZ).

² The Director of Surveys to the Assistant Secretary in Livingstone, 6 April 1926, A SEC3 291 (NAZ).

³ Mons. Knatchbull-Hugessen from the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to FO, 9 December 1926, A SEC3 291 (NAZ) and FO 93/14/113 (Kew).

⁴ Anglo-Belgian Agreement of 19 March 1927 with regard to the scope and composition of a mixed commission to carry out the demarcation of the boundary between Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo and to the instructions to be given to that commission, Government of Northern Rhodesia to British Government, 29 April 1927, p. 6 in A SEC3 291 (NAZ) and FO 93/14/113 (Kew)

⁵ Anglo-Belgian Agreement of 19 March 1927, 29 April 1927, p. 3 in A SEC3 291 (NAZ) and FO 93/14/113 (Kew)

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Anglo-Belgian Agreement of 19 March 1927, 29 April 1927, pp.3-4 in A SEC3 291 (NAZ).

commission replace the original 46 pillars erected by the 1911-1914 boundary commission, it erected an additional 182 main boundary pillars no less than five kilometres apart.¹



Fig. 3. The old and the new Boundary Point 41

Commercial interests so dictated the second demarcation that not only the BSAC but also the RCBC contributed to the cost of what should have normally been a solely government-funded commission.² Lt. Col. E.R.L. Peake, the final leader of the British contingent of the 1927-1933 boundary commission, frankly admitted that 'if the best part of the watershed had not been found to be highly mineralised the probability is that the earlier demarcation would have held good for many more years'.³ Another consequence of that fact was that only the watershed was given proper attention. The other contested sections, the Meridian (4) and Mweru-Tanganyika (1) sections, could not be agreed upon.⁴ The Northern Rhodesia administration still believed the Mweru-Tanganyika section should be demarcated but 'in view of the uncertainty as to the result of negotiations which are now proceeding regarding proposed major exchanges and the fact that acceptance of the Belgian Government of such proposals (...) might now be agreed upon, it would be a waste of time and money to proceed further with the demarcation of that boundary'.⁵ As a consequence the Mpanta section remained unchanged while the Mweru-Tanganyika section was left blurry. This would feed many diplomatic disputes in the following decades.

¹ J.W. DONALDSON, 'Pillars and Perspective', p.488.

² In March 1928 the RCBC and the BSAC paid the Colonial Office their £2000 contribution towards the cost of the boundary commission that had ensured the commission first demarcated their mineralised section of the watershed boundary between B.P.s 22 and 29. See J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.154.

³ E.R.L. PEAKE, 'Northern Rhodesia: Belgian Congo Boundary', p.264.

⁴ The details of the unfruitful negotiations over these two sections have been described in detail elsewhere and for the sake of fluidity, will not be repeated here. Please see J.W. Donaldson's comprehensive section on the question: *Marking Territory*, pp.164-174. There is also a lengthy description of these negotiations in a letter dated 11 May 1960 from H.V. Conybeare (office of the Prime Minister and External Affairs) to Hope Sotherton, WPI/14/36, doc. 42 (NAZ).

⁵ Letter Kennedy (NR Chief Secretary) to P. Cunliffe-Lister (CO), 6 September 1932. para. 2., RC/1349 vol. I (NAZ).

4. CONTINUING BICKERING

Despite the two commissions appointed to solve it, the complex dispute over the Northern Rhodesia/Congo boundary continued for many years. Difficulties that formed the bone of contention between the two colonial powers fell into two groups which, though often treated separately in correspondence, are connected to each other.¹ First, there is what may be described as the general question of boundary adjustment, which mainly affected the stretch of frontier running from lake Tanganyika to lake Mweru (1). The borderland area along the Mweru-Tanganyika section had never been closely administered by Northern Rhodesia and in the autumn of 1929 the Northern Rhodesia district commissioner based in Chiengi, J.B. Thomson, travelled through the border area and found that numerous villages located within the British-claimed territory were being administered and taxed by Belgian authorities. At the same time, Thomson revealed that the tribes inhabiting these villages were under the control of chiefs located in the Belgian Congo.² Not wanting to upset the situation on the ground, and aware that the Anglo-Belgian boundary commission was to address this section in the near future, Governor Maxwell informed the Colonial Office at the end of 1929 'that the matter be left in obedience until the boundary is definitely fixed.'³ Except, of course, that it was never fixed. As it happens, thirty years later this state of affairs had hardly changed at all. On February 14, 1961, H.V.G. Conybeare of the Office of the Prime Minister and External Affairs sent to the government of Rhodesia, several maps 'marked to show the areas as at present administered by the local authorities on each side of the hypothetical border'. 'It is realised' he added, 'that it must be extremely difficult to decide on the ground where a straight line boundary between the Lakes is supposed to exist since neither side is marked in any way. (...) I shall be grateful if you will (...) let me have your views on the situation from an administrative point of view in relation to the fact that no official boundary exists, and settlement being opened at the present time.'⁴ The answer he received from the acting Secretary to the government of Northern Rhodesia was the following:

'The population of the four enclaves carry Congo (Belgian) identity certificates and has for many years regarded itself as being subject to the Congo (Belgian). Congo Chiefs provide tribal control. (...) I confirm that at the moment, there are no administrative difficulties. (...) I note that there is no question of negotiation towards a definitive settlement of the boundary being opened at the present time. This is satisfactory as the de facto boundary is accepted by the people on both sides and presents no administrative problem.'⁵

Perhaps for that reason, the problem of the Mweru-Tanganyika Section stagnated. On April 26, 1960, i.e. practically the eve of Congolese independence, Bob de Quehen, head of the *Federal Intelligence and Security*

¹ D. Williams (Commonwealth Relations Office, London) to J.B. Ross (Rhodesia House), WPI/14/36, doc. 24 (NAZ).

² Report by J.B. Thomson to Provincial Commissioner, Fort Rosebery, 14 October 1929, para. 4. RC/1355 (NAZ) as quoted in J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.169.

³ Letter Maxwell (NR Governor) to CO, 30 December 1929, RC/1355 (NAZ), quoted in J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.169.

⁴ H.V.G. Conybeare (Office of the Prime Minister and External Affairs) to the Administrative Secretary, Government of Northern Rhodesia, February 14 1961, WPI/14/36, doc. 46 (NAZ).

⁵ D. Dalmagh for Acting Secretary to the Government of Northern Rhodesia to office of the Prime Minister and External affairs, 29 April 1961, WPI/14/36, doc. 47 (NAZ).

Bureau (FISB) was still wondering whether ‘it might be wise to get agreement and a defined boundary before the new Congolese Government comes into power’,¹ to which the Office of the Prime Minister and External Affairs replied that ‘the Lake Mweru-Lake Tanganyika boundary (...) remains undefined at the present time’.²

The second part of the boundary problem concerned one small boundary adjustment on the south side of the Katanga Pedicle at a place called Mokambo. The Mokambo Strip was a small portion of Northern Rhodesia, only about 50 acres in extent, which jutted into the Belgian Congo in such a way that the Belgian railway line in that area had to follow an awkward alignment. Starting in 1927 the Belgians had repeatedly tried to gain possession of the area, ostensibly so that they might realign their railway. On various occasions, they had offered in exchange an area of the Belgian Congo in the region of Nkana where the Northern Rhodesian Railways was encroaching upon Belgian territory. However, although exchanging the two pieces of territory would have been a seemingly simple operation, the Northern Rhodesian government never agreed to it. The reason for this refusal is simple: the Mokambo Strip contained a considerable copper orebody whereas the region where the Rhodesia Railways had strayed into the Congo had, as far as anybody knew, no similar deposits of mineral wealth beneath its soil.³ Yet, at the same time, the minister for external Affairs feared that a ‘blank refusal’ at Mokambo could make any negotiations over easing the traffic across the Katanga Pedicle, which was the source of much frustration on the part of Rhodesian travelers,⁴ more troublesome: ‘the Pedicle crossing is the subject of complaint now by private and commercial interests and we would wish to improve conditions. It seems logical that if we are uncooperative over Mokambo that the Belgians would have little desire to be co-operative over improvements in the crossing of the Pedicle’.⁵ As a result, the entire question of the border had reached a stalemate and no amount of negotiations was ever able to solve it.

The Mweru-Tanganyika section and the Mokambo Strip spurred a great deal of discussion, correspondence, squabbling ... and nothing else. No agreement was ever reached between the two colonial powers on the Mweru-Tanganyika nor, for that matter, any other contentious area. These lack of agreement meant that 1) travelling across the pedicle was painfully difficult and 2) many villages along the Mweru-Tanganyika section were unsure of their nationality. The Mweru-Tanganyika boundary section, when compared with the other sections of the same boundary, highlights a complete disparity in purpose regarding border definition. The clear emphasis put on the boundary along the watershed and meridian sections was tied directly to economic resources. The border area between Lakes Mweru and Tanganyika did not possess any proven

¹ B. de Quehen (FISB) in Salisbury to the Office of the Prime Minister and External Affairs, 26 April 1960, WPI/14/36, doc. 40 (NAZ).

² The Office of the Prime Minister and External Affairs to B. de Quehen (FISB) in Salisbury, April 26 1960, WPI/14/36, doc. 40 (NAZ).

³ D. Williams (Commonwealth Relations Office, London) to J.B. Ross (Rhodesia House), WPI/14/36, doc. 24 (NAZ).

⁴ Many letters of complaints emanating from angry travellers reached the Ministry of External affairs but perhaps most telling is an article entitled ‘Congo customs red tape angers N.R. motorists’ that was published by the *Rhodesia Herald* on July 11 1959: ‘An “iron curtain” has clamped down on roads to the Belgian Congo, complain Copperbelt drivers. Local business men have cancelled trips to the Northern Province through the Congo pedicle by way of Mokambo because it takes days to amass the necessary documents and clearances (...). To go through the Congo Customs barrier the official there can insist on an international driver’s license, yellow fever inoculation certificate from the district commissioner [and a] “morality certificate”.’ Article enclosed in WPI/14/18-424/6/1, doc. 24/6 (NAZ).

⁵ R.C. MacFarlane (Ministry of External Affairs) to S.J. Olivier (esq., Office of the High Commissioner for Rhodesia and Nyasaland), January 14 1955, WPI/14/36, doc. 1 (NAZ).

mineral resources and the only appeals for boundary demarcation came from the local administrators. Recalling the long history of negotiations going back before the 1911-14 boundary commission, the Colonial Office saw major territorial concessions in the Katanga pedicle as the primary goal in order to alleviate the transport issues between the two territorial ‘halves’ of Northern Rhodesia. The only perceived ‘value’ of the Mweru-Tanganyika borderland was as a bargaining chip for gaining the more ‘valuable’ area in the Pedicle.

3. Local Attitudes to the Border

1. EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

Initial Administrative Neglect

Once the border was positioned, there was little European activity or administrative control along the Anglo-Congolese boundary prior to 1900, as both the BSAC and the Congo Free State were then attempting to cement their control over local rulers. From 1891 to 1900, Katanga’s management was entrusted to the *Compagnie du Katanga*, a concession company that was founded for the purpose of dissuading any British claim to the territory, but otherwise left the territory largely unsupervised.¹ No effective administration was set up until 19 June 1900, when the *Compagnie du Katanga* was renamed the *Comité Spécial du Katanga*, an administration separate from that of the Congo Free State.² Until then, European occupation of Katanga remained so sparse as to be almost nonexistent. In the words of one of the very few officials stationed in the area before the turn of the century, ‘there never were more than six Free State agents at any one time in Katanga. In 1896, there were three; in 1899-1900, only two (...) as for missionaries there were two (...) And when it comes to traders, they were so ‘elusive’ that none could ever be discovered in all of Katanga (...) until 1905.’³ This neglect – paradoxical though it might seem considering the haste and effort that were taken in acquiring Katanga – finds its origin in the fact that Leopold II was facing more immediate challenges. These were twofold. First was the fact that Leopold’s obsession with colonies was regarded with high suspicion and dread by his country’s Parliament and citizens, who regarded Leopold’s grand design as ‘megalomaniac’ at best (prompting Leopold’s famous retort: “petit pays, petit esprit”).⁴ For that reason Leopold had to prove the profitability of his venture, and do it fast. In the short term this was more easily achieved through the collection of readily commercialisable items such as ivory and rubber as both were in high demand and required much less infrastructure than mining did. All that was necessary to make sure there was no interruption in the flow of these goods and to maintain law and order was an armed force. To this end in 1885 the Congo Free State established the *Force Publique*, a force composed of Congolese mercenaries performing both military and

¹ J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.105.

² *Congo Bulletin*, 1906, FO 367/1/427.

³ H. DELVAUX, *L’Occupation du Katanga, 1891-1900*, p.33.

⁴ For Leopold’s personality and the lack of enthusiasm of his contemporaries for his enterprise in the Congo, see J. STENGERS, ‘Leopold II and the Association Internationale du Congo’ in F. FORSTER, W.J. MOMMSEN and R. ROBINSON (eds.), *Bismarck, Europe and Africa: The Berlin Conference*, pp.229-246.

police functions.¹ The harshness with which the *Force Publique* raided for ivory and enforced the compulsory collection of rubber has been widely documented, having famously triggered what is sometimes referred to as the first mass human rights movement: a lively propaganda campaign, led by British diplomat Roger Casement and former shipping clerk E.D. Morel and supported by such literary personalities as Mark Twain and Arthur Conan Doyle. The campaign eventually forced Leopold to relinquish control of the Congo in 1908.² A more serious reason for this administrative neglect, however, was the outbreak of the hostilities between the Congo Free State and Arab traders active in the east of the territory in 1892. This conflict, which was to last for a decade, was prompted by Leopold's decision to establish a state monopoly over ivory, thereby depriving the Arab traders of a major source of income. At the same time, starting in 1895, the Free State had to face a series of Luba, Bena Lulua and Tetela revolts, precipitating a state of general unrest in Katanga.³ In this way, Leopold's single-minded preoccupation with the exploitation of immediately available resources as well as the conditions created by the uprisings were to keep the attention away from the Free State's most southern border and populations. These two elements also explain why the Congo Free State's concept of native administration, despite its harshness, was never systematic; rule was enforced solely in the places where it was needed, i.e. places that were either resource-rich or troublesome or both. Direct administration, rather than any sort of indirect rule, was the *de facto* policy – except of course where there was no administration at all. The treatment of the Lunda area is a case in point. Since there was no immediate incentive for Leopold's agents to venture in the area, no contact was established between them and the Mwata Yamvo before 1896. Though the Lunda heartland was agitated by a liberation struggle against the Cokwe in the last decade of the nineteenth century, this hardly received any Belgian attention at all.⁴

¹ M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, 'Military Violence against Civilians', p.647.

² For a detailed retelling of the Propaganda Congo War that opposed Leopold II and the critics of the Congo Free State, see A. HOCHSCHILD, *King Leopold's Ghost, A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, updated edition (London, 2006).

³ Chief Kalamba of the Bena Lulua rose against the Free State assisted by the Cokwe in February 1895. The rebellion was crushed by the end of June. On June 4 the Tetela and Luba Contingent of the Force Publique mutinied at Luluabourg, followed in 1897 by another Tetela rebellion. See E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.43.

⁴ For more details on the Lunda reconquest of their heartland see E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, pp.46-49.



Fig. 4 and 5. Two images of the Congo Propaganda War: a cartoon published by the British weekly magazine *Punch* in 1906 and the cover of E.D. Morel's *Red Rubber* depicting Leopold II's afterlife judgment in ancient Egyptian fashion. Leopold's soul is being weighed up against a cut black hand under the watchful eyes of his Congolese victims. Hand-cutting was a common punishment for those failing to meet rubber collection quotas.

On the other side of the brand new border, events were evolving at a surprisingly similar sluggish pace. In the first few years of its existence, Northern Rhodesia was in such a situation of widespread administrative neglect that up to 1896, it was for the most part completely unaffected by, and unaware of, the fact that it now formed part of the British Empire. Although British control over Northern Rhodesia had been recognised by European powers from 1891, it was just a notch above illusory on the ground. British presence in Northern Rhodesia was so weak that despite pleas from missionaries, the British were unable to take on the Bemba, whose chiefs still raided the north-eastern plateau.¹ In the mid 1890s however, the pace of British intrusion quickened. In 1896, company officials began to intercept trading caravans as they left Bemba country, by which they weakened the Bemba without engaging in a head-on confrontation,² and by the end of the century, BSAC control over Bembaland was effective. The biggest difficulty for the BSAC came from Mwata Kazembe X Kanyembo Ntemena (1884-1904) who from 1895 to 1899 repeatedly clashed with British authority. The background of the outbreak of hostilities is obscure but it seemed to have been in part influenced by events in the Congo: 'the successes of the rebels in the Congo Free State, with whom Kazembe is said to be in communication, and with whom he has certainly expressed his sympathy has had some share in inducing Kazembe his present attitude'.³ Though the power of Kazembe was much less than it has once been, he

¹ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.163.

² Ibid, p.164.

³ Codrington to Sharpe, 14 September 1899, enclosed in Sharpe to FO, 29 September 1899, PRO, FO 2/210 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.185.

succeeded in keeping the British at bay until 1899, when he was obliged to acknowledge his defeat. Instead of surrendering, however, he decided to take refuge on the Belgian bank of the river. Alfred Sharpe, the governor of Nyasaland who was leading the contingent sent to face Kazembe¹ described how they ‘received news that during the night a number of the chief’s headmen having deserted him, and a large number of his warriors having followed them, Kazembe himself had suddenly decided to fly, and that in the early hours of the morning the whole population of the town had fled, and had made for the Luapula’.² Once the two great powers of the north east, the Bemba and the Lunda, had submitted, no other Africans in the area were rash enough to challenge the white man’s firearms.

Changes in Subordination Relationships

The new Anglo-Belgian border not only cut straight through both the main Lunda Kingdom and the Kingdom of Kazembe but its awkward shape around the middle – the Katanga pedicle – effectively cut off Mwata Yamvo’s eastern Lunda from Kazembe’s western Lunda. Although the effects of the re-drawing of the African map were not immediately felt, for the Eastern Lunda, it eventually proved to be very much a deadly blow to their already battered ‘empire’. While the bulk of the old empire heartland was now part of the Congo Free State, the western sphere of Lunda influence was absorbed into Angola and most of the southern Lunda (or Ndembu) found themselves south of the Northern Rhodesian border. Of course, one could argue that the real loss was that of the Western dominions since the southern Lunda had already ceased to be Mwata Yamvo’s tributaries by the time of the Cokwe invasion. Similarly, direct contact between the heartland and Kazembe in the lower Luapula valley had already been severely impaired after the Yeke invaded the Mweru-Luapula in the early 1880s. Still the border unwittingly drawn by European cartographers had, by making communication more difficult, the effect of emphasising the heartland’s *de facto* separateness from its former minions. Crucially however, though pre-colonial links between the Mwata Yamvo’s state and the now Northern Rhodesian Lunda were never fully revived, the authority-enhancing connection with the Mwata Yamvo remained an essential and celebrated component of the historical and ethnic consciousness for both Kazembe’s Lunda and Ndembu.³

If the effective separation with the Mwata Yamvo was not a source of excessive concern for the Kazembe, the fact that his territories above the Luapula River were now part of the Congo Free State was probably one. At the time of colonial conquest, the Luapula River already served as some sort of implicit border and the Kazembe’s authority was no longer thoroughly established on its West bank. With a colonial border turning the implicit border into an explicit one, Lunda authority on the West bank was made all the more tenuous.⁴ Notwithstanding, the then Kazembe Kanyembo made brave attempts at reaffirming the eastern Lunda sway over the western bank of the lower Luapula river, in areas that now belonged to the Congo Free State. But these attempts were bound to run against the stringent rules of the Congo Free State concerning territorial

¹ D.M. GORDON, *Nachituti’s Gift*, p.63.

² Sharpe to FO, 29 December 1899, PRO FO 2/210 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.188.

³ E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.59; G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.277.

⁴ D. M. GORDON, ‘Owners of the Land and Lunda Lords’, p.315.

sovereignty and trading monopoly. From the very start, the Congo Free State had ruled that ‘un chef étranger ne [pouvait] exercer aucune suzeraineté sur le sol congolais’.¹ At the same time, they had embarked on a large program of appointment of ‘colonial chiefs’ as part of their direct rule policy. These colonial chiefs were carefully chosen native chiefs whose job was to control the areas that they were appointed to in the name of the Congo Free State. Since Msiri’s death had left a power vacuum, all former Yeke/Lunda chiefs along the banks of the Luapula were left with a choice: to submit to their former overlord in Northern Rhodesia or to become chiefs in their own right with the help of the new colonial power. Unsurprisingly, some of them were more than happy to take full advantage of the situation to claim their autonomy from their former suzerain. Kiba, a former follower of Msiri who refused to pay tribute to the eastern Lunda king, reportedly asked the Congo Free State for help. Kiba was duly allocated guns and powder accompanied by the promise that he would get immediate support in the event of an attack by Kazembe.² Similarly, a few owners of the land and Shila clans rulers were able to escape Kazembe’s authority and become colonial chiefs. In this way, colonial structures of governance, even when fragile, undermined the links of subordination that were previously operating in the region.³

However given the ‘ancientness’ of the relationship between the two banks of the Luapula, the impact of these ad hoc interventions was bound to be short-lived. Without a stable Belgian presence, the area could not be policed and Mwata Kazembe X could not be prevented from encroaching upon it. Throughout the mid- and late 1890s, Kanyembo’s ascendancy over the western bank of the Luapula endured, which did not fail to cause concern for Congo Free State officials in Katanga. However, from 1895, with the help of the newly formed *Force Publique*, the enforcement of the collection of ivory and rubber was enforced and the Luapula’s main passage ways were patrolled ‘empêchant le commerce de se porter vers Kasembe’.⁴ Kazembe’s final defeat by BSAC forces in 1899 signified the end of his efforts. More than a year after the event, the former inhabitant of the Lunda districts were still reported to be ‘scattered’ as a result of the BSAC ‘invasion’.⁵ Kanyembo’s humiliating defeat of 1899 must have convinced him that his own survival depended on his finding a *modus vivendi* with the Europeans, so he embarked on securing his political future in the new colonial state and convinced officials of the BSAC (including Alfred Sharpe) to choose members of the Royal Family as chiefs, thus allowing him not only to keep his network within Northern Rhodesia intact but even to strengthen it. This success in reconsolidating power and patronage networks was due to a combination of eastern Lunda’s historical roots in Luapula and the nature and dispersal of the British administrative presence. Unlike Msiri’s, Kazembe’s kingdom was old and enjoyed a high degree of historical legitimacy. It also enjoyed a resilient form of perpetual kinship which allowed him to reconstitute a network of subordinate chiefs and accord them offices within the ‘Lunda family’. These factors gave Kazembe leverage to negotiate his survival, and that of his

¹ M. Lacanne, *Enquête Politique sur la Région du Luapula-Moero*, 1935, p.40 EA-MRAC, Fonds O. Boone as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, pp.168-169.

² H. LEGROS, *Chasseurs d’Ivoire*, p.131; G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.174; D. M. GORDON, ‘Owners of the Land and Lunda Lords’, pp.321-322.

³ D.M. GORDON, *Nachituti’s Gift*, pp.64-65.

⁴ C. Brasseur to ‘Gouverneur Général’, March 1 1896, Papiers C. Brasseur, HA-MRAC, RG768/81.15 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.175.

⁵ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.189.

kingdom. In this way, not only did Kanyembo escape with his life, he, and his successors, succeeded in exploiting the structures and policies of the British colonial state and recreate a local network of client colonial chiefs. Yet there is no doubt that the Belgian resolve to keep the Mwata Kazembes out of Katanga became more and more effective as the century progressed. In fact as Giacomo Macola pointed out, ‘the erosion of their ascendancy over the territory to the west of the lower Luapula may help to account for the determination with which Lunda royals pursued a policy of self-aggrandizement along the eastern bank of the river, the only region of which they remained officially in charge.’¹

2. *PROTEST MIGRATIONS*

Though the artificial border was often ignored in its early years, the advantages of acting upon it became increasingly clear. The existence of two sovereign state side by side, neither of which had authority over the other, provided the people living along the boundary with new leverage. If a measure implemented on one side of the border was not to the liking of the inhabitant of one or the other country, they could easily cross the border into a territory over which their ‘formal’ colonial masters had no authority. This was made easier by the lack of colonial personnel along the border. From 1891 a phenomenon of ‘back and forth migrations’ across the Anglo-Belgian border appeared and gradually amplified as the effects of European penetration were increasingly felt. ‘On one side was tyranny, on the other was sanctuary’ as M.C. Musambachime put it.² Which side was which fluctuated depending on circumstances. These ‘protest migrations’ were usually temporary in nature (though they did occasionally resulted in the permanent settlement of a people on one side or the other) since, in the words of Bruce Fetter, ‘flight, however pressing the stimulus, is a response rather than a permanent course of action.’³ As such they are a testimony to the way in which the border came to serve a new and innovative function, one of self-protection.

The ‘Sentry System’ and its Abuses

In 1895, a sentry system i.e. the posting of a sentry responsible for tax collection in every village,⁴ was put in place along the Anglo-Belgian boundary in order to control and limit cross-border linkages. Unfortunately for the colonisers, this measure had the unwitting effect of prompting massive movements of peoples across the very border they were trying to protect. Dugald Campbell, a missionary in charge at Johnston Falls-Mambilima on the Lower Luapula has left a graphic account of how Katangese sentries, inadequately supervised, had quickly developed into tyrants:

‘I have made a journey myself to the copper hills in the west [and other places in Katanga] and found the sentries everywhere living like kings, plundering, killing and burning villages in the name of the State. (...) Every time I made representations they were declared impossible or the answer was “I shall ask my head sentry to make enquiries,” the head sentries being one of the worst blacks in the country.

¹ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.227.

² M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, ‘Escape from Tyranny’, p.148.

³ B. FETTER, *Colonial Rule and Regional Imbalance in Central Africa*, p.200.

⁴ M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, ‘Escape from Tyranny’, p.149.

Nothing was ever proved. He could not believe that his soldiers could be guilty of such misconduct or “well, they must have carte blanche or the natives would not respect the State.” Sometimes “Might is Right” would be the curt reply. What could one say? There were no judges or court of appeals, and the officer, often at his wit’s end, would say “What can I do? I must get ivory. I have no law or regulation book. I am the only law and only god in Katanga”¹

Similar abuses were reported all along the border and in most cases generated the same response from those subjected to them: flight across the boundary. On August 14, 1895, Lt. Clément Brasseur, then in charge of the *Force Publique* in Katanga, recorded in his travel diary that ‘pas mal de gens du Katanga [avaient] filés jadis s’installer chez Kanyembo’.² ‘Protest migrations’ continued, largely unchecked throughout the late 1890s. At the end of July 1896, the hunter and explorer Weatherley noted that the western bank of the Luapula river was ‘gradually becoming a desert’.³ As late as 1904 E. Stephenson, the Native Commissioner for Ndola reported that ‘many natives are crossing into this Territory (North West Rhodesia)’⁴ while Campbell was still reporting that:

‘on the Luapula, similar abuses existed and women were raped and made to serve both white and black (soldiers) until many of the best and biggest villages crossed into British territory where they live in peace. The wholesale exodus is due to Belgian raiding, the sentry system and the maltreatment of natives.’⁵

In 1908, the Belgian government took over Leopold II’s private colony and the ‘Congo Free State’ became the ‘Belgian Congo’. Frontiersmen, and by extension their abuses, were unable to outlive the gradual stabilisation of colonial rule. In 1908, the Native Commissioner for Fort Rosebery was already reporting that:

‘Large numbers of natives have left this district and gone across the Luapula to Belgian territory. The natives have not done this on account of any grievance against the administration, they simply returned to their own country from which they fled when the Belgian region was not as humane as present.’⁶

The Hut Tax

From about 1903 the direction of migration reversed as a result of new economic measures taken by the BSAC. In an effort to avoid depending on subventions from metropolitan treasuries, a three shillings hut tax, to be paid in kind or in coin, was gradually introduced in Northern Rhodesia in the first years of the twentieth century.⁷ In addition, the Company made a practice of calling on villagers to perform works of public utility,

¹ Dugald Campbell as quoted in E.D. MOREL, *Red Rubber*, p.45.

² C. Brasseur to D. Brasseur, October 10 1895, Papiers C. Brasseur, HA-MRAC RG768/81.15 as quoted G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.177.

³ Weatherly to Daly, 2 June 1897, NER/A1/5/2 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.177.

⁴ Stephenson to Administrator, 22 August 1904, BS1/70 as quoted in M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, ‘Escape from Tyranny’, p.149.

⁵ Dugald Campbell as quoted in E.D. MOREL, *Red Rubber*, p.45.

⁶ Report of the Commissioner for Rosebery, 1908, KDF3/1, Vol. I (NAZ), p.396 as quoted by M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, ‘Escape from Tyranny’, p.151.

⁷ It was enforced in 1901 in the East of Northern Rhodesia and in 1905 in the West. See B. FETTER, *Colonial Rule and Regional Imbalance in Central Africa*, p.89.

such as building roads or carrying loads, in fulfillment of their tax obligations.¹ These measures were not happily received, to say the least. Despite the BSAC's protestations to the contrary, there is little doubt that the imposition of the tax was accompanied by brutality on the part of the European tax collectors, who reportedly resorted to such practices as the imprisonment of the uncooperative payer or the burning of his hut.² A British Colonial Office official once privately observed that 'Mr Beak [British Consul in the Congo Free State] in one of his reports said that the NWR administration was as bad as the Congo Free State (...) This officer appears to have flogged systematically, had several natives shot, and indulged in forced labour, all CFS methods.'³ To escape this, many inhabitants of the British-controlled territory crossed the border to take refuge in Katanga. Reports of tax evasion were recounted yearly in all the districts along the border. On the western section of the boundary, the Native Commissioner of Mwinilunga Sub-District received reports of a massive exodus of people from the district to Angola and the Belgian Congo: 'Not a village at all has stayed (...) they have all fled in the night (...) There is no doubt that it is the tax that they revolt from.'⁴ On the eastern half, the situation was similar. Harrington, Native Commissioner for Fort Rosebery reported in 1906 that 'whole villages decamped to the Belgian Congo to avoid payment'.⁵ Flights across the border were often carefully timed to coincide with tours by District officials. By 1908 the same Harrington was reporting that the people in the border area had 'huts on both sides of the Luapula River making it extremely difficult for him to collect taxes.'⁶ By 1906 the loss of inhabitants fleeing the rigours of the hut tax seems to have worried Mwata Kazembe XI Muonga Kapakata (1904-1919) to the point that he instituted an unofficial patrolling system along the lower Luapula in order to 'appréhender et retenir de force les indigènes de la Rhodésie qui avaient l'intention de s'installer [au Congo]'.⁷ This cannot have been entirely successful since, around the same time, the District Commissioner in charge of Mweru-Luapula, reported that more than half of the male population in Katanga was either fleeing from the hut tax or seeking employment to pay it.⁸ Even though tax evasion remained high throughout the first decade of the century, it is clear that growing numbers were eventually forced to come to terms with the new fiscal burdens. Those who could not find employment locally began to seek wage employment in the white farms of Southern Rhodesia and, to a much larger extent, the developing copper mines of southern Katanga. As early as 1905, many inhabitants on the eastern bank of the Luapula were reported to be travelling independently to the mines of Kambove and Ruwe in Katanga in order to earn 'les quelques shillings dont ils [avaient] besoin

¹ Although the practice of 'tax labour' was firmly forbidden as early as 1902 by Sir Clement Hill at the Foreign Office, the exaction of forced labour remained an importance source of grievance until at least 1920. See I. Henderson, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, p.16; G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.201.

² G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.198.

³ C.O. 417/467: Minute by "O.R.", 9 January 1910, as quoted in I. Henderson, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, p.26.

⁴ M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, 'Escape from Tyranny', p.151.

⁵ Nweru-Luapula District Notebook, Vol. I, KDF/3/1 (NAZ) as quoted in M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, 'Escape from Tyranny', pp.151-152.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Gooris to Gheur, 28 January 1907, encl. in Wangermee to 'Gouverneur General', 22 February 1907, AAMAA, AE, I,332/272 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.199.

⁸ Mweru-Luapula District Notebook, Vol. I, KDF/3/1 (NAZ) as quoted in M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, 'Escape from Tyranny', pp.151-152.

pour payer le nut tax.¹ In 1921, seven sub-districts, all in the eastern half of Northern Rhodesia, had sex ratios of less than 70 men per 100 women: Feira, Serenje, Fort Rosebery, Abercorn, Lundazi, and Petauke. Since these were the areas of most intense tax collection, these statistics confirm the relationship between labour migration and tax collection.² This is not to say that tax evasion stopped however. As late as 1934, one Native Commissioner reported that 'there was a continued movement of Natives to and from the Belgian Congo (...) a large number of natives have migrated from this district into Congo, the reason seems to be Tax.'³

Sleeping Sickness Regulations

In the early twentieth century, a number of small pox and sleeping sickness epidemics hit both Katanga and Northern Rhodesia. The spread of these diseases was clearly aggravated by the important populations movements that took place at the time. In Northern Rhodesia, the Mweru-Luapula was especially badly hit, probably being exposed to an infectious strain stemming from northern Katanga.⁴ Starting in 1907-1908, every time an epidemic of sleeping sickness was detected, the BSAC implemented a series of ambitious and detested measures which consisted in 'restricting the movement of natives in sleeping sickness area'.⁵ These new regulations stipulated that 'all movements of natives from this [any North Rhodesian] territory into any part of the Congo state or from any part of the Congo State into the Territory are prohibited except under the permit signed by a magistrate or a native commissioner'.⁶ Any native contravening these regulations was 'liable upon conviction to a penalty not exceeding one pound shilling or to imprisonment with or without hard labour'.⁷ Not only did these regulations aim to limit cross-border movement for health reasons, they also defined and quarantined 'sleeping sickness areas'. In 1907, an area lying to the east of the Luapula and lake Mweru, and to the south of the North-Eastern Rhodesia/Katanga border and Lake Tanganyika was declared an 'infected area' from which no-one was permitted to emigrate.⁸ In addition, between 1908 and 1910, many villages were forcefully moved, which led to more people dying of 'hunger and hardship than died of sleeping sickness' as was reported by an eyewitness.⁹ Given the stringency of the regulations, not to mention their detrimental effect on economic matters, it is not surprising that they were not well received. These measures were moreover as useless as they were unpopular, since Northern Rhodesian efforts to contain epidemics were not reciprocated on

¹ Rutten to 'Procureur d'Etat', May 1905, Papiers L. Guebels, Dossier "Affaire Campbell", HA-MRAC, RG917 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.202.

² B. FETTER, *Colonial Rule and Regional Imbalance in Central Africa*, p.89.

³ Annual Reports for the Serenje District for 1934, KSK6/1/7, Vol. III (NAZ) as quoted in M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, 'Escape from Tyranny', p.152.

⁴ Memorandum by legal advisor explaining the reasons for the new regulations restricting the movements of natives in sleeping sickness areas, encl. in Chas McKinnon, Acting Administrator to the High Commissioner for Southern Africa, 23 January 1914, A2/1/7, tag. 749 loc. 183, doc. 29 (NAZ).

⁵ Chas McKinnon, Acting Administrator to the High Commissioner for Southern Africa, January 23 1914, A2/1/7, tag. 749 loc. 183, doc. 29 (NAZ).

⁶ Government Notice of 1914 regarding the restriction of movements of natives in sleeping sickness areas, encl. in Chas McKinnon, Acting Administrator to the High Commissioner for Southern Africa, 23 January 1914, A2/1/7, tag. 749, loc. 183, doc. 29 (NAZ). These regulations, though published in 1914, were virtually identical to the rules established in 1907 and only differ from them in that they provide for the punishment of those siding or abetting the movement of natives in and out Congo.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers in Central Africa*, p.15.

⁹ W. LAMMOND, 'The Luapula Valley' in NRJ, Vol. II, No. 5 (1955), p. 54 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.204.

the part of the Belgian Congo.¹ Since the Belgians had enforced no preventive regulation limiting the movement of peoples, many, in a way that had become usual, sought to evade the new regulations by engaging in mass migrations.² In April 1909 the medical officer at Fort Rosebery noted:

‘The opposite bank of the Luapula is thick with villages and more are being built (unfortunately it must be admitted that some of these at least are peopled with refugees from this side), and as long as these villages are allowed to remain on the river bank affording every facility for fishing and the like, they will be a continual temptation and a continual menace to our own people.’³

The sleeping sickness regulations were only lifted in October 1922, allowing the last refugees to return to their original villages along the border.⁴

Conclusion

The partitioning of Africa into European colonies was largely the result of a large-scale diplomatic game between contending European nations. In 1929, the Commissioner of the Hilton Young Commission on the closer union in Eastern and Central Africa noted that:

‘The boundaries separating territories [in Africa] are in effect historical accidents and not of any reasoned plan. They have grown up piecemeal as a result of the labours of early travellers who wandered at large, and of international diplomacy (...) with little knowledge of geographical conditions and less ethnographical [information].’⁵

The reports on the presence of copper, mixtures of rumour and fact though they were, had developed as a result of the previous decades’ missionary and exploratory activities and fuelled a stiff competition for Katanga. It is in this light that the actions of Rhodes and Leopold II in the 1880s and 1890s must be judged. To a very large extent, it can be argued that the main factor determining the eventual shape of the border was the acquisition of valuable resources such as gold, copper, rubber and timber.

The case of the two Anglo-Belgian boundary commissions reveals that the presence of economic resources in borderland areas was also a key-motivating factor in developing boundaries through localised demarcation. Although it would perhaps be too simplistic to contend, as some did, that the border ‘remained undemarcated until copper and tin mining made demarcation essential if major disputes were to be avoided’,⁶ the pervasiveness of the influence of mineral deposits on boundary demarcation cannot be denied. There were

¹Memorandum by legal advisor explaining the reasons for the new regulations restricting the movements of natives in sleeping sickness areas, encl. in Chas McKinnon, Acting Administrator to the High Commissioner for Southern Africa, 23 January 1914, A2/1/7, tag. 749 loc. 183, doc. 29 (NAZ).

²D.M. GORDON, *Nachituti's Gift*, p.70.

³W.H.T. Storrs to P.M.O. Fort Jameson, 10 April 1909, BS1/65 (NAZ) as quoted in C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers in Central Africa*, p.17.

⁴M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, ‘Escape from Tyranny’, p.155.

⁵Report on the Commission on Closer Union in Eastern and Central Africa, 1929 (also called the Hilton Young Commission) Command Paper 3234 as quoted in M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, ‘The Influence of Copper Ores in Delimiting the Rhodesia-Congo Boundary’, p.16.

⁶J.V. Prescott and G. Triggs *International Frontiers and Boundaries: Law, Politics and Geography* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008), p. 67 as quoted in J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.174.

relatively few boundaries that garnered a second imperial boundary commission and fewer still that were demarcated with as much rigidity as the watershed section was. This is another clear illustration of how the economic value of African territory was an important catalyst in boundary development. Easing the administration of local 'native' borderland populations was not the priority for the commissions. Even though local administrators in Northern Rhodesia's border areas continually implored their superiors to mark the boundary with Belgian Congo clearly on the ground, they were often left with just the opposite; at best, widely-spaced pillars and a series of map sheets while many zones, like that along the meridian section, were left as tacitly understood zones of non-interference. No other commission was ever established after 1933 and neither were the beacons erected in 1927-1933 looked after,¹ so that the border stayed forever vague, and therefore remained a source of administrative difficulty and international incidents. In 1968, i.e. after Zambia had become an independent state, the District Secretary of Mporokoso, reported that 'there are 13 Congolese villages on the Zambian side of the border. This state of affairs is inevitably causing administrative problems'.² On a diplomatic level therefore, the presence of copper ores as well as a poorly defined border (one deriving to a large extent from the other) was a definite recipe for conflict not only between nations, but also between administrators and administrated.

The proximity to an utterly artificial international frontier did not only generate constant tension between British and Belgian officials, it also affected relationships between groups that found themselves arbitrarily bisected by an imaginary line. In the Belgian Congo and Northern Rhodesia, it was the Lunda especially who suffered from the outline of the Anglo-Belgian boundary. The western Lunda lost what was left of their control over the southern and western part of their original empire, while the eastern Lunda kingdom found itself divided in two by the River Luapula. Rather than ceasing, contacts between the butchered parts of Lunda areas changed in nature. The different ways in which colonialism affected the structure of the various Lunda groups depended largely on the relative styles of the colonial administrations. The Belgian administration was known for its harsh paternalism while the British doctrine of indirect rule encouraged rule by pre-colonial elites, such as the Lunda paramount, on the condition that they fully cooperated with the British authorities. So when the Belgians established their own network of state-appointed colonial chiefs, many chiefs, who had traditionally been Kazembe's subordinates, were quick to take this opportunity to cut ties with their former overlord and become chiefs in their own right. On the Northern Rhodesian side, if some decentralised clan elders succeeded in escaping the rule of Eastern Lunda, the Kazembe was nevertheless able to rebuild a strong client network through collaboration with the colonial authorities. Opportunities for adaptation varied depending on what side of the border one stood, but these opportunities were duly identified and utilised.

On both sides however, it took a while before there were noticeable effects on the ground. To many people in Northern Rhodesia and Katanga, the intrusion of European rule did not, at the time, seem an event of

¹ J.W. DAVIDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.183 – p.189.

² A.N. Chimuka, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Presidential affairs, June 1968, FA1/1/3, loc. 492, doc. 253 (NAZ).

great importance. The full significance of external rule did not become clear until it had set up a local administration and had begun collecting tax. When that happened, the artificial boundary, which until then had been acted upon as if it did not exist anywhere else than on paper (which arguably, until a rather late date, it did not), was turned into 'leverage'. Cross-boundary movement was used as a form of political protest against governmental actions that were considered brutal, oppressive, or simply disadvantageous. In this way, local groups were able to adapt to their new situation and even capitalise on it through their creative use of the new border and the differences in colonial regimes on either sides of it. The border was artificial, contested and porous, and it is this what made such resourceful interaction possible. By the time the second boundary commission was sent to the field, the border was such an integral part of Northern Rhodesia's political landscape that Governor Maxwell was able to justify his opposition to any adjustments along the meridian section on the ground that:

'I can see no advantage in disturbing a boundary, artificial though it may be, which has become known to the native population and is accepted by them'¹

¹ Letter Maxwell (NR Governor) to Amery (CO), 28 August 1928, RC/1348 (NAZ).

CHAPTER 3

The Copper Industry

Very often when Zambia is mentioned or looked at in any detail in academic literature, the focus is on the Copperbelt, or, at the very least, the latter figures prominently in the narrative. The Copperbelt has been an object of study from as early as the 1930s when the first miners' strikes shocked the colonial government into creating a research centre endowed with the mission to investigate the impact of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation on the local populations: the *Rhodes-Livingstone Institute* (RLI).¹ The RLI's wide-ranging studies and publications sparked the trend of Copperbelt- and labour-related literature, focusing on such topics as labour migration, the intermingling of people of different origins that it brought about, and the impact of the latter phenomenon – usually understood as negative – on the rural areas and traditional authorities. That the Copperbelt inspired such studies should not be surprising. In the mid-1920s, after forty years of colonial rule and relative obscurity, Northern Rhodesia became a major supplier of copper, leading to the very rapid development of this sparsely inhabited, narrow strip of land (about 130 kilometres long) that was the Copperbelt. By the time Northern Rhodesia became independent in 1964, the Copperbelt had five bustling industrial centres, three smaller mining towns, and a population of about 544,000 people.² It hosted one of the most concentrated large-scale industries in Africa south of the Sahara, which, by 1960, employed 36,000 Africans and 7,000 Europeans. The Africans in this changing society belonged to about 70 different Bantu groups, in 13 linguistics groups.³ In this way, although high rates of migration and mobility predate the onset of the copper industry, as has been argued in the previous chapters, colonial capitalism in south-central Africa created (often by force) new patterns of movements and residence. It is hardly a coincidence therefore, that mineworkers should occupy a prominent place in the “classical literature” on migration and urbanisation in Zambia.

This focus on labour migration, if justified, has had an unintended consequence: the creation of an archetype story of labour migration, or as James Ferguson puts it, a ‘conventional wisdom according to which (...) specific studies are fitted into a larger picture’.⁴ In his influential *Expectations of Modernity*, Ferguson shows how changes in the nature of migration and urbanisation in Zambia over the years have been described in terms of an overarching, progressive narrative in which a “classic” migrant labour system featuring short-term migration by lone, male, rurally based migrants gradually gave way to a permanently urbanised working class.⁵ However, this linear developmentalist view has come under increased criticism as forty years of scholarship have shown that migrant miners tended to migrate from mine to mine, or from job to job, rather than alternating

¹ For a detailed study of the work of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in the Twentieth Century, please see L. SCHUMAKER, *Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham, 2001).

² J. PARPART, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*, p.13.

³ H. POWDERMAKER, *Copper Town*, pp.3-7.

⁴ J. FERGUSON, *Expectations of Modernity*, p.41.

⁵ Ibid.

periods of work with long periods not working at home. Ferguson himself strongly argued that ‘rural-urban mobility was not always so orderly’¹ and that processes of mobility and urbanisation were more varied and more complex than was usually suggested. In addition, he argues, ‘already in the 1920s and 1930s, many Copperbelt mineworkers were much more used to long-term urban dwelling than the image of the cyclical migrant would suggest. Indeed (...) many of the early Copperbelt workers had long histories of urban employment at other labour centres in the region, especially the Katanga mines in the Belgian Congo and in the mining centres of Southern Rhodesia.’² Interestingly, while the role of Southern Rhodesia in this process of economic development and population movement is both acknowledged and relatively well-known, Katanga’s role in the same processes is less so. Indeed, the history of the development of the copper industry in Katanga – which has itself received a considerable amount of attention, though still considerably less than the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt – has been seen as separate and distinct from that of the mines on the British side of the border. This, Luise White contends, is partly due to the fact that ‘the two histories do not provide a good chronological or comparative fit’.³ Copper mining in Katanga had begun well before World War I, whereas on the Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt it only really took off in the late 1920s. Another thing that seems to set the two Copperbelts apart is the apparent disparity in labour policy. By 1926, before the first copper mine in Northern Rhodesia was fully operational, the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* (UMHK) had begun to stabilise its labour force whereas copper mines in Northern Rhodesia did not yet encourage a family presence. This created the idea that labour was ‘stabilised’ in Katanga while the copper mines of Northern Rhodesia still relied on a migrant system.⁴ In this way, ‘with few exceptions, the threads that link the two copperbelts have been overlooked, and the fluidity with which African labour penetrated colonial and cultural borders has not been the source with which history was written.’⁵

In this chapter, I will argue that, far from constituting two distinct economic entities, the two Copperbelts shared labour and managerial expertise from an early date. Looking at migration in and out of Northern Rhodesia, it will be shown that labourers from Northern Rhodesia crisscrossed the border between Katanga and Zambia well into the 1940s and that this had a series of corollaries on both human and economic levels. By shifting the terms of the debate on labour migration from the classical rural/urban opposition championed by the RLI to an oscillation between different centres of production, I contend not only that economic relations with Katanga played an important part in the history of Northern Rhodesia but also that the patterns of movements that the copper industry set into motion were as varied in form as they were important in volume.

¹ J. FERGUSON, *Expectations of Modernity*, p.39.

² Ibid, p.50.

³ L. WHITE, ‘Class Struggle and Cannibalism’, p.274.

⁴ Ibid, p.275.

⁵ Ibid.

1. *The Katangese Copperbelt: A Joint Enterprise*

1. *A DISHEARTENING START FOR NORTHERN RHODESIA*

Once it had secured Northern Rhodesia, the BSAC found itself in the strange situation of not knowing what to do with it. Northern Rhodesia was, as Andrew Roberts put it, ‘an awkwardly shaped piece of debris resulting from Rhodes’s failure to obtain Katanga.’¹ Ironically, considering the efforts that went into acquiring exclusive mineral rights over it, Northern Rhodesia’s economic prospects seemed dim as its soil was rocky and infertile and gold deposits soon turned out to be insignificant. Consequently, the BSAC did little with Northern Rhodesia. In 1891 the Company assigned responsibility for its northern territory to the Commissioner in Nyasaland, Harry Johnston and concentrated its attention on the search for a ‘second rand’ in its territories south of the Zambezi.² In the words of Ian Henderson: ‘The gilt was (...) missing from the gingerbread – if indeed there was any gingerbread at all.’³ For it became increasingly clear that, worse than not being lucrative, there was a danger the colony might not even be self-sufficient. In 1899, at the end of his lengthy confidential report on the Anglo-German boundary between Lakes Nyassa and Tanganyika, C.F. Close remarked that, though some parts of North East Rhodesia on the Lower Zambezi river (well south of the boundary with Belgian Congo) were fertile, the eastern plateau region between the lakes where the boundary ran was a ‘remote, unhealthy, unprofitable country’,⁴ adding that ‘it is unlikely, unless the native population largely increases in the next generation, that the country will be able to pay for its own administration’.⁵ Fifteen years later, in his official report on the Anglo-Belgian boundary commission, I. Walker made a similar point:

‘One can only hope that when N.E. Rhodesia is fully opened up to prospectors and exploration, minerals (above all tin) will be discovered in workable quantities, for without this incentive to progress, this country will remain a backwater of empire for several years to come.’⁶

Walker’s comment turned out to be exceptionally insightful.

European prospecting in Northern Rhodesia began in the 1890s. Several prospecting companies were formed under the aegis of one of Rhodes’s associates: Edmund Davis. The *Bechuanaland Exploration Company* (registered on April 25 1888) came first and was followed by a series of offshoots: the *Northern Territories (BSA) Exploring Company*, the *Rhodesia Copper Company*, the *Rhodesia Broken Hill Development Company* and the *Rhodesia Copper and General Exploration and Finance Company*.⁷ Under the auspices of these companies, prospectors discovered small copper mines at the ‘Hook’ of the Kafue River, lead and zinc at Broken Hill (now Kabwe) just below the Copperbelt region, and staked copper claims called Roan Antelope,

¹ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.175.

² Ibid; J.L. PARPART, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*, p.13.

³ I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.10.

⁴ Confidential Report C.F. Close, 24 January 1899, FO 64/1549 (NAZ), p.35, as quoted in J.W. DONALDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.136.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Report by Walker on the Anglo-Belgian Boundary Commission, 1914, RC/609 (NAZ).

⁷ F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.6.

Rietbok and Bwana Mkubwa further north in the area that was to become the Copperbelt. In 1898 Rhodes granted a former associate, the Scottish engineer Robert Williams, a prospecting area of 2,000 square miles in Northern Rhodesia for a period of two years. For this purpose, Williams launched the *Tanganyika Concessions Limited* (TCL) in January 1899.¹ Persuaded that minerals would be found around the Congo-Zambezi watershed, the company sent its first expedition there. The expedition found copper deposits at Nkana, Kipushi and Kansanshi, just 12 miles south of the watershed, as well as some gold.² Despite these discoveries, no substantial mining operations were started.³ The reason for this lack of enthusiasm lies in developments taking place in Katanga.

2. THE KATANGESE 'EL DORADO'

In 1900, Robert Williams, convinced that the copper deposits found near the watershed extended well into Katanga, obtained from King Leopold the opportunity to explore the Katangese Copperbelt.⁴ It may seem surprising that after the efforts poured into avoiding a British presence in Katanga, Leopold should so easily welcome into his territory those he had so fiercely competed against. Actually, Leopold had little choice but to tolerate British involvement. Not only was the Congo Free State coming under increased international scrutiny because of the brutal practices of its agents, resulting in economic difficulties, but no Belgian financial group was ready to invest capital in a region that was far from the homeland and difficult to access.⁵ In any case, letting the *Tanganyika Concessions Ltd* do the preliminary work could only be to the advantage of the Congo Free State, as Albert Ochs, a stockholder of the *Compagnie du Katanga*, remarked in a letter to the Compagnie's administrator, Albert Thys:

‘Le plan financier de cette compagnie vous fera plutôt sourire mais le groupe est actif et non sans influence. On suivra leur voie si ils trouvent quelque chose de vraiment bon. Je ne vois pas d’objection [à] accepter leur argent tout aussi bien que Rhodes le fait [dans sa] sphère.’⁶

An agreement was consequently concluded between the *Tanganyika Concessions Ltd* and the newly formed *Comité Spécial du Katanga* (CSK), which had by now taken over the administration of the territory on behalf of both the state and the *Compagnie du Katanga*.⁷ Under this agreement the TCL was given exclusive prospecting rights over 60,000 square miles along the Katanga border for a period of five years, and the right to work any mine for a period of up to thirty years in return for a guarantee of 60 % of the profits of any minerals

¹ R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.67; C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.9.

² R. WILLIAMS, ‘The Cape to Cairo Railway’, p.248; F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.7.

³ Some small-scale mining and smelting was undertaken at Kansanshi and Bwana Mkubwa, and in the Hook of the Kafue. See A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.175.

⁴ F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.8.

⁵ R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.69; B. FETTER, ‘L’Union Minière du Haut-Katanga 1920-1940’, p.4; B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, p.18.

⁶ Albert Ochs to Albert Thys, June 1899, as quoted in R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.67.

⁷ In May 1900, the Congo Free State and the Compagnie du Katanga agreed to divide the benefits derived from the territory and entrust its administration and exploitation to a new body: *Comité Spécial du Katanga* (CSK). ‘Dans la proportion d’un tiers, tout ce qui se fera, tout ce qui se donnera, tout ce qui se récoltera sera la propriété de la Compagnie du Katanga, les deux autres tiers restant à l’Etat.’ See R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.68.

discovered.¹ By the end of the concession period more than one hundred deposits had been located, including the gold mine of Ruwe (now Mutoshi), the copper and cobalt at Kambove, and the extremely rich carbonate deposit of the 'Star of the Congo' mine, close to which the future capital of Katanga, Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi), was to be founded in 1910.²



Fig. 1. The Ruwe mine circa. 1906

By contrast, British/South African capital had found nothing of even remotely similar promise in Northern Rhodesia. After the impetus of the initial prospecting spurt had lost momentum in the early years of the twentieth century, it seemed clear that results in Northern Rhodesia were relatively disappointing. Gold finds were negligible and the numerous small copper mines in Kafue (Broken Hill) were either failures or about to be. Kansanshi and Bwana Mkubwa were too far away from transport facilities. Though the mines discovered at the time in Northern Rhodesia presented plenty of signs of copper deposits, these existed in oxide ores, which yielded 3 to 5 % copper at best, a barely profitable margin compared with the 15 to 25 % of the Katangese oxides.³ Therefore, not only were the mines of the Hook of the Kafue, Kansanshi, Ndola and Broken Hill hardly enough to build a colonial economy on, they were also quite simply not worth the effort since Katanga was spewing deposits that were plentiful, ready for use and not far from the surface. Thanks to its 'plenteous bounty', Katanga was promised a very bright future indeed:

'The engineer's estimate is that he can turn out copper from the Star and Kambove at (...) less than £30 a ton. There is not a mine in the world, with the possible exception of Rio Tinto, that can afford to

¹ R. WILLIAMS, 'The Cape to Cairo Railway', p.249; F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.8. In 1905 the TCL concession was extended for another year, and in 1906 for a further three years. See C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.10.

² These were discovered in 1903 and 1907 respectively. See C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.10; F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.9.

³ F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.9-p.14; I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.10.

sell copper below £38 a ton (...) Given the railway and efficient management, Katanga should control the world's copper supply and be the brightest spot in Africa.'¹

Consequently, attention was duly diverted from Northern Rhodesia, where prospecting activities declined after 1906,² and from then on, copper production on either side of the border evolved much along the lines of what had been predicted. By the end of the 1920s the Belgian Congo was the world's third largest exporter of copper with 5.8 % of world output of smelter production.³ Northern Rhodesia was not as successful. Though Broken Hill and Bwana Mkubwa (at Ndola) both expanded their operations when the railroad reached them in 1900 and 1909 respectively, economic activity remained on a very small scale: Bwana Mkubwa produced copper from 1916 to 1918, and from 1917 to 1925 the country's principal export was lead, from the open-cast mine at Broken Hill.⁴

Year	Katanga	Northern Rhodesia	Average price per ton (£)
1908	-	589	-
1909	-	601	-
1910	-	782	-
1911	997	905	-
1912	2,492	1,972	-
1913	7,408	240	-
1914	10,722	218	62.6
1915	14,054	176	79.6
1916	22,149	167	125.2
1917	27,462	132	125.0
1918	20,237	96	113.5
1919	22,366	195	86.0
1920	18,961	130	80.4
1921	30,464	184	57.6
1922	43,362	180	61.6
1923	57,886	130	66.5
1924	85,379	89	60.0
1925	90,110	74	64.7
1926	80,639	708	63.6

Table 1. Copper Production (long tons) between 1908 and 1926⁵

By 1924, Northern Rhodesia was a territory teetering on the edge of insolvency. Thus the BSAC negotiated and reached an agreement with the British government on September 29, 1923, by which the Crown agreed to take

¹ *Livingstone Mail*, December 26 1908, as quoted in F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.14.

² F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.14.

³ *Ibid*, pp.20-23.

⁴ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.175.

⁵ The dramatic drop in 1918 can largely be accounted for by the 'Spanish flu' epidemic which struck central Africa (along with the rest of the world) that year. See F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.21.

over the administration of Northern Rhodesia though the mineral rights remained attached to the company. Northern Rhodesia officially passed to the Colonial Office as of 1924.¹

3. BRITISH INTERESTS AT THE HEART OF KATANGESE ECONOMICS

Northern Rhodesia having proved a disappointment, the British turned their attention to Katanga and the benefits that could potentially be derived from it. The economic health of the BSAC was to an extent linked to the fortunes of the *Tanganyika Concessions Ltd* in as much as (1) the chartered company held a 35 % interest in the claims of the TCL in Northern Rhodesia, (2) Rhodes himself possessed 2,000 £1 shares and (3) by virtue of Williams' agreement with Leopold, the TCL was to enjoy 40 % of the profit of Katanga operations.² The BSAC therefore had direct interest in the development and smooth running of operations in Katanga. In turn the Belgians were to become increasingly dependent on Great Britain for the production and export of its minerals. For a start, there was no connection between Katanga and a seacoast, which was a *sine qua non* condition for the export of Katanga copper on a large-scale. There was a project to build a rail link between Katanga and the Atlantic via the port of Lobito (near Benguela in Angola) but the line, whose construction had started in 1903, was not yet usable (and would not be until 1931).³ By contrast, the British railway line from Kimberley (South Africa) had reached Broken Hill in 1907.⁴ Both the BSAC and the TCL recognised that it would be mutually beneficial to extend that line to Katanga. The final section of the line, sustained by a financial alliance between the TCL and the BSAC, was extended to the copper-rich Congo border, from which point it reached Elisabethville in 1910.⁵



Fig. 2. The railway reaches Elisabethville, 1 October 1910

¹ F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.27.

² Ibid, p.9.

³ R. WILLIAMS, 'The Cape to Cairo Railway', p.253; W.A. HANCE & I.S. VAN DONGEN, 'The Port of Lobito and the Benguela Railway', p.466.

⁴ R. WILLIAMS, 'The Cape to Cairo Railway', p.253; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.177.

⁵ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.177; F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.12.

Henceforward, the Katanga mines imported coal and coke from a colliery just south of Victoria Falls, while their copper along with the lead and zinc from Broken Hill, was exported via Rhodesia Railways to the Mozambican coast.¹ Its traffic paid for the maintenance of the track and rolling stock, and provided jobs for Northern Rhodesians.² As such, the railway seems to have been the means by which the *British South Africa Company* was able to survive at all. Writing to Owen Letcher in August 1931, Sir Robert Williams remarked:

‘Dr Jameson, when he asked me after Rhodes’s death to try to get a connection for the Rhodesia Railways to the Katanga mines, told me that unless I got this, the Chartered Company would go into liquidation as that Company, of which Dr Jameson was then the president, was losing £300,000 per annum under its guarantee of interest to the Rhodesian Debenture Holders.’³

This was not the full extent of British involvement for they were also able to worm their way into the highest sphere of decision-making in Katanga. In order to handle what promised to be an extremely important mining interest in Katanga, the TCL and CSK launched a new chartered company on October 28, 1906: the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* (UMHK).⁴ The UMHK took over all the CSK’s rights and obligations with regard to the exploitation of the mineral wealth of Katanga and, from 1906 onwards, became the real locus of power in Katanga.⁵ The fact that the UMHK was to be a joint venture between British and Belgian interests stemmed out of necessity. Katanga was a Belgian territory but, in practice, Belgium’s experience as a colonial power was highly limited. There was no one in Belgium familiar, let alone experienced, with the mineral industry. Nor was anyone in Belgium familiar with Africa and its population. It is in recognition of that fact that the technical direction of the UMHK and the responsibility of recruiting labour were entrusted to the TCL.⁶ In return, Leopold II obtained a few concessions from the TCL: that the UMHK would be known as a Belgian, and not British company; that at least half of the employees would be Belgian; that 60 % of the material necessary for the exploitation of copper should be imported from Belgium; and last but not least, that half of the mines’ produce would be exported to Belgium.⁷ Leopold also made sure that some prominent Belgian groups would be included in the shareholders so as to counterbalance British influence on the Katangese mining sector. Prominent among these was the *Société Générale de Belgique*, Belgium’s largest holding company. As a result, the first administrative council of the UMHK was composed of five British representatives, all of whom were attached to the TCL, and five Belgians.⁸ The Company was Belgian and its administrative direction was to be Belgian but the technical direction, a.k.a. the overseeing of operations on the ground, was to be entrusted to the

¹ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.177; I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.57.

² B. FETTER, *Colonial Rule and Regional Imbalance*, p.87.

³ F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.12.

⁴ C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.10.

⁵ *Congo Bulletin*, 1906, FO 367/1/427.

⁶ R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.74.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The five Belgians were: the Baron Baeyens, Governor of the *Société Générale* and President of the Council; Joseph Devolder, Minister of State and Vice-Governor of the *Société Générale*; Theodore Heyvaert, President of the *Chemin de Fer du Katanga*; Ernest Cambier, representative of the *Compagnie du Katanga* within the CSK; Henri Buttgenbach, representative of the Congo Free State within the CSK. The repartition of votes at general assembly and the participation of the different groups to the benefits were as follows: 45 % for the TCL, 30 % for the CSK, 10 % for the *Société Générale* and 15 % for other Belgian groups. See R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.75.

British. In practice therefore, the TCL continued to operate the mines, control the recruitment of labour and manage the native compounds¹ and the British directors and engineers of the UMHK continued to dictate most of the company's decisions, both short-term and long-term. Until World War I, the main language of communication in Elisabethville was English.² Between 1907 and 1911, the Company even had two European headquarters: a head office in Brussels, where the Belgian senior management met, and a "technical committee" in London, where the real power lay since it was where Robert Williams' office supervised African undertakings. The British possessed half of the capital and the expertise in terms of mining and metallurgy, they controlled the main means of access to Katanga, and they provided and controlled labour.³ They were, as far as Katanga is concerned, everywhere.

Given this context of imbalanced dual power, tension between Belgian and British staff quickly escalated within the UMHK. A report on the UMHK undertaken by Jules Jadot, brother of the then President of the Société Générale, Jean Jadot, gave a grim picture of Belgo-British relations in Katanga:

'L'Union Minière n'était qu'un mythe ou une formule vague dénuée de signification (...) Tout au plus considérait-on que les hasards de la politique ayant fait du Katanga un territoire belge, il fallait donner à l'affaire une étiquette belge et qu'on avait pour cela créé l'Union Minière, dont toutefois Mr. Williams était le maître comme de la Tanganyika. Les Belges qui commencèrent à arriver peu à peu devaient naturellement être considérés comme des intrus (...) Le résultat était forcé: tout devait marcher mal.'⁴

On the Belgian side, on the other hand, there was a feeling that their company, and by extension their colony, was slowly being turned into a British dependency: 'l'administration congolaise n'existait que de nom dans ces parages et cette partie du Haut-Katanga était sans aucun doute considérée comme une extension de la Rhodésie.'⁵ Crossing the Congo in 1909, Prince Albert (who was to succeed to Leopold II that year) noted how the railway, once finished, would be:

'un inappréciable moyen de pénétration économique dans la partie la plus riche de notre colonie. Nous ne disposons d'aucun moyen par le Congo même qui puisse nous permettre de leur faire concurrence et l'on se demande si nous avons été inspirés par le vrai souci de notre avenir colonial en aidant nos concurrents et leur chemin de fer. Le Katanga apparait à tous les Anglais occupés à la mise en valeur de l'Afrique du Sud comme une vraie terre promise, ils parlent déjà avec des noms séparés du « Congo » et du « Katanga ».'⁶

¹ W.J. Schriviner (Compound Manager at Nkana), Report on Native Labour as Affecting the Copper Industry of Northern Rhodesia, 17 August 1934, SEC1/1293, doc.1 (NAZ), p.3.

² L. WHITE, 'Class Struggle and Cannibalism', p.275.

³ B. FETTER, 'L'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga 1920-1940', p.4.

⁴ Rapport sur L'Union Minière du Haut Katanga by Jules Jadot, 1 Mars 1912, AGR, UM I, 963 as quoted in R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.76.

⁵ Jules Jadot, as quoted by R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.76.

⁶ Prince Albert of Belgium, as quoted in R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, pp.76-77.

The British 'threat' led the Belgian government to hasten already projected changes in the administration of Katanga. In 1910, the CSK handed Katanga over to the Colonial Ministry, which set up a very hierarchal and well-staffed provincial government for Katanga, thereby increasing Belgian presence in Katanga and putting the latter more firmly under the authority of the Belgian state.¹ Tensions came to a head when the mines were first opened for business in 1911. The Belgian managers of the UMHK accused their British counterparts, Robert Williams in particular, of not running the mines properly. An inquiry commission, headed by Jules Jadot, was sent in November of the same year to assess the state of operations and suggest measures to be taken in the near future. Their report was incendiary: nothing worked properly, a fact that they attributed to the duality of command and the inefficiency of British technical direction. Jules Jadot concludes: 'L'Union Minière aurait-elle pu faire mieux si elle avait dirigé elle-même ses affaires? Oui, sans le moindre doute.'² Unfortunately for the Belgians, the First World War made it impossible to take any step towards re-claiming absolute authority over Katanga. Worse, the demands of war led to a dramatic drop in the Belgian presence in Africa. In 1917 Belgians represented less than 25 % of the UMHK's white employees, while the UMHK depended completely on the British and their control over southern Africa for the supply of provisions, labour and expertise.³ It was only after the war, by which time Anglophobia was rife in Elisabethville, that Belgium was able to pursue a policy of 'nationalisation' of its industry. In 1918, the then Procureur du Roi Martin Rutten, who spearheaded Belgian opposition to British domination over Katanga, had P.K. Horner, local overseer of UMHK operations, fired on the ground of poor hygiene conditions in 'native' housing.⁴ Immediately afterwards, Rutten used the series of strikes undertaken by the South African employees in 1919 and 1920 to dismiss them and replace them by Belgians.⁵ Then, still in 1918, the Union Minière created its own native labour department and took over the management of the compounds from Robert Williams and Company.⁶ In this way, between 1917 and 1920 many non-Belgians were successfully uprooted from their position of power in Katanga. This process was made all the easier by the fact that the Belgian franc declined in relation to the pound sterling after the war making London less keen to invest in Belgian ventures. By the early 1920s, Brussels had finally and definitively come to replace London as the source of capital for the development of the Katanga Copperbelt, the *Tanganyika Concessions* had become little more than a holding company and the combination of British entrepreneurship and British capital that had been so important in the early development of the Union Minière had lost its

¹ B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, p.44.

² Rapport sur L'Union Minière du Haut Katanga by Jules Jadot, 1 Mars 1912, AGR, UM I, 963 as quoted in R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.76.

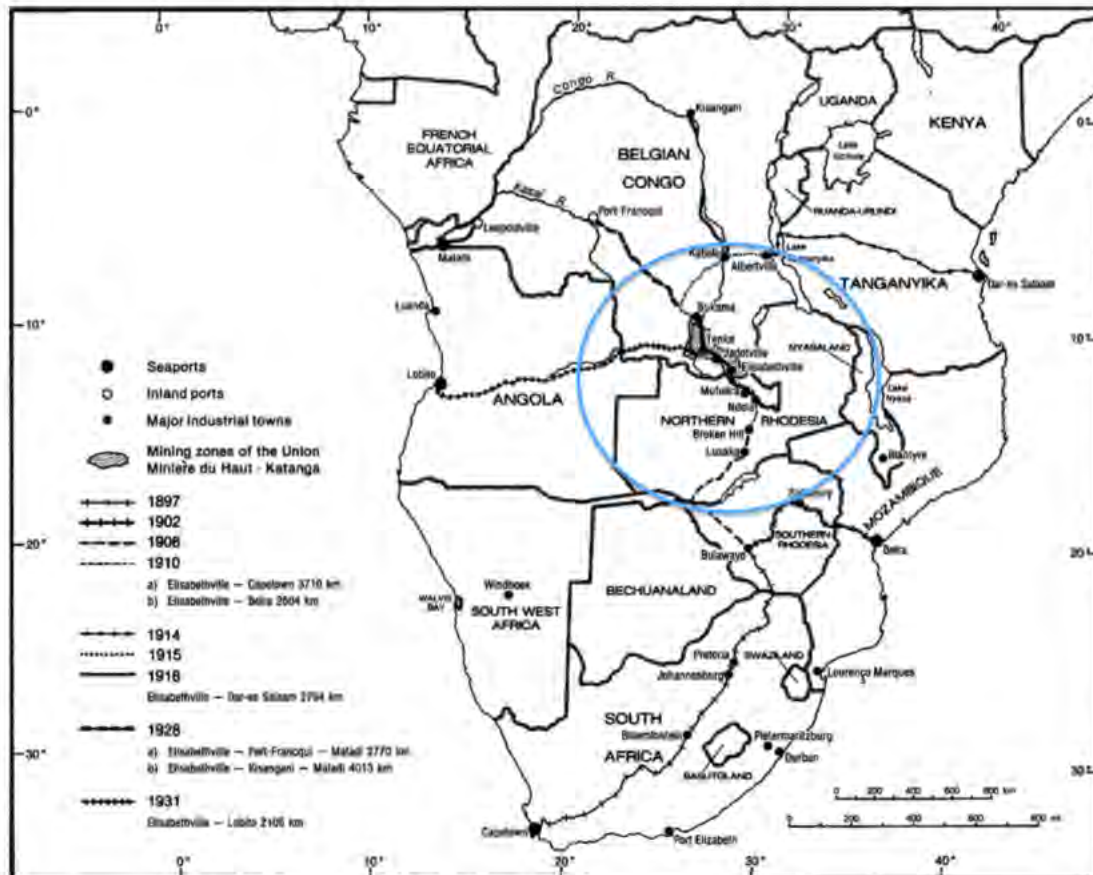
³ The Belgians obtained the closure of the UMHK headquarters in London while they also sought to strengthen links with Germany between 1912 and 1914 to counterbalance British influence. The war cut these undertakings short. After Brussels was taken by the German army in 1914, the head office was transferred back to London. See B. FETTER, 'L'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga 1920-1940', p.5.

⁴ Anglophobia did not only play out in a boardroom battle between directors. The Belgian settlers were also very active. Right after the end of the war they sent a set of statistics to the Colonial Ministry, which, they hoped, would demonstrate the degree to which the copper industry had fallen under British leadership. See B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, p.64.

⁵ Ibid, p.6.

⁶ W.J. Schriviner (Compound Manager at Nkana), Report on Native Labour as Affecting the Copper Industry of Northern Rhodesia, 17 August 1934, SEC1/1293, doc.1 (NAZ), p.3.

importance. The UMHK was now Belgian in both name and reality.¹ Despite these successes however, the UMHK could not break away completely from its English-speaking neighbour. For one thing, if British presence in UMHK directorate was diminished it was by no means eradicated. British money kept flowing in and out of the Union Minière and British directors sat on the board until as late as the 1960s.² For yet another thing, the two territories were still economically interdependent in terms of infrastructure, trade and, most importantly *labour*. This enduring interdependence is what we now turn to.



Map. 1. Southern Africa, circa 1932-1933

2. Labour Migrations in the Colonial Era (1910-1960)

1. A RHODESIAN WORKFORCE FOR KATANGA (1910-1925)

Northern Rhodesia as 'Labour Reservoir': A Gentlemen's Agreement

When the BSAC realised that the low-grade ores discovered at Broken Hill and Ndola would not yield significant enough profit to fund the territory's administration, the Company had to find another way for the northern territories to be useful to the Empire. If Northern Rhodesia was not to be a second Rand and if its agricultural possibilities were strictly limited, there was only one residual economic function for the North to

¹ Before World War I the major nations of Europe had all been on the gold standard, making their currencies freely interchangeable at a fixed rate. After the war, both Belgium and Britain went off the gold standard, while at the same time, the Belgian franc declined in relation to the pound sterling. See B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, pp.75-78.

² M. HUGHES, 'Fighting For White Rule in Africa', p.595.

perform: to provide labour for the expanding, labour-intensive economies of southern Rhodesia and, to a lesser degree, South Africa.¹ It is traditionally suggested that the principle aim of the hut tax was to manipulate the Northern Rhodesian population into engaging in migrant labour in a particular direction.² Though Ian Henderson, in an attempt to nuance that statement, contends that ‘taxation was not a necessary or sole cause of labour migration, but rather that it was one stage (though perhaps the most important one) in the process of the imposition of European control’,³ there is little doubt that tax and labour were regarded by the administration as indispensable to one another. For most of the Northern Rhodesians, who numbered about one million at the time, engaging in wage labour outside the territory became the only possibility of paying their tax, since opportunities for employment within Northern Rhodesia were scarce.⁴

At the same time as these measures were being implemented in northern Rhodesia, Katangese mines went into function and were – rather conveniently – in dire need of labour.⁵ The labour policy in Katanga was to copy the South African model in which workers would typically stay for a period of 6 to 9 months, work until exhaustion, be replaced by new recruits until they too succumbed to fatigue. The success of such a scheme presupposed the comparative proximity of dense population clusters.⁶ There lay the rub, for not only was there no transportation network to carry potential recruits to the mines, but Katanga was also much less populated than South Africa.⁷ In 1912, at the time when the mining in Katanga was entering its industrial phase, Katanga was described as ‘[une terre] inhabitée, sans ressource aucune au point de vue main-d’œuvre et ravitaillement. (...) Entre Elisabethville et Kambove, sur 160 kilomètres, on ne rencontre que deux villages.’⁸ In addition, the few potential labour supply areas that Katanga did have were not the ecological traps of the Bemba plateau in North-Eastern Rhodesia, and labour recruiters had to contend not only with an ineffectual administration, but also with the comparative profitability of peasant production.⁹ In addition, the region was still bearing the scars left by the era of the Congo Free State, as was noted in 1928 by the Northern Rhodesian Department of Native affairs:

‘In the Congo the main difficulties are (1) scarcity of native population (2) extreme difficulty experienced in persuading the male natives to come out as wage earners in industry. The reluctance to work for Europeans, it can safely be said, was caused by the ruthless methods practiced in the early

¹ I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.12; J.L. PARPART, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*, p.16.

² B. FETTER, *Colonial Rule and Regional Imbalance*, p.147.

³ I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.14.

⁴ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.177.

⁵ C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.14.

⁶ B. FETTER, ‘L’Union Minière du Haut-Katanga 1920-1940’, p.12; E. CLEGG, *Race and Politics*, p.39.

⁷ E. CLEGG, *Race and Politics*, p.39.

⁸ Rapport sur L’Union Minière du Haut Katanga by Jules Jadot, 1 Mars 1912, AGR, UM I, 963 as quoted in R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.81.

⁹ The actual area of the Copperbelt mines was particularly sparsely populated with only the Sanga and Lamba peoples present there. Ruwe was near modern day Lualaba province where Luba, Lomotwa and Zela groups lived along the Lualaba below the Lufira junction. See C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.14.

days of the Congo Free State to exploit the rubber trade (...) The rubber trade is also responsible to a great extent for the sparseness of the population.’¹

For want of any viable alternative, the Union Minière started to look towards Northern Rhodesia for the recruitment of its workforce.² For the purpose of handling labour recruitment and management, a small subsidiary of the TCL was formed: *Robert Williams & Co.* Its recruiters, using Fort Rosebery (now Mansa) as a base, set up an efficient recruitment system, concentrated in the area in Northern Rhodesia within 200 miles of Elisabethville. In the early years, *Robert Williams & Co.* was the sole provider of labour in Katanga, supplying to all three centres of operations – Ruwe, Kambove and the Star of the Congo – as well as fulfilling a portion of the company’s portage requirements.³

Considering the BSAC’s stakes in Katanga, it was of interest to them that that the *Robert Williams & Co.* obtained a large measure of cheap labour. Yet initially there seems to have been some concern about the fact that Katanga was diverting some of the labour that would have been sent southwards to support the development of Southern Rhodesia.⁴ According to Charles Perrings the bans against outward migration and labour recruitment that were enforced in 1905 ostensibly in response to the sleeping sickness epidemic in the Luapula valley, were in fact part of an attempt to place an embargo on the shipment of all labour from North-Eastern Rhodesia to Katanga.⁵ ‘There is little doubt,’ Perrings argues, ‘but that the appearance of sleeping sickness caused widespread alarm along medical men in both the Rhodesias and Katanga, but there is equally little doubt that the curative and preventive measures taken by the BSA Company administration were not actuated by that concern alone.’⁶ Unfortunately for the BSAC however, even if the closure of the border prevented Katangese recruiters from crossing the river to search out either labour or food, it was less effective a check on African mobility than the BSAC would have liked.⁷ By December, the acting administrator was describing the closure of the river as a ‘dead letter’ and arguing that the ‘popularity’ of the Katanga mines was such that no system of patrol could be effective. ‘So long as the natives have no other lawful sphere of labour’, he went on, ‘they will evade the restrictions on their movements’.⁸ At the same time, in Katanga, though a new recruiting agency called the *Bourse du Travail du Katanga* (BTK) had been launched in 1910, it was unable to round up enough recruits to meet the stringent needs of a territory undergoing an industrial and commercial boom.⁹ These circumstances made it becoming increasingly obvious to both BSAC and UMHK that a compromise had to be found. A conference was consequently held at Fort Rosebery in October 1910 where North-Eastern Rhodesian administration agreed to permit the controlled flow of labour on the Luapula, on the condition that the *Robert*

¹ Northern Rhodesia Department of Native Affairs in Livingstone to Chief Secretary, 22 December 1928, SEC1/1472, doc.1A (NAZ).

² C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.14.

³ R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.81; B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, p.39.

⁴ C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.15.

⁵ Ibid, pp.15-16. See Chapter 2 for the measures enforced to fight the spread of the disease.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ D.M. GORDON, *Nachituti’s Gift*, p.70.

⁸ Acting Administrator of North-East Rhodesia to the Office of the BSAC in London, December 18 1908 as quoted in C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.17.

⁹ R. BRION & J.L. MOREAU, *De la mine à Mars*, p.81.

Williams & Co. retained control of recruiting operations inside North-Eastern Rhodesia.¹ Further agreements between the Northern Rhodesia Government and *Robert Williams & Co.* were clinched in May 1911, establishing that Northern Rhodesian workers had to return home at the end of their terms (six months renewable for six more). In a supplementary agreement reached in 1913 the Katanga government allowed the Northern Rhodesian government to appoint a permanent Inspector of Rhodesian Labour to be posted at the ‘Star of the Congo’ mine.² In this way, because of economic necessities, two colonial strongholds acknowledged their economic interdependence and made the best of an awkward situation. The Union Minière obtained a reliable supply of labour albeit at an increased cost while the BSAC gained a source of revenue. The taxed Rhodesian mineworkers represented an important part of the territory’s meagre export earnings; in 1912, total domestic exports amounted to only £70,000, which was little more than the total value of mineworkers’ pay in Katanga.³

The Enduring Popularity of Katanga

From the moment the *Robert Williams & Co.* started recruiting extensively across the border in 1910, it was the Luapula area (the Awemba and Tanganyika Districts) in North-East Rhodesia that yielded most of the African labour for the newly formed UMHK. The Luapula supply areas, i.e. the great plateau of North-Eastern Rhodesia along the Luapula between lake Mweru and Bangweolu, comprised the Bemba, Bisa, Mambwe, Iwa, Namwanga, Lungu, Ushi, Chisinga, Ngumbo and Eastern Lunda peoples. All these groups had few options to earn the few shillings they needed to pay their taxes. Northeast Rhodesia had poor soils and was infested with tsetse flies, which hampered both agriculture and cattle husbandry. To make things worse, there were few employment opportunities in the area, apart from the small white settlement around Abercorn.⁴ As a result, the Katangese mines seem to have been quite popular with the Mweru-Luapula peoples. Not only were work conditions there believed to be slightly better than those of pre-1910 Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, but the mines of Katanga were also particularly advantageously located.⁵ It is not surprising therefore that, as soon as they got the opportunity, Luapulans flocked to Katanga to the point of forming the largest part of the Rhodesian workforce in Katanga. In December 1921, out of the 1,290 Rhodesian recruits that arrived that month, 1,069 came from North-East Rhodesia (158 came from Barotseland and 63 from other areas).⁶ Despite a short decrease towards the end of the First World War (when Northern Rhodesia closed its border temporarily to labour because of the pitiful quality of the labour camps in Katanga⁷) labour migration routes were well established by 1920 and the volume of the movements along them had increased. The Rhodesians had built

¹ C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.21.

² B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, pp.39-41.

³ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.179.

⁴ I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.42-p.44; C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, pp.14-15; G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.215.

⁵ I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, pp.44-46, G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, pp.201-202.

⁶ Report of the Inspector of Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga for December 1920, 7 March 1921, A4/1/3, tag.824, loc.209, doc. 99, (NAZ).

⁷ The following was reported in February 1919: ‘A visit of inspection was paid to the Likasi Mine and Panda works. [The compound at Likasi] was not in satisfactory condition. Representations were made to the Union Minière through Messrs. Robert Williams and Company and a satisfactory undertaking was received in reply.’ See Report of the Inspector of Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga for February 1919, 28 April 1919, HC/1/3/53, tag.1140, loc.286, doc. 1053/19 (NAZ).

themselves a reputation in Katanga for their reliability and resilience and their accumulated experience was a growing asset.¹ Their accommodation was better than that of the Katangese from the surrounding area, and since they were paid in sterling rather than depreciating francs, Northern Rhodesians enjoyed greater buying power than Congolese workers. In 1926 the salary that the UMHK paid to Northern Rhodesians was the equivalent of twice what the Congolese received in francs.² The number of Northern Rhodesians in Katanga grew steadily over the years with a particularly dramatic and sudden increase in 1920 and 1921, which may be related to a rise in hut tax in 1920.³ In February 1919, there were 1,301 Northern Rhodesian natives employed by Union Minière.⁴ By January 1920 they were 5,752,⁵ and by January 1921, 5,983.⁶ In 1920-1921 Northern Rhodesians therefore represented 56 % of the Union Minière workforce.

Year	Number	Percentages
1917 (April 1)	1661	34 %
1918 (March 31)	-	23 %
1919 (December 31)	5634	46 %
1920 (April 30)	6836	52 %
1921 (December)	5548	56 %
1922 (September)	2177	33 %
1923 (October)	4267	43 %
* Does not include Rhodesians in domestic and other non-mine employment, who probably amounted to a similar number.		

Table 2. Numbers and percentages of Rhodesian labour in the Katanga mines of UMHK, 1917-1923

2. THE RISE OF THE NORTHERN RHODESIAN COPPERBELT (1924-1931)

A New Competitor

Until the early 1920s, Britain's main concern had been to see that the territory was made to pay for its own upkeep, mostly through the export of labour.⁷ However within a few years the situation changed unexpectedly and dramatically thanks to the growth of the automobile and electrical industries that followed the end of the First World War. These new industries engendered global demand for copper, considerably boosting copper prices. This, combined with the success of the mines developed over the border in the Belgian Congo, prompted a change of policy on the part of the *British South Africa Company*. Towards the end of 1922, instead of granting individual prospecting licenses as it had hitherto done, the BSAC began to grant exclusive

¹ I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.46.

² B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, pp.81-85.

³ Ibid, p.81.

⁴ Report for Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga for February 1919, 28 April 1919, HC/1/3/53, tag.1140, loc.286, doc. 1053/19 (NAZ).

⁵ Report of the Inspector of Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga for January 1920, 27 April 1920, A4/1/3, tag.824, loc.209, doc. 80 (NAZ).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.185; J.L. PARPART, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*, p.19.

prospecting rights to large mining concerns over extensive areas.¹ This change in BSAC's mining policy was clearly specifically aimed at attracting larger well-financed concerns with technical expertise. Since the United States now led the world in copper production and technology, promotion of the Copperbelt as a potential important copper supplier was especially geared towards attracting American financiers.² Two fish were hooked: A. Chester Beatty, a London-based mining financier whose holding company, *Selection Trust Ltd* provided some funds in 1920; and Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, founder of the *Anglo American Corporation*, who joined forces in 1924.³ New prospecting soon revealed large sulphide deposits containing copper at workable depths just below the topmost layers of oxide ore near Ndola close to the Belgian Congo border. Following the discovery in 1911 of a flotation method drastically lowering the cost of processing sulphide ores, the Copperbelt became a highly lucrative investment opportunity, and systematic mining followed suit.⁴ Bwana Mkubwa was relaunched in 1922 and employed some 1,400 men by the end of 1924.⁵ By 1930 four large new mines were being developed on the Copperbelt: Roan Antelope (now Luanshya), Nkana (Kitwe), Mufulira and Nchanga (Chingola). The Rhodesian branch of Oppenheimer's *Anglo American Corporation* developed the Nchanga and Nkana mine, forming the *Rhokana Corporation Ltd* in 1931 to manage the latter. Beatty's *Selection Trust* incorporated the Roan Antelope and Mufulira mines in 1927 and 1930 respectively.⁶ In 1931, despite the worldwide depression that led to the closure of the small Bwana Mkubwa mine, Roan Antelope and Nkana went into production. Mufulira began producing in 1933 and in 1934 a refinery was opened at Nkana. The growth of the Copperbelt had touched off a revolution for Northern Rhodesia. The value of exports increased five-fold between 1930 and 1933, and the contribution of copper rose from 30 % to 90 %.⁷ This made copper a welcome source of revenue for the country's administration and it remained the most valuable product in the territory.

Northern Rhodesia's Introduction to the Migrant Labour System

Despite this rapid growth, the newly formed Copperbelt companies were at first hard pressed to obtain sufficient African labour. In 1929, two shafts at Mufulira closed temporarily because of insufficient personnel. Part of the problem lay in the fact that no local labour was available.⁸ The Compound manager of Nkana noted the following:

'The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt is a sparsely populated District, the supply of labour being totally inadequate to keep any large industry going and moreover the quality of the labour is very poor. It is

¹ E. CLEGG, *Race and Politics*, p.37; L.J. BUTLER, *Copper Empire*, p.14; F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, p.32.

² L.J. BUTLER, *Copper Empire*, p.14.

³ J.L. PARPART, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*, p.20.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ J. FERGUSON, *Expectations of Modernity*, p.48.

⁶ The two same groups were to remain in control of the industry until January 1 1970, when the Zambian government took a 51 per cent stake in the mines. See A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.186; E.L. BERGER, *Labour, Race and Colonial Rule*, pp.5-6.

⁷ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.186.

⁸ E.L. BERGER, *Labour, Race and Colonial Rule*, p.12.

thereof necessary to import labour from districts further afield. This fact alone constitutes a greater part of the native labour problem of the copper mining companies.’¹

This lack of local labour source meant that the Copperbelt mines had little choice but to engage in the migrant labour system. When they did so, however, they encountered stiff competition. Labour-routes to other industrial centres were already well established, having been trodden for two decades. In 1928 it was reported that some 15,7% of the male population of Northern Rhodesia was working outside the territory, in the mines of Katanga, Southern Rhodesia, South Africa and even Tanganyika.² To counteract this trend, the Copperbelt companies adopted a series of strategies. In December 1925 they convinced the government of Northern Rhodesia to put an official limit on the number of Rhodesians allowed to work in Katanga.³ In May 1929 representatives of the two main Copperbelt Companies met together with governor of Ndola and agreed to establish a new labour bureau: the *Native Labour Association* and by 1931 the Association had 27 agents stationed at strategic points throughout the territory. In this way, the mines secured the major part of their labour force by recruiting in distant regions, usually east of the Fort Rosebery, the area favoured by Congo recruiters. To compete with them, Northern Rhodesian mines offered contracts for 180 days of work, and of course, wages were also forced up considerably, as each mine tried to outbid the other, as well as the Union Minière.⁴ These strategies had a measure of success. It was reported that the ‘habit of going abroad to work is already losing its hold’⁵ and that there was a relative decline in migration to the Katanga. At the same time foreign labour, mainly from Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia, was also increasingly attracted to the north. Early in 1927 there were about 8,500 workers on all the mines and concessions in the territory. At the end of 1928 the figure had risen to 16,073; to 22,341 at the end of 1929; to 29,689 at the end of 1930; and to a peak of 31,941 in September 1930.⁶ However none of these measures succeeded in meeting the demands of the new mines and general labour scarcity endured. The companies struggled to offer conditions of employment comparable to those at neighbouring mines and there, as was noted by the Department of Native Affairs in 1928, lay the heart of the problem:

‘Our greatest and most serious problem is that the best of our labourers proceed to Southern Rhodesia, Congo Belge and even Tanganyika Territory in quest of employment in preference to working in our own territory because of the better conditions of employment and the better terms of wages offered them in these places. There is no reason to believe that this state of affairs will alter until Employers in

¹ W.J. Schriviner (Compound Manager at Nkana), Report on Native Labour as Affecting the Copper Industry of Northern Rhodesia, 17 August 1934, SEC1/1293, doc. 1 (NAZ), p.1.

² Northern Rhodesia Department of Native Affairs in Livingstone to Chief Secretary, 22 December 1928, SEC1/1472, doc. 1A (NAZ), p.6.

³ B. FETTER, ‘L’Union Minière du Haut-Katanga 1920-1940’, p.18.

⁴ J.L. PARPART, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*, pp.33-34; C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.93; E.L. BERGER, *Labour, Race and Colonial Rule*, p.13.

⁵ Northern Rhodesia, Department of Native Affairs, Annual Report, 1930 as quoted in C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.95.

⁶ E.L. BERGER, *Labour, Race and Colonial Rule*, p.13; J.L. PARPART, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*, p.34.

Northern Rhodesia pay the same wages as can be obtained elsewhere and conditions in respect of housing, feeding, medical treatment etc are improved.’¹

In the report on Rhodesian natives in Katanga for October 1929 a similar statement was made:

‘Doubtless many of the natives from the Mweru-Luapula districts who have been accustomed to work in the Katanga for a long time will continue to do so. Others will seek the work which is the most attractive, where their friends are working and where they receive fair treatment. (...) The only thing which might attract natives to the Rhodesian mines from those districts would be higher pay. The Belgian manager of Katanga cement company who visits some of the mines in Northern Rhodesia from time to time informs me that he thinks that the scale of rations in Northern Rhodesia compares unfavourable with the existing scale in the Katanga.’²

Major G.St.J. Orde Browne, an expert on colonial labour policy, remarked in 1933 that the extent to which the African worker travelled and compared conditions of employment was not generally realised.³ Northern Rhodesians employed in Southern Africa had developed their own networks which conveyed information on labour conditions. News travelled rapidly along the established labour routes, and conditions in the mines of Katanga, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, as well as Tanganyika (a small but regular number of Northern Rhodesians worked in the Lupa gold fields of Tanganyika) were well-known. Most Northern Rhodesians understood the relative rewards available to them at various places of employment, and they made decisions based on that knowledge. The general labour shortage of the 1920s in central Africa put skilled workers in a relatively good bargaining position in the labour market: jobs were plentiful and experienced workers in short supply. Northern Rhodesians knew they could change jobs easily, which they did, sometimes even before the end of their contracts.⁴ The Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, as the newcomer, found it particularly difficult to compete with industries that were better established and better ‘stocked’.

It is no wonder therefore that, when the Copperbelt mines began construction in 1926, Northern Rhodesians did not flock to them. Katanga was a tough act to follow, the standards of living of its mines having been described as ‘positively amazing’ by Orde Browne in 1929.⁵ From 1926 on, to palliate the effects of the Northern Rhodesian government’s decision to restrict the number of Northern Rhodesians allowed to work in Katanga, the Union Minière had decided ‘on an attempt to settle a native population on their properties and thus provide themselves with a permanent resident labour supply’.⁶ This meant that the UMHK was now after two

¹ Northern Rhodesia Department of Native Affairs in Livingstone to Chief Secretary, 22 December 1928, SEC1/1472, doc. 1A (NAZ), p.2.

² Report on Rhodesian Natives in Katanga, 22 October 1929, SEC1/1472, doc. 6 (NAZ), p.7.

³ G. St.J. Orde Browne, *The African Labourer*, p.120.

⁴ Very high rate of desertions were reported every month on both sides of the border. In the mine of Luishia in Katanga in particular, desertions were described as ‘high’ in Report of the Inspector of Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga for January 1921, 18 April 1921, A4/1/3, tag.824, loc.209, doc. 101 (NAZ).

⁵ Report by Labour Commissioner by Major G. St. J. Orde Browne on his Tour through the Belgian Congo and Angola, August 1929, SEC1/1472, doc. 4 (NAZ).

⁶ W.J. Schriviner (Compound Manager at Nkana), Report on Native Labour as Affecting the Copper Industry of Northern Rhodesia, 17 August 1934, SEC1/1293, doc. 1 (NAZ), p.4.

things: new and more permanent sources of African labour, which would limit Katanga's dependence on foreign labour on the one hand¹ and on the other, a more stable and skilled workforce, since allowing workers to stay for longer periods of time meant reducing dependence on a constant large supply of unskilled workers.² From 1927 the UMHK began to enlist workers on three-year contracts and increasingly, though not exclusively, sought to attract men from within the Congo or Rwanda-Urundi.³ In order to attract settled labour, a dramatic upgrading of African living conditions had been achieved by the end of the decade; the company built better houses and hospitals for employees as well as granted small salary increases and better food.⁴ This made Katanga very attractive for Rhodesian workers and, despite the UMHK's policy of lowering the mines' dependence on Rhodesian labour, many Northern Rhodesians still went to Katanga on a voluntary basis and were still hired.⁵ As late as 1929, the total number of Rhodesian male natives employed by the UMHK was 'estimated approximately at 11,000 or 12,000'.⁶ Yet the total number of Rhodesians present in Katanga is likely to have been much larger than the number of UMHK employees may indicate. By 1924 J.P. McGregor, the British Vice-Consul in Elisabethville, estimated that his office looked after the interests of 10,000 Rhodesians when only half that number was reported to be working for the UMHK at the time.⁷ There are several reasons for this discrepancy. First was the fact the UMHK was not the sole employer in Katanga. The expansion of Katanga was paralleled in other industries and by 1924 industrial and commercial employment in Katanga outside the UMHK accounted for an average of 12,000 men. The majority were employed by the railways but others were also employed by more recent undertakings such as the *Charbonnages de Luena*, the *Société Coloniale de Construction*, the *Société Belge Industrielle et Minière du Katanga* and the *Société Ciments du Katanga*.⁸ In addition, Northern Rhodesians were also engaged in non-industrial wage labour. They worked as artisans, shopkeepers and, more importantly as "houseboys" as it was 'a recognised fact that the Rhodesian natives are better servants. They are a pleasanter type and are bettermannered, though their manners soon deteriorate after they have been a little time in the Congo.'⁹ Another element that explains the sudden increase in Northern Rhodesian presence in Katanga was the fact that, in 1923 the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* decided to allow labour recruits to bring their wives and families to the mining townships, arguing that a man accompanied by his wife was more likely to be contented and consequently would both stay longer and be a better worker.¹⁰ As a

¹ Report on Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga by the Acting British Vice Consul in Elisabethville as at December 31st 1932, 15 February 1933, SEC2/165, doc. 18 (NAZ).

² The fact that Katanga mines were mostly open-cast mines meant that it was both possible and economical to use machinery on a large scale. This further enhanced the need for a skilled and stable workforce. It also meant that fewer workers were needed. See A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.189.

³ In 1926 the government granted the company recruitment rights in the Maniema District of Orientale province as well as in the mandated territory of Ruanda-Urundi. In 1927 these rights were extended to three territories of the Lomami district: Kabinda, Tshofa and Kanda-Kanda. See B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, p.90.

⁴ B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, p.94.

⁵ J.L. PARPART, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*, p.32; B. FETTER, 'L'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga 1920-1940', p.32.

⁶ Report on Rhodesian Natives in Katanga, 22 October 1929, SEC1/1472, doc. 6 (NAZ), p.1.

⁷ I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.70.

⁸ C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.49.

⁹ Report on Rhodesian Natives in Katanga, 22 October 1929, SEC1/1472, doc. 6 (NAZ), p.4.

¹⁰ W.J. Schriviner (Compound Manager at Nkana), Report on Native Labour as Affecting the Copper Industry of Northern Rhodesia, 17 August 1934, SEC1/1293, doc. 1 (NAZ), p.3.

result, married Northern Rhodesian women also crossed the border with ease, and as it happens, so did unmarried ones: 'Owing to the large number of men who flock to the mines both in Northern Rhodesia and the Katanga many of whom remain permanently or for long periods, the number of detribalised natives is increasing. The number of young men who remain in the villages is very small and the women are also flocking to the mines in search of husbands.'¹ In 1929, therefore, despite restrictions enforced by both Katangese and Northern Rhodesian authorities, the Northern Rhodesian community in Katanga had remained large, representing 37.5 % of the population in the UMHK's compounds of the Elisabethville area and 44 % of the population of the Elisabethville district as a whole.² The most common language spoken in the mines of Katanga at the time was Bemba.³

	Men	Women	Children	Total
Place	Elisabethville City: Union Miniere camps (Lubumbashi-Etoile-Ruashi)			
Northern Rhodesian	1,563	577	317	2,462
Congolese	2,612	961	528	4,101
Total	4,181	1,538	845	6,563 ¹
Place	Elisabethville District: (Entire City-Kipushi-Rural)			
Northern Rhodesian	5,746	1,476	1,077	8,301 ²
Congolese	7,283	3,149	2,341	12,773 ³
1. The Northern Rhodesian and Congolese sub-totals are extrapolated from the overall totals at a ratio of 37.5 % Northern Rhodesians, 62.5% Congolese.				
2. All men at work or seeking work				
3. That number includes rural population				

Table 3. African population statistics for greater Elisabethville, 1928-1929

3. THE CHANGE IN THE DIRECTION OF LABOUR MIGRATION (1931-1940)

The Depression of the Early 1930s

By the time Northern Rhodesia copper entered the world market in 1931, the onset of a severe depression in 1931 dramatically reduced the price and demand for copper on the world market. In copper mining, the Depression years were 1929 to 1936, with copper prices starting to fall in mid 1930 and hitting bottom in 1932.⁴ Mining companies in both southern Katanga and Northern Rhodesia reacted to the slump in copper prices by curtailing production and reducing the size of their labour force. Recruitment for the Katanga mines in Northern Rhodesia, which had already been decreasing for some years, came to a final end on July 31 1931. In addition more than two-thirds of the UMHK workforce was laid off – the African labour force was reduced from 16,000

¹ Report on Rhodesian Natives in Katanga, 22 October 1929, SEC1/1472, doc. 6 (NAZ), p.7.

² B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, p.99.

³ L. WHITE, 'Class Struggle and Cannibalism', p.275.

⁴ Prices dropped precipitously from £112.635s per ton in 1929 to £27.25s per ton in February 1932. See L. WHITE, 'Class Struggle and Cannibalism', p.282; J. PARPART, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*, p.21.

to less than 5,000 between 1930 and 1932 – with the Northern Rhodesians being especially targeted.¹ The number of Northern Rhodesians settled in Katanga drastically reduced from an approximated population of 20,000 in 1929 to an approximated population of 7,200 in 1932.² In the meantime, due to the combined effect of the Depression and the repatriation of Northern Rhodesia-born miners from the Congo in 1931, workers started to flock in the Copperbelt mines in such numbers that recruitment was no longer necessary and was disbanded in 1932.³ What had been the companies' dearest hope just a year or two before, was now almost an inconvenience as there were more voluntary recruits than the Copperbelt mines could realistically accommodate. In addition the Depression was eventually to close all of the Copperbelt mines except the Roan Antelope and Nkana, and even these two remaining mines sharply scaled back production.⁴ Africans employees on the mines, which had hit a peak of 31,941 at the height of the construction boom in September 1930, dropped to 19,313 by the following September, and to 6,677 at the end of 1932.⁵ During 1931 and 1932, some 58 % of the workforce lost their job⁶ and unemployment on the mines was subsequently widespread. Dismissed Africans were simply supposed to go home to rural villages during the slump. But many, having worked for some years on the Copperbelt or in other urban centres in Katanga, Southern Rhodesia, or South Africa had been away from the villages for a long time and 'felt so out of touch they refused to return'.⁷

Gradually, however, the Depression lifted and the mines began to recover. Mufulira reopened in October 1933 and production facilities expanded at all three major mines. By 1935, the mines were producing 153,790 tons, or 10 % of the free world's production.⁸ As the world moved towards war for the second time, the demand for copper rose briskly and prices followed accordingly.⁹ This ushered in an era of unparalleled prosperity for the Copperbelt, thanks to which Northern Rhodesia was firmly established as one of the world's major copper producers by 1945.¹⁰ Between 1935 and 1941 employment on the mines rose from 13,734 to 27,602, which was still a few thousand less than at its peak in 1930 but reflected the vastly increased scale of operations at Mufulira, the reopening of Nchanga, and significant expansion at both Roan Antelope and Nchanga.¹¹ At the same time, there were substantial improvements in underground conditions, so that in many mines the working conditions improved and remuneration for skilled labour increased, bringing about an era of increased stabilisation in the workforce.¹² The Depression, despite the Copperbelt's subsequent recovery, had rather profound effects on the African labourer. For, in just a matter of months, the latter had lost its leverage in the

¹ B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, p.123; B. FETTER, *Colonial Rule and Regional Imbalance*, p.153; C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.101; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.191.

² Report on Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga by the Acting British Vice Consul in Elisabethville as at December 31st 1932, 15 February 1933, SEC2/165, doc. 18 (NAZ).

³ P.O. OHADIKE, *Development of and Factors in the Employment of African Migrants*, p.1.

⁴ In February 1931, Bwana Mkubwa mine was shut down permanently. See F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, p.66.

⁵ J. FERGUSON, *Expectations of Modernity*, p.50; P.O. OHADIKE, *Development of and Factors in the Employment of African Migrants*, p.1.

⁶ L.J. BUTLER, *Copper Empire*, p.18.

⁷ E.L. BERGER, *Labour, Race and Colonial Rule*, p.21.

⁸ J. PARPART, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt*, p.21.

⁹ F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, p.143.

¹⁰ L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, p.146.

¹¹ P.O. OHADIKE, *Development of and Factors in the Employment of African Migrants*, p.1;

¹² L. WHITE, 'Class Struggle and Cannibalism', p.283.

labour market and the balance of power had shifted to the mining companies. As employment opportunities dried up throughout southern Africa, miners clung fiercely to their jobs, which contributed to breaking such migrating cycle from to mine to mine, as had previously been the norm, even if new opportunities opened up.

The Volume of Cross-Border migrations

Despite the seemingly clear-cut situation presented in the previous section, it is in fact difficult to ascertain the precise timing of changes in the direction of labour migration in this period. It is even more difficult to assess its significance. Blurring the picture is the fact that official data on migrant labour for that period is sorely lacking. The Northern Rhodesian government, who was only interested in labour in as much as it permitted the laws of supply and demand to operate freely, was insulated from the realities of labour conditions until the first Copperbelt strike broke out in 1935, and even then it took an additional few years before anything happened to change this state of affairs. There was no Labour Department in Northern Rhodesia until the late 1930s,¹ and Orde Browne, attempting to analyse labour conditions in Northern Rhodesia in 1938, found that labour problems had been ignored in government annual reports: 'statistics of the movement of natives, analyses of contract, records of court cases under industrial legislation and similar particulars, are not to be found: wider aspects of the problem are hardly mentioned.'² This haze of ignorance is a major handicap in attempting to quantify and analyse African labour before 1940. Henderson summarises the labour movements of the 1930s as follows:

'If it is possible to generalise about the wage-labour activities of Africans in the 1920s and 1930s, one might say that labour migration continued unabated and uncontrolled by the government. The direction of the migration changed, but the volume continued unchanged except by the economic slump of 1931-33.'³

Henderson adds however that the exact number of ex-Katanga mineworkers who went directly to the Copperbelt remains an 'open question'.⁴ It is likely that the new market provided by the Copperbelt was seen as a potential life-belt by many of them, especially the inhabitants of the Mweru-Luapula, who depended heavily on copper mining. In 1930, only 1,620 (or 25 %) of the 6,420 voluntary mineworkers from Mweru-Luapula Province were estimated to have proceeded to southern Katanga while all the others were said to have proceeded to the Copperbelt.⁵ The fact that the Northern Rhodesian government stayed largely unconcerned with labour issues until 1935 also meant that the composition and provincial origins of the original Copperbelt labour force is obscure. It seems that the bulk of the unskilled labour force was indeed supplied by Africans from Northern

¹ I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.68.

² G. St.J. Orde Browne, *Labour Conditions*, para. 6, as quoted in I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.69.

³ I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.60.

⁴ *Ibid*, p.71.

⁵ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.215.

Rhodesia, especially the Bemba-speaking peoples of the northeast,¹ while the rest mainly came from Nyasaland.²

As for the Rhodesian presence in Katanga, it would be wrong to think that it was wiped out. Even when the effects of the Depression were the most acutely felt, and despite the fact that, in the words of the Inspector of Rhodesian Natives in Katanga 'it is fairly obvious that the policy of the mines is to give preference to the natives of the Congo when engaging labour', it was equally 'obvious' that 'with a revival of trade and fresh undertakings in the Katanga Rhodesian natives will no doubt again be gladly welcomed'.³ And indeed in 1947 it was reported that most men from Luapula, even on the Northern Rhodesian side of the river, looked or were recruited for wage work in the Belgian Congo, which was nearer and more accessible than the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt.⁴ What is more, many Northern Rhodesians remained in Katanga throughout the 1930s. In 1933, though their number in the UMHK workforce had decreased almost to insignificance (they were 230 Rhodesian *and* Nyasaland natives employed by the UMHK at that time⁵), it was also reported that:

'There are some 3,000 male Rhodesian natives employed in the town itself, practically, if not all, domestic servants and office boys are Rhodesian. In addition there are between 350 and 450 Rhodesian natives who have settled in the villages round the town as market gardeners. They rent the ground from the Comité spécial and sell their produce in Elisabethville at the market which is held twice a week.'⁶

This said, it is undeniable that there was net decline in Northern Rhodesian population and that the lives of those who chose to remain was becoming increasingly difficult. The Rhodesians remaining on the mines – now representing only 5 % of the workforce – were reportedly 'mainly skilled or trained workmen who have long periods of service with the Union Minière behind them and who have been retained for this reason'. Consequently they were considered to be 'detribalised' and to have 'settled down',⁷ and the legitimacy of their presence in Katanga was not called into question. For the rest, the Northern Rhodesians who were unemployed, independent workers, or who for one reason or another were not as immovable as the qualified miners, life in Katanga was markedly more uncertain. Belgian administrators attempted to pursue the same policy as the UMHK of reducing foreign presence in the native towns. Workers were expelled if they remained unemployed for more than a month. To cope with this situation, many jobless married men sent their families back to the villages, and many left Katanga altogether.⁸ Yet, the fact that there had been a Northern Rhodesian presence in Katanga for two decades ensured that (1) those who left would be likely to come back if given the chance and

¹ The manpower resources were strained to the limit. Merle Davis considered that as many as 60 % of the able-bodied Bemba men aged from 15 to 45 were away from their village in 1931. See F.L. COLEMAN, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962*, p.65.

² I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.72.

³ Report on Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga Province, Belgian Congo for six months ending the 31st December 1931 by Inspector of Natives, Elisabethville, 4 February 1932, SEC2/165, doc. 11 (NAZ).

⁴ W.V. BRELSFORD, *Copperbelt Markets*, p.12.

⁵ Report on Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga by the Acting British Vice Consul in Elisabethville as at December 31st 1932, 15 February 1933, SEC2/165, doc. 18 (NAZ).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, pp.126-127.

(2) that a significant number of Northern Rhodesians ‘visitors’ would regularly come to gauge their working possibilities. In this way, the Depression served to make the border more porous than it had been before. In 1930-31 alone the British Vice Consulate in Elisabethville registered 4,480 Northern Rhodesian men who left Katanga, while 3,652 new arrivals took their place.¹ The exact fluctuation in volume of Northern Rhodesian ‘visits’ is difficult to ascertain but their numbers reportedly went from 110 in 1,931 to 1,335 in 1932.² Even where numbers are lacking, the evidence of cultural exchange attest to the volume of cross-border migration. Religious movements, witch-finding movements, and new dance fads crossed the border regularly.³ Particularly telling is the ease with which Kitawala (or Watchtower), a millenarian movement widespread in Southern Africa, penetrated Katangese circles to the dismay of the colonial administration. Conditions of insecurity and economic distress and the constant threat of expulsion made Northern Rhodesians particularly receptive to Kitawala teachings.⁴ Even more revealing is the ease with which rumours spread across borders. Luise White offers a detailed study of how one such rumour relating to vampire men (known as *banyamas* in Northern Rhodesia and as *batumbula* in the Congo) gained momentum in both Copperbelts between 1930 and 1964. Following stories of ‘mysterious’ disappearances, strangers, European doctors, corpulent administrators, prospectors, surveyors and tourists were all highly suspected of being *banyamas*. In her *Speaking with Vampires*, White not only shows how these stories were to a large extent a symptom of the ‘mood’ of dissatisfaction and confusion among the African population in a period of deep economic recession, but she also points out how these stories, which were widespread in an area encompassing Katanga and all of the former BSAC territories, were also extremely similar in the way they were told and the elements that they comprised.⁵ The prevalence, pervasiveness and similarity of these stories are another indicator of the extent to which people penetrated colonial borders at the time.

3. *Copper’s Corollaries: Agriculture, Fishery and Markets*

1. *FEEDING KATANGA: AN ALTERNATIVE TO MIGRANT LABOUR*

Nothing so far has been said about the development of secondary industries or other non-copper-based economic activities in Northern Rhodesia. Part of the reason is that there was little of that. It is almost a matter of course that an industry with such potential as the Copperbelt, implanted in a territory as poor as Northern Rhodesia, should come to dominate the economy from an early date. Many other industries, transport facilities, and power supplies were dependent on the mines. Even the government itself relied heavily on them for

¹ B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, pp.126-127.

² Report on Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga by the Acting British Vice Consul in Elisabethville as at December 31st 1932, 15 February 1933, SEC2/165, doc. 18 (NAZ).

³ L. WHITE, ‘Class Struggle and Cannibalism’, p.276.

⁴ For a detailed study of the development and impact of the Kitawala movement in Katanga and Southern Africa, see J. HIGGINSON, ‘Liberating the Captives: Independent Watchtower as an Avatar of Colonial Revolt in Southern Africa and Katanga, 1908-1941’ in *Journal of Social History*, vol. 26, no. 1 (1992).

⁵ See L. WHITE, ‘Class Struggle and Cannibalism: Storytelling and History Writing on the Copperbelts of Colonial Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo’ in *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley, 2000) and M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, ‘The Impact of Rumor: The Case of the Banyama (Vampire Men) Scare in Northern Rhodesia, 1930-1964’ in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1988).

revenues; they were the largest taxpayers in the country, incurred heavy custom duties on imported supplies and provided employment for a very large numbers of taxpayers. The mining industry did not however spark the growth of many secondary industries, nor did it lead to improved prospects in the rural areas.¹ Instead, the entire economy of Northern Rhodesia was built around mineral extraction, whose highly technical nature and export orientation limited the growth of secondary industries. In a regional survey carried out in 1960, the Copperbelt was described as ‘a compact economic oasis with seven springs, surrounded by a most extensive economic desert.’² Consequently no real alternative source of profit existed in Northern Rhodesia besides the copper industry, as was noted in the same 1960 survey:

‘Apart from copper, cobalt and uranium, lime and perhaps a little citrus, not much is produced on the Copperbelt for markets outside of the Copperbelt. Our economy is still, broadly speaking, at the extractive stage. Secondary and light manufacturing industries are not established here (...) The local people are too few, and too poor. Transport charges are too high. There is no chance of economies of scale. There is an absence of specialised skills and equipment. The Copperbelt moreover has its own well-hackneyed reason for not being a mushroom bed of manufacturing industry. The region is 1,500 miles from the coast. The real wages in the mining industry set a standard of living so high as to constitute a positive deterrent to any other. The region is so new that an entrepreneur must invest too large a part of his capital to provide houses and services for his workers.’³

Even agriculture was limited. The tsetse flies, which covered large parts of the woodland area, the distance from markets, the poor soils and the competition from Southern Rhodesia were all factors militating against any large-scale venture. Only very few areas were arable enough to produce some international market-oriented crops; tobacco was grown in the east of the country, in the Fort Jameson (Chipata) area, and small amounts of coffee were produced by plantation agriculture in the Abercorn area (Mbala) in the north-east.⁴ So if Northern Rhodesia was used a labour reservoir, it seemed to have little chance of becoming a grain one. And yet, for a while, it came to play just that role for the mines of Katanga.

Once copper mining was launched, Katanga faced the problem of feeding its large population of miners and urban workers. In order to satisfy Katanga’s growing foodstuff requirements, buying stations had been established at ever-increasing distances from the mines. By 1908 the UMHK was purchasing grain from African producers in an area extending over much of Katanga and well into North-Eastern and North-Western Rhodesia. In March 1911, with the purpose of extricating the company from a situation of dependence on African producers, *Robert Williams & Co.* concluded a major agreement with the firm of *King and Werner* in North-Western Rhodesia, under which the latter contracted to supply the mines with the bulk of their requirements of

¹ E.L. BERGER, *Labour, Race and Colonial Rule*, pp.8-9.

² Special Commissioner to Ministry of Land and Natural Resources in Ndola, Report on a Regional Survey of the Copperbelt, 1 February 1960, WP1/2/64, doc. 19 (NAZ).

³ Ibid.

⁴ E. CLEGG, *Race and Politics*, p.36; I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.12.

both grain and beef.¹ These were raised by white immigrants, mainly Afrikaners from South Africa, who had begun to settle in Northern Rhodesia in the years that followed the Boer War. They were strung out along the railway that ran from Livingstone to Broken Hill, which happened to run through a tsetse-free and relatively fertile belt. The Katanga market expanded rapidly after the railway reached Elisabethville in 1910, and between 1911 and 1915, the white farmers of Northern Rhodesia were supplying most of the foodstuffs – cattle and maize – that fed the miners in Katanga. This continued until the early 1920s when Northern Rhodesian farmers, aware that they were rapidly losing this market to white farmers in southern Rhodesia, diverted their attention to the protected home market that the development of the Copperbelt offered them. However, if the maize-growing areas along the railway line in the Southern and Central provinces benefited from the expansion of mining, no other major crop was developed in the North beyond the requirements of the mines and agriculture was never turned into a large-scale profitable activity.²

Only in one place did a viable potential alternative to wage labour develop for Africans: the Mweru-Luapula. Labour was not the only Luapula commodity that was valued. The fish coming out of its large lakes was another. Fish, especially dried fish, was a convenience food much in demand on both Northern Rhodesian and Katangese Copperbelts, though the former was a much more important consumer than the latter.³ Fresh fish, fished by African fishermen and packed in ice by Greek traders, came from Lake Mweru and the Luapula River; dried fish came from the lower Kafue, the Lukanga swamps, Lake Tanganyika and Lake Bangweolu. Though unstable (it depended on the prosperity of urban markets) the fishing industry brought the lower Luapula valley a new relative prosperity in the late 1920s. In 1919, the urban population of southern Katanga – the main market for Luapulan fish throughout the colonial era – seems to have consumed no less than 130 tonnes of dried fish from Mweru-Luapula. By 1927, the lower Luapula valley alone was reported to be exporting ‘some 500 tons of fish worth £5,000 and nearly the same quantity of native flour valued at £600’.⁴ The Depression and the abrupt reduction in the demand for fish was to affect this business rather badly but World War II, increasing as it did the demand for copper and consequently for fish, allowed fish exports to southern Katanga to return to the same level as the late 1920s. The growing prosperity of the trade accounts in great part for the fact that the flow of migrant labourers from the Luapula Province declined in the 1940s. In fact, the relative flow of migrants from Luapula declined to half its former level during that period.⁵ In this way, fishing became an alternative to wage

¹ C. PERRINGS, *Black Mineworkers*, p.19.

² I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, pp.11-12; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.177; M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, ‘Escape from Tyranny’, pp.153-154.

³ Beef was more readily available in Northern Rhodesia. Therefore fish were not considered an essential item in worker’s rations, as they were in the Belgian Congo. See D.M. GORDON, *Nachituti’s Gift*, p.70.

⁴ W. Owen, Kawambwa Sub-District, Annual Report, 1927, encl. in E. Sharpe, Mweru-Luapula District, Annual Report, 1927, ZA7/1/11/8 (NAZ), as quoted in G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.216.

⁵ P.O. OHADIKE, *Development of and Factors in the Employment of African Migrants*, pp.7-8.

employment for a growing percentage of the residents of the Mweru-Luapula and allowed them to vary the ways in which they could make a living.¹

2. *A VIBRANT SUB-ECONOMIC CULTURE: THE MARKET*

Unsurprisingly markets in Katanga predate those of Northern Rhodesia since the existence of markets, in the Copperbelt at least, was intimately linked to the copper industry. When the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt became an economic power by its own right, the constant flow of travellers and the high concentration of population that this induced were followed by an automatic mushrooming of markets in every important mining town. In 1930 this led to the enforcement of proper regulations regarding 'native markets'. These stipulated that '(1) all markets established in a municipality or township shall be under the control and management of the local authority' and that '(2) all markets established by a native authority shall be under the control and management of the native authority'.² With these clauses, Northern Rhodesian authorities sanctioned the creation of markets on a more or less spontaneous basis, leaving local authorities to decide the shape these markets would take and how they would be organised. Copperbelt markets were copied on the Congo model in which inhabitants from the surrounding country could bring in dried fish, mealie, etc., for sale.³ In this way the growth of the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt gave the impetus for the development of a lively market culture. By 1947 there were nine organised markets on the Copperbelt,⁴ each of them becoming a nest of economic activities as well as a social place. I.D.S. Mackigan, the District Officer for Chingola, gave a vivid description of the market in Bancroft in 1954:

'African life at Bancroft centres round the market, which stands close by the largest of the Contractor's Compounds. Many African Traders from Kasompe African township, Chingola bring their wares here; and fish traders from the North and West, peanut vendors, salad oil sellers, men who boil up old bones and meat. All these traders operate in the open air or from small thatched booths. On a market day the scene is gay, animated and noisy, against a background of bright clothes for sale hung out upon lines or spread upon the ground.'⁵

The markets were the main, and for some the sole, source of food for the African population in the Copperbelt. In 1960 a regional survey of the Copperbelt revealed that there were 120,460 'natives' in employment on the Copperbelt, that their total number in the Copperbelt was nearing 300,000 and that approximately the same number did their shopping 'on the Copperbelt itself'.⁶ In the same regional survey it was added that:

¹ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.216; D.M. GORDON, *Nachituti's Gift*, p.68; I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia 1900-1953*, p.62. For a detailed study of fishery in the Mweru-Luapula, please see GORDON, D.M., *Nachituti's Gift: Economy, Society and Environment in Central Africa* (Madison, 2006).

² Draft Markets Ordinance, 19 May 1930, SEC2/263, Vol. I, doc. 7 (NAZ).

³ Acting chief secretary in Livingstone to the Acting Attorney General, 9 August 1930, SEC2/263, Vol. I, doc. 4 (NAZ).

⁴ There were five compound markets under the control of compound managers at Nkana, Roan Antelope and Nchanga, and four township markets at Kitwe, Mufulira, Luanshya and Chingola. See W.V. BRELSFORD, *Copperbelt Markets*, p.7

⁵ I.D.S. Mackigan, Chingola District Officer, Tour Report N.1, WP1/2/18, doc. 8 (NAZ).

⁶ Special Commissioner to Ministry of Land and Natural Resources in Ndola, Report on a Regional Survey of the Copperbelt, 1 February 1960, WP1/2/64, doc. 19 (NAZ).

‘No space need be wasted in expatiating upon the food and food-processing trades which serve this market – butcheries, creameries, grain and flour milling, bakeries, sugar refining, beverages soft drinks factories and the distributing business connected with them. Perhaps one may comment that these have been slower to establish themselves than might have been expected, perhaps because of a feeling that their market would not be a stable one. By now however they constitute substantial businesses.’¹

If markets were an important internal business, they were also very much an international one. In his social and economic study of the Copperbelt markets of 1947, V.W. Brelsford notes how the Copperbelt not only acted as a magnet to labour but also attracted ‘traders of all types, even from as far afield as Senegal, Gambia and Nigeria’.² However, the most represented foreign group on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt was, unsurprisingly, the Congolese. On a day a random count was operated in the largest market of the Copperbelt, that of Mufulira, it appeared that fourteen out of the twenty-four sellers were Congo natives.³ In the same market, the Congo was also the main source of supply including many seasonal commodities such as mushrooms, maize, shallots, cassava root and leaves, potatoes of several types, and wild roots. It was calculated that the Copperbelt market absorbed in a normal year about 3,000 bags of cassava, practically all of which came from the Congo.⁴ This, Brelsford argues, is partly due to the fact that ‘Mufulira (...) is the nearest market to the Congo, so that most of the village produce comes from over the border. The tribe in the nearby area of Katanga Province of the Congo is also Lamba and among them are settled a number of Northern Province Rhodesian Natives such as Chisinga, Ushi and Bemba.’⁵ It seems therefore that if Northern Rhodesia originally acted as food supplier for the Katangese mines, Katanga later played a similar role for the Northern Rhodesia mines, in a local and indirect way. Northern Rhodesians too made use of the Katangese markets. It was noted in 1933 that the Solwezi people, who were a bit more isolated from the Copperbelt economic centres than other groups still found ‘a ready market for produce of all kinds at Kapushi Mine in the Congo where a large number of natives are employed by the Union Minière’.⁶ In the early 1930s Northern Rhodesian Africans also seem to have dominated petty trade, as well as artisan labour outside the mining sector in Katanga. As has been noted in the previous section, there was in Elisabethville a large number of Northern Rhodesians who earned their livelihood through the urban European economy without being directly independent on large companies for salaries. In addition to Northern Rhodesian shop assistants and servants, there were also many who were self-employed, i.e. artisans, itinerant merchants, and market gardeners.⁷

¹ Special Commissioner to Ministry of Land and Natural Resources in Ndola, Report on a Regional Survey of the Copperbelt, 1 February 1960, WP1/2/64, doc. 19 (NAZ).

² W.V. BRELSFORD, *Copperbelt Markets*, p.12.

³ Ibid, p.93.

⁴ Ibid, p.44, p.58, p.93.

⁵ Ibid, p.93.

⁶ Secretary for Native Affairs to the Chief Secretary, 25 September 1933, SEC2/263, Vol. I, doc. 56 (NAZ).

⁷ B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, pp.130-131.



Fig. 3. General view of old Mufulira market, 1947

It was not, therefore, only mineworkers and their families who crossed the border between Belgian and British Africa. Peddlers, hawkers and traders of all kinds, some of whom were European or Indian, carried goods across the border into Katanga and sold them for less than in Katanga's newly opened shops. After 1930, African and Greek traders sold dried fish to migrants on both sides of the border. Africans individuals also spontaneously travelled to the nearest market, no matter which side of the border it happened to be, to trade the products of their land. This phenomenon took such proportions that it occasionally became the source of friction. Africans could to some extent decide where to do their shopping, and so usually did so where it was most advantageous to them, which was not necessarily to the advantage of permanent shops, or indeed to the advantage of the national economies. Measures taken to deal with these issues could be really unpopular. Some sources suggest that one reason for the 1935 strike was that the Belgians had closed the border to Northern Rhodesian trade and produce the year before, thus making Africans more dependent on income from wage labour than they had hitherto been (more on this in chapter 4).¹ The border was reopened in 1936 and by 1950 it was noted there was an imbalance in the number of items sold and bought on either sides of the border:

'Investigation has confirmed that the existing disequilibrium in the balance of trans-frontier trade is due to (...) the large number of small transactions by Africans either employed on the Copperbelt or resident in the Luapula River area of the Western Province purchasing goods generally known as "kaffir truck" i.e. second-hand clothing, blankets, toilet sundries and soap etc. (but mainly clothing), at stores in the Belgian Congo.'²

¹ C. PERRINGS, 'Consciousness, Conflict and Proletarianization', pp.40-41.

² Governor in Lusaka to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 February 1950, FO 371/80310, doc. JB file 1141 (NAUK), p.1.

This was considered a serious situation since it could gravely endanger the existing satisfactory trade relationship between Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo. This would be problematic since, as was pointed out by the Governor of Lusaka in 1950, Northern Rhodesia depended on the Belgian Congo:

‘for essential imports of palm oil (for soap manufacture) and of timber estimated to value some £158,000 in 1949, and it was necessary to purchase some £232,000 of Belgian foodstuffs in 1949 additional to normal requirements, to alleviate local food shortages due to drought. It can be said that the ability of this Territory to make these purchases has been, to a large extent, due to the goodwill of the Congo authorities.’¹

This comment highlights the extent to which cross-border trade was becoming both voluminous and geopolitically significant. It was virtually the only economic activity taking place on Northern Rhodesian soil not to be directly part of the copper industry, though it was triggered and sustained by the latter. It gave rise to a whole new level (both micro and macro) of cross-border economic and population interaction.

Conclusion

The new set of links that the copper industry created between Katanga and Northern Rhodesia are easy to overlook quite simply because they cannot be made to fit a structured timeline of events. Developments on either side happened at different pace, sometime separately, sometimes not. The overall picture is – to put it candidly – messy. Nevertheless I shall hazard a general sketch.

Until the 1920s, development on both sides of the border stayed erratic and speculative. Prospects in Northern Rhodesia were initially unpromising especially when compared with those of neighbouring Katanga. The latter, however, despite being referred to as a ‘geological scandal’ in 1906, was left unattended by the Belgians for lack of funds, personnel and capital. Quick to jump on such an opportunity, British interests carried out the evaluation and initial development of copper deposits of the region, together with the development of the essential transport infrastructure. In return the UMHK provided jobs and freight traffic on the BSA controlled railroad linking Katanga with South Africa. In addition, throughout the late 1910s and the early 1920s, at the time when Northern Rhodesia’s industrial economy was relatively stagnant, Katanga relied almost exclusively on Northern Rhodesian labour and foodstuffs. From the very beginning, therefore Katanga and Northern Rhodesia were economically interdependent in terms of capital, investment, labour, trade and expertise. No less.

It was only in the 1920s that the traditional direction of labour migration – upwards towards Katanga and southwards towards Southern Rhodesia and South Africa – was disturbed when Northern Rhodesia copper production finally received a fillip. Unfortunately, until the 1940s, the Northern Rhodesia government did not concern itself excessively with the numerical details of African migration as long as every mine got its necessary labour, and as a result, knowledge about the actual volume of labour migration in this period is

¹ Governor in Lusaka to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 February 1950, FO 371/80310, doc. JB file 1141 (NAUK), p.1.

patchy. Yet we may venture two generalisations. First the overarching narrative of Copperbelt urbanisation, which posits a developmental process of transition from an initial migrant labour phase of short-term, cyclical male migration to a final phase of permanent urbanisation, does not seem to be supported by the evidence. Instead of simple evolutionary dualisms, we are faced with complex shifts over time in patterns of mobility between urban and rural areas and between countries. Second, the shifts in and volume of labour migration gave the Copperbelt towns a cosmopolitan flavour. Groups were drawn together that would not have otherwise met. After 1924, not only did individuals from all over Central Africa rub shoulders with each other in the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, but also all the Northern Rhodesian migrant labourers who had worked abroad were brought together in their own nation for the first time. This was to be very politically significant.

What may be said with confidence therefore is that labour migration constituted, for a long period, Northern Rhodesia's single most defining characteristic, hence its prevalence in scholarship. The entire apparatus of colonial administration – transport, labour bureaus, scientific surveys, etc. – was geared towards the creation of conditions favourable to the profitable operation of the state and the companies. African labour migrants however were by no means passive victims of the new cash economy. So far as possible, they chose their employer since both wages and working conditions varied considerably. This unwittingly caused African labourers, artisans and hangers-on to crisscross the border for many decades, which they did without following any set pattern. As Luise White put it:

‘These movements must be added to the picture of African labor – the jigsaw puzzle again – (...) in which African workers’ gossip passed on the latest information about the safest working conditions, the best living conditions, the best wages. Such talk sent African workers across cultural and colonial boundaries to work and to make money, where they found themselves in worlds and seams and stopes that had different safety records, different standards of living, and different rates of remuneration.’¹

Although the present narrative stopped around the middle of the twentieth century, it seems such interaction endured in later years, at least to some extent. In 1955, the Kitwe District Officer described how the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt was ‘an enormous magnet drawing in not only Northern Rhodesian Africans but those from the Congo and Portuguese West Africa, in particular’.² In April 30, 1965, at least 9,900 natives of what had by then become the Republic of Zambia were registered in Elisabethville alone. Out of these 9,900, 7,272 came from the Luapula Province and 1,335 came from Northern Province.³ In 1967 the Zambian Consul General in Lubumbashi (as Elisabethville was known from 1966), mentioned a total figure of 250,000 Zambian nationals living in the Congo.⁴ This enduring Northern Rhodesian presence in Katanga was without doubt the result of several decades of Northern Rhodesians coming to work in Katanga. For lack of space and sources, the question of whether and how the copper industry continued to affect population movements in the later

¹ L. WHITE, ‘Class Struggle and Cannibalism’, p.276.

² P.O. Bourne, Kitwe District Officer, Tour Report N.1, 1955, WP1/2/18, doc. 11 (NAZ).

³ Zambian Consulate in Elisabethville to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 April 1965, FA/1/24, loc. 495, doc. 39 (NAZ).

⁴ E.M. Mwamba (Consul General in Lubumbashi) to The Chief Immigration Officer and Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 April 1967, FA/1/67, loc. 503, doc. 127 (NAZ).

twentieth century will have to be the object of another study. This chapter served to point to the fact that, although the region of the Copperbelt had already been the scene of many population movements in pre-colonial times, the allied effect of an artificial border and the implantation of two powerful, neighbouring *and* competing mining industries changed the nature and patterns of these movements. This new type of migration had, before anything else, an economic *raison d'être* and therefore transcended cultural boundaries.

CHAPTER 4

The Politics

The Republic of Zambia was born on October 24 1964 as Africa 35th independent state. Like most of its sister nations, Zambia's transition to independence was rapid, sudden and at times dramatic. For the ten years preceding independence Northern Rhodesia was part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, a Federation created and governed by European men. During that time, it functioned as an extension (and a subordinate) of British power in southern Africa: its communications all ran south while both policies and social attitudes continued to be much influenced by the white-dominated South. Consequently, there was little doubt in the early 1950s that Northern Rhodesia was destined to be a 'white' country. Yet, as the decade advanced, the all-pervasiveness of white rule in Africa was increasingly being challenged from all sides. Starting in 1957 with the independence of Ghana, the unstoppable nature of decolonisation was made palpable by Harold Macmillan's famous 'Wind of Change' speech of February 3 1960. This historic address made to the Parliament of South Africa must have indeed sent a chill down the spines of many an African white settler:

'In the twentieth century, and especially since the end of the war, the processes which gave birth to the nation states of Europe have been repeated all over the world. We have seen the awakening of national consciousness in peoples who have for centuries lived in dependence upon some other power. (...) In different places it takes different forms, but it is happening everywhere. **The wind of change is blowing through this continent, and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it.**'¹

The speech signalled unmistakably the British Government's intention to grant independence to many of its territories, which indeed happened subsequently, with most British possessions in Africa becoming independent nations in the early 1960s. Northern Rhodesia, for all the settlers' efforts, was not spared by the wind of change. As late as 1958 only 11 Africans were registered as voters in Northern Rhodesia but within five years that number exceeded a million. Northern Rhodesia went to the polls three times between 1958 and 1964. These were the years during which Northern Rhodesian nationalism was most militant.² The history of the period of 'freedom struggle' has often been portrayed as a time of spontaneous unity of all Zambians against colonialism. A traditional account of the growth of Zambian nationalism reads very much like D.C. Mulford's:

'Half a century of white rule and all which that implied – contact with Christian education, the undermining of traditional authority and values, new opportunities for travel and exchange of ideas, racial discrimination, and exposure to the harsh realities of government administration and the workings of a cash economy – had given Northern Rhodesia's Africans a measure of unity hitherto

¹ H. MACMILLAN, *Pointing the Way*, pp. 473-482, Appendix I.

² D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.1.

unknown. Reinforced by the colour bar, by dissatisfaction among Africans with their new position and above all by the threat of permanent white domination, this unity took root, producing among those diverse groups the beginnings of a common identity.’¹

This unity, as Ian Henderson candidly put it, ‘independent Zambia might well envy, if it had existed’.² The genuine enthusiasm generated by national independence led to the production of a history that championed the nationalist movement as a ‘convergence into a united front of a number of heterogeneous organisations and areas of discontent spearheaded by the political party’.³ The party under which Zambia achieved independence – Kenneth Kaunda’s *United National Independence Party* (UNIP) – and which was to be Zambia’s sole ruling party until 1991, promoted a militant type of history that staged a ‘United Nation’ in the face of adversity and left little room for other interpretations or the acknowledgement of the existence of dissident voices. Giacomo Macola, the biographer of one such dissident voice – Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula, head of the opposition party – noted that:

‘Feeding upon one another, the discourses of academics and party thinkers reached the same conclusion: UNIP did not merely serve the interests of the young nation; it was its embodiment. The existence of dissenting voices within the nationalist landscape (...) was conveniently forgotten or treated as a minor “tribal” irritant destined to be swept away along the path toward full-blown nationhood.’⁴

In reality, throughout most of the colonial period the political destiny of Northern Rhodesia was far from clear. Even its very geographical position was politically ambiguous: it was situated between the territories of Southern Africa, dominated by Europeans, and those to the north, such as the Belgian Congo and East Africa, where the colonial governments largely denied white settlers political power and did envisage, however dimly, an eventual transfer of power to Africans. Northern Rhodesia’s traditional association with Southern Rhodesia often overshadows the influence of these territories. Interestingly the dates the Belgian Congo and Tanganyika obtained their independence – in 1960 and 1961 respectively – coincided with a period of more aggressive nationalism in Northern Rhodesia. In fact there are many such ‘coincidences’ in the timelines of Congo and Zambia in the 1960s. 1960 was the year the Congo achieved independence as well as the year the copper-rich province of Katanga embarked on an ephemeral, though momentous, secession.⁵ It was also the year when the first ‘violent’ nationalist outbursts took place in Northern Rhodesia. 1963 was the year the Katanga secession ended. It was also the year the Federation effectively collapsed. In 1967, Mobutu, President of Independent Congo from 1965 to 1997, launched his notorious ‘zaïrianisation’ campaign, which, as an effort to rid the country of the lingering vestiges of colonialism, entailed the creation of a strong centralised state and the nationalisation of the economy. By 1974, the Congo, now re-baptised ‘Zaire’ was a nationalised single-party

¹ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, pp.3-4.

² I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, p.247.

³ *Ibid*, p.233.

⁴ G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.23.

⁵ R. LEMARCHAND, ‘The Limits of Self-Determination: The Case of the Katanga Secession’, pp.404-416.

state. In April 1968, Kenneth Kaunda launched the Mulungushi Reforms by which he declared his intention to acquire an equity holding (usually 51 % or more) in a number of key foreign-owned firms. By 1973 the Republic of Zambia was a single-party nationalised state. Coincidence? I wager that it is not entirely. In this chapter it will be shown that the ‘Katangese factor’ is perceptible in Zambian nationalist development from its very beginning. By covering the entire period between the first spark of nationalist development in 1935 – when African miners rioted on the Copperbelt for the first time – to the establishment of the UNIP-dominated nationalised state in 1973, this chapter will explore Katanga’s contribution to the development of Zambia as an independent political entity.

1. The Rise of Nationalism

1. THE STRIKES OF 1935 AND 1940

First African Disturbances

On May 29, 1935 six African mineworkers were killed, and a further 17 were wounded, when the local police opened fire on a crowd of strikers at Roan Antelope mine (Luanshya). The strike, whose immediate trigger had been the implementation of a new supposedly more ‘equitable’ taxation regime which entailed that tax levels on the Copperbelt should be considerably raised,¹ was the first African-led disturbance of any kind to take place in Northern Rhodesia. Not only did the strike, which started in Mufulira, spread to every other mine of the Copperbelt like wildfire, but in addition, its instigators were able to find some *ad hoc* leadership by making use of the ready-made structure of the Mbeni Dance Society: a Bemba-based group with an active network in all three producing mines. Although the strike, which had started on May 21, 1935 had been put down by force by the end of the month, with no tangible result in terms of either tax reduction or rise in wages,² the scale and shock of the disturbances prompted the colonial state to appoint a Commission of Inquiry. The Commission set out to list the workers’ numerous complaints. These included insufficient wages and rations, the deductions from wages for mining material such as boots and lamps, high levels of unemployment and the condescending manner in which they were generally treated.³ The report also concluded that ‘an important predisposing cause of the recent disturbances’ was the propaganda by the Watch Tower movement described as ‘dangerously subversive’,⁴ and further noted the manner in which traditional tribal custom and authority appeared to have collapsed because of industrialisation:

¹ Whereas previously Africans had been taxed according to their area of origin, under the new system, tax levels would be based on one’s current place of residence. In addition, in order to encourage part of the swelling urban population to return to the countryside as well as to relieve the distress in the rural areas caused by the Depression, it was decided to reduce the tax rates there and to increase the rate in the Copperbelt towns from 12/6 to 15/-. This meant that taxation levels for Copperbelt workers were increased by an average of 50 %. See L.J. BUTLER, *Copper Empire*, p.52; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.202; C. PERRINGS, ‘Consciousness, Conflict and Proletarianization’, p.32.

² I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, pp.146-147; M. LARMER, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, p.31.

³ *Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the disturbances in the Copperbelt*, October 1935, para.10, p.4.

⁴ *Ibid*, para.114, p.51.

‘Here [in the Copperbelt] there are considerable numbers of natives concentrated in the compounds; without chiefs; with their tribal organisations being broken down by disintegrating influences; becoming accustomed to machinery and modern methods; feeling an increasing desire for luxuries.’¹

This latter point triggered particular alarm in the colonial government.² Not only did the strikes decisively expose the colonial neglect of the African labour question, they were also the first sign that African society had changed and that the government still went by outdated views of both African lifestyle and aspirations. As a result the colonial government was completely taken aback not only by the strikes themselves but by the level of organisation and unity displayed by the strikers, and was ill-equipped to deal with the novelty of the situation.³ Colonial anxieties regarding the emergence of such ‘detribalised’ urban Africans prompted the government to open up channels of communication with this unknown African community through the *Native Industrial Labour Advisory Board* (NILAB) and the *Rhodes-Livingstone Institute*, both set up in 1935 in the wake of the strike. This trickle of information was not enough, however, to enable the government to head off a second strike, which started on March 28 1940. The 1940 strike, was like the 1935 strike, a mass protest against the rise in the African cost of living in the first year of the war, but this time demands for higher wages were framed in a larger protest against Africans’ low position in industrial hierarchy.⁴ The strike lasted for a week and like its predecessor, came to a bloody end, when on April 3, 1940 16 African mineworkers were killed at Nkana mine.⁵ The demands made by African miners in 1940 – which once again were not met⁶ – were strikingly similar to those of 1935: higher wages, better housing and better welfare facilities in order to enjoy similar standards of living as those of European employees’.⁷ The 1940 Commission of Inquiry duly acknowledged the way in which the strike formed a protest against inequality in terms of pay and possibility of advancement:

‘The African strike and our subsequent inquiry brought to the surface a number of grievances in addition to that which had relation to their rates of pay (...) The African workers contended that they were doing a class of work which justified them in expecting higher wages, and indeed claimed that they were qualified to do the work normally done by the Europeans.’⁸

In that sense, this strike was a political challenge as it was an implicit protest against the *de facto* colour bar that was in effect in all the mines.⁹ In fact 1940 was the start of a continuous struggle for African advancement which would last for a quarter of century.

¹ *Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the disturbances in the Copperbelt*, October 1935, para.144, p.61.

² M.J. MURPHY, ‘The 1935 Copperbelt Disturbances Commission: A Critical Assessment’, p.36.

³ L.J. BUTLER, *Copper Empire*, p.51.

⁴ The initial spark was provided by another strike, which had taken place from 18 to 27 March and had been organised by the white mineworkers at Mufulira and Nkana. The success of this strike – white demands for higher wages were largely conceded – at once stimulated Africans at these mines to stage a strike of their own. See I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, p.156; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.203.

⁵ I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, p.137; L.J. BUTLER, *Copper Empire*, p.52.

⁶ I. HENDERSON, ‘Early African Leadership’, p.91-p.94; M. LARMER, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, p.30.

⁷ *Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the disturbances in the Copperbelt*, July 1940, p.12.

⁸ *Ibid*, paras.109-114-121-122, pp.25-30.

⁹ In the 1930s, global depression led to reductions in the wages of both whites and Africans. As demand for copper revived, particularly in the years before World War II, white miners were able to secure a *de facto* colour bar separating ‘White’ and ‘African’ jobs. By 1940

The Bemba Factor

If the findings of the Commissions are to be believed, the 1935 strike had all the bearings of a tax revolt while the 1940 strike was a general protest about the industrial colour bar. Yet, in reality, little is known about the process about which they came about and the commissions did little to shed light on the issue. Instead, according to Perrings, ‘under a flood of accusations and counter accusations by industry and state’, they ‘succeeded in thoroughly obscuring the fundamental causes of the actions’.¹ Prominent among the elements overlooked by the commissions is ‘the dominant part played by the Bemba’.² The ‘Bemba’ – an all-encompassing term used by the employers to denote the peoples from the Northern and Luapula Provinces – were not only the largest single grouping among the labourers of the Copperbelt (the next biggest group being the ‘Ngoni’ from Eastern Province, Nyasaland and Mozambique),³ they were also, in the opinion of the authorities, the most troublesome and coherent group in the Copperbelt labour force.⁴ It was the Bemba language, in the form of ‘Town Bemba’ that was the *lingua franca* of the Copperbelt⁵ and it was a Bemba dance association, the Mbeni, that was the principal organ in the transmission of news, rumours and instructions. The 1935 Commission did touch upon the fact that ‘the Wemba-speaking tribes took lead in the disturbances’ while the Mbeni organisation, a Bemba/Bisa-dominated entity, ‘was made use of to some extent for the purpose of furthering [the disturbances]’.⁶ Yet why this should have been so was not explored, although it was sufficiently alarming to the Government for them to bring in a number of traditional Bemba leaders from the rural areas to inquire into the grievances of the Bemba on the compounds.⁷ The Bemba had been experiencing important changes in their economic situation just prior to 1935. Perrings notes that it is ‘a point of immense significance that the 1926 Line of Rail Reserves Commission had deliberately taken the decision to isolate African producers from the main markets in the territory’.⁸ Although the commission’s recommendations on the establishment of reserves were not immediately implemented, by 1930 the viability of African commercial agriculture had been very seriously compromised. In 1930, despite an increase in overall demand, the prices paid for ‘native grown grain’ were falling and a growing proportion of the requirements of the large companies was being supplied by the large-scale white farmers. To make matters worse still, between 1934 and 1936, the Belgian Congo border was closed to all African produce in support of a campaign against foot and mouth disease.⁹ Although Africans could cross the pedicle, they could do so as workers only. An annual report for the Native Affairs Department mentioned that:

the industrial colour bar was all but institutionalised. See I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, p.156; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.203.

¹ C. PERRINGS, ‘Consciousness, Conflict and Proletarianization’, p.34.

² Ibid, p.35.

³ A.L. EPSTEIN, *Politics in an Urban African Community*, pp.5-6.

⁴ I. HENDERSON, ‘Early African Leadership’, p.89.

⁵ For a detailed study of the Bemba-based multilingual practices that were preponderant in Copperbelt towns, see D. SPITULNIK, ‘The Language of the City: Town Bemba as Urban Hybridity’ in *Journal of Linguistic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1999).

⁶ *Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the disturbances in the Copperbelt*, October 1935, para. 114, p.51.

⁷ A.L. EPSTEIN, *Politics in an Urban African Community*, p.31.

⁸ C. PERRINGS, ‘Consciousness, Conflict and Proletarianization’, p.38.

⁹ Ibid, p.40.

‘restrictions imposed by the Government of the Belgian Congo on the transit of produce of every description across the Pedicle have for the time being practically killed the former flourishing fish trade conducted by natives of the Northern Province with the copper mines and the Congo. At Fort Rosebery, where it used to be a common thing to see large numbers of natives on bicycles laden with fish making for the copper mines, not a single permit was issued during the year.’¹

Under these circumstances the pressure on individuals to enter the labour market was intense and their dependence on wage labour all but absolute. The room for manoeuvre for Bemba and related peoples in 1935 was less than it had been at any stage since the First World War. As Perrings argues, ‘it would thus seem reasonable to suggest that what occurred in 1935 was indicative of the cumulative resentment of those who had experienced not one, but a series of major blows to their capacity for economic survival within a comparatively short space of time’.² This, according to Perrings, was ‘a development of absolutely crucial importance’,³ one that never occurred to the Commission.

In 1940 disturbances were also understood to be emanating mainly from the Bemba-speakers. T.F. Sandford, Secretary for Native Affairs, reported that: ‘I and the officials concerned felt that the main impetus came from Mufulira and that the main support came from the hot-headed natives of the Bangweolu and Luapula areas.’⁴ The 1940 Commission found that the ‘natives of the Fort Rosebery and Kawambwa districts’ were indeed ‘prominent in disturbances throughout the strikes’.⁵ Max Gluckman (head of the RLI from 1941 to 1947) argued that what was significant about the Bemba was no so much their ‘tribal’ overrepresentation but rather the fact that while the Bemba filled many minor authoritative posts on the mines, the elite jobs requiring education had been taken by Nyasa and Lozi.⁶ In this reading, the *de facto* Bemba leadership was less the direct result of their numerical preponderance than the result of the calculation on the part of men in top and middle range positions on the mines that the allegiance of the mass and unskilled would be more easily obtained by identifying their cause as that of the Bemba.⁷ But there is another reason for Bemba leadership. Many Bemba had worked in the Katangese mines in large numbers from 1910 onwards,⁸ and, according to Sandford, ‘knew of the different [read: more liberal] attitude in that territory towards the colour bar restrictions’.⁹ The Bemba could therefore offer experience and leadership to those people who either, like the Lunda and Luvale, had not worked in mines before, or like the Ngoni, had worked in the Southern Rhodesia mines, where labour policies were

¹ Department of Native Affairs of Northern Rhodesia, Annual Reports (1934), pp.21-22 as quoted in C. PERRINGS, ‘Consciousness, Conflict and Proletarianization’, p.49.

² C. PERRINGS, ‘Consciousness, Conflict and Proletarianization’, p.49.

³ Ibid, p.40.

⁴ T.F. Sandford’s report, SEC/LAB/137 as quoted in I. HENDERSON, ‘Early African Leadership’, p.94.

⁵ *Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the disturbances in the Copperbelt*, July 1940, para. 61, p.16.

⁶ M. GLUCKMAN, ‘Anthropological Problems Arising from the African Industrial Revolution’ in A. SOUTHALL (ed.), *Social Change in Modern Africa*, p.74; A.L. EPSTEIN, *Politics in an Urban African Community*, p.236.

⁷ I. HENDERSON, ‘Early African Leadership’, p.95.

⁸ See Chapter 3.

⁹ T.F. Sandford to Chief Secretary, April 13 1940, SEC/LAB/78 as quoted in I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, p.165. For Katanga’s stabilisation policies, see Chapter 3 & J. MERLE DAVIES, *Modern Industry and the African*, pp.170-77.

severely restrictive.¹ ‘In other words’, as Henderson put it, ‘the Bemba speakers were likely to be more politically conscious than the other groups, because of their history as migrant workers. This political consciousness was to be the basis of the Bemba’s claim to leadership on the Copperbelt, and later in Zambia. It cannot entirely be explained by their occupation as miners, or by the fact that they constituted a simple majority on the vital Copperbelt.’²

The Significance of the Strikes

At first glance, the strikes of 1935 and 1940 are not that remarkable in terms of scale and outcome. The death toll was not high, compared with other similar occurrences, and in both cases Africans largely failed to obtain what they had protested for. In addition there were to be many more strikes on the Copperbelt in the following three decades. Still, these two stand out in Zambian history as landmarks in the development of African political consciousness, constituting, as they do, the first surfacing of African organised industrial agitation as well as the first overt action of any kind against colonial rule in the territory. As such, in the words of Henderson, they are ‘firmly embedded in Zambian political consciousness and form the conventional starting point for the popular history of the nationalist movement.’³ Their romanticisation put aside, the strikes *were* undeniable political. Or at least they had political effects. First of all, the strikes, which predated political nationalism by ten years, highlighted the Copperbelt as the future scene of nationalist struggle. Whoever led the later political movement was unlikely to achieve success without the support of the Copperbelt miners. Another future aspect of Northern Rhodesian politics that was hinted at in 1935 and 1940 was the political militancy of the Bemba. The strikes did not result in the creation of a common front among the workers but they made it obvious that where firm and decisive (and sometimes violent) action was required, Bemba speakers took the lead. In spite of this the strikes did not lead to the emergence of a permanent institutionalised African leadership on the mines. Nor did they lead to the immediate politicisation of its workforce. Yet the very fact that the underlying grievances – the colour bar and differences in wages – were not made obsolete for a long time yet, ensured that discontent would always be brewing not far below the surface. Up to 1953, despite some wage rises for Africans, practically no progress was made in breaking the colour bar down.⁴ So long as the Africans were unable to exert political pressure on the Government, this situation was unlikely to alter and as a result African advancement question found itself at the heart of the nationalist ‘struggle for independence and freedom’. In that sense, the disturbances that rocked the Copperbelt in 1935 and 1940 were among the most significant episodes of violent unrest to affect the inter-war colonial empire.

¹ I. HENDERSON, ‘Early African Leadership’, p.95.

² I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, p.165.

³ I. HENDERSON, ‘Early African Leadership’, p.85.

⁴ The reasons for this stagnation are manifold. First, the Second World War and its aftermath of austerity for Britain played into the hands of those who wished to preserve a status quo on the mines. The need to produce copper for Britain and the Allies was far overriding those of the African workforce. Finally African job advancement had as pre-requisite, a policy of stabilisation in the towns, which meant large-scale finance. See I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, pp.175-182 and A. D. ROBERTS, ‘Northern Rhodesia: The Post-War Background, 1945-1953’ in J.B. GEWALD, M. HINFELAAR & G. MACOLA, *Living the End of Empire*, p.17.

2. TRADE UNIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

The Run-Up to Federation

The rise of African trade unions and political agitation, which has attracted a fair body of literature, is a process that is generally described as conjoined. Yet, if the fact that the crisis of control over the urban labour force was closely paralleled by the development of African political parties is undeniable, the popular vision of the trade union as vanguard of revolution quite simply does not square with the facts in the case of Northern Rhodesia. If the mine companies did initially, in 1941-2, prefer to appoint committees of Tribal Representatives (TR's) as an alternative to unions,¹ neither they nor the colonial government opposed their formation. Quite the contrary in fact: they encouraged it. Henderson argued that, following the strikes, 'far from being mistrusted as subversive institutions, trade unions for colonial peoples were now regarded as something to be encouraged, which could help to develop an interest in local self-government and development. Not only paternal guidance from governments was to be available, but also fraternal encouragement from the labour movement in the United Kingdom.'² Early in 1947, William Comrie, a Scottish unionist, was sent out to Northern Rhodesia by the British Trade Union Congress to help establish African Unions along 'British' lines, i.e. non-political bodies which would negotiate over wages and conditions. Within a year of Comrie's arrival, shop assistants formed the first African trade union in Northern Rhodesia, and by 1948 there were African unions in all four mines. In 1949, the same year that the legal basis of trade unions was firmly placed on a colour-blind footing,³ these early trade unions were amalgamated in the *Northern Rhodesia African Mineworkers' Union* (AMWU), which was followed by the creation of the *Trade Union Congress* (TUC) in 1951. Both were headed by Lawrence Katilungu, a senior interpreter at Nkana and a favourite with the Bemba.⁴ AMWU membership rose from 50% (19,000 members) of the 37,000-strong labour force in 1949 to 80% in 1953 and, between 1949 and 1953, 30 disputes and 12 strikes occurred, culminating in a well-conducted and peaceful three-weeks strike in October-November 1952 which succeeded in bringing massive wage increases.⁵

The growing strength and efficiency of African labour on the Copperbelt and the fear that African economic and social advance generated, stimulated Europeans to make new efforts to obtain more political power in the 1930s and 1940s. As the European presence, in terms of human resources, was negligible in Northern Rhodesia, it was felt that the preservation of white hegemony could be more easily achieved if Northern Rhodesia joined forces with its Southern sister state and broke away from Great Britain. With amalgamation the white settlers would kill two birds with one stone: it would allow them to redirect both political power and copper revenues into their hands. A fierce campaign was then waged in favour of

¹ M. LARMER, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, p.32.

² I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, p.207.

³ A. D. ROBERTS, 'Northern Rhodesia: The Post-War Background, 1945-1953' in J.B. GEWALD, M. HINFELAAR & G. MACOLA, *Living the End of Empire*, p.16.

⁴ Lawrence Katilungu enjoyed great influence among the Bemba. He was one of the few Bemba clerks on the mines and he was the grandson of the Bemba minor chief Chipalo. A.L. EPSTEIN, *Politics in an Urban African Community*, p.92.

⁵ Other African unions were soon formed on the roads and railways and in the building trade but none reached the power, scope and level of efficiency that the AMWU was able to achieve. M. LARMER, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, p.33; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.205; I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, pp.207-229.

amalgamation, led by Roy Welensky (later Sir Roy Welensky), an ex-professional boxer who had been elected to the Legislative Council in 1938. The Europeans' drive towards political supremacy had largely been prompted by fears of African advance; but their campaign for amalgamation or federation had the unwitting effect to give the first stimulus to an African political awakening throughout the territory.¹ In 1948, at its annual meeting at Munali school, Lusaka, the *Federation of African Societies*, which had been created in 1946 for the purpose of bringing together various groups such as shop assistant groups, work associations etc, was transformed into an expressly political body: the *Northern Rhodesia Congress*.² In August 1951 Congress was renamed the *Northern Rhodesia African National Congress* on the same day as Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula, a London-educated teacher from Southern Province, was elected to take over its presidency.³ Nkumbula had built himself a reputation as a fearless advocate of African rights and, from the early 1940s, had been lobbying fiercely against the prospect of amalgamation with Southern Rhodesia. In 1942 he had written an "explosive" letter to the editor of the newspaper *Mutende*⁴ to express, in no uncertain terms, his opposition to white domination:

‘We in Northern Rhodesia loathe the idea of amalgamating Northern Rhodesia with Southern Rhodesia which is dominated by Europeans. (...) The policy of the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia is to make Southern Rhodesia a WHITE MAN’S COUNTRY.’⁵

With Nkumbula's accession to the presidency the Congress increasingly took the bearings of a mass movement. Nkumbula and his fellow congressmen, drawing on the idea of interethnic unity and solidarity, worked hard to unite the whole territory in a sense of common purpose: opposition to the Federation.⁶ The replacement of the party's Secretary-General, the southerner Nabulyato, with the northerner Kenneth Kaunda, along with the election of three new politicians from Bemba-speaking regions to the executive of the ANC in August 1953, were in all probability undertaken to support the image of 'national party' that the ANC was striving to create.⁷

The ANC, however, failed to establish an effective working relationship with the African trade-union movement. This ultimately was probably its fatal flaw. Though Katilungu was himself against Federation and eventually joined Congress, African trade unions were by no means secure in their independence from the state on whose assistance they had come to depend more and more. So if no official barrier prevented trade unionists from maintaining personal political affiliations, there were strong reasons for them not to introduce politics into trade-union affairs.⁸ In addition, as Henderson argues, 'there was a genuine miners' consciousness which did not necessarily rule out a wider political consciousness, but which was keenly aware that the miners owed nothing

¹ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, pp.206-208; D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, pp.15-19.

² D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, pp.14-16.

³ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, pp.210-211.

⁴ It should be noted that this letter was never published. The question of the publication was referred to the Governor who ruled against its publication. See R. SMYTH, 'War Propaganda during the Second World War in Northern Rhodesia', p.355.

⁵ Enclosed in letter from Bradley to Secretary for Natives Affairs, 19 February 1942 as quoted in R. SMYTH, 'War Propaganda during the Second World War in Northern Rhodesia', p.354 and G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.13.

⁶ G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.29.

⁷ *Ibid*, p.48.

⁸ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.26.

to the political elite.’¹ In other words, the Copperbelt’s politics were not necessarily to be in harmony with so-called ‘national’ politics if it was felt there was no advantage to be drawn from it. The conflict came to a head when Nkumbula as a climax to Congress’s campaign against federation, organised two days of national prayer which were to be supported by industrial action. However the AMWU refused to use the strike weapon in support of political objectives.² Protests fell through and in March 1953, the House of Commons approved the proposals for Federation. For the next ten years, Northern Rhodesia was consequently part of a Federation that tied it to Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia. Its capital was Salisbury, its president from 1956, Roy Welensky and its economic and political dominant minority group was the white settlers.³

Developments during the Years of Federation

1953 certainly marked the end of a period in the growth of African nationalism. Discredited to some extent by its failure to prevent Federation, the ANC quickly lost much of the popular enthusiasm it had been able to kindle. Lacking a sound political agenda, the ANC was in need of a new *raison d’être*, i.e. new objectives and strategies, and these were slow to emerge.⁴ As a result the movement entered what Mulford refers to as ‘a period of disintegration and decline characterised by inconsistent policies, petty bickering amongst officials, poor relations with the African trade-union movement, and apathy among the African public’.⁵ By 1958, however, Congress had revived. This resurgence was partly a response to economic stress – copper prices fell sharply in 1956 and stayed low for two years after that – and partly a result of the ANC’s growing popularity within the ranks of the AMWU’s executives, which led to more active militancy on the Copperbelt.⁶ In January 1955, ANC-friendly leaders within the AMWU pressured Katilungu to call a strike with political and economic aims: the pay rate demanded (10s 8d) would have qualified many African mineworkers for the income-related electoral franchise for the first time. The strike lasted nearly two months and was followed by twelve months of heightened tensions over wages, advancement and union representation, culminating in the ‘rolling strikes’ of June 1956: a series of strikes whose magnitude was such that it led to the declaration of a State of Emergency in the colony’s industrial heartland in September and the arrest of numerous local AMWU and Congress officials.⁷ Despite the fact that direct AMWU participation in nationalistic politics dwindled after these events,⁸ this was enough to renew the ANC’s visibility, and therefore spark renewed interest in its activities. In turn, this growing labour unrest on the Copperbelt caused a profound ideological crisis within

¹ I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, p.230.

² D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.26; M. LARMER, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, p.35.

³ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.19; M. HUGHES, ‘Fighting for White Rule in Africa’, p.594.

⁴ After the inception of the Central African Federation, the ANC busied itself with a campaign, extending over much of 1953–1954, against the colour bar in shops and such public places as restaurants and hotels. The campaign consisted mainly of boycotts of such shops as discriminated against their customers on the basis of colour. See G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, Chapter 2.

⁵ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.36.

⁶ In the early 1950s, the AMWU executive became the centre of a struggle for power between those who had been converted to the necessity for a political role for labour, among whom were Robinson Puta (Vice-President of the ATUC and chairman of the AMWU branch of Chingola), Mathew Nkoloma (General Secretary of both ATUC and AMWU) and Dixon Konkola (President of the *Northern Rhodesia Railway African Workers’ Trade Union*), and Katilungu, who preferred to keep the union separate from politics. See I. HENDERSON, *Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia*, pp.229–230; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.219; D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.42.

⁷ M. LARMER, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, p.35; G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.55.

⁸ *Ibid.*

the ANC. Throughout the 1950s, some elements within ANC had been growing increasingly committed to the idea of creating an independent African state, an aim which, in their opinion, could only be reached by refusing to compromise in any way with the Federal Political system. This newly popular ‘policy of activism’ was most vocally endorsed by Kenneth Kaunda. Nkumbula, on the other hand, was less clearly committed to this approach. In the summer of 1955, he had launched what came to be known as the ‘New Look Policy’, which promoted negotiation with the colonial authorities so as to obtain their ‘official recognition and respect’. The first tangible expressions of the ‘New Look Policy’ were the decision to call off an ongoing boycott in Lusaka late in April 1956 and the choice to take part in semiofficial talks with MLC John Roberts, Welensky’s right-hand man in Northern Rhodesia and the leader of European settlers in the country. This eventually resulted in a disgruntled Kaunda, accompanied by his friend Simon Kapwepwe, Secretary of the Kitwe branch of ANC, and a few others, forming a new party: the *Zambia African National Congress (ZANC)*.¹ For many observers of the time, the split had a strong ‘ethnic’ flavour. Looking at where, or rather between whom, the ZANC/ANC division line was drawn, it is indeed tempting to interpret the split as a showdown between the party’s southern ‘Bantu Botatwe’ elements (Nkumbula) and its northern ‘Bemba’ elements (Kaunda and Kapwepwe both of whom were born in Chinsali, Northern Province). The chain of events that led up to the split certainly give a measure of credence to this interpretation of events. Nkumbula seems to have interpreted the continuing opposition from the ‘Kaunda group’ as an indicator that he was being challenged by an ethnic and urban core that was fast gaining ground. When Nkumbula undertook the reshuffling of his party in the summer of 1958, more than one Bemba-speaking member were crossed out the party’s list.² With the Copperbelt and its ethnic hinterland, the Northern Province, seeing its ‘favourites’ being shunned by Nkumbula, it was not long before Nkumbula was likened to a ‘second-hand suit which the nation does not intend to resew or patch’ by the Kasama-based provincial secretary of the Congress, J.C.M. Ng’andu.³ Yet this should not obscure the nuances of the split’s circumstances. Macola noted that:

‘Of course, it would be disingenuous simply to portray (as much of the European press did at the time) the split within the ANC as the result of a Bemba tribal onslaught. For what Northern Rhodesia witnessed in 1957–58 was rather the clash between two ill-defined and ill-definable interest blocs structured around both ethno-linguistic criteria (Bemba-speakers vs. Bantu Botatwe) and different regional modes of incorporation in the colonial economy (roughly: waged work-force in the Copperbelt and its vast Northern hinterland vs. rural-based agricultural producers in the Southern and Central Provinces). In this latter respect at least, the militant—if, given the prominence of nationalist

¹ G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.55; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.220.

² G. Macola found that one of the two Kapwepwe loyalists whom Nkumbula removed from the executive council of the Western Province (i.e., Copperbelt) in the latter part of August was the Bemba-speaking J. Mulenga, provincial president. The other, provincial secretary Jonathan Chivunga, hailed from the Eastern Province, but had a long background as a Copperbelt-based trade unionist. See G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.70.

³ Ibid, p.71.

discourses and claims, always subterranean—ethnic ideologies that underlay the ZANC/UNIP split were closely interwoven with contemporary politico-economic circumstances.¹

The last two years of the 1950s witnessed increased confusion and frenzy in the Northern Rhodesian political scene. By this time the British Government realised that there would have to be rapid constitutional evolution in Northern Rhodesia, and it also seemed increasingly doubtful whether the Federation could realistically be held together. This led to concessions in the form of a new constitution and elections, both implemented to increase African representation in the Legislative Council. In an attempt to eradicate the most subversive elements of its opponents, the colonial government banned ZANC in March 1959, less than five months after its inception and imprisoned its leader, Kaunda. Consequently a new party, integrating former ZANC member and a few other ANC split-away groups, was formed in the later part of 1959: the *United National Independence Party* (UNIP). In January 1960, Kaunda was released from gaol, was greeted as a hero and was made the leader of the newly formed UNIP.² UNIP strived to assert its image as a national party and to tighten its grip over a large part of the population, especially the miners and their unions. Mineworkers joined UNIP in their thousands as did many younger AMWU members.³ This was another crippling blow to the ANC, which had already suffered the loss of the bulk of its Bemba-speaking leadership. This is the backdrop against which events unfolding in the newly independent Congo started to play an increasing and more direct role in the Zambian political struggle.

2. *The Katanga Secession (1960-1963)*

'The Katanga story is not a pleasant one to tell. It is a tale of savagery, deceit, false morality, power politics, smugness and plain incompetence.'
- Smith Hempstone, *Katanga Report*, opening statement.

On July 5, a mere five days after King Baudouin of Belgium presided over the independence ceremony that transformed the Belgian Congo into the Republic of the Congo, the Congolese army – the *Force Publique* – mutinied against their white officers. Despite Prime Minister Patrice Emery Lumumba's efforts, the mutiny soon spread to the entire country. Before long, a substantial portion of the 100,000 Belgian citizens living in the Congo, terror-stricken by reported incidents involving the looting of European properties, the beating of European officers and civilians, and the rape of European women,⁴ had fled the country. This exodus robbed the Congo of the experienced people who had planned to remain as advisers or technical experts and sent the country into a spiral of unrest and political chaos that would last until 1966.⁵ In this context of generalised unrest and anarchy, Moïse Tshombe, provincial president of Katanga, declared his province independent on July 11, 1960. Although its independence was never officially recognised internationally, the secessionist state of Katanga existed and functioned autonomously for exactly 30 months and three days, and received, at least in the

¹ G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.71.

² Ibid, p.74; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.220.

³ M. LARMER, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, pp.37-38.

⁴ Ch. D. GONDOLA, *The History of Congo*, p.118 ; K.C. DUNN, *Imagining the Congo*, p.63.

⁵ E.W. LEFEVER, *Crisis in Congo*, pp.11-12.

beginning, significant military and technical assistance from powerful Belgian financial and government circles.¹ Lumumba immediately accused the Belgian government of having ‘minutieusement préparé [la] sécession du Katanga dans le but de garder la mainmise sur notre pays’,² and called on the United Nations to intervene. By the early hours of Thursday July 14, exactly two weeks after independence day, the United Nations Security Council had launched the United Nations on what the Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, soon described as ‘the biggest single effort under United Nations colours organised and directed by the United Nations itself’.³ Still, frustrated by the way the situation stagnated, Lumumba turned to the Soviet Union for assistance, attracting the attention of the *Central Intelligence Agency* (CIA) in the process. Though the Soviet Union only sent a few planes and some material to the Congo,⁴ the ‘communist threat’ was considered real enough for President J.F. Kennedy to back the UN fully and on January 14, 1963, the United Nations troops, with substantial assistance from the United States, called the secession to an abrupt halt.⁵ The repercussions of this period of extended turmoil, known as the Congo Crisis, cannot be overstated. It brought about the downfall of Congo’s first elected government, caused the death of some 100,000 people, led to the assassination of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba as well as the death of United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, and culminated in Mobutu seizing power on November 25, 1965. It is hardly surprising therefore that it should have attracted a fair amount of literature, most of which is French-speaking and contemporary to the events that it describes.⁶ And yet, as Matthew Hughes noted in an article entitled ‘Fighting for White Rule in Africa’, in all this voluminous literature, very little is said about the Federation.⁷ Most of the relevant works, such as J.R.T. Wood’s edition of Roy Welensky’s papers, focus primarily on events within the Federation, while Alan James’ *Britain and the Congo Crisis*, though it touches indirectly upon the subject, focuses primarily on Britain. The exception is the interest shown in the death of Hammarskjöld. His out-of-the-ordinary death in September 1961 in an aeroplane crash near Ndola while en route to cease-fire negotiations, did a great deal to arouse suspicions about the possible implication of Roy Welensky and his henchmen in the event.⁸ Some years later, Welensky would describe how ‘the wildest accusations were flung at the Federation and at me personally. In Léopoldville there was an immediate demand for war against Rhodesia as a punishment for the “murder” of the Secretary-

¹ A.A.J. VAN BILSEN, ‘Some Aspects of the Congo Problem’, p.48

² Telegram from P. Lumumba and J. Kasavubu to the United Nations headquarters, as quoted in *Le Soir*, 14 June 1960.

³ D. Hammarskjöld Statement in the Security Council Introducing his report, 20 July 1960 in *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations*, Vol.V, p.43.

⁴ K.C. DUNN, *Imagining the Congo*, p.63.

⁵ R. HILSMAN, *To Move a Nation*, p.267; L. DEVLIN, *Chief of Station, Congo*, p.23.

⁶ The death of Lumumba, in particular, continues to attract popular and intellectual interest. Ludo de Witte, in his explosive *De Moord op Lumumba* (Leuven, 1999), accused Belgian agents of murdering the Congolese Prime Minister in January 1961. The publication of De Witte’s book was followed by an official investigation in the circumstances of Lumumba’s death. The Commission of Inquiry, formed of several leading historians, arrived to the conclusion that the Belgian state was responsible in part for Lumumba’s death but denied that Belgium ordered his assassination. The CIA and MI6 were also finger-pointed. Many grey areas remain however. For the results of the Commission, see L. DE VOS, E. GÉRARD, J. GÉRARD-LIBOIS, P. RAXHON (eds.), *Les secrets de l’affaire Lumumba* (Brussels, 2005).

⁷ See HUGHES, M., ‘Fighting for White Rule in Africa: The Central African Federation, Katanga, and the Congo Crisis, 1958-1965’ in *The International History Review*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (2003).

⁸ The potentiality that the crash might not have been an accident was widely discussed in the press at the time. The Northern Rhodesian newspaper, *Northern News*, commented right after the event took place, that ‘sabotage is not ruled out. There is even some official speculation that the plane may have been shot down.’ ‘Hammarskjöld dies in N.R. crash’, *Northern News*, 19 September 1961.

General.’¹ Despite this dearth of academic publications on the subject, the impact that the secession of Katanga had on both the crumbling Federal state and the nascent Zambian nation-building movement, was substantial.



Fig. 1. The 'Katanga trio'. From left to right: Dag Hammarskjöld (UN Secretary-General); Comte d'Aspremont-Lyndon (head of the Mistebel or Mission Technique Belge in Katanga), Moïse Tshombe (President of Secessionist Katanga), April 1960.

1. WELENSKY AND KATANGA: FIGHTING FOR WHITE RULE IN AFRICA

‘They made a desert and they called it peace’
- Roy Welensky, *Welensky's 4000 Days*

‘The Point Where The “Wind of Change” Begins To Veer’

Congo’s accession to independence attracted a great deal of attention in Northern Rhodesia. The fact that Belgium, having shown little concern about decolonisation until January 1960, suddenly agreed to grant independence on June 30 of the same year,² meant the settlers of the Federation faced the fast-approaching prospect of a black-run administration in a neighbouring province geographically and culturally akin to the Copperbelt. A writer for the Northern Rhodesian newspaper *Northern News* called attention to the fact that ‘whether or not the Congo gamble comes off no one can say now, but events there are going to affect us one way or the other much more than in the past.’³ In addition the Federation still had both a long-standing economic association with and a political interest in Katanga in the late 1950s, as Roy Welensky noted in his memoirs:

‘When it was under Belgian rule there was close and growing contact between the Congo and the

¹ S. R. WELENSKY, *Welensky's 4000 Days*, p.237.

² A.A.J. VAN BILSEN, ‘Some Aspects of the Congo Problem’, p.42.

³ Ibid.

Federation. We had a long common frontier, and the economy of the nearest neighbouring province, Katanga, was to be to a considerable extent complementary to our own: it too produced copper; it bought our coal and coke, and an increasing quantity of Southern Rhodesia's consumer goods; and it used our railways for export.'¹

Despite the fact that British hegemony over the Union Minière had been significantly diminished in the aftermath of World War I, the *Tanganyika Concessions Ltd* still owned a 40 % ownership in the Union Minière, and the two companies shared reports, correspondence, directors, dividends and shares, letterheads and auditors. British directors still sat on the board.² Moreover, important British firms such as Unilever, the British-American Tobacco Company, and Shell Oil had large holdings in Katanga.³ On July 25 1960, while trying to convince the British Government to give Tshombe 'sub rosa encouragement', Captain Charles Waterhouse, a former Conservative member of the British parliament who was both the chairman of the Tanganyika Concessions Ltd and a director of the Union Minière, said the extent of the British interest in Katanga was of the order of £180 million.⁴ The links between the British and Belgian governments, the TCL, the Union Minière and the Federation led to the formation of a 'Katanga lobby' within British governing circles. The 'Katanga lobby' was, according to Alan James, an 'important and sometimes influential' shadowy group of businessmen and politicians keen to keep control of the wealth they derived from white rule in Africa. With the growing uncertainty about the future of the Federation, these wealthy men began to consider how they could best protect their interests in that part of the world. Secessionist Katanga, with its white-friendly tendencies, increasingly looked like the best option to achieve this aim.⁵

The advantages of a closer association with Katanga were not lost on the settlers of the Federation either. Katanga was after all also inhabited by a large number of settlers and had a provincial government that openly professed 'white-friendliness'.⁶ Like their colleagues in the Federation, the Katangese settlers desired autonomy. This was to a large part prompted by the feeling of hostility that they harboured towards the draining of their resources by another entity, in their case Léopoldville. The British ambassador in Léopoldville noted that there was:

¹ Sir R. WELENSKY, *Welensky's 4000 Days*, p.209.

² At the time of the Congo crisis, British member of the Union Minière's board of directors included Captain Charles Waterhouse, who was also chairman of the Tanganyika Concessions Ltd, Sir Ulick Alexander and Lord Selborne. See S. HEMPSTONE, *Katanga Report*, p.50.

³ A. JAMES, *Britain and the Congo Crisis*, p.31.

⁴ Minute of M. Waterhouse visit to Brussels, 25 July 1960, FO 371/146640, doc. JB1015/228, para. 4 (NAUK).

⁵ The Katanga Lobby counted as members Waterhouse and the Marquess of Salisbury, one of the most influential members of the Conservative Party. A. JAMES, *Britain and the Congo Crisis*, p.xii-p.134.

⁶ Founded on October 30, 1958 as a merger of the majority of Katangese ethnic and tribal organisations, the *Confédération des Associations Tribales au Katanga (Conakat)* had originally been constituted with the aim of forming an alliance between 'Katangais authentiques' against what they felt to be an invasion of Baluba Kasai, who, since the 1920s, had constituted the bulk of the UMHK's African *main d'oeuvre*. The idea of decentralisation and the constitution of a Belgo-Congolese community came from a perceived need of a state in charge of its own immigration affairs on the one hand, and the Conakat's short-lived alliance with the white settlers' party, the *Union Katangaise*, on the other. For more details about the origins of Katanga particularism, see R. YAKEMTCHOUK, *Aux origines du séparatisme katangais* (Brussels, 1988) and J. GÉRARD-LIBOIS, *Sécession au Katanga* (Brussels, 1963).

‘a strong feeling, equally current among the Belgians (of whom there are some 30,000) and Africans in the province, that Léopoldville should not be the future capital of the Congo. It suffers in their minds from being the distant (over 1,400 miles) seat of an authority which has been felt in the past to be both unsympathetic and out of touch (...) Additional force is given to the general desire in the Katanga for strong provincial powers by the fear of both Africans and Belgians of seeing their province continue to be milked for the benefit of the rest of the Congo.’¹

There was therefore almost a *de facto* connivance between Katangese and Rhodesian settlers. Conor Cruise O’Brien, an Irish diplomat whom the United Nations posted in Katanga, wrote in 1962: ‘In Katanga, I came to feel that I was living at the point where the “wind of change” begins to veer: that is the point where it encounters the escarpment of a relatively old area of European settlement and rule. The 30,000 or so Europeans of Katanga felt themselves to be backed by the 300,000 or so of the Rhodesias and by more than 3,000,000 in South Africa.’²

Rumours of Association between the Federation and Katanga

In 1958, long before the Belgian government announced its plans to withdraw from the Congo, the settlers in Katanga had already suggested a merger with the Federation.³ Then, in March 1960 Welensky claimed in an interview with Rene MacColl, a reporter with the Daily Express, that the Katanga might well join the Federation:

‘I suppose there is going to be a hell of a row for my having told you this (...) Suggestions have been made to me (...) that the federation should “hold out the hand of friendship” to Katanga when the Congo gains its independence.’⁴

When the Belgian ambassador in Salisbury Jacques Houdart asked him on behalf of his government to confirm or deny the terms of the interview, Welensky confirmed ‘that he had been approached by ‘certain circles’ from the Congo’s Eastern Katanga Province on the subject of a prospective merger with the Federation’ but ‘did not specify whether this concerned Katanga whites or Africans.’⁵ According to Jules Gérard-Libois, ‘le Daily Express a laissé entendre que les approches n’ont pas été opérées par des représentants des 30,000 Européens de la province, ni de la puissante Union Minière, mais par M. Moïse Tshombe’.⁶ Whomever it was Welensky was in touch with, Welensky’s policy of overture towards Katanga certainly did not receive universal acclaim. It was

¹ From Scott, Léopoldville to CO, current events in Katanga, 29 April 1960, FO 371/146633, doc. JB1015/82, para. 4 (NAUK).

² Introduction by C.C. O’Brien to R. Ainslie, *The Unholy Alliance: Salazar-Verwoerd-Welensky* (London, 1962), p.3 as quoted in M. HUGHES, ‘Fighting for White Rule in Africa’, p.596.

³ M. HUGHES, ‘Fighting for White Rule in Africa’, p.598. Talks between the two sides intensified in late 1959 and early 1960 when ‘les groupes européens du Katanga et de Rhodésie’ met to discuss ‘les questions d’intérêt commun, posées par l’accession du Congo à l’indépendance et examiner les diverses hypothèses d’avenir pour la République du Congo avec leurs incidences sur le Katanga et le Copperbelt.’ See J. GÉRARD-LIBOIS, *Sécession au Katanga*, p.55.

⁴ ‘There’s going to be hell because I’ve told you this – Rene MacColl interviews Sir Welensky’, *Daily Express*, 2 March 1960, as quoted in M. HUGHES, ‘Fighting White Rule in Africa’, p.599.

⁵ ‘Sir Roy maintains that Congo ‘circles’ approached him on Katanga’, *Northern News*, 8 March 1960.

⁶ J. GÉRARD-LIBOIS, *Sécession au Katanga*, p.54.

welcomed neither by Britain who, being ‘popularly believed’ to be responsible for Sir Roy Welensky,¹ resented being finger-pointed because of Welensky’s imprudent statements, nor, predictably, by Belgium whose reply to Welensky was summarised by *Northern News* as meaning: ‘Hands off the Congo’.² But neither was it welcomed in Katanga itself. The interview drew violent protest from the local press with the *Essor du Congo* noting that ‘L’invraisemblance de cette nouvelle est telle que l’on se demande comment on peut la prendre au sérieux.’³ In addition, Katanga’s ruling party, the Conakat, ridiculed the idea of Katanga joining Rhodesia and issued a statement to that effect, stressing that the racial segregation practiced by the Rhodesias and South Africa was incompatible with their dignity and mentality.⁴ This led the Foreign Office to conclude that ‘though important tribes straddle the Katanga/Northern Rhodesia border’, the only possible circumstances in which a real demand for association could be conceivable would be ‘if it were thought that the new country would be run entirely by Africans, *i.e.* if U.N.I.P. ever came to power in Northern Rhodesia. Some sort of African union might then be put forward’.⁵ The British ambassador in Léopoldville made a similar point:

‘I am convinced that such a development is out of the question: the Congo Africans do not want it and have no desire to exchange one colonial regime for another; and while superficially it might seem attractive to the Belgian mining interests and settlers, the former realise that such a possible union would not work out in practice (...) The Katanga will, therefore, remain in the Belgian Congo, perhaps even more closely united with the rest of the country as a result of Sir Roy Welensky’s statements, the echoes of which still reverberate.’⁶

Whoever was in contact with Welensky, it was therefore obvious that the extension of white power to Katanga was not to materialise. In any case, the Federation was increasingly faced with both external and internal pressures. Following serious rioting erupting in Nyasaland, and further disturbances in Northern Rhodesia, the British government, and more particularly Ian Macleod, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, was pushing for independence for Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. With the Federation collapsing, it made little sense for Welensky to clamour for an amalgamation with a secessionist state that all the major powers and international organisations opposed.⁷

The Federation Supports Tshombe’s Secessionist State

If secessionist Katanga was not to be Rhodesian, it still constituted a pro-Western breakaway state and a buffer zone against the African nationalist states to the north.⁸ Consequently, Welensky did all that he could to support the secessionist state. From the moment Katanga seceded from the Congo in July 1960, Welensky

¹ Leopoldville to Foreign Office, 5 July 1960, FO 371/146692, doc. JB1061/6 (NAUK).

² ‘Welensky warned: Hands off the Congo’, *Northern News*, 9 March 1960.

³ ‘A propos d’une nouvelle saugrenue’, *Essor du Congo*, 5 March 1960, FO 371/146630, doc. JB1015/44 (NAUK).

⁴ A.G. Evans (British Consul in Elisabethville) to the British Consulate-General in Leopoldville, 5 May 1960, FO 371/146630, doc. JB1015/44 (NAUK).

⁵ Foreign Office to Leopoldville, 22 June 1960, FO 371/146692, doc. JB1061/3 (NAUK).

⁶ From Scott, Leopoldville to CO, current events in Katanga, 29 April 1960, FO 371/146633, doc. JB1015/82, para. 2 (NAUK).

⁷ M. HUGHES, ‘Fighting for White Rule in Africa’, p.601.

⁸ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.243.

provided continuous assistance to the flood of Belgian refugees escaping the war in Katanga,¹ and urged Britain to recognise Tshombe's state or, at least, to sanction the deployment of Federation troops to buoy it up. Britain, however, though Macmillan did write to Welensky that if the Central Government collapsed, some kind of 'ad hoc recognition' could be considered, decided that neither Britain nor the Federation should give the impression that they were trying to break up the Congo.² Despite this, the Federation (and South Africa) became not only a conduit for supplies and material going to and from Katanga but also the recruiting ground and forward base for a largely white mercenary force that was deployed in Katanga as Tshombe's private army: the infamous Katangese "gendarmarie" that continually thwarted the efforts of the UN forces. The local press commented on the recruitment drives for the mercenaries in Northern and Southern Rhodesia. Some articles almost read like job advertisements: 'The man who is recruiting Rhodesians and South Africans for President Tshombe's Katanga Army and Air Force is Mr. Stuart Finley-Bisset, a 58-year-old Scotsman who runs a labour agency in Lusaka. He wants 100 recruits – mostly technicians etc.'³ It was not long before the United Nations carried out investigation of its own and in December 1961, Welensky was urged to invite the United Nations to station observers in frontier zones and airports. Addressing himself to the UN Advisory Committee on January 9, 1962, U Thant, Hammarskjöld's successor as UN Secretary-General, claimed that he had 'concrete evidence' that illicit traffic was taking place:

'I wish to consult you about the replies I have received to my request (...) that observers be stationed along the frontiers of Rhodesia and Angola for the purpose of controlling illicit traffic with Katanga (...) Here I might say that this approach was made because we finally had some concrete evidence of illicit assistance to Katanga from the Rhodesian side, which we immediately presented to the British government and which Sir Roy Welensky has promptly denied in phraseology that could not be described as gracious.'⁴

Welensky called the suggestion to post observers in the Federation 'one of the most objectionable proposals' ever made to him,⁵ and negotiations on the subject subsequently fell through.⁶ In addition to making his disapproval of the United Nations abundantly clear, Welensky launched a diplomatic offensive in support of Tshombe's Katanga, protesting against what he referred to as the 'calculated UN policy of grinding Mr.

¹ S. R. WELENSKY, *Welensky's 4000 Days*, pp.210-211. The National Archives of Zambia in Lusaka host ample evidence of the extent to which the Federation was involved in helping rescuing Belgian refugees throughout the different waves of flights that the early 1960s witness, and of the administrative complications that they brought about. There are two thick folders pertaining to the question of the different 'Congo Evacuations' that took place between 1960 and 1962. The files that they contain document the various measures taken by the government to deal with the flood of incomers throughout the years as well as the spontaneous initiatives taken locally to bring immediate relief to the refugees. See files on the Congo Evacuation, phases I & II in WP1/14/57 and WP1/14/58.

² S. R. WELENSKY, *Welensky's 4000 Days*, p.213; BBC Broadcast, 19 July 1960, FO 371/146692, doc. JB1061/16 (NAUK).

³ 'Lusaka man behind Tshombe's drive for recruits', *Northern News*, 26 January 1961.

⁴ U Thant's Statement to the Advisory Committee on the Congo, New York, 9 January 1962 in *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General*, pp.80-81.

⁵ S. R. WELENSKY, *Welensky's 4000 Days*, p.251.

⁶ Though he refused the posting of observers, Welensky invited U Thant to come personally to Salisbury for discussions intended to correct United Nations misunderstandings regarding both Federal policy and the position on the frontier of Northern Rhodesia and Katanga. Nothing happened in the end and this was used by Welensky in his anti-UN campaign. *Northern News* published a series of articles on the subject: 'Government turns down request for UN men in Rhodesia' (5 January 1962); 'UN's chief in Europe may visit Rhodesia to meet Sir Roy' (15 January 1962); 'UN no kind of sacred cow, sir Roy tells parliament' (23 January 1962).

Tshombe into the ground.’¹ Late 1961 had indeed seen a series of offensives on the part of the UN² and on September 13, 1961, in a climate of great latent tension, the UN special representative in Katanga, Conor Cruise O’Brien, set the green light for what would be the UN’s most controversial operation: operation *Morthor*. This operation, supposed to be a bloodless coup, lasted a total of 8 days and resulted in the deaths of 11 UN Soldiers, about 50 gendarmes, and a handful of civilians.³ In legal, political, and military terms, operation *Morthor* had become a great embarrassment to Hammarskjöld, the Secretariat and the countries supporting UN action.⁴ How then did Hammarskjöld justify this embarrassing operation? According to O’Brien, by allowing ‘the world to be given an official version which was so phrased as to make what had been an active intervention by the United Nations look like a defensive action.’⁵ The relevant section of the UN report issued on September 14 (S/4940) was worded as follows:

‘*Paragraph 15:* In the early hours of September 13th, (...) an alert was set since arson was discovered at the UN garage. As the UN troops were proceeding towards the garage premises, fire was opened on them from the building where a number of foreign officers are known to be staying.’⁶

About this report, O’Brien candidly admitted: ‘If this is an accurate account of what took place in Elisabethville on the morning of September 13th, my name is Titus Oates’⁷, adding that:

‘Whatever high-level agnosticism now prevails about what we had been instructed to do and – as I found later in Léopoldville and New York, there is a veritable ‘Cloud of unknowing’ surrounding the whole subject – it is hard to see how he [Hammarskjöld] and Linner can altogether have escaped knowing the essentials (...) *Morthor* is a Hindi word. It does not mean ‘Sound the alarm; there is arson in the garage’ or ‘Let us now assist the provincial authorities to maintain order’. It means ‘Smash’.⁸

This gave Welensky plenty of material to launch an important propaganda campaign against the United Nations. On the day operation *Morthor* was launched, Welensky issued a solemn warning in the Federal parliament: ‘Let other countries take warning. What has happened in Elisabethville today is the law of the jungle.’⁹ Welensky also had UN ‘atrocities’ against civilians in Katanga described in a vitriolic pamphlet that was published at the government’s expense. This pamphlet’s conclusion read as follows: ‘There have been other reports of the tragic events of September and December, 1961. All refer to the lawlessness, horror, savagery and brutality of the United Nations forces and show clearly the need for a public inquiry into these matters which are of the gravest

¹ S. R. WELENSKY, *Welensky’s 4000 Days*, p.216.

² J. GÉRARD-LIBOIS, *Sécession au Katanga*, p.238. E.W. LEFEVER, *Crisis in the Congo*, p.77; M. HUGHES, ‘Fighting for White Rule in Africa’, p.611.

³ E.W. LEFEVER, *Crisis in Congo*, p.80.

⁴ J. GÉRARD-LIBOIS, *Sécession au Katanga*, p.241.

⁵ C.C O’BRIEN, *To Katanga and Back*, p.264.

⁶ UN Document S/4940 as quoted in *Congo 1961*, p.534.

⁷ C.C O’BRIEN, *To Katanga and Back*, p.264.

⁸ *Ibid*, p.266.

⁹ A.E.P. Robinson (High Commissioner) to Harold Macmillan (Prime Minister of the United Kingdom), 13 September 1961, PREM11/3187 (NAUK).

concern to the future peace of the world.’¹ Welensky’s efforts did not succeed to save Katanga however. Not any more than they succeeded in saving the Federation, which, just over a year after the UN finally reclaimed Katanga in January 1963, collapsed entirely. As for the fight for ‘white rule’, after 1965 it had moved from the Congo to the borders of Southern Rhodesia.



Fig. 2. A Katangese ambulance is caught in the crossfire, December 5 1961.

3. *THE ANC AND KATANGA: AFFILIATION AND OPPORTUNISM*

1960 and 1961 were a period of severe difficulty for Nkumbula’s ANC. The formation of ZANC/UNIP caused increasing international isolation for Nkumbula, whose former place as most visible African leader in Northern Rhodesia was rapidly taken over by Kaunda. At the same time, Kaunda’s UNIP espoused a nation-building paradigm that not only portrayed itself as decidedly proactive and combative but was also exclusionary in nature. As early as November 1959, UNIP claimed to be ‘the only party which command[ed] the respect, confidence and unanimous support of the African people in Northern Rhodesia.’² In 1960, year of Congo’s independence, the general atmosphere was one of great expectations, especially in the UNIP’s strongholds, Luapula and Northern Provinces (‘Bemba country’ in other words). Local officials constantly referred to the progress of other African states towards independence, especially Congo and Tanganyika, and in each case the lesson drawn was the same: increased militancy, and if necessary increased violence, was the way to independence. As Mulford put it: ‘Northern Rhodesia African would have to die in 1960, and everywhere there were encouraged not to be afraid.’³ Throughout the year, UNIP was indeed very active, organising boycotts and other similar actions, which were enthusiastically taken up by a large part of the population. By late 1960, the belief that breaking the Federation depended upon seizing power in Northern Rhodesia had gained wide

¹ Rhodesian Pamphlet on UN Atrocities in Katanga, 11 June 1962, DO 183/146, doc. 15 (NAUK).

² Memorandum on constitutional change submitted to His Excellency the Governor, Sir Evelyn Hone, 24 November 1959, UNIPA, ANC 5/15 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.76.

³ D.C. MULFORD, Zambia, *The Politics of Independence*, p.137.

acceptance amongst the Territory's nationalist power, and African opposition was both effectively organised and militant under the UNIP banner.¹ Crippled by increasingly fragile administrative structures, severe shortages of funds and lack of ideological cohesion, the ANC was no match for UNIP's rejuvenated brand of nationalism. Yet, by the end of 1962, Nkumbula, the man who was increasingly being stigmatised as 'pleasure-loving', 'internationally finished', and an 'alcoholic wreck',² had managed to reconstitute his party as a force to reckon with in Northern Rhodesia. As it will be seen, Katanga was instrumental in dictating the terms of the showdown between Kaunda's UNIP and Nkumbula's ANC.

Ideological Redefinition

After a comparatively long period of stagnation,³ some signs of greater ideological cohesion became detectable from April 1961 when Kaunda's party was, for the first time, accused of hostility toward 'the Western World'. The context for this accusation was the new Constitution for Northern Rhodesia that the Colonial Office proposed to pass in 1961. This Constitution, which was originally meant to make an African majority in the legislature possible, was subsequently revised after much lobbying by Welensky, in favour of the Europeans.⁴ This provoked UNIP to stage a 'positive action campaign which would manifest the people's displeasure and induce the British Government to reconsider and modify the scheme'.⁵ This 'positive action campaign' spanned four months (from July 15 to October 31) and involved a good deal of violence despite Kaunda's claimed belief in non-violence. The report on the disturbances stated that:

'All provinces except Barotseland, were affected in varying degree; worst affected were the Northern and Luapula Provinces where gangs roamed the bush, communications were interrupted, attacks were prepared and launched against Government servants, and widespread destruction of schools, bridges, and other property by fire occurred. In these areas there was widespread violence, intimidation and violence. (...) There can be no doubt of the responsibility of officials and members of the United National Independence Party for the disorder.'⁶

Perhaps more importantly, the same report noted:

'He [Kaunda] had claimed that the party controlled the mines, the railways and the kitchens. This suggested that the essence of the plan was to be a general strike. In fact the party controlled none of these activities and have so far failed to harness to their cause the two most powerful African trade unions in the Territory – the African Mineworkers' Trade Union and the African Railway Worker's Union. The U.N.I.P. was therefore compelled to fall back on other methods to embarrass

¹ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.302.

² N. Tembo, 'Copperbelt Circular no. 5. Organ of UNIP-Western Division', Ndola, March 1960, UNIPA, ANC5/15 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.75.

³ Nkumbula disappeared from the political scene between April 1961 and January 1962, during which time he was serving a prison sentence for causing death by dangerous driving. See G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.75.

⁴ A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.220.

⁵ *Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances in Northern Rhodesia, July to October 1961*, p.1.

⁶ Ibid.

Government.’¹

In this way the disturbances of 1961 made it apparent that not only UNIP did not receive the quasi-universal support it claimed to have, but it also made the ANC look like a ‘moderate’, ‘responsible’ party in comparison to the impetuous UNIP. Thereafter, to sustain this new status and make sure to dissociate itself from the ongoing “disturbances,” the Congress took its sharpest yet turn to the right of the political spectrum. Throughout 1962, open professions of a more explicit and informed liberal-democratic agenda, as well as ridiculing of UNIP’s supposedly ‘non-violent’ policy, became more frequent. In an important interview, Nkumbula accused UNIP of believing in a ‘totalitarian form of government’ while his party, on the contrary, was committed to ‘private enterprise’ and the ‘complete freedom of the individual.’ In the same interview Nkumbula claimed that ‘UNIP has aligned itself with the Casablanca Group of countries, which are Communist inclined. We in the ANC to the Monrovia Group which is democratically inclined (...) Kaunda is not carrying out his own policies. They are Nkrumah’s ideas.’² These declarations had an unmistakable ‘Tshombeist’ connotation. After all, anti-communism and the continued pursuance of liberalism had been both the cause and the justification for the secession as was openly declared in the Katangese declaration of independence of July 11 1960:

‘L’indépendance du Congo est un fait depuis le 30 juin 1960.

Que Constatons-nous à présent ?

[...] Un gouvernement central à majorité extrémiste s’est constitué. [...]

Des troubles ont éclaté partout [...].

Dans ces circonstances, et devant les menaces que ferait peser sur nous une plus longue soumission à l’arbitraire et à la volonté communisante du gouvernement central, le gouvernement katangais a décidé de proclamer l’indépendance du Katanga.

[...] Cette Indépendance est TOTALE. Cependant, conscient de la nécessité impérieuse d’une collaboration économique avec la Belgique, le gouvernement du Katanga [...] demande à la Belgique de s’unir avec le Katanga en une étroite communauté économique.’³

That this similarity was not deliberate seems unlikely. It was no secret that Kaunda and Tshombe had no love for each other. As early as July 1960, within days of the beginning of the Katanga secession, M. Mainza Chona, UNIP deputy president and United Kingdom representative, had made a public statement to the effect that, although the two parties had previously been very friendly towards each other, ‘His [Tshombe’s] open links with Union Minière, which have come to the surface, the fact that he appealed to the settlers of Central Africa for help, and the way he is being boosted by the Press is proving embarrassing to most of us in the U.N.I.P.’⁴ By

¹ *Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances in Northern Rhodesia, July to October 1961*, p.1.

² ‘Nkumbula: I am against merger’, *Central African Mail*, 24 July 1962 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.81.

³ The Declaration of Independence of Katanga, 11 July 1960, in *Congo 1960*, Vol. II, pp.718-719.

⁴ ‘Conakat is proving embarrassing to U.N.I.P. – Chona’, *Northern News*, 15 July 1960.

January 1962, Tshombe was referred to as a 'primitive clumsy looking man-eater'¹ in a UNIP pamphlet published by the divisional headquarters in the Southern Province. He was also referred to as 'Welensky's stooge' in the resolutions passed by the UNIP National Council in March 1962:

'This council endorses the stand adopted by the party in the past namely that no balkanisation of the Congo, or any other part of Africa, shall ever be tolerated; that we affirm our stand that neither the West nor the East has any right to choose leaders for the Congo and that the danger of balkanisation hamply [sic] demonstrated during the recent gun-running periods when Welensky used Tshombe as a stooge. This council, therefore, appeals to all Congolese leaders to get together for the sake of national unity, and appeals to Moïse Tshombe to avoid, by breaking away from the Congo and join Rhodesia, jumping from the flying pan into the fire.'²

Not to be outdone, Tshombe had let it known that he considered Kenneth Kaunda to be 'the Lumumba of Northern Rhodesia.' 'And, like Lumumba', he said, 'Kaunda would never achieve real power.'³ He added, 'wiping the anger from his face with a smile': 'I think the moderates, the men with the philosophy like us, men like Nkumbula and Katilungu, are the ones who will lead the Africans in Northern Rhodesia.'⁴ Whether this rapprochement between Katanga and the ANC, which the clear bearing of Tshombe's ideas on the ideological re-positioning of the ANC made obvious, was ideological or practical can be debated. There was in any case at least one commodity that Katanga possessed in abundance and that the ANC sorely needed: *cash*.

Alliance with Katanga

Marginalisation, at both national and international levels, and financial crisis were certainly determining factors in strengthening Nkumbula's resolve to seek new allies across the Katangese border. It is not certain when Nkumbula started to meet with Tshombe but by May 1961, Ronald John Japau, the ANC's provincial general secretary in the North-Western Province and Tshombe's fellow Lunda, paid the first of a series of visits to Elisabethville where, between 1961 and 1962, he managed to secure five vehicles and an unknown sum of money for the ANC.⁵ The precise volume of Katangese financial assistance to the ANC is difficult to gauge. Mulford found that the ANC accounts for the year up to 30 June 1961 showed a contribution of £10,000 from Katanga, most of which was used for the purchase of vehicles.⁶ Thanks to the Congress' ever more open professions of support for the secession, the flow of Katangese aid continued unabated and may well have reached £25,000 by February 1962.⁷ The governor of Northern Rhodesia suggested a figure of £40,000 in

¹ F.S. Mulanga, L.S. Chivuno, and A.B. Chisanga, 'Catalogue of Nkumbula's political masturbation', Monze, 16 January 1962, UNIPA, ANC 7/48 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.75.

² UNIP North Rhodesia. Resolutions of National Council of UNIP, done at UNIP freedom house, Lusaka, PO box 302, 8 March 1962 MMC/KBK, UNIP/1/1/3a, doc.06, p.3.

³ 'Lumumbist' Kaunda will never get power, says Tshombe', *Northern News*, 15 February 1961.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ M. LARMER & G. MACOLA, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion Against the Zambian One-Party-State', pp.474-5.

⁶ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.241.

⁷ Following a new request from Nkumbula to Godefroid Munongo, the Katangese Interior Minister, an additional £20,000 were seemingly made available to the ANC in September. H.M. Nkumbula to G. Munongo, Lusaka, 7 July 1962, UNIPA, ANC 7/54 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.85.

August 1962.¹ There is little doubt in any case, that the sums involved were considerable. By mid 1962, the (in)formal ‘alliance’ that existed between Tshombe and the ANC was not much more than an open secret. On July 29, 1962, the British Newspaper *The Observer* published an article, which, because of its direct relevance to this argument, is worth quoting in full:

‘The evidence is increasing that, in a last bid to save Sir Roy Welensky’s Federation, powerful interests in Katanga are intervening in the affairs of Northern Rhodesia. If Kenneth Kaunda’s United National Independence Party wins a majority in the elections next October everyone knows it will insist on following Nyasaland out of the Federation. To avert this, President Tshombe of Katanga and the moneyed interests behind him are backing, not Welensky’s United Federal Party – that would be too obvious and ineffective – but the small African Opposition Party, Harry Nkumbula’s African National Congress.

For a long time there have been links between Nkumbula and Tshombe. Nkumbula has been visiting Elisabethville at least once a fortnight. Senior members of his Congress have been based there for long periods. The Congress has its party literature printed in Elisabethville. Last April Nkumbula received £24,000 from the National Bank of Katanga in Elisabethville and it is known that this was not the first subvention from those quarters (...).

But this collaboration between the two goes further. Last August a Northern Rhodesian delegation went to Elisabethville to ‘thank President Tshombe for his aid to certain moderate leaders’ – according to the Bulletin des Renseignements No.261 of the Katangese security service. In the last few months this aid has taken the form of the military training of Northern Rhodesians, mainly from the Tonga and Lozi tribes, to serve as the nucleus for an “army” for Nkumbula’s A.N.C.

‘What is Tshombe’s motive in all this? The money he has dished out to Nkumbula was given on the understanding that the ANC was to put his case in Northern Rhodesia, but not surprisingly Congress has shown little enthusiasm for this unpopular activity. Tshombe himself has often underlined the fact that before the Europeans came, Katanga and Rhodesia formed one great territory. Some Congress leaders rather than accept rule by Kaunda’s U.N.I.P., are believed to be prepared to partition Northern Rhodesia and join parts of Katanga.’²

The *Observer* article garnered immediate interest from the British government, which demanded clarifications from the Northern Rhodesia governor in Lusaka. The latter’s comments on the points made by the article were the following:

¹ Governor in Lusaka to First Secretary of State, Central African Office in London, 28 August 1962, FO 371/161512, doc. JB1105/5-21 (NAUK).

² ‘Tshombe Intervenes in N. Rhodesia’, *The Observer*, 29 July 1960, found in file sent from Elisabethville to Foreign Office on 2 August 1962, FO 371/161512, doc. JB1105/5-6 (NAUK).

- (i) Although Nkumbula is known to have visited Elisabethville on several occasions, his visits are not at regular intervals and are far less frequent than fortnightly.
Congress have a well-equipped office in Elisabethville which is run by an official named Bellings LOMBE, who is known to have entrée to the Minister of the Interior and to other senior Katanga ministers. (...)
- (ii) It is known that Nkumbula has received payments of £40,000 through the Katanga National Bank during the last six months and it is thought likely that the money has come from the Katanga authorities.
- (iii) I have no knowledge of a Northern Rhodesia Congress delegation travelling to Elisabethville in August of last year to "thank Tshombe for his aid to certain moderate leaders".
- (iv) No confirmation has been obtained of the allegations that Congress members are being given military training at Karavia near Elisabethville.
- (v) It is understood from information obtained from the Federal Intelligence and Security Bureau that the basis of the Agreement between Tshombe and Congress is that, in the event of Congress forming the future government of Northern Rhodesia, a federation between Katanga and Northern Rhodesia would be arranged.¹

Kaunda himself interpreted Tshombe's intention as including the annexation of Northern Rhodesia to Katanga and said so to the National Council: 'Tshombe wants Angola and Northern Rhodesia to join him. This is his dream. He does not want any copper competition. Welensky is using Nkumbula to get Tshombe in order to swallow both. He wants both Northern Rhodesia and Katanga.'² If there is little doubt that the ANC benefited from Katangese financial support, other claims sound rather fanciful. Whether and how many Northern Rhodesians train in Katanga was never ascertained.³ Nor does it seem likely that Tshombe and Nkumbula could (or even would) realistically envisage the formation of a Federation between their two countries. In all likelihood, theirs was a pragmatic alliance which was to yield immediate results: cash for Nkumbula; the installation of a friendly government in neighbouring Northern Rhodesia and the easing of Katanga's diplomatic isolation for Tshombe. But the fact that such rumours existed and the way they brought about the production of considerable correspondence is revealing in itself of the fear that their alliance occasioned.

Nkumbula's Gamble: The 1962 Elections

By mid-1962 therefore, thanks to Katangese cash, the ANC was no longer a party in decline. This happened just in time for the country's first national elections, which were to be held in October and

¹ Governor in Lusaka to First Secretary of State in London, 28 August 1962, FO 371/161512, doc. JB1105/5-21 (NAUK).

² Minutes of the meeting of the National Council held on 10 November 1962, UNIP/1/1/2, doc.4.

³ Analysis of the Allegations that Members of the African National Congress are receiving Military training in Katanga, annexure to Savingram from Governor in Lusaka to First Secretary of State, central African Office in London, 24 August 1962, FO 371/161512, doc. JB1105/5-21 (NAUK).

November.¹ The ANC began campaigning furiously, using their newly found ideological framework as electoral slogan: 'multi-racialism, non-violence, economic stability'.²



Fig.3. Clipping from a *Northern News* Advertisement for the ANC, 19 October 1962

Yet, despite its renewed vitality, the ANC was still too weak to hope beating UNIP. Nkumbula then embarked in a delicate political balancing act. Knowing that Federal Prime Minister Welensky's feared a UNIP victory, which would ensue in the immediate dissolution of his cherished Federation, Nkumbula entered an alliance with the United Federal Party (UFP). This was a risqué yet very tactical move. For if Nkumbula, by entering such an alliance, was doing what many would have interpreted as a pact with the devil, he was also able to see that his position as Katanga's darling could impose him as one of the most powerful people in Northern Rhodesia. The Tshombe connection would garner him the support of the Lunda as well as that of the Northern Rhodesian Europeans who could hardly miss the fact that in Tshombe, they and Nkumbula had a common friend.³ In this way, by suggesting the possibility of a future coalition government between the UFP and the ANC, Nkumbula convinced the UPF that each party should support the other's candidates on the so-called national roll, which comprised both upper (*i.e.*, white) and lower roll voters. To the dismay and fury of UNIP, the circumscribed electoral alliance between the UFP and the ANC proved successful, culminating in the ANC supplementing its three lower roll seats with two 'national' ones (these would become four after the by-elections of December).⁴ As a result of Nkumbula's coup, the ANC, now held, as Mulford pointed out, 'the balance of power, a position of immense influence, (...) radically disproportionate to the party's actual strength in the country'.⁵ Yet, right after these results came up, Nkumbula changed allegiances. Quite brutally so. Having used the UFP's votes to the greatest possible advantage and forced UNIP to enter negotiations from a paradoxical position of weakness, Nkumbula dropped his federal allies and stipulated a coalition pact with UNIP. Despite Kaunda's assertion that 'Mr Nkumbula is the most worried man. If he goes with UNIP, he will be in trouble with his financial masters

¹ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.229.

² Advertisement for the African National Congress, *Northern News*, 19 October 1962.

³ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.243.

⁴ G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.86.

⁵ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.243.

and if he goes with UFP, he will be finished politically',¹ Nkumbula did not seem to have too many qualms making his choice. Asked why he had suddenly changed his mind about a link with UNIP, Nkumbula immediately answered with a ready-made justification: 'Two of the main reasons behind my decision were that Mr. Kaunda assured me his party is not committed to communism and he is more favourably inclined towards Katanga.'² Despite having nearly twice as many parliamentarians as the ANC, UNIP eventually allocated his party half of the six full ministerial posts reserved for elected representatives in the new cabinet³ so that the final result of the elections was the following:

Legislative Council Party Composition of Elected members				
	U.N.I.P.	U.F.P.	A.N.C.	Total
Europeans	-	15	2	17
Africans	12	1	5	18
Asians	1	-	-	1
Euro-Africans	1	-	-	1
State of Parties	14	16	7	37

The Disaggregation

On November 16, 1962, three days before nomination day, Kaunda and Nkumbula issued a joint statement confirming their intention to form a coalition and calling on their respective supporters to cease hostilities. By November 29 they were announcing their intention to co-operate in the formation of a new government and their wish for early home-rule.⁴ Despite this optimistic statement, it grew quickly obvious that the Coalition Government was 'ridden by political manoeuvring and rent with internal dissent'⁵ and that the position of Nkumbula himself, despite his seemingly resounding victory, was far from secure. To start with, some ANC officials were far from happy with this alliance with their former enemies. ANC officials on the Copperbelt in particular called the pact 'unwanted and unwarranted' and called for Nkumbula's resignation as party leader.⁶ Welensky and the UFP (which became the *National Progress Party* in April 1963) were – it goes without saying – similarly disgruntled. Though resigned to the impending dissolution of Federation, federal politicians were not ready to forgive what Welensky called Nkumbula's 'breach of faith',⁷ and they began actively to plot his demise by supporting the activities of a rebel faction grouped around national secretary Job Michello: the ephemeral *People's Democratic Congress* (PDC) founded in August 1963.⁸ But least happy was probably Nkumbula's sponsors. When Nkumbula agreed to cooperate with UNIP, one of his chief concerns had been the maintenance of his profitable Katanga connection. Nkumbula had explicitly sought Tshombe's blessing

¹ Minutes of the meeting of the National Council held on 10 November 1962, UNIP/1/1/2, Doc.4.

² 'ANC officials demand immediate resignation of Nkumbula', *Northern News*, 16 November 1962.

³ G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.86. UNIP and the ANC between them won over 80,000 votes – two-thirds of the total. See A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, p.221.

⁴ 'ANC UNIP agree to form a coalition government', *Northern News*, 29 November 1962.

⁵ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.338.

⁶ 'ANC officials demand immediate resignation of Nkumbula', *Northern News*, 16 November 1962.

⁷ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.307; G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.87.

⁸ G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.87.

before signing his pact with “Lumumbist” UNIP in December 1962. Twice in early November Nkumbula visited Elisabethville before confronting UNIP with his Katanga demand: an assurance against hostile Katanga politics and a tripartite meeting with Tshombe before the coalition was formed. While ANC’s first demand could have been quietly satisfied, UNIP’s panafricanist affiliations and previous Katanga policies ruled out consideration of the second. At the time of the joint ANC-UNIP declaration however, Nkumbula forced the issue by informing the Press, in Kaunda’s presence, that a meeting with Tshombe had been arranged. Kaunda however, took the initiative of immediately arranging a secret meeting with Tshombe at Kitwe on November 18.¹ This quickly leaked to the press and soon there was speculation as to whether the two leaders were discussing ‘the possibility of a new federation of Central African countries, including a link between Northern Rhodesia and Katanga’ and the ‘tribal ties between Katangese and Northern Rhodesian Africans’.² This rumour was refuted the next day by Kaunda in a press release in which he stated that ‘reports in the papers about Mr. Tshombe and himself discussing the possibility of a new federation of Central African countries, including a link between Northern Rhodesia and Katanga and reports of ‘a vast new confederation of states’ were all utter and malicious concoctions created by the Press which was unable to obtain access to the talks (...) The talks (...) were among other things intended to create more understandings among Africans and eventually bring Mr. Tshombe into line with the Leopoldville Government.’³ The ANC had been caught by surprise and, though Nkumbula rushed to Kitwe to meet Tshombe the following day,⁴ Kaunda’s coup had succeeded in undermining Nkumbula’s special relationship with Tshombe. He was no longer Tshombe’s sole interlocutor in Northern Rhodesia and there was little that he could do to reclaim his erstwhile stature among Katangese leaders. With the ending of Katangese support, the ANC was plunged back into a state of serious financial difficulty. Late in the summer of 1963, the party’s debts were already in the region of £25,000.⁵

In addition, despite their convenience alliance, relationships between ANC and UNIP members remained tense and unfriendly both within and outside the cabinet. By January 1963, the coalition was unambiguously at an end. In the course of two days Nkumbula and Kaunda issued public statements that were vitriolic enough as to leave little doubt as to the coalition’s chance of survival. Once, more the bone of contention, at least publicly, was Katanga. On January 3 *Northern News* reported that:

“Mr. Nkumbula accused Mr. Kaunda of breaking promises he made in London recently that he would end his hostile attitude to Katanga and that Congolese Premier Adoula and President Tshombe should be left to settle the crisis themselves.

¹ D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, p.294.

² ‘Tshombe – Kaunda meet for hush-hush talks’, *Northern News*, 19 November 1962.

³ Press release by Kaunda dismissing the possibility of an association with dissident Katanga, Sikota Wina, Director of Publicity Bureau, 20 November 1962, UNIP/1/1/2, doc. 21.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.87.

Mr. Nkumbula claimed that one of the conditions of the coalition Government had been that UNIP would adopt a friendly attitude towards Katanga. Mr. Kaunda's actions at the Leopoldville conference showed he had no intention of doing so."¹

Thereupon, Kaunda replied with a blistering attack:

'He [Kaunda] accused the ANC leader of putting Katanga's interests before Northern Rhodesia's and revealed they had already clashed twice on this issue. (...)

Mr. Kaunda called a Press conference today to refute the charges made by Mr. Nkumbula yesterday that he had broken promises to end his hostile attitude to Katanga.

"If the African National Congress agreed to enter a coalition government in Northern Rhodesia to serve Katanga interests – which seems to be the case – then the coalition is finished," he said. (...)

"our first duty was to the Central Government in the Congo and we made that point very clear indeed."²

On January 23 1963, a mere five days after the secession of Katanga was finally brought to an end, so was the coalition.³ Unsurprisingly the parties competed head-on in the 1964 election. There was to be no repeat of Nkumbula's coup of 1962 in the run-up to the general elections of January 1964. The ANC with its 10 seats was cut down to size by UNIP's 55. On October 24 1964, the Republic of Zambia was born. Its President was Kenneth Kaunda.⁴

3. *The Rise of the One-Party-State*

1. *DISAPPOINTED EXPECTATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE*

In the same way that the 'freedom struggle' has been portrayed as that of a nation united against a common foe, Zambia's First Republic has generally been understood as a period of relative political harmony, coinciding with a 'honeymoon period' of economic growth.⁵ The common assumption which is often made or alluded to in the specialist literature is that the Zambian post-colonial state encountered little or no challenge in the 1960s until the economic stagnation of the early 1970s created widespread popular disenchantment and

¹ 'Nkumbula attacks Kaunda for breaking promises: N.R. Government to split over Katanga crisis?', *Northern News*, 3 January 1963.

² 'Kaunda widens split with ANC and denies he made Promises', *Northern News*, 4 January 1963.

³ 'ANC chief confirms split, warns 'hands-off press'', *Northern News*, 23 January 1963.

⁴ P. BURNELL, 'The Party System and Party Politics in Zambia: Continuities Past, Present and Future' in *African Affairs*, Vol. 100, No. 399 (2001), p.246. Many details are left out of this narrative for the sake of fluidity. Mention should be made of two other major sources of resistance that Zambian nationalism still faced on the eve of independence. First was the Lumpa Church, an independent Christian Church that was established in 1953 by "Alice" Lenshina Mulenga in the village of Kasoma. The Lumpa church, which militated against earthly authority, was eventually banned in 1964 after which most of its followers took refuge at Mokambo in the Congo. Second was the BSAC which still owned the mineral rights of the Copperbelt. The government mounted a skilful public relations campaign, bringing forward evidence that proved that the Company had never in fact had any legal right to the royalties. On the eve of independence, the chairman of the BSAC agreed to surrender its royalties, which finally sealed up a major leak in the country's economy. See A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, pp.221-222.

⁵ Zambian economy upon independence, though buoyant, was till characterised by a consistent practical reliance on Rhodesia and South Africa (principally) for foreign advisors, investments and export routes, and exclusive reliance on one commodity: copper. See R.A.A. DEVERIA, 'A New Nation ?', p.11 ; A. ROBERTS, *A History of Zambia*, pp.224-227.

seriously threatened UNIP's hitherto secure political hegemony. However Larmer noted how new evidence from the UNIP archives suggests that the situation was not as rosy as suspected. The archives provide overwhelming evidence of UNIP's inability to bring about the era of economic and political felicity that their programme promised, and this from the very beginning. The failure to address the numerous expectations of post-independence that they had dangled in the eyes of their voters in order to mobilise their support, led to significant discontent and divisions within the ruling party as well as within the country. Regional expressions of discontent were heard in virtually every part of Zambia, but took different forms, arising from historical, political and economic particularities. Western Province, the Lunda heartland, was particularly vituperative, thus joining ANC's stronghold, Southern Province, in challenging UNIP's narrative of absolute unity.¹



Fig. 4. Nkumbula is greeted by a crowd of 6,000 when visiting the Kantanshi Township of Mufulira on August 9 1965. Many followers had travelled overnight from different part of Zambia to hear him talk that day.

The Lunda Factor

Practically from the moment the first UNIP-dominated government came into power, the Lundas became one of the first and main voices expressing resistance towards UNIP policies. Interestingly that was true of both the 'older' Lunda stronghold, that of Mwata Yamvo, and of the 'newer' one, that of the Mwata Kazembe. This is no doubt related to the process of revitalisation and glamourisation of a 'Lunda Mystique' in provenance of Katanga that had been underway since 1959. That year, following widespread rioting in Léopoldville from 4 to 7 January, the Belgian government was shocked into announcing on January 13, 1959 that 'La Belgique entend organiser au Congo une démocratie capable d'exercer les prérogatives de la souveraineté et de décider de son indépendance.'² In response to this declaration, the then Mwata Yamvo Ditende Yawa Nawezi III had censured the 'unforgivable aberration' of 'considering the opinions which emanate from the urban centres as representing

¹ M. LARMER, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, p.45; G. MACOLA, 'It Means as If We Are Excluded from the Good Freedom', p.44.

² Déclaration gouvernementale du 13 janvier 1959, *Congo 1959*, pp. 45-49.

the general feelings of this province'.¹ This, he did in the name of the 'Lunda empire, one of the most important demographic groups in Katanga whose sphere of customary authority extends beyond the boundaries of the Congo [into] Angola and [Northern] Rhodesia.'² On February 25, 1960, Mwata Yamvo Ditende, striving to prove the enduring vitality of the Lunda, produced a list of 'no fewer than thirty-two tribes and sixty major chiefs claimed as traditional subordinates of the Mwaant Yaav'. The list included every group that had ever had a Lunda chief or migrated over the previous 400 years from the Imbangala to the Babemba,³ including the Lunda of Kazembe.⁴ This boasting had a pragmatic purpose as well as an ideological one. On the eve of the secession of Katanga, the construction of an inflated representation of the pre-colonial Lunda 'Empire' served the purpose of rallying masses by providing a rationale for Katangese particularism and a 'common ground' between Tshombe's Conakat party and the Mwata Yamvo's royal circles. The *Conakat*, although 17 tribes in total were grouped under its banner,⁵ had as its hard core Moïse Tshombe's own tribe: the Lunda.⁶ Tshombe himself was a nephew and the son-in-law of the *Mwata Yamvo*.⁷ In this way, the term "Lunda Empire", which had scarcely if ever been mentioned in public prior to January 1959, had rapidly become a household word among militant Lunda circles. Nor did the end of the secession call time on the process of Lunda revitalisation. On the very eve of Zambian independence, Kaunda supposedly received a message from Tshombe, who had come back in power as the Prime Minister of a government of national reconciliation in July 1964, indicating that 'Tshombe could, if he chose, make trouble for Kaunda through his influence with the Lunda.'⁸ This did not stop Kaunda from excluding Tshombe from Zambia Independence celebrations.⁹

For the Kanongesha Ndembi in particular, 'Zambia' was much less enticing a concept than that of 'Lunda Empire' as had been revamped by the Katanga secession. Since Kanongesha Ndembi was based in the District of Mwinilunga, a part of a larger Lunda area that was wedged between Congo and Angola, the promise of an ethnically-inspired redrawing of the geopolitical map of central Africa must have seemed particularly attractive.¹⁰ From the beginning of the secession, Katangese dignitaries, seeking to rally support for the secession, seem to have been in touch with Ndembi and a number of his subchiefs. The Mwata Yamvo himself, with whom the Kanongeshas had maintained close relationships for almost two centuries, was a regular visitor

¹ Mwata Yamvo to Minister for Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, 31 January 1959, as quoted in E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.189.

² Ibid.

³ Mwata Yamvo to Governor General, 25 February 1960, as referred to in E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.194.

⁴ G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.227.

⁵ R. YAKEMTCHOUK, *Aux origines du séparatisme katangais*, pp.89-90.

⁶ Tshombe was not the only member of the *Conakat* with 'royal' connections. In fact the *Conakat* counted among its ranks members of all the old kingdoms' aristocracies: Godefroid Munongo assured the support of the Bayeke by his position as King Msiri's grandson; Jason Sendwe, whose origins were more modest, was nevertheless related to one of the Baluba chiefly families. See R. YAKEMTCHOUK, *Aux origines du séparatisme katangais*, pp.89-90; J. KESTERGAT, *Du Congo de Lumumba au Zaïre de Mobutu*, p.62; and S. HEMPSTONE, *Katanga Report*, p.73.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ British Embassy in Leopoldville to West and Central African Department of Foreign Office, 20 October 1964, FO 371/176685, doc. JB1062/59 (NAUK).

⁹ 'ANC Man Speaks up for Tshombe', *Times of Zambia*, 15 October 1964.

¹⁰ E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, pp.190-193; D.C. MULFORD, *Zambia, The Politics of Independence*, pp.270-271; M. LARMER & G. MACOLA, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion', p.474.

of the North-Western Province.¹ Kanongesha Ndembi was not the only resident of Mwinilunga with a vested interest in events across the Katangese frontier however. Ronald John Japau, the local ANC's provincial general secretary in the North-Western Province also visited Katanga a number of times, starting in May 1961 (see point 2.3 above) to promote the ANC's cause and collect the fruit of the Tshombe-Nkumbula alliance.² Their common alliance with Tshombe caused supporters to the ANC in Mwinilunga to make common cause with the Lunda of Kanongesha.³ Japau's 'New Plan for North Western Rhodesia To Join Lunda and Angola', which he wrote in 1964, leaves little doubt as to how 'Lunda' and opposition to UNIP had become synonymous in his mind:

'To all Lunda people (...) Lunda Empire is strongly opposing to the Zambia Government (...) which is being run by a foreign Prime Minister (...) [and] is predominantly communist (...) We are to join together with the people of Angola and Katanga to form up a great force but we don't want fighting but we want peace.'⁴

Thanks to Tshombe's resources, Kanongesha Ndembi's partisanship and Japau's organisational skills, Mwinilunga remained one of the few Northern Rhodesian localities not to be won over at any point by the radical version of nationalism espoused by Kaunda's UNIP. In the general elections of 1964 January 20, despite the ANC's overall defeat, Japau defeated Peter Matoka, the UNIP candidate and was returned to Parliament with a comfortable majority. This caused the ANC branch of Mwinilunga to be the victim of an aggressive campaign of intimidation on the part of UNIP to the point that sometime in November 1965, having been openly threatened with deposition on several occasions, Ndembi and a sizeable group of his followers crossed the border into neighbouring Angola where they began to be trained by the Portuguese military as a counter-guerilla force.⁵

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Katanga pedicle, the Luapula Province, also started to agitate. In contrast to the Mwinilunga District, the Luapula Province had always traditionally been a centre of UNIP support, but after independence, the Luapulans grew disaffected with UNIP remarkably rapidly. The Luapula Province had been characterised by an early and intense political mobilisation from the 1950s due to its economic importance as a source of labour and fish. As a result in this province, the feeling that Independence was to bring forth immediate and tangible rewards in the form of meteoric development was particularly felt. When this failed to materialise, clashes between Mwata Kazembe XVII Paul Kanyembo Lutaba and UNIP became increasingly common.⁶ Tensions came to a head in 1965 when the government announced that chiefs would soon be removed from presiding over local courts. In July of that year, Paul Kanyembo paid a long visit to the Congolese bank of the Luapula River. Kanyembo, though all the while professing his attachment to

¹ M. LARMER & G. MACOLA, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion', p.474; E. BUSTIN, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, p.189.

² M. LARMER & G. MACOLA, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion', p.475.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Excerpts of R.J. Japau, 'New Plan for North Western Rhodesia To Join Lunda and Angola', 1964 as quoted in 'Tshombe is named at treason trial', *Times of Zambia*, 27 July 1967.

⁵ M. LARMER & G. MACOLA, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion', p.477.

⁶ G. MACOLA, 'It Means as If We Are Excluded from the Good Freedom', pp.44-46.

UNIP, had been a fervent supporter of the secession of Katanga.¹ The Lunda of Kazembe had been included in Ditende's list of the Mwata Yamvo's 'traditional subordinates', and though it did not result in the resumption of formal contacts between the two Mwatas, the secession certainly did much to revive the old Lunda 'imperial mystique' in the breast of the Eastern Lunda king.² Kanyembo had reportedly declared that: 'he [had been] paving way for his final action [unknown]. He [had] confirmed (...) that he [had] no confidence in the Government of Zambia, except Congolese one, from where he came.'³ With such anti-UNIP statements becoming increasingly common in the Luapula Province, the local regional publicity and youth secretary of UNIP reported that the 'situation was very bad indeed. We cannot tolerate Katanga people to come and influence our people.'⁴ Paul Kanyembo is unlikely to have seriously considered a political union between the Luapula valley and the Congo however. His sustained appeal to past ethnic greatness and Lunda unity must be placed in the context of an attempt to offer the Luapulans an alternative political community, one that would be more attractive than the frustrating post-independence Zambia, and a channel in which to express grievances as well as justify them. His policy, in any case, undeniably led to an intensification of ethnic feeling in the valley.

Tshombe's final fall from power in October 1965 when he was dismissed by president Joseph Kasavubu, represented an obvious setback for both Japau's and Paul Kanyembo's seditious campaigns. Throughout 1966, MP Japau – who appears to have become increasingly convinced that only military action could unseat UNIP from power – kept in touch with Ndembu's successor as leader of the Lunda exiles, John Samawino and did his best to provide him with new recruits.⁵ Despite Kaunda's warning that he would keep trouble-makers in the district 'under very careful watch' and dismiss any chief that would flaunt government authority,⁶ this eventually led to the only significant internal armed rebellion against the Zambian state in history, known as the 'Mushala rebellion' (after its leader Adamson Mushala), which took place between 1976 to 1982 in North-Western Province.⁷ In the Luapula, though the Kazembe's campaign was brought to an abrupt end in 1965, frustration with the government's failure to meet 'expectations of independence' continued.⁸ As Macola put it:

'Over the next few years calls for a more authoritarian political dispensation became more frequent and raucous both in the Luapula province and the country as a whole. When seen in the light of the long history of popular discontent which predated its inception in 1973, the one-party state was less a

¹ G. MACOLA, 'It Means as If We Are Excluded from the Good Freedom', pp.44-46.

² G. MACOLA, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, p.227.

³ M.M. Lumande to A.K. Shapi, Nchelenge, 11 August 1965, HM89/PP/1/F3 (NAZ) as quoted in G. MACOLA, 'It Means as If We Are Excluded from the Good Freedom', p.53.

⁴ M. Lufoma to political assistants in Luapula Province, 24 September 1965, HM89/PP/2/F1 (NAZ) as quoted in G. MACOLA, 'It Means as If We Are Excluded from the Good Freedom', p.54.

⁵ Japau was put on a very publicized trial in July-August 1967 for 'conspiring with unknown persons to train in arms and military exercises.' His intention was described as being to 'overthrow the government.' See 'High treason hearing: Court told of plan to overthrow the Government', *Times of Zambia*, 8 April 1967. Japau was eventually acquitted.

⁶ 'K.K. Tells Chiefs To Keep in Line', *Times of Zambia*, 24 June 1966.

⁷ See M. LARMER & G. MACOLA's detailed article on the subject.

⁸ The launch of the First National Development Plan in 1966 revived provincial hopes but it was soon discovered that the Luapula Province had been allocated 'only 4 % of the total expenditure' and in terms of proposed capita expenditure, Luapula and Western provinces ranked as the lowest with K66 and K65 respectively for the entire plan period. See G. MACOLA, 'It Means as If We Are Excluded from the Good Freedom', pp.55-56 and 'President Kaunda 'sentences Zambia to four years' hard labour to build a paradise. Our targets...', *Times of Zambia*, 1 August 1966.

response to increased factional competition for fast-shrinking public resources (the standard explanation of political science) than the means to ensure the survival of a besieged political elite, whose erstwhile credibility had all but melted away in the heat of unfulfilled expectations.’¹

It is evident therefore that frustration with the UNIP state predated the fall of copper prices from 1970. Before bringing the argument to a close, a word should be said about the final developments that led to the inception of the one-party state and how growing opposition due to disappointed ‘expectations of Independence’ had a great part to play in it.

2. THE FINAL SHOWDOWN

The 1968 Elections

In the summer of 1967, due to the chronic inability on the part of the headquarters to raise enough money, the ANC was close to disappearing from the political map of Zambia. Thanks to the renewed enthusiasm for ANC in Mwinilunga and its unwavering support, however, the ANC was able to become a major player in the Zambian chessboard once more. Within little more than a year, to the surprise of UNIP as well as of many foreign observers, the ANC had not only managed to avert complete debacle, but it had also regained a position of comparative strength that it had not enjoyed since the beginning of the decade.² Nkumbula staked everything on the outcome of the by-elections of March 1, 1968 in Southern Province, – which was an important risk since the ANC would not have survived a comprehensive defeat – and was rewarded with victory: all UNIP candidates were all soundly beaten by their ANC colleagues.³ Then another development that eventually played in the ANC’s favour was the ban of the *United Party* (UP). The United Party had originally been launched at the beginning of 1966 by ANC dissidents Mumbuna and Lombe, and had been able to attract a number of UNIP officials who were unhappy with what they characterised as their party’s neglect of Barotseland and the North-Western Provinces and its more general inability to meet popular expectations of independence.⁴ The UP’s attempt to gain a foothold in the Copperbelt in the early part of 1968 had plunged the industrial heartland of the country into a vicious spiral of interparty violence and prompted Kaunda to bring the party’s life to a premature end.⁵ The UP ban, which Nkumbula had openly condemned, now enabled the Congress president to orchestrate the fusion between the two organisations from a clear position of strength. The merger between the two parties accounts for the comparative success of the ANC in the general elections of December 19, 1968, when Nkumbula’s party, despite being made the target of systematic intimidation and official harassment, managed to double its 1964 parliamentary contingent by supplementing its traditionally safe constituencies in the Southern

¹ G. MACOLA, ‘It Means as If We Are Excluded from the Good Freedom’, p.56.

² G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, pp.121-123.

³ Ibid, p.124.

⁴ Lozi feelings of disaffection with the post-independence dispensation had grown more intense between the end of 1966 and 1967 as a result of the government’s ban on the labour recruiting activities of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association in Barotseland. See G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, pp.125-126.

⁵ Kaunda managed to make it look internationally like a necessary measure for national security. See ‘Foreign Support for Kaunda’s U.P. ban’, *Times of Zambia*, 16 August 1968.

and Central Provinces with as many as eight out of the eleven Barotseland seats.¹ The results, gloated ANC's national secretary Liso, showed that it was 'not possible to have a one-party state in Zambia', at least not through electoral means.²

'One Zambia, One Nation'

In the years that followed the election of 1968, there were more and more signs of UNIP radicalisation. Already in April 1968, Kaunda had announced to the UNIP National Council the launching of the so-called 'Mulungushi reforms', in virtue of which the government bought a 51 percent (i.e. a controlling) share in twenty-six major companies.³ Yet, as Nkumbula and others had predicted, the Mulungushi reforms had merely been a harbinger of more radical economic measures to come. In August 1969, Kaunda announced the nationalisation of the copper industry.⁴ Even more momentous, or so it was felt, was the total ban on the ANC imposed in February 1970 in the Livingstone district, following interparty clashes in that region. This perhaps more than anything, convinced the ANC leaders that UNIP's limited toleration for internal dissent was definitely a thing of the past and that the ruling party had now resolved to move in the direction of a one-party state.⁵ The real extent of UNIP's authoritarian inclinations was made evident by its reaction to the formation of the *United Progressive Party* (UPP), led by his former associate Simon Kapwepwe. Kapwepwe's election as UNIP and Zambia's vice President in 1967 had sparked opposition, particularly among Easterners, who feared the 'Bemba dominance' of UNIP. Bemba politicians from Northern and Copperbelt Provinces, on the other hand, expected their numerical dominance in the nationalist struggle to be reflected in central Government representation and the regional distribution of state expenditure. Kaunda, who claimed neutrality but was in reality increasingly aligned with the Eastern group, reduced Bemba representation in the cabinet in 1969. Simon Kapwepwe himself, though Vice President, was increasingly marginalised. As a result, he eventually resigned from government in 1970 and, in a context of growing Bemba discontent, established the UPP in 1971.⁶ The UPP was a formidable opponent for UNIP. Not only was the UPP very popular – its supporters included the Bemba of the Northern and Luapula Provinces, the organised workers and small businessmen of the strategic Copperbelt, and the intelligentsia and radical students of Lusaka – but Kapwepwe also made common cause with Nkumbula, with whose party the UPP was sharing its offices. Unsurprisingly, the prospect of an electoral alliance between Kapwepwe and Nkumbula's organisations struck fear into UNIP. The potential for an alliance between the two opposition parties meant that UNIP could find itself a minority party for the first time, raising the prospects of its defeat in the next following general elections of 1973.⁷ Violent clashes between UNIP and

¹ M. LARMER & G. MACOLA, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion', p.482.

² E.M. Liso to ANC members, Lusaka, 11 February 1969, UNIPA, ANC 9/44 as quoted in G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.127.

³ 'Govt. taking over 26 key companies', *Times of Zambia*, 20 April 1968; The impact of the Mulungushi reforms is discussed in J.B. GEWALD, M. HINFELAAR & G. MACOLA (eds.), *One Zambia, Many histories: Towards a History of Post-colonial Zambia* (Leiden, 2008).

⁴ This was done with the agreement of the *Anglo American Company* and the *Roan Selection Trust*, which were handsomely compensated. See M. LARMER, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, p.44.

⁵ M. LARMER & G. MACOLA, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion', p.483.

⁶ M. LARMER, *Mineworkers in Zambia*, p.45.

⁷ M. LARMER & G. MACOLA, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion', p.484; G. MACOLA, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa*, p.138.

UPP supporters provided the excuse for Kaunda to ban the party in February 1972, heralding the declaration of the one-party state which, despite Nkumbula's last desperate diatribe in the parliament and the walkout of his MP's, was promulgated on December 13, 1972. The next day, *The Times of Zambia* was able to publish an article entitled 'One Zambia One Nation One Party!'.¹

Conclusion

Not at any point was the history of Zambian political awakening, from the first disturbances of 1935 to the establishment of the full-blown single-party state in late 1972, that of a 'united nation'. If the anti-Federation protests of the early 1950s indeed had some of the aspects of a 'national' movement, it all but disintegrated as soon as its *raison d'être* – opposition to the Federation – ceased to exist. Even the strikes of 1935 and 1940, though considered the traditional starting point of Zambian political history, were meant as an industrial protest rather than a political one. Though they tackled 'race' related issues, they did not openly question the colonial system in place. Similarly labour Unions, though traditionally regarded as the vanguard of political revolution, were first and foremost established to protect the interests of the Copperbelt – which usually consisted in improvements in pay or working conditions. This is not to say that the strikes and the developments that followed did not have a political effect in the long term. For one thing they certainly played a great part in starting off the decolonisation process. For another they highlighted the Bemba, whose political success on the Copperbelt can be partly explained by their experiences in Katanga, as the future frontrunners of political agitation. It is no coincidence that Bemba-dominated areas such as the Luapula and Northern Provinces were among those that consistently gave the Federal state the most trouble.

The secession of Katanga was the backdrop against which some of the major antagonisms of the previous decade found their resolution. From the moment Harold Macmillan announced the beginning of the 'winds of change' to the fall of the UDI state of Rhodesia some twenty later, white settlers in central Africa fought a fierce battle against Black rule. The most famous episode of this struggle is its last: the protracted 'Zimbabwe War of Liberation' (also known as second Chimurenga), which eventually led to the end of white minority rule in Rhodesia in March 1980. In the early 1960s, however, the focus of this battle was on the Federation's neighbour to the north: Katanga. The settlers of the Federation started by working towards the creation of a White Federation that would embrace Katanga. When it became clear that such an association would not materialise, the settlers fought desperately for the preservation of a white-friendly – for want of a white-dominated one – regime in their vicinity. Alas they were unsuccessful. The would-be independent Katanga state fell in 1963, and soon afterwards both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland obtained their independence. This can hardly be a coincidence. In many ways, the Katanga affair had cost the Federation what little was left of its credibility on the international level, and more than anything else could have, brought home to Welensky and his peers their increased irrelevance in an Africa that was fast decolonising. In that sense Katanga represented the last-ditch

¹ 'One Zambia One Nation One Party!', *Times of Zambia*, 14 December 1972.

attempt by increasingly outdated power structures to assert their authority and legitimacy not only in the face of other powers abroad but also in their own territory.

If the secession sounded the death knell for white rule in that particular region of the world, it also to a large extent determined the nature of competing nationalism within Zambia. Tshombe's support to the *African National Congress* went a long way in dictating the terms of its programme. The nearly bankrupt ANC was quick to identify Tshombe as a potential ally in its uphill struggle against the now stronger, richer and better-organised UNIP. Given the latter party's explicit Lumumbist sympathies, anti-secessionist stance, and appraisal of Tshombe and his 'murderous ministers' as 'imperialist puppets', it is hardly surprising that Katangese authorities felt favourably inclined towards the ANC's overtures. In turn, UNIP's accentuation of the 'national' nature of his party was made all the more stringent by the potentially disastrous effect a precedent of 'balkanisation' in the Congo would have on his party. UNIP therefore opposed the secession wholeheartedly on both ideological and instrumental grounds since Tshombe was one of the ANC's main sponsors. This dichotomy was commented on by the then Congo premier:

'Mr. Adoula likened the relationship between the Congo and Northern Rhodesia to a double tennis game, with himself and Dr. Kaunda on one side of the net and Mr. Nkumbula and Mr. Tshombe, ex-Katangese leader, on the other, "having picked up the racket thrown down by Welensky."¹

In any case, the constant opposition of the Katanga-supported ANC allied to the effects of Lunda militancy in Mwinilunga Districts and Luapula province threatened to unmask the fragility of the edifice of UNIP nationalism. Despite UNIP's countrywide electoral success, the existence of a growing core of opposition in those areas 'militated against the party's sustained efforts to present itself as the sole legitimate embodiment of the blossoming nation and to portray the ANC as a moribund tribal organisation, limited to the Tonga-speaking areas of the Central and Southern Provinces.'² It is only when the full extent of the challenge faced by UNIP is realised, therefore, that it becomes possible to account for the inception of the Zambian one-party state. As Nkumbula's survival against the odds forced UNIP to face the uncomfortable truth that a significant proportion of the future electorate did not subscribe to its nationalist vision and project, the party leadership reacted by blurring the distinction between party and nation. This also explains why there are similarities between Mobutu and Kaunda's states: economic troubles combined with dwindling popularity and diminishing internal legitimacy, logically led the government suffering from these woes to resort to nationalisation and one-party-rule.

¹ 'Nkumbula a valet of Tshombe, says Congo premier', *Northern News*, 14 March 1964.

² M. LARMER & G. MACOLA, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion', p.476.

Conclusion

Copper, Migration and Politics

Long live the friendship between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Zambia.¹

- President Kaunda to Mobutu at the occasion of the anniversary of the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR), 19 May 1971

1. *Cultural Identities and Political Development*

As set out at the outset, the aim of the present work was twofold: to put forward the commonalities between a range of factors in the history of the Copperbelt(s) and to examine how the development of these distinct but linked regions has shaped political ideas, consciousness, people movements and organisations. The four chapters in which this thesis is divided have aimed to highlight the places where the history of the two regions converged, or influenced each other, and why they did so.

The first point of convergence is also the longest one. In the late nineteenth century, although that area of Katanga and Zambia that was crudely divided by the colonial border was not, strictly speaking, a tightly-knit homogeneous whole, virtually all its inhabitants shared long-standing cultural ties. Several larger 'kingdoms' had existed for centuries, most prominent among which were the Luba kingdom, the Lunda kingdom of Mwata Yamvo, and the kingdom of Kazembe. Though they could not be described as 'kingdom' in the medieval sense of the term, their cultural aura spread far and wide. Not only were they linked together by a complex network of tributary and trading relationships, but they also sparked a series of population movements, mostly oriented southwards. As a result many groups in Zambia's Northern, North-Western, Copperbelt and Luapula provinces traditionally trace their ancestry to Katanga. The outline of the colonial border, entirely determined as it was by the presence of resources, cut right through these groups and consequently significantly affected the way they interacted. Yet, two assumptions should be carefully avoided. The first is the idea that the appearance of the colonial border was the one single event that unsettled a hitherto undisturbed region. In fact colonisation, of which border-drawing is the first and most powerful expression, was only the last phase of a long process of destabilisation. By 1900, i.e. before colonialism could be implemented in full force in any part of central Africa, all the old 'kingdoms' had already fallen. Throughout the nineteenth century Katanga had come to be pressurised by a series of intruding forces. The Cokwe, the Yeke, the Arab traders – all contributed to affect previous networks of interactions and all were symptomatic of the growth of one particular phenomenon: long-distance trade. Under the influence of the latter, groupings became wider and, in the case of the Yeke, more authoritarian and conquering in nature. Thus, by the time cartographers drew an arbitrary line on the map of central Africa, the Lunda had already lost control over their southern minions and the kingdom of Kazembe had already lost control over the west side of the Luapula as well as over most of its smaller tributaries to the south.

¹ Draft Message of Congratulations to Lt. General Mobutu, 19 May 1971, FA/1/356, loc. 550, doc. 213 (NAZ).

One could argue however that, to an extent, the appearance of the colonial border served to confirm those divisions and make them long-lasting. Yet – this is where the second mistaken assumption comes in – it would be wrong to think that all form of relations between these groups were severed, though they were certainly transformed. Though the colonial border separated the Luba and Lunda heartland from former subsidiaries, traditional allegiances were still recognised and were still invoked at times, as happened with the Lunda in the 1960s. At the same time, in the early years of the twentieth century, local populations put the colonial border to good use. Some chiefs, eager to cut ties with their former overlord, utilised the fact that the latter now lived in a different country to become chiefs in their own right, asserting their authority by collaborating with the newly established colonial administration. The Mwata Kazembe, on the other hand, though he was never able to reclaim his western territories was similarly able to rebuild a strong client network through collaboration with the colonial authorities. In addition border-crossing became a common activity as a way of escaping all sorts of plights, such as an overbearing tax-system or brutal administration practices. To sum up, the Copperbelt and its environs developed as an interconnected whole, the border *was* disruptive but not overpoweringly so, and it was on occasions turned into ‘leverage’ by those who lived alongside it.

The second major point of convergence in the history of the two regions is probably the best-known one: the parallel development of the almighty copper industry. From the moment mining was developed in the early years of the twentieth century, it had become a joint affair. Belgium had no experience in African ventures and lacked the capital and personnel to realise the potential of the copper province. As a result it was British interests that carried out the evaluation and initial development of copper deposits in the region, together with the development of the essential transport infrastructure. In return the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* provided jobs and freight traffic on the BSA controlled railroad and offered a 40 % ownership of its shares to British interests. In addition, throughout the late 1910s and the early 1920s, Katanga relied almost exclusively on Northern Rhodesian labour and foodstuffs. From the very beginning, therefore Katanga and Northern Rhodesia were economically interdependent in terms of capital, investment, labour, trade and expertise. Due to this interdependence, the copper industry induced new patterns of movements as labourers and traders crossed the borders in both directions to make a living. Attracted by the employment opportunities that Katanga offered, many Zambians lived and worked in Katanga for a while, sometimes a very long while, sometimes permanently. This, perhaps more than any sort of interaction that took place beforehand, contributed to bringing the two regions closer. These migrations were of a different nature than those that preceded them in that they took place outside of any ‘cultural’ or ‘traditional’ framework. People, goods, wealth and culture flowed between villages, mining towns and countries, creating hybrid cultures and communities. Of this process, the Bemba are a case in point. The agricultural poverty of the Bemba-speaking areas of Northern Rhodesia meant that it emerged as an early labour reservoir, first to the mines of Katanga, and then to the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt. From the 1940s a new Bemba-speaking but relatively cosmopolitan urban African community began to establish itself on the Copperbelt, a process which would have many political implications. Another aspect of the mining companies of Katanga and the Copperbelt that had clear political implications was their all-pervasiveness allied

to their interdependence. Given their long history of interaction and economic interdependence, from an early date, events in Katanga could profoundly affect Northern Rhodesia and vice-versa. The omnipotence and overbearing nature of the mining industries in both countries not only inevitably linked the financial status of the Northern Rhodesian and Katangese governments with the prosperity of the copper industry but also made sure that the effects of such an event would be magnified. This made the copper mines a monstrous presence in the territories that hosted them.

Finally all of the above had a profound impact on the development of Zambia as a political entity. To begin with, the experiences of the Zambians – the Bemba in particular – in Katanga was instrumental in the staging of the first protests against colonial inequalities. The Katangese experience of the Bemba further contributed greatly to making them one of the most politically militant group in Zambia, a tendency that endured in later years. But it was the secession of Katanga that had the most dramatic effect on Northern Rhodesia. Not only did it play a major role in the ideological positioning of the various Zambian parties in the early 1960s but it also contributed to a great extent to determining who would win the political battle in Zambia. Secessionist Katanga was the object of a last-ditch attempt on the part of the settlers of the Federation to cling on to their prominent position. This settler hegemony did not survive long after the secession was brought to an abrupt halt. As for the role of the secession in the showdown between UNIP and the ANC, it was both rhetorical and practical. The alliance between Tshombe and Nkumbula certainly stemmed out of opportunism more than ideological affinity, but it is also arguable that this alliance would have gained such momentum in certain areas of Northern Rhodesia had it not been for cross-border Lunda identities. The memory of a ‘glorious’ Lunda past did a great deal to provide the necessary gel between potential allies. Even after the short-lived alliance between the ANC and Tshombe was broken, the revamping of the Lunda ‘aura’ continued to provide a useful framework in which to express popular frustration with stalled post-colonial transformation. In both Zambia and Congo, the immediate response to such popular dissatisfaction was the nationalisation of the mining sector and the establishment of one-party states. Therefore, dangerous as it is to indulge in suppositions, it is possible that Zambia would have known a different process of political development had it not been for the influence of its neighbour to the north. Without Katangese support, the ANC might not have survived the hardships of the early 1960s. Without the strength of the Katangese ‘aura’, the Kanongesha and the Kazembe might not have so easily joined the early chorus of protests against UNIP. Without the added support of these provinces, the ANC might not have succeeded in constituting as much as a constant and ‘general’ threat to the UNIP state. Without Katanga therefore, UNIP might perhaps not have rushed the nation on the path to one-partyism at such a speed. It goes without saying that this is entirely speculative but it is undeniable that Katanga played a role, indirect or not, in all these processes.

Thus I have distinguished three poles of ‘interconnection’ between southern Katanga and northern Zambia: a cultural pole – identities are not limited to bounded geographic entities –; an economic pole – the Copperbelt, because of its economic value, remained a nexus of ideas and people between the two countries –; and a political pole – because the allied effects of the first two poles affected the direction that Zambian history

took in the 1960s. Would the history of these two countries be different had there not been any copper in their soils? That is a truism. The rise of the Luba, Lunda and Kazembe kingdoms, the outline of the colonial border, the development of the copper industry, migrant labour, industrial and political activism... copper is the thread that holds it all together. In that sense, copper was a critical factor in determining the fate of the territories beneath whose ground it lay.

2. *The Copperbelt and 'Nation-Statism'*

The 'nation-state' and the various ways in which its boundaries are undermined or 'eroded' are the broad concepts which underwrote the whole narrative of this thesis. It has been stated in the introduction that the 'nation-state' is traditionally seen as an 'old' grounding principle, which is supposedly coming increasingly under threat because of the effects of such 'modern' phenomena as globalisation.¹ Yet, in the case of central Africa, globalisation penetrated and affected local populations long before any nation-state was set up. Thanks to the long-distance trade, Katanga was fully integrated into the world economy by the nineteenth century. In fact one could say that it is globalisation that brought about the nation-state, complete with immovable borders, national institutions, and export-oriented economies. It is the long-distance trade that made that region of Africa known to European observers, and this in turn stimulated a particularly ferocious scramble. So the idea that, as is posited by the globalisation paradigm, that there is an opposition between 'a past of territorial boundedness and a present of interconnection and fragmentation'² should actually be reversed in the case of central Africa. It is because globalisation reached central Africa that it was divided into bounded entities.

The importance of the nation-state is not as easily disowned. In Zambia, like virtually everywhere else in Africa, 'Nation-statism' was adopted as a channel in which to express grievances and aspirations for independence. It was in the name of the integrity of the Northern Rhodesian territory that amalgamation with southern Rhodesia was fought, and in the name of the sovereignty of the same territory that the independence battle was fought. Given the utter artificiality of the border and the way it cut right into homogeneous entities, it is paradoxical that it should have been so. Paradoxical yet not surprising. A strong border was an essential prerequisite for any would-be independent country to be introduced into the community of recognised modern states. As a result, redrawing the map of central Africa was not an option. Before Zambia became independent in 1964, 34 states had preceded it. Of all these 34 states, only in one had an actual attempt at redrawing the map occurred: the Republic of the Congo. The way in which the secession of Katanga was crushed after not even three years of existence was a strong warning to any other state contemplating to do the same. In only one other place was the same feat attempted – the eastern province of Biafra in Nigeria whose independence was declared in 1967 but was put to an end with as little mercy as Katanga's was in 1970.³ The example of what happened to Tshombe's Katanga made the leader of the party under which Zambia became independent very aware of the

¹ S. BISLEV, 'Globalization, State Transformation and State Security', p.281.

² C. TORNIMBENI, 'Migrant Workers and State Boundaries', p.107.

³ See C. R. NIXON, 'Self-Determination: The Nigeria/Biafra Case' in *World Politics*, Vol. 24, N. 4 (1972).

risk of letting any particularist complaint be advertised too loudly, hence the energy put in silencing them. Therefore, if the nation-state, with all its emphasis on self-governance and sovereignty, was a useful framework for the protest against colonialism, it also implied that its integrity was not to be questioned, not even by the peoples who live within it. In this sense, Davidson has more than a point when he argues that nation-statism 'looked like a liberation, and really began as one. But it did not continue as a liberation.'¹

It would be disingenuous therefore to argue that the nation-state is non-important or that it is simply a concept with no bearings on reality. Nothing could be further from the truth. Artificial or not, colonial borders – like borders elsewhere – were real and were acted upon as such. What is criticised here is not the validity of the concept of nation-statism, but rather the fact that, though the artificiality of the African borders is a well-known fact, phenomena happening across them or overlapping memberships are often overlooked precisely because they overlaid supposedly territorially separated and independent polities. In the introduction, mention was made of the concept of 'transnationalism' which broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states. It is argued that 'transnationalism' is imbued with an 'inherently transgressive quality'² since 'transnational' ties develop across borders that are considered inconvenient,³ while at the same time such interconnections change conceptions of membership as well as the institutions of each interconnected country.⁴ In many ways, the Katango-Zambian boundary is the embodiment of such processes. The movement patterns that the copper industry set into motion certainly 'eroded' the border, even more efficiently than previous 'protest migrations' were able to do. If the mining companies and the colonial state worked hard to channel labour into a certain direction, they could not control every single individual, especially when there were virtually no checkpoints along the border. Movements of traders and labourers proved to be both a necessity and at times a difficulty. Migrants certainly bypassed the rules supposed to limit their movements more often than can be counted. From the inhabitants of the Mweru-Luapula areas resolutely choosing the Katangese mines and markets because it was more convenient to them to the dismay of those who wanted to send them to the south, to the Lunda of Kanongesha Ndembi fleeing to Angola to avoid reprisal for their supporting the ANC over UNIP, border crossing in Zambia certainly had a transgressive quality to it. Throughout the colonial era, people have crossed the border for a variety of purposes: safety, search for employment, trade, visiting relatives, (self-)imposed political exile etc. The concept of nation-state therefore is very useful if one is attempting to study its particular effects on African societies and history. Unfortunately it often obscures part of the other aspects that affect that history. The nation-state is a new concept as far as Africa is concerned, introduced as it was less than 150 years ago. It is intrinsically artificial and so, logically, are the 'threats' that it is supposedly facing. For all these reasons, in the case of the Copperbelt, the nation-state should *not* be taken as *de facto* basis for intellectual enquiry.

¹ B. DAVIDSON, *The Black Man's Burden*, p.10. Ibid.

² K. MITCHELL, 'Transnational Discourse: Bringing Geography Back', p.101.

³ C. TORNIMBENI, 'Migrant Workers and State Boundaries', p.110.

⁴ R. BAUBÖCK, 'Towards a Political theory of Migrant Transnationalism', p.701.

3. *Border Conflicts in the Later Twentieth Century*

Before bringing this argument to a close, it should be mentioned that the northern border of the Zambian 'nation-state' remained very much what it was in colonial years throughout the later twentieth century: a porous, contended and awkward-shaped boundary. Although complex negotiations continued – not to say dragged on – throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, the various disputes over segments of the border, such as the Mweru-Tanganyika section, were never brought to a conclusion. As soon as Zambia became independent, its first government had to deal with a number of reported problems along the boundary, which even prompted the Surveyor General and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources to suggest setting up a boundary commission in August 1966 to demarcate the disputed Mweru-Tanganyika section. However, keeping with the habit taken in colonial times, no commission was ever established.¹ The lack of demarcation has continued to lead to periodic disputes, sometimes resulting in violence. A recurring problem was the Katanga pedicle through which many Zambians were compelled to travel to reach the Copperbelt (among other places). Zambians travelling through the pedicle were regularly mistreated or subjected to levies by frustrated (because badly-paid) Congolese soldiers.² In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the border problem became embroiled in a series of eruption of escalating violence.

Following defeat at the hands of the United Nations in late 1961 and 1962, Tshombe's mercenary force in Katanga, the Katangese 'gendarmes', gradually dissolved. Many decamped to Angola where, in order to earn their keep, they fought alongside the Portuguese Forces against the Angolan nationalist movements (MPLA, PNLA and UNITA). They were soon joined by the Kanongesha's Lunda fleeing UNIP's reprisal in November 1965.³ These exiled mercenaries sporadically re-emerged from Angola to create trouble in Congo and Zambia alike.⁴ For example, those of the Lunda who had fled Mwinilunga to join the ranks of the Angolan military, re-emerged in the night between 26 and 27 November 1968, i.e. three weeks before the Zambian general elections, and razed three villages of UNIP supporters to the ground.⁵ But the greatest conflict emerged in 1977 and 1978 with two failed attempts at invading Shaba (as Katanga was renamed under Mobutu's zairinisation campaign), known as Shaba I and II respectively. On March 8, 1977, the *Front for the National Liberation of Congo* (FNLC), a group largely composed of former members of the Katangese gendarmerie, crossed the border into Shaba from Angola.⁶ Shaba II, in contrast to the first Shaba invasion, did not consist of an outright invasion of Zairian territory, but of an infiltration of Zaire (as Congo was known from 1971) via Zambia. In May 1978, FLNC battalions entered Shaba through a part of northern Zambia that was inhabited by the same groups

¹ D.W. DAVIDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.189.

² M.C. MUSAMBACHIME, 'Military Violence against Civilians: The Case of the Congolese and Zairean Military in the Pedicle 1890-1988' in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 23, Vol. 4 (1990).

³ I. Walker (African Section, Research Department) to S. Orbone (East African Department), 'Aims, Objectives and Possible Political Affections of the Ex-Katangese Gendarmerie', 14 April 1977, FCO 31/2116, doc. 254 (NAUK).

⁴ M. HUGHES, 'Fighting for White Rule in Africa', pp.612-615.

⁵ M. LARMER & G. MACOLA, 'The Origins, Context, and Political Significance of the Mushala rebellion', p.479.

⁶ Brief on Zaire for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Visit to Saudi Arabia and Iran, 15 May 1977, FCO 31/2117, doc. 285 (NAUK); S. Osborne (East African Department) to C. Townsend (M.P.), 'Background notes on Shaba Invasion', 22 April 1977, FCO 31/2115, doc. 225, (NAUK); I. Walker (African Section, Research Department) to S. Orbone (East African Department), 'Aims, Objectives and Possible Political Affections of the Ex-Katangese Gendarmerie', 14 April 1977, FCO 31/2116, doc. 254 (NAUK).

(Lunda and Ndembu) as many members of the FNLC.¹ In both cases, not only did the insurgents find little opposition from local populations along their way, but they also acquired new recruits from among their Lunda kinsmen.² Thanks to this sympathisation, the two invasions were quick and efficient (in 1978, the rebels were able to capture Kolwezi) though in the end both were nipped in the bud thanks to foreign intervention (mostly French and Belgian). During the invasion of 1978, in particular, the use of Zambian territory, which Kaunda claimed to know nothing about,³ strained diplomatic relations between Zaire and Zambia. In addition, the suppression of the revolts led to minor border problems and skirmishes, caused by the great numbers of refugees who escaped through Zambia.⁴

But ultimately it was the undemarcated Mweru-Tanganyika section that provoked the most tension between the two countries. In August 1980, Zambia accused Zaire of establishing a border post some 30 km within Zambian territory in the Kaputa area on the western end of the Mweru-Tanganyika section near Lake Mweru. Tensions escalated rapidly again in early 1982 when a series of skirmishes occurred along the border in the Kaputa area. The tension soon spread to the watershed section where exchanges of fire reportedly took place in February and March 1982, causing several deaths. Although a prisoner release was organised in April 1982, tensions continued fuelled by a communiqué of Lusaka radio claiming that two more Zairian border posts had been established within Zambian territory in the Kaputa area. Problems along all Zaire-Zambia borderland areas continued for several years, and Zairians were often scapegoated for the region's problems of crime and insecurity, including the smuggling of minerals such as emeralds and other commodities.⁵ Shaba still relied on Zambia for the supply of essential commodities such as sugar, mealie-meal, cooking oil and soap but cross-border trade had been limited by the Zambian government in an attempt to protect its own domestic market. As a result, there was an increase in illegal trade and when the Zambian government took measures to stop this, it was interpreted as provocation by the Zairian authorities. Then, in July 1984, Zambia deported over 2,000 Zairians while in return Zaire expelled a similar number of Zambians from Shaba.⁶ In a context of such latent tension, many skirmishes occurred between 1980 and 1984, some of which resulted in the sending of troops but none appears to have escalated into large-scale military operations.

According to D.W. Davidson, Documents from the US Department of State indicate that Zaire and Zambia had set up a joint technical committee to settle the disputed Mweru-Tanganyika section during the tensions in 1982. On December 20, 1987, Zambian Cabinet Secretary Charles Manyema stated that this committee had reached an agreement on the Mweru-Tanganyika boundary section, but that their

¹ A.G. Munro (East African Department) to Private Secretary, A discussion with Ambassador Lengema, 17 May 1978, FCO 31/2288, doc. 50 (NAUK); A.G. Munro (African Department to Private Secretary), Brief for Prime Minister's Meeting with Kaunda, 15 May 1978, FCO 31/2287, doc. 2 (NAUK).

² E.I. Young (British Embassy) to P.E. Rosling (East African Department), 'German Assessment of the Situation in Zaire', 18 April 1977, FCO 31/2115, doc. 205 (NAUK); A.G. Munro (African Department to Private Secretary), Brief for Prime Minister's Meeting with Kaunda, 15 May 1978, FCO 31/2287, doc. 2 (NAUK).

³ A.G. Munro (African Department to Private Secretary), Brief for Prime Minister's Meeting with Kaunda, 15 May 1978, FCO 31/2287, doc. 2 (NAUK).

⁴ D.W. DAVIDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.188.

⁵ D.W. DAVIDSON, *Marking Territory*, pp. 188-189.

⁶ S. KONGWA, 'Relations between Zambia and Zaire', p.104.

recommendations still had to be approved by Kaunda and Mobutu.¹ It was not until September 19, 1989 that the treaty was signed by Presidents Mobutu and Kaunda in the Zairian town of Nsele near Kinshasa, after which President Kaunda announced:

‘The signing of this treaty is truly a proud moment for Africa. It shows that left to themselves, African countries are sufficiently mature to resolve even the most serious of problems in an amicable manner.’²

Unfortunately, the text of this agreement does not appear to have ever been made public so its content is unknown. Some sources indicate that the treaty addressed frontier security, trans-border smuggling as well as supposedly delimiting a new boundary along the Mweru-Tanganyika section. Still, minor skirmishes and problems continued, making it doubtful whether any demarcation of the Mweru-Tanganyika section had actually taken place. In early December 1997, the Zambian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister stated in the Zambian Parliament that he blamed ‘the physical non-demarcation of Zambia’s border with the Democratic Republic of Congo on the state of insecurity (along the boundary)’ and added that Zambia was willing to undertake physical demarcation but the state of insecurity along the boundary and ‘uncooperative attitude which characterised the former Zaire’ had hampered efforts.³ As a result of this continuous failure to settle on an agreement, the Mweru-Tanganyika section, remains undemarcated and a source of diplomatic tension. Very recently (May 17, 2013), Zambian fishermen were arrested for ‘illegal fishing’ on the Congolese side of Lake Tanganyika. Subsequently fishermen asked, in terms very similar to those used some hundred years before, for ‘delimitation exercise’ to be instituted in order ‘to clearly mark Zambia’s borderline with its neighbour’.⁴ History has a way of repeating itself.

¹ D.W. DAVIDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.189.

² ‘Border agreement signed with Zaire’ *ZANA/PANA – Zambian News Agency*, 19 September 1989 as quoted in D.W. DAVIDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.190.

³ D.W. DAVIDSON, *Marking Territory*, p.191.

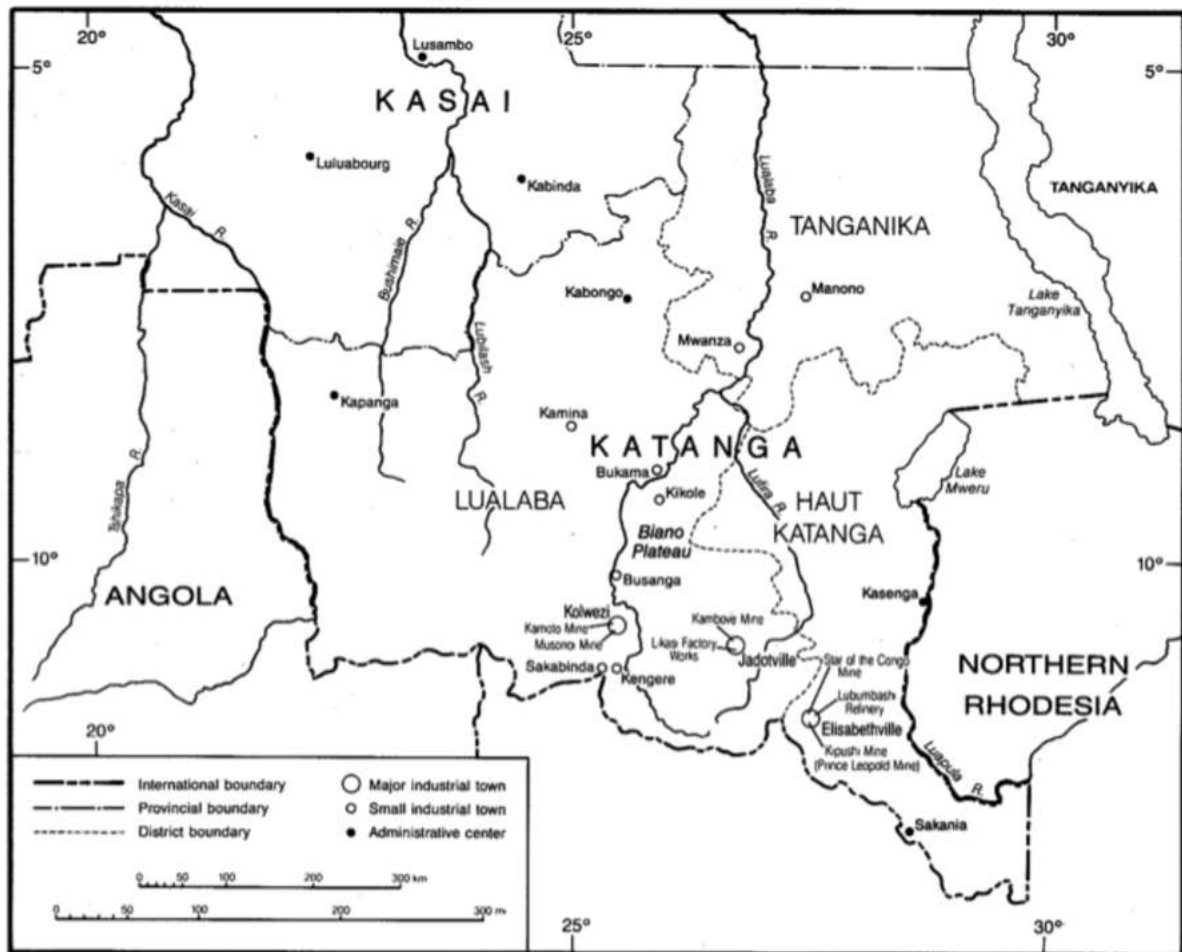
⁴ ‘DRC soldiers hold 16 Zambians’, *The Times of Zambia*, 17 May 2013, available at <http://www.times.co.zm/?p=10887>, [accessed on 17 May 2013].

Appendix

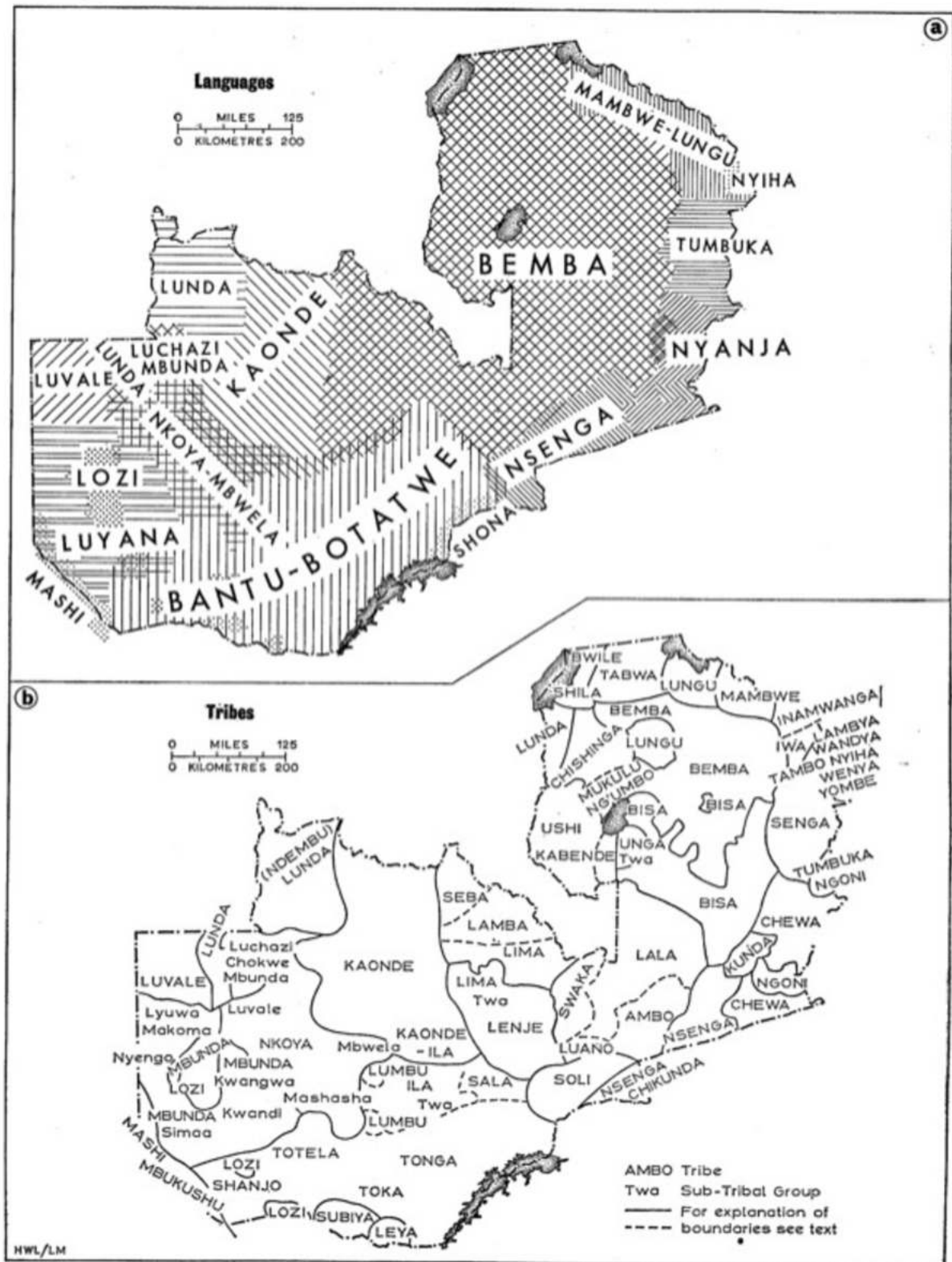
1. Administrative Divisions of Zambia



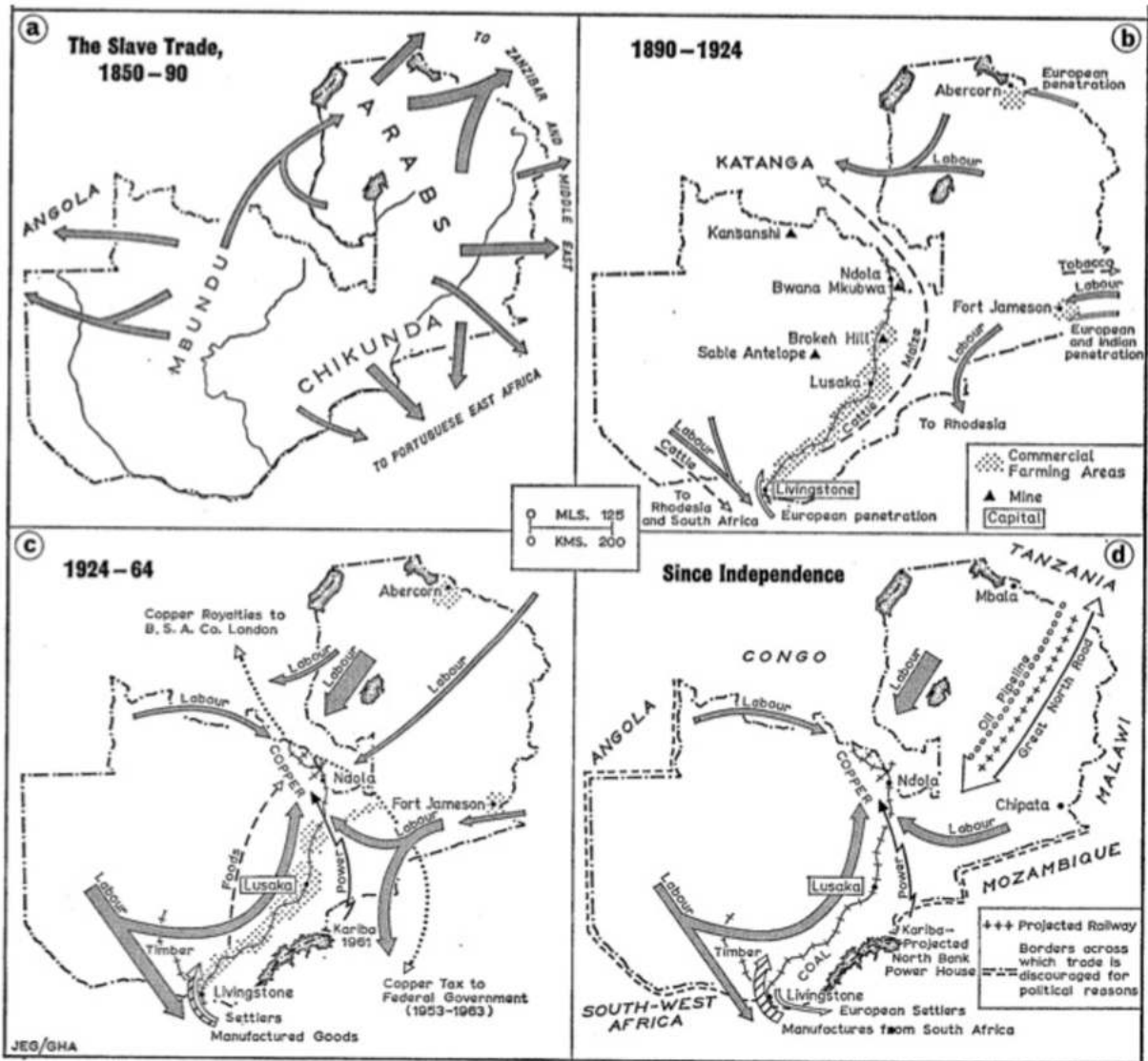
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