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**Researching and writing in the  
twilight of an imagined conquest:  
Anthropology in Northern Rhodesia  
1930 - 1960**

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## Abstract

The rich corpus of material produced by the anthropologists of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute (RLI) has come to dominate our understanding of Zambian societies and Zambia's past. The RLI was primarily concerned with the socio-cultural effects of migrant labour. The paper argues that the anthropologists of the RLI worked from within a paradigm that was dominated by the experience of colonial conquest in South Africa. RLI anthropologists transferred their understanding of colonial conquest in South Africa to the Northern Rhodesian situation, without ever truly analysing the manner in which colonial rule had come to be established in Northern Rhodesia. As such the RLI anthropologists operated within a flawed understanding of the past.

The paper argues that a historical paradigm of colonial conquest that was applicable to the South African situation came to be unquestioningly applied by anthropologists to the Northern Rhodesian situation, and discusses what the consequences of this paradigm are for our understanding of Zambian history.



## Researching and writing in the twilight of an imagined conquest: Anthropology in Northern Rhodesia 1930 – 1960

I am saying that the sociology of the environment of social anthropologists has a bearing on the history of social anthropology.<sup>1</sup>

They are too intelligent to be able to persuade themselves that they are particularly important...<sup>2</sup>

### **Introduction**

The rich corpus of material produced by the anthropologists of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute (RLI) has come to dominate our understanding of Zambian societies and Zambia's past.<sup>3</sup> It is argued here that the anthropologists of the RLI, which was primarily concerned with the social-cultural effects of migrant labour, worked from within a paradigm dominated by the experience of colonial conquest in South Africa. RLI anthropologists transferred their understanding of colonial conquest in South Africa to the Northern Rhodesian situation, without ever truly analysing the manner in which colonial rule came to be established in Northern Rhodesia. As such, the RLI anthropologists operated with a flawed understanding of the past.

In arguing that a paradigm that was applicable to South Africa came to be applied to Zambia, it contributes to a discussion that was initiated by Gordon, Widlok, and Sunseri. Each of whom, in their separate fields, have drawn attention to the manner in which the South African experience continues to inform and obscure the dominant view of both anthropology and history about southern Africa as a whole. As such, Robert Gordon has highlighted “the effectiveness of [South African] colonial socialization”, which prevents us – in his case – from using terms such as “bushman” and infusing new

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund R. Leach, “Glimpses of the Unmentionable in the History of British Social Anthropology”, in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 13 (1984), 1 – 23. p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony St. John Wood, *Northern Rhodesia: The Human Background*, London: Pall Mall Press, 1961, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> This point is made in a review article by David Gordon, “Rites of Rebellion: Recent Anthropology from Zambia”, in *African Studies*, 62, 1, 2003, pp. 125 – 139.

meaning into them.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the South African experience has effectively placed terms and concepts out of bounds and thereby appropriated them and robbed them of all meaning other than that dictated by the South African experience. Similarly Thomas Widlok, in dealing with Hai//om “bushman” communities in northern Namibia, has drawn attention to the continuing influence of labelling, locating and classifying of Hai//om within a South African paradigm.<sup>5</sup> In a succinct article dealing with labour migration in colonial Tanzania, Thaddeus Sunseri tackled the hegemony of South African historiography in Tanzanian history. He clearly outlined the way in which an historiography, based on the South African experience, obscured historical understanding and exerted, “a hegemony that is belied by the empirical evidence”.<sup>6</sup> Thomas Spear, in discussing the work of Mahmood Mamdani, has drawn attention to the danger of assuming that the “experiences of settler colonialism reflected those of all Africa”.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, historians working on Mozambique and Namibia have indicated that the overwhelming reliance on South African models has shaped the writing of history in ways which do not bear relation to the observed data.<sup>8</sup> This reliance has, as Sunseri correctly concludes:

... led Africanists elsewhere to adopt one of the major weaknesses of this literature, the inability to show how peasants and labour migrants, men and women, contributed to the shaping of colonial political economies.<sup>9</sup>

Informed by these perspectives, this paper provides an overview of how and why the South African paradigm came to be applied to Zambia, and discusses what the implications of this paradigm have been for Zambian history. The paper concludes that current historiography dealing with the colonisation of Zambia between 1890 and 1920 is seriously flawed and needs to be revised.

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Gordon, *The Bushman Myth*, p. 6. Thanks to Thomas Widlok for making this point.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Widlok, *Living on Mangetti: “Bushman” Autonomy and Namibian Independence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999. See in particular Chapter 1, “Cultural Diversity”, pp. 15 – 41.

<sup>6</sup> Thaddeus Sunseri, “Labour Migration in Colonial Tanzania and the Hegemony of South African Historiography”, in *African Affairs* (1996), 95, 581 – 598.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Spear, “Neo-traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa”, in *Journal of African History*, 44 (2003), p. 9, fn. 23. With thanks to Thaddeus Sunseri.

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Hayes (et. al.)(eds.), *Namibia under South African Rule: Mobility and Containment, 1915 – 46*, Oxford: James Currey 1998. & Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860 – 1910*, London: James Currey 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Sunseri, “Labour Migration”, p. 585.

## **The Importance of Anthropology in Zambian History**

What he [Marshall Sahlins] is stressing is the importance of ethnography. And I sometimes feel myself that perhaps when all the theories are forgotten ... if there is anything that will survive, I think it may be in the ethnography. And by and large I think the work that was done at that time was very, very good ethnography. It's history.<sup>10</sup>

Although history is not the object of professional inquiry by anthropologists, they do have ideas about the past, and in the Zambian context anthropology has to a large extent come to determine the country's historiography.<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere in Southern Africa it could be suggested that every ethnicity has its own historian and written history, whereas in Zambia every ethnicity appears to have its own ethnologist and written ethnology. In contrast to South Africa and Zimbabwe, there has been comparatively little historical work done in Zambia. Which is not to say that there is not a rich and varied body of historical material available in Zambia. Yet, at the same time, comparatively more anthropological work has been done in Zambia than in South Africa and Zimbabwe. At the basis of all of this anthropological research lies the hard work of Audrey Richards, Godfrey and Monica Wilson, Max Gluckman, and the anthropologists who made up the Rhodes Livingstone Institute.<sup>12</sup>

It is to the credit of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute, that Zambia has a unique and richly detailed corpus of anthropological research that can be delved into for historical purposes. Indeed, so rich is the anthropological tradition in Zambia that when historical research has been conducted and historical debates have erupted, it has been on the basis of anthropological research conducted in the past. In other words, even the

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<sup>10</sup> Kevin A. Yelvington, "An Interview with A.L. Epstein", in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Apr., 1997), 289 – 299, p. 296.

<sup>11</sup> Nowhere was this more so than in the case of Barnes and the Ngoni, whereby the Ngoni have come to form the stereotypical image of violent conquest in Zambia that came to be applied to the rest of the territory. John Barnes, *Politics in a changing society: A Political History of the Fort Jameson Ngoni*, London: Oxford University Press, 1954.

<sup>12</sup> Those interested in an introduction to the history of the RLI are advised to read, L. Schumaker, *Africanising Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa*, London: Duke University Press 2001.



historical debates in Zambia are anthropological in origin. Examples would include the material published by Megan Vaughan and Henrietta Moore that re-examined the work of Audrey Richards, Lyn Schumaker's historical study of the RLI, and the rumbustious debate that developed between James Ferguson and Hugh Macmillan in the *Journal of Southern African Studies*.<sup>13</sup> Thus the products of the RLI's anthropological research, have formed a basis for historical research and historical debates.

### **South African Meta-Narrative of Colonial Conquest Transferred to Zambia**

Politically and socially, the RLI anthropologists inhabited a well-defined position on the liberal fringe of white colonial society, closely connected to the wider community of white liberals in South Africa and alienated from the mainstream of Northern Rhodesian settler society by virtue of their intellectualism, their politics, and, in a number of cases, their Jewish ethnicity.<sup>14</sup>

In the early 1990s the anthropologist James Ferguson unexpectedly and unwittingly initiated what would turn out to be one of the most vicious and raucous debates ever to have graced the pages of the *Journal of Southern African Studies*. James Ferguson, a young anthropologist who had previously worked in Lesotho and had conducted a year of fieldwork on the Copperbelt, sought to provide an overview of the material that had previously been written and published on urbanisation on the Copperbelt.<sup>15</sup> In short, Ferguson argued that the texts that had been written on urbanisation in Zambia had been subject to a modernist narrative that had seen an inevitable progression from migrant

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<sup>13</sup> Megan Vaughan and Henrietta Moore, *Cutting Down Trees*, London: James Currey, 1994; Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology* & James Ferguson, "Mobile Workers, Modernist Narratives: A Critique of the Historiography of Transition on the Zambian Copperbelt, part I", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1990, 16, no. 3, pp. 385 – 412; "Mobile Workers, Modernist Narratives: A Critique of the Historiography of Transition on the Zambian Copperbelt, part II", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1990, 16, no. 4, pp. 603 – 621; "Modernist Narratives, Conventional Wisdoms, and Colonial Liberalism: Reply to a Straw Man", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1994, 20, no. 4, pp. 633 – 640; "Urban Trends on the Zambian Copperbelt: A Short Bibliographic Note", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1996, 22, no. 2, p. 313.

<sup>14</sup> James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999 pp. 28 – 9.

<sup>15</sup> To be sure the material looked at by Ferguson did not deal solely with the Copperbelt, but it was this that was the main focus of his literary overview. See fn. 13 above.

labourer to permanently urban proletarian. Ferguson, in dealing with the position of anthropology in Zambia, noted that:

In the same way that India has been anthropology's designated spot for thinking about hierarchy, southern Africa (and particularly the Copperbelt) has served as the anthropological topos for the ideas of "social change" and "urbanization". It is the place where a classical social anthropology engaged, if not first, then at least most seriously and successfully with subjects such as urbanization, industrialization, labor migration, and social transformation.<sup>16</sup>

Anthropology in Zambia was primarily interested in social transformation brought about by industrialisation and labour migration. However this interest was subject, according to Ferguson, to a meta-narrative of modernisation. As Ferguson noted:

The distinctive RLI approach to African urban life depended on a meta-narrative of transition, in which tribal rural Africans were swiftly becoming modern, urban members of an industrial society. ... all shared a narrative of urban "emergence" and "adaptation", which complemented the parallel story of "tribal breakdown" that was being elaborated by Audrey Richards and others in the RLI's rural studies.<sup>17</sup>

Rather unexpectedly the sentiments expressed by Ferguson led to a response in which no holds were barred.<sup>18</sup>

Leaving aside the merits of Ferguson's work and that of his detractors, it is of interest to note that the root cause of what drove Zambian men to engage in migrant labour, was never seriously investigated. Instead of researching what it was that had initiated the involvement of Zambian men in migrant labour it was taken as a given by the RLI anthropologists, as well as those who later examined the work of the RLI. Young

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<sup>16</sup> James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, pp. 24 – 5.

<sup>17</sup> Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity*, p 33.

<sup>18</sup> Illustrative of the tone of the debate that raged between Ferguson and Hugh Macmillan, Robin Palmer wrote:

I find Ferguson's book, which includes a chapter on 'Back to the Land?', glib, superficial, grossly pretentious and, on this particular subject, profoundly wrong – or at best seriously misleading. Robin Palmer, *Land Tenure Insecurity on the Zambian Copperbelt, 1998: Anyone Going Back to the Land?*, Oxfam GB March 2001, p. 2.

men became migrant labourers for the reasons given by a meta-narrative shared by the anthropologists at the RLI; the meta-narrative stating that the people of Zambia had been subject to colonial conquest. This meta-narrative had as its origins, not the empirical data of Zambia's past, but the past of South Africa transferred to Northern Rhodesia, i.e. colonial conquest had impoverished the rural areas, resulting in the movement of people to the mines. Consequently, the root of what drove men to migrant labour - alleged colonial conquest - was never seriously investigated but taken as a given.

The anthropologists who dominate Zambian historiography did not consider how colonial rule came to be established. Where they did consider it, as in the case of Barnes, it was primarily because the ethnographic detail so clearly brought this aspect of violent conquest to the fore.<sup>19</sup> For the rest, it was taken for granted that colonial rule had been established through conquest. Where did this meta-narrative of colonial conquest come from? In the remainder of this paper I seek to show that the RLI anthropologists believed that this had occurred in the same way it had in South Africa, and that this meta-narrative of colonial conquest was inadvertently, yet understandably, transferred to Zambia through the work of the RLI. To sum up, an extensive body of Zambian anthropological material dominates the historiography of Zambia. Unfortunately, with the exception of the notable work by John Barnes, it does not analyse the establishment of colonial rule.

### **Audrey Richards**

As a professional discipline in Zambia, Anthropology owes its origins to the remarkable work of Audrey Richards. Audrey Isabel Richards was born into the upper echelons of British society, and her life and professional career could be read as an allegory of the twilight of the British Empire.<sup>20</sup> After a childhood spent in India she returned to England when her father, then a member of the viceroy's council, was appointed Chichele Professor of International Law at Oxford. Richards read natural science at Cambridge (1918 – 21) and completed a PhD (1931) at the newly established London School of Economics. She first visited Zambia in 1930, where she conducted 15 months of

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<sup>19</sup> John Barnes, *Politics in a changing society: A Political History of the Fort Jameson Ngoni*, London: Oxford University Press, 1954. Notably this book has as its front piece a photograph of "man points upwards and sings that, because they conquered the Ngoni, the Whites must have come from heaven".

<sup>20</sup> Her father, Sir Henry Erle Richards, was professor of law, and her mother, Isabel, the daughter of Spencer Pereceval Butler of Lincoln's Inn.

fieldwork before returning in 1933 for another 18 months. In the late 1930s she taught at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, before returning to Britain in 1940. Richards subsequently worked on, amongst other things, establishing the Colonial Science Research Council, as a special lecturer in colonial studies at the London School of Economics, as director of the East African Institute of Social Research at Makerere College, Uganda, and at the University of Cambridge where she established the Centre for African Studies.<sup>21</sup>

At the end of his career the renowned anthropologist Edmund Leach wrote a controversial article entitled, “Glimpses of the Unmentionable in the History of British Social Anthropology”. The article is remarkable in that it pulls no punches, and in so doing besmirched an academic career. Well aware of his own position, Leach argued that “differences of social class played a critical role in what happened in British anthropology during the first 40 years of this [20<sup>th</sup>] century”.<sup>22</sup> Unflinchingly and with the disdain of old age and power for political niceties, Leach dissected the ‘political economy’ of the world of British social anthropology. He wrote of the *intellectual aristocracy*, “the members of a small group of closely intermarried families who came to dominate the affairs of Oxford and Cambridge (especially Cambridge) from about the middle of the nineteenth century”.<sup>23</sup> And he wrote of the *aristocracy*, those whose families are to be found in reference books such as *Burke’s Peerage* or *Burke’s Landed Gentry*. Without a doubt Audrey Richards belonged to both aristocracies, which as Leach noted were not wholly distinct, “indeed, at the beginning of this century [20<sup>th</sup>], the interests of the intellectual aristocrats who ruled the universities and of the titled aristocrats who ruled the Empire were almost identical”.<sup>24</sup>

For Leach, British social anthropology owed its origins to Bronislaw Malinowski who from the 1920s onwards started teaching cultural anthropology at the London School of Economics; “an upstart institution created as a platform for radical Fabian ideas”. As a result “almost all the Oxford and Cambridge graduates who, for one reason or another, found themselves interested in social anthropology, migrated to London to sit at the feet

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<sup>21</sup> Oxford National Biography:

<sup>22</sup> Leach, “Glimpses of the Unmentionable”, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Leach, “Glimpses of the Unmentionable”, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Leach, “Glimpses of the Unmentionable”, p. 4.

of Bronislaw Malinowski”. For Leach, Richards, through attending courses at the London School of Economics, was an example of the intellectual aristocracy who turned their backs on the “stifling Cambridge social atmosphere”.<sup>25</sup> Whilst at the LSE Richards met another disaffected member of the intellectual aristocracy, Godfrey Wilson, and his future wife Monica Hunter.

In 1930 Richards departed for Northern Rhodesia where she conducted research among the Bemba, it resulted in her majestic *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: An Economic Study of the Bemba Tribe*, which was published when she was a senior lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. In the mid-1930s Richards was instrumental in establishing anthropological research in Northern Rhodesia and crucial in the establishment of what would become the Rhodes Livingstone Institute. Indeed, she was the first person to conduct professional anthropological fieldwork in the country and would have become the Institute’s first director, but for the fact that she was a woman. Writing at a much later stage, Richards noted that:

... the Governor then felt that such an appointment would be fatal to the success of a nascent institute. He had ‘nothing against women’, he said -a phrase often heard at the time- but he felt it to be too great a risk to appoint someone who was not only a woman but also a woman who was an anthropologist, a word which aroused the greatest possible apprehension in the minds of government officials and settlers at the time.<sup>26</sup>

In the event and with the support of Audrey Richards, the first director of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute became Godfrey Wilson, who Audrey Richards had known since her time at the London School of Economics.

### **Monica Wilson (Hunter) and Godfrey Wilson**

His [Godfrey Wilson] abominable treatment at the hands of the colonial oligarchy shocked the small, tightly knit band of anthropologists...<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Leach, “Glimpses of the Unmentionable”, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Audrey Richards, “The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute: An Experiment in Research, 1933 – 38”, in *African Social Research*, 24 December 1977, pp. 275 – 283, p. 277.

<sup>27</sup> H.J. Simons, “Prologue”, *African Social Research*, 24 December 1977, p. 263.

Although Godfrey Wilson was a graduate of Hertford College, Oxford, and not Cambridge, he most certainly equalled the qualities of the more intellectual of Edmund Leach's fellow Cambridge students whom he described as being "of a radical, near communist, political persuasion".<sup>28</sup> Godfrey Wilson's socially engaged and deeply principled position was rooted in a firm Christian faith that he shared with Monica Hunter, the woman who would later become his wife.

Monica Hunter was born to missionary parents in the mission settlement of Lovedale in South Africa's Eastern Cape. Lovedale mission station is situated on what was effectively the frontline between the agriculturally based Xhosa chieftaincies and the rapacious expansion of European settlement emanating from the Cape. It was in the course of no less than a hundred years of war that the advance of white colonial settlement eastwards along the South African frontier was blunted and deflected northwards into what would become the Orange Free State.<sup>29</sup> It was a geographical setting that had experienced more than its fair share of colonial warfare, but Lovedale mission was a centre of multi-racial sanity in an area of racially defined violence. Monica Hunter grew up playing with the descendants of Amaxhosa who had survived the incessant frontier wars, and she undoubtedly heard the same histories as Nelson Mandela who would later hear of the colonial conquest whilst speaking to his elders; "I listened to the elders of the tribe telling stories about the good old days, before the arrival of the white man".<sup>30</sup> In contrast to nearly all other South Africans of European descent Monica Hunter attended the multi-racial mission school in Lovedale. In many ways Lovedale College, as with Fort Hare University where she later worked, were the seedbeds for the nationalist movement as it would develop in southern and central Africa.<sup>31</sup> Among the

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<sup>28</sup> Leach, "Glimpses of the Unmentionable", p.9.

<sup>29</sup> Those seeking a succinct overview and introduction to this topic are advised to look at Monica Wilson's own "Co-operation and Conflict: The Eastern Cape Frontier", in *A History of South Africa to 1870*, Cape Town: David Philip 1982, pp. 233 – 71.

<sup>30</sup> Nelson Mandela, *The Struggle is my Life*, London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa 1978, p. 141, see also, p. 155 & p. 207.

<sup>31</sup> Monica Wilson, *Freedom For My People: The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews: Southern Africa 1901 to 1968*, London: Rex Collings 1981, pp. 131 – 6.

distinguished graduates of these institutions was Z.K. Matthews, of whom Monica Wilson noted in the preface to his autobiography which she edited<sup>32</sup>:

I knew and admired Z.K. Matthews over thirty years. I was born and grew up in Lovedale, went to school there, and for a year was a part-time student at Fort Hare. I knew most of the people Z.K. mentions at Lovedale and Fort Hare. Both my husband, Godfrey Wilson, and I were members of Malinowski's famous seminar at the London School of Economics to which Z.K. refers, but we were before and after he was. From 1944-6 I was lecturer in anthropology on his staff at Fort Hare.<sup>33</sup> At the special request of my husband he stood godfather to our younger son. His wife was my lifelong friend who had also grown up in Lovedale, and with whom I share many common memories.<sup>34</sup>

With such a background Monica Wilson had very specific ideas about how the colonial state had come into being, ideas that more often than not stood in contrast to those of the colonial authorities. Her doctoral thesis, which studied the effects of European contact on the Amapondo in the Eastern Cape, was aptly titled *Reaction to Conquest*, and noted:

The Bantu first encountered the European as a conqueror who fought and defeated him in the struggle for land. Submitting to the inevitable he acquiesced in the confiscation of lands he had occupied, and in the establishment of British rule.<sup>35</sup>

Monica Wilson's understanding of the role of conquest in colonial rule was reinforced by her experiences in Tanganyika, where she and her husband, Godfrey Wilson, worked between 1934 and 1938. The Wilsons conducted research among the Nyakyusa and Ngonde in south-western Tanganyika, an area that had been ravaged by the advent of

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<sup>32</sup> Z.K. was the father of Joe Matthews, who together with the late Chris Hani would reinvigorate the African National Congress in the 1970's. Stationed in Tanzania and chaffing at the inaction of their elders, Joe Matthews and Chris Hani, initiated a mutiny within *Umkhonto we Sizwe* which led to the re-establishment of military action against minority rule in South Africa through joint operations with ZAPU in Rhodesia. Stephen Ellis & Tsepo Sechaba, *Comrades against apartheid: the ANC & the South African Communist Party in exile*, London: James Currey 1992.

<sup>33</sup> Whilst on the staff of Fort Hare, Govan Mbeki, the father of the current president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, was the first elected student representative on the governing body of the university. Govan Mbeki, *South Africa: The Peasants' Revolt*, London: IDAF 1984, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Monica Wilson, *Freedom For My People: The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews: Southern Africa 1901 to 1968*, London: Rex Collings 1981, p. viii.

<sup>35</sup> Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*, London: Oxford University Press 1936, p. 8.

colonial rule and the effects of World War One in particular.<sup>36</sup> Yet, here, too, their interpretations overemphasized the process of conquest. In a recent publication James Ellison has noted that the Wilsons failed to realise the impact of the 1918 influenza pandemic on social structures in south-western Tanganyika.<sup>37</sup> It is probable that for the Wilsons the epidemic was obscured by the more immediate and overwhelming presence of contemporary colonial rule.

In 1938 after Audrey Richards and Max Gluckman had been turned down on the grounds that they were respectively a woman and Jewish, Godfrey Wilson was appointed as Director of the recently established Rhodes Livingstone Institute. Following up on work that he had begun in Tanganyika, Wilson decided to concentrate on migrant labour. After learning Ibibemba, Godfrey Wilson commenced fieldwork in Broken Hill (Kabwe). However, as Monica Wilson later wrote, “Compound managers were critical of an outsider who spoke better Ibibemba than they did, and who established easy relationships with workers”.<sup>38</sup> Anxious to retain some measure of control over Wilson’s work, the mining company suggested that they could build an office and supply a messenger to select informants, if Wilson would refrain from visiting the workers in their quarters.<sup>39</sup> As Monica noted, “it was all right, a compound manager said, to *give* cigarettes to workers, but *not* right to smoke with them: that was letting down the prestige of the white man”.<sup>40</sup> In addition, the Wilsons were told to desist from fraternising with Africans, something which, given Monica Wilson’s background, would have been considered absurd if not impossible.

Godfrey Wilson’s research in *An Essay on the Economics of Detribalization in Northern Rhodesia* reflected the influence of Radcliffe-Brown, and the historians W.M. Macmillan and C.W. de Kiewiet, who writing of South Africa in 1936 noted:

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<sup>36</sup> Jan-Bart Gewald, *Colonial Warfare: Hehe and World War One, the wars besides Maji Maji in south-western Tanzania*, ASC Working Paper 63/2005, Leiden.

<sup>37</sup> James G. Ellison, “The epidemic in southwest Tanzania”, in *The Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918 – 19: New Perspectives*, edited by Howard Phillips and David Killingray, London 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Monica Wilson, “The First Three Years, 1938 – 41”, in *African Social Research*, 24, December 1977, p. 279.

<sup>39</sup> It is of interest to note that this way of conducting “fieldwork” was that preferred by the volkekundiges and Holleman. A. Kuper, “South African Anthropology: An Inside Job”, 1999, *Paideuma*: pp. 83 – 101. W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect Interpreters: South Africa’s Anthropologists, 1920 – 1990*, Johannesburg; Witwatersrand University Press, 1997, p. 137.

<sup>40</sup> Wilson, “First Three Years”, p. 279.



Segregation is a myth, a fancy, anything but a fact. As a word it describes a hope or a policy but not a real situation [...] What has been twisted together by history cannot be readily disentangled by laws. To unwind the woven cord of native and European life is simply to require history to retrace its steps.<sup>41</sup>

Wilson's work on Northern Rhodesia, as with de Kiewiet's on South Africa, "forced officials and employers to look at urban realities, destroyed the myth that peasant-workers would remain in a state of perpetual motion, and traced the links between rural poverty and urban growth".<sup>42</sup> Richard Brown noted that:

..., the work is marked not only by good scholarship in the technical sense, but also by that breadth of view and imaginative sympathy for the colonised ...

Wilson's strongly humanist values are clearly evident throughout the work which, for all its apparent neutrality, is implicitly a passionate indictment of the Northern Rhodesia of his day.<sup>43</sup>

Rather than take cognisance of his findings, the mining company denied Godfrey Wilson access to the mining compounds and the workers in the mines, resulting eventually in his resignation. Although this effectively prevented the Wilsons from conducting any further research in Zambia, it did not prevent them from collaborating on a remarkable book that drew on their combined work and would in many ways lay the foundations for the future work of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute. Described as "one of the most ambitious brief attempts to explain the overall processes of change since the *Communist Manifesto*", their book entitled *The Analysis of Social Change* investigated the social economic effects of the Central African "industrial revolution".<sup>44</sup> They illustrated the underlying nature of the social and economic conflicts inside Northern Rhodesia that had resulted from the introduction of a modern mining economy directly linked to the world economy. In other words, the Wilsons brought to the fore the relationship between the social and economic lives of all people in central Africa and the world economy, and showed that people living in Central Africa were affected by and were part and parcel of a single economic process.

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<sup>41</sup> De Kiewiet cited in Kuper, "South African Anthropology", p. 87.

<sup>42</sup> Simons, "Prologue", pp. 262 – 263.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Brown, "Anthropology and Colonial Rule: Godfrey Wilson and the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Northern Rhodesia", in Talal Asmad (ed), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, p. 194.

<sup>44</sup> Brown, "Godfrey Wilson and the RLI", p. 188.

Although the Wilsons were muscled out of Northern Rhodesia, they did have a lasting effect on the RLI and Zambian history. Following Godfrey Wilson's departure his successor as director of the RLI, Max Gluckman, designed and drew up "The Seven Year Research Plan of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute". It emphasized research into the social effects of industrialisation and labour migration, and it owed much to the Wilsons. Furthermore, Gluckman was to insist that his researchers visit Monica Wilson prior to beginning their fieldwork in Northern Rhodesia.

### **Max Gluckman**

The remarkable circumstances that contributed to the history of South Africa in the twentieth century also ensured that three of the world's best known anthropologists, Meyers Fortes, Isaac Schapera and Max Gluckman, were all born in South Africa as the sons of Jewish immigrants who had fled persecution in Tsarist Russia. In their lives and academic careers these men were to experience anti-Semitism in all its many and varied forms.<sup>45</sup> These experiences, combined with the experience of growing up in the strictly segregated and racist environment of the Union of South Africa, probably contributed to the way all three consciously opposed racism in their social, political and professional lives.

Born in Johannesburg in 1911, Max Gluckman was an adolescent in the years when his father worked as an attorney for Clements Kadalie, the charismatic leader of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU).<sup>46</sup> Gluckman entered the University of the Witwatersrand in 1927 shortly after the segregationist government of General Hertzog had initiated a package of legislation designed to defend 'white civilisation' and ensure full employment for the whites.<sup>47</sup> At Wits he studied law until he came into

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<sup>45</sup> Readers are advised to read Hugh Macmillan, "From Race to Ethnic Identity: South Central Africa, Social Anthropology and the Shadow of the Holocaust", in *Social Dynamics* 26, 2, 2000, 87 – 115. On the remarkable history of Jewish immigrants in Zambia, see Hugh Macmillan and F. Shapiro, *Zion in Africa: The Jews of Zambia*, London: I.B. Tauris 1999.

<sup>46</sup> On Kadalie and the ICU see, Helen Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in Rural South Africa, 1924 – 1930*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1988.

<sup>47</sup> Saul Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa 1919 – 36*, London: James Currey, 1989, pp. 107 – 11. Paul Maylam, *South Africa's Racial Past, The history and historiography of racism, segregation and apartheid*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001, pp. 143 – 78.

contact with Isaac Schapera and the lectures of Winifred Hoernlé and decided to switch to anthropology.

Winifred Hoernlé conducted research among the Nama in southern and central Namibia and her work detailed for the first time in the academic community the extent of the genocide that had been perpetrated by Imperial Germany on the Nama in Namibia. This pioneering work, which still awaits follow-up research by a worthy successor, continues to express the shock and horror felt by Hoernlé with regard to the colonial conquest and genocide in Namibia.<sup>48</sup> In November 1922 the South African Administration invited Hoernlé, who had conducted research in German South West Africa in 1912 and 1914, to return to South West Africa under the auspices of the Administration which now governed the territory as a mandated territory of the League of Nations. Hoernlé conducted three months of research in the aftermath of the Bondelswarts war in southern Namibia, in which the South African air force and army bombed and strafed a Nama chieftaincy, known as the Bondelswarts, into submission.<sup>49</sup> In April 1923 Hoernlé submitted a report of her research in which she noted that she had hoped to find Nama who had “preserved more of their old traditions and beliefs than their southern relatives who had been in the midst of the turmoil and strife of the European occupation”.<sup>50</sup> Instead of a pristine and untouched idyllic pastoral life, Hoernlé found the impoverished remnants of once-important communities eking out a living. Writing of the Nama she found in Windhoek Hoernlé said:

Old people were there in numbers, and intelligent old people too, but that was partly the tragedy. These men, with their families, were practically prisoners of war of the Germans; they had all of them worked and worked hard in their day, but there were numbers of them well over sixty who were unable to earn their living any more, and before the break in the dreadful drought of 1922 these people were suffering real hunger.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Peter Carstens, Gerald Klinghardt, and Martin West, eds., *Trails in the Thirstland: The Anthropological Field Diaries of Winifred Hoernlé*, Cape Town: Centre for African Studies, 1987.

<sup>49</sup> Tony Emmett, *Popular Resistance and the Roots of Nationalism in Namibia, 1915 – 1966*, Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 1999, pp. 111 – 124.

<sup>50</sup> National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek, SWAA 1328, A. 198/3/4, Anthropological Research, Hoernlé in Johannesburg, 14 April 1923 to The Secretary for South West Africa, Windhoek, folio 2 - 3.

<sup>51</sup> NAN, SWAA 1328, A. 198/3/4, Anthropological Research, Hoernlé in Johannesburg, 14 April 1923 to The Secretary for South West Africa, Windhoek, folio 4.

Hoernlé described in plain language how the South African administration had failed to fulfil its obligations to those who had been placed under its jurisdiction by the League of Nations. Summing up her research Hoernlé described the following incident:

A very fine old man of the Red Nation, old Jeremias, said to me the day I was leaving, that he would like to ask me something, now that I had done questioning him: ‘I was born living well and eating well’, he said, ‘Under the Germans I suffered much, and I would like to ask when I am going to live well again’.

Such were the people among whom I worked...<sup>52</sup>

Her report, in drawing attention -even if only in passing- to the terrible poverty that prevailed in the mandated territory, was seen to be subversive by her sponsors. In the event, one of the South African officials angrily scrawled “Politics, not science” across her report.<sup>53</sup> In 1923 Hoernlé was appointed as a lecturer in ethnology at the University of the Witwatersrand, from which she would resign in 1938. Hoernlé “saw public service as an important role for the social anthropologist” and her resignation allowed her “to pursue a more socially activist career. By the end of World War Two she had become a central figure in that “bastion of liberal thought”, the South African Institute of Race Relations”.<sup>54</sup> It is interesting to note that aside from Gluckman, Hoernlé also taught and influenced Eileen Krige, Hilda Beemer (Kuper) and Ellen Hellman, women who as anthropologists would all come to be associated with Gluckman and his followers.

It is clear that Hoernlé’s lectures had a deep and lasting influence on Max Gluckman. Apart from ensuring that his research officers read and met Hoernlé, Gluckman was explicit in his intellectual debt to her. In the course of 1955 Gluckman presented a series of six lectures on the BBC that were later published in a book dedicated to Hoernlé on her seventieth birthday in 1956, under the title *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Eschewing an introduction and choosing instead for a brief preface, Gluckman noted:

My first teacher in anthropology, Mrs. A.W. Hoernlé, planted the idea of my argument in my mind in Johannesburg in 1931, when we were trying to

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<sup>52</sup> NAN, SWAA 1328, A. 198/3/4, Anthropological Research, Hoernlé in Johannesburg, 14 April 1923 to The Secretary for South West Africa, Windhoek, folio 6.

<sup>53</sup> Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect Interpreters*, p. 38.

<sup>54</sup> Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, p. 90.

understand the ceremonies which Zulu women performed to their goddess Nomkubulwana.<sup>55</sup>

Gluckman's argument was essentially to see unity in the system, that conflict was engendered through custom, but that it was also constrained by custom. But of central importance to Gluckman and his followers was this interplay of conflict and culture within society as a whole, also in those cases where, as in South Africa, immigrant groups had moved in and established themselves. In other words, society as a whole had to be investigated, even if it included Indian traders, Afrikaner farmers, African peasants and British colonial officials.<sup>56</sup> Gluckman was inspired by the work of the historian William Macmillan "who held that South Africa was a single society, racially diverse but economically and socially interdependent".<sup>57</sup> Gluckman succinctly summed up his position, when in providing an overview of the RLI's activities in Central Africa, he declared:

For it is one society. Central Africa has become a territorial region inhabited by people of different ethnic origin, recognizing different values, having markedly different customs, but who are all in relationship with one another. They are bound together in a common political and economic system; and the effects of movements in this system influence every part of the lives of all the different groups.<sup>58</sup>

### **The Seven Year Plan and the South African Paradigm**

Richards', Wilson's, Read's, and my work, and that of the 1935 Nyasaland Commission, as well as researches in South Africa and the Protectorates, all demonstrate that it is industrialization with labour migration which dominates the whole trend of social developments.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Max Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, 1956, republished New York: Barnes and Noble 1967, p. vii.

<sup>56</sup> Gluckman, "The Bonds in the Colour-Bar", in *Custom and Conflict*, pp. 137 – 65.

<sup>57</sup> Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, p. 78. See also, Hugh Macmillan, "Return to the Malungwana Drift – Max Gluckman, the Zulu Nation and the Common Society", in *African Affairs*, 1995, 94, pp. 39 – 65.

<sup>58</sup> Gluckman, "Social Anthropology", p. 15.

<sup>59</sup> Gluckman, Seven-year Research plan, p. 7.

Gluckman also saw Northern Rhodesia as a laboratory for developing a social-scientific critique of trends emerging and spreading from South Africa.<sup>60</sup>

The Seven Year Plan written by Max Gluckman and submitted to a variety of bodies in 1943 owed much to Gluckman's mentors and forms the basis of what was to become the Manchester School. It is in essence the document that set the paradigm for anthropological research in Northern Rhodesia. The plan aimed to investigate Northern Rhodesia as a single unitary social system. Gluckman, owed much to Isaac Schapera who had told him "that the Africans in South Africa were, with Whites and others, integral parts of a single social system, so that all had to be studied in the same way – even though their roles might differ considerably".<sup>61</sup> James Ferguson notes that in response to Malinowski's analysis of the South African situation in terms of culture contact:

Gluckman insisted, in a devastating polemical attack, that Malinowski's "culture contact" formulation obscured the fact that colonialism in Africa was not simply a matter of one "culture" influencing another, it was a matter of the forced incorporation of Africans into a wholly new social and economic system. Largely through land alienation and the system of migrant labor, Africans had come to participate with Europeans in a "single social system",...<sup>62</sup>

In this dismissal of Malinowski, Gluckman echoed the views of Monica Wilson and her work on the Pondo, and in Northern Rhodesia Gluckman observed a system that mirrored that of South Africa. For Gluckman, Central Africa, "[w]as a laboratory for sociological inquiries relevant to all human societies in southern Africa". Schumaker has noted that "although this vision developed out of his opposition to racial segregation, it was also rooted in the cultural and economic forces that had shaped southern African history".<sup>63</sup> A vision, which in keeping with Gluckman's South African background, included conquest, land dispossession and a host of further inequities. The material that the RLI researchers

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<sup>60</sup> Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, p. 79.

<sup>61</sup> Gluckman cited in, E. Colson, "The Institute under Max Gluckman, 1942 – 47", in *African Social Research*, 24, December 1977, pp. 288 – 9.

<sup>62</sup> Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity*, p 26.

<sup>63</sup> Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, p. 76.

collected appeared to substantiate this vision. Discussing the material that she and her colleagues had collected, Colson noted:

In the analysis of the African material, we recognised that we were looking at people caught up in a colonial system whose influence was pervasive. This was a basic datum. We certainly indicated that in both rural and urban areas people resented the economic and political domination and the gross inequalities of the system.<sup>64</sup>

Central to Gluckman's Seven Year Plan was an investigation of the effects of labour migration in relation to the differing ethnic groups. Indeed, the various groups selected for study were chosen on account of their varying labour migration rates. In justifying his research programme, Gluckman noted that it needed to cover "the major social developments in the region" and "deal with the most important social problems confronting the Government of the Territory". These needs, Gluckman argued, were to be clearly met by a study of the "problem of labour migration, ... [for] it is industrialization with labour migration which dominates the whole trend of social developments".<sup>65</sup>

Writing about her experiences as part of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute, Elizabeth Colson noted that:

The proposal submitted by Max Gluckman to the Colonial Social Science Research Council called for the investigation of how involvement in the market economy affected rural African communities that were either exporting labor or growing cash crops. We were asked to look at people who were moving about, making choices, adjusting to changing circumstances.<sup>66</sup>

Yet the way in which this labour migration had initially emerged was not to be the object of investigation. Essentially for Gluckman, and later for his students, labour migration was brought about by taxation, which had been instituted following colonial conquest, and as they "knew" how colonisation had taken place they did not re-investigate this.

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<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Colson, "Overview", in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 18 (1989), p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> Max Gluckman, "Seven – Year research Plan of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute of Social Studies in British Central Africa", *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal* 4, 1945, p. 7.

<sup>66</sup> Colson, "Overview", pp. 1 – 16.

The persistence of the South African conquest paradigm, that is “knowledge” of the past, as well as the absence of any necessity to re-investigate the past, persists into the present, as is illustrated by a reading of James Pritchett’s otherwise excellent *The Lunda Ndembu*.<sup>67</sup> Readers of the work, will be struck by the central necessity of colonial conquest for the validity of the argument that Pritchett puts forward. To paraphrase Pritchett, in pre-colonial times the Lunda Ndembu were able to live in comparative comfort and stability, by supplying caravan routes with cassava. Unfortunately this idyllic setting was disrupted by agents of the British South Africa Company (BSAC), who brutally suppressed the Lunda-Ndembu and subjected them to servitude and rural impoverishment.<sup>68</sup> However, Pritchett’s analysis of the introduction of colonial rule in North Western Zambia differs substantially from that which is to be found and read in the archives, and appears to be more of a caricature than a true portrayal of the historical past.<sup>69</sup> The District Notebook for Mwinilunga, the colonial administrative centre for the area dealt with by Pritchett, provides a rendering of the past in which the incoming colonial administration was far from powerful, and was, instead, dependant on the goodwill of the local population. One such colonial administrator, “a man of uncertain temper”, lost the goodwill of those whom he sought to administer and was forced to:

ask the assistance of the mission at Kalene Hill to recruit carriers to take him on tour. His police, messengers, and personal servants deserted, and a great number of natives fled either into Angola or the Congo. Major Hodson B.N.P, who was sent up in June 1909 to enquire into Mr. MacGregor’s administration found him and his assistant, Mr. J.M. Pound, doing their own cooking and washing their own

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<sup>67</sup> James A. Pritchett, *The Lunda-Ndembu: Style, Change, and Social Transformation in South Central Africa*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 2001.

<sup>68</sup> Pritchett’s view relies heavily on Fergus Macpherson, *Anatomy of a Conquest: The British Occupation of Zambia, 1884 – 1924*, London 1981, and C. Luchembe, “Ethnic stereotypes, violence and labour in early colonial Zambia, 1889 – 1924”, in S. Chipungu, ed., *Guardians in Their Time: Experiences of Zambians under Colonial Rule, 1890 – 1964*, London 1992, pp. 30 – 49.

<sup>69</sup> This is not to deny that people may believe that they were brutally colonised. However, it must be borne in mind that what people believe may not always be in keeping with the historical past. A case in point would be the position of the Dutch vis-à-vis the Second World War. The generally accepted premise is that the Dutch population actively opposed the Nazi occupation, whereas a more nuanced rendering of the historical past indicates that for most of the war the Netherlands distinguished itself by its cooperation, not to say collaboration, with the Nazi occupation. Indeed, Dutch civil structures, from the police to provincial administrations remained unchanged until the last year of the war. C.J. Lammers, *Vreemde Overheersing: Bezetten en Bezetting in Sociologisch Perspectief*, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2005.



pots and pans – Both officials were recalled, and Mr. MacGregor’s resignation asked for.<sup>70</sup>

A reading of the archives indicates clearly that the colonial state had been established, not by conquest but in a series of initially symbiotic ad hoc relationships between the junior representatives of the British South Africa Company and a varied and disparate arrangement of resident power brokers.<sup>71</sup> That is, far from violent conquest, the colonial state came about through a long process, in which initially the colonial administrators had very little power, but which by the 1930s, when Audrey Richards started her fieldwork, had switched to the advantage of the colonial administration.

For the researchers at the RLI, who commenced their research at the height of the colonial administration’s power, a number of basic assumptions were made with regard to the colonial administration that was in place when they conducted their fieldwork, a colonial administration, that in keeping with the South African paradigm, they believed had been established through conquest. Writing of this administrative system, Colson noted:

That we failed to provide descriptions of the working of the colonial administration adequate to the needs of later readers is due to our assumption that since administrative practices were everywhere similar, readers who knew anything about Africa could fill in the details.<sup>72</sup>

Effectively, as Colson notes, she was writing in the high days of colonial rule, in which the state’s power to influence the day to day life of people was at its greatest.<sup>73</sup> These were conditions in which repressive and often racist nature of the colonial administration was so all pervasive and apparently self-evident that explicit description of it was left out, because it was believed that readers would fill in the details themselves. That later readers and observers should fail to understand and adequately condemn this condition appeared beyond comprehension. Undoubtedly, this provides some of the background to the position of former RLI employee Bruce Kapferer, when he expressed outrage and

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<sup>70</sup> National Archives of Zambia, KSE 4/1 Mwinilunga District Note Book

<sup>71</sup> See in this regard the papers of Theodore Williams, who was stationed as a junior administrative officer in Mwinilunga, the area dealt with by Pritchett. Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS. Afr. S. 776 – 781. Williams (Theodore R.) Administrative Officer, Northern Rhodesia: Diaries, 1912 – 21. 3 vols.; letters home, 1912 – 24. 3 Volumes.

<sup>72</sup> Colson, “Overview”, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup> A case in point being the forced removal of no less than 35,000 people as part of the Kariba dam project.

indignation at what he saw as the failure of James Ferguson to adequately recognise the situation in which RLI anthropologists sought to work in late colonial Zambia:

I'm doing a critique of this Expectations of Modernity book (Ferguson 1999) which is on the Copperbelt studies and he says they were just liberals, they were against racism. I just think that this is a profoundly ignorant statement, since the whole structure of the colonial world in Southern and Central Africa was based around the structure of race. In fact, Northern Rhodesia, as it was called when I arrived, had apartheid actually under the British colonial government - much more heavily entrenched than it was in South Africa at the time. So that was all part of the tension.<sup>74</sup>

For the RLI researchers South Africa and its racist policies formed the yardstick of the conditions in which they worked. For them, the repressive policies and racism of South Africa were present in Zambia. Why South Africa and its peculiar history should come to form the touchstone for the researchers of the RLI relates firstly to the South African background of the research paradigm established by Max Gluckman and, secondly, the actual conditions RLI researchers were experiencing in Northern Rhodesia at the time.

### **RLI Researchers and South Africa**

South African social scientists figured prominently in liberal and radical dissent and formed the primary political network supporting the RLI's particular research program as it was delineated by South African or South African connected directors such as Godfrey Wilson (...), Max Gluckman, and J. Clyde Mitchell.<sup>75</sup>

There is an anecdote about Max Gluckman, his powers of persuasion and the academic school that he founded. After leaving the RLI, Gluckman went on to establish anthropology at Manchester University where the standing joke amongst his colleagues and students was "We are all Maxists here".<sup>76</sup> Throughout his academic career Gluckman established and ran a very tight ship. Kapferer, Kuper, and Werbner have all detailed how

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<sup>74</sup> Bruce Kapferer interviewed by Olaf Smedal, [http://www.anthrobase.com/txt/S/Smedal\\_Kapferer\\_01.htm](http://www.anthrobase.com/txt/S/Smedal_Kapferer_01.htm), accessed 6 February 2006.

<sup>75</sup> Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, p. 33.

<sup>76</sup> Adam Kuper, *Anthropology and anthropologists: The Modern British School*, third revised and enlarged edition, London and New York: Routledge, 1996 p. 122.

Gluckman ran the RLI and established the Manchester School, and these and many other authors have outlined its principal concepts and methodology. Ferguson has eloquently argued that the RLI texts written on urbanisation in Zambia were subject to a modernist narrative that saw an inevitable progression from migrant labourer to permanently urban proletariat. Schumaker has covered in detail how Gluckman dominated the RLI research in Northern Rhodesia, through choosing field sites, determining research themes, prescribing set reading - most notably “the Bridge” -, organising joint field visits, chairing fieldwork seminars, and establishing the camaraderie necessary for a successful assault on the established order.<sup>77</sup> In all of this, the band of researchers, with the notable exception of Lewis Gann, found themselves united in their opposition to colonial rule. Through the establishment of academic posts whereby RLI anthropologists could write up their fieldwork under his supervision at the University of Manchester, Gluckman ensured that his influence on the work of the RLI continued long after he had left for England.

The first group of researchers recruited by the RLI for the Seven Year Plan were subjected to a rigorous programme designed by Gluckman, which would serve as the researchers’ induction into what was referred to by colonial administrative officers as “Gluckman’s Circus”. In later years this group of young researchers, who did indeed share the camaraderie of the legendary “flying circuses” of World War One, would come to be referred to as the “Cloth Cap Boys” and later still, and with far more respect, the Manchester School.<sup>78</sup> It is interesting to note that Hans Holleman and Lewis Gann did not take part in Gluckman’s induction. Though both were recruited and selected by him for the RLI, and although both men were clearly intelligent and productive, neither of them would ever be associated with the Manchester School. In contrast with the rest of the RLI researchers, neither of them shared Gluckman’s analysis of Northern Rhodesia, and Gann would later place himself in a political position that was diametrically opposed to that of the Gluckman and his followers. The extent of the difference that developed between Gann and Gluckman’s followers can be garnered from the fact that Gann dedicated his monograph, *The Birth of a Plural Society*, which had been commissioned by the RLI, to

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<sup>77</sup> Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, pp.75 – 92.

<sup>78</sup> Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, pp. 109 – 110.

Roy Welensky, the prime minister of the short lived Central African Federation and the personification of White minority rule in central Africa.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, in direct contrast to the other RLI researchers, who travelled to Europe to complete the process of writing up, Gann initially remained in central Africa and took up employment with the colonial administration in Salisbury, where after he emigrated to the United States where he became a renowned Cold War warrior at the Hoover Institution, a conservative think tank attached to Stanford University.<sup>80</sup>

Apart from extensive reading and debate, the researchers' introduction to Northern Rhodesia and their induction into the RLI included an organised tour past Gluckman's mentors and friends in South Africa as well as a stretch of supervised fieldwork on the Copperbelt. Only then were the RLI researchers let loose in Zambia. In this way Gluckman's researchers were effectively inducted into his view of the world. They became primed to read Zambia as they would South Africa. With its specific historical trajectory, this came to be the paradigm through which the researchers of the RLI (and Max Gluckman) dealt with the situation as they found it in Northern Rhodesia. By providing his researchers with a specific way of looking at the world, Gluckman ensured that the historical paradigm that applied to South Africa came to be applied to Zambia too.

In South Africa the young RLI researchers were introduced to Isaac Schapera, Winifred Hoernlé, Eileen Krige, Hilda Beemer (Kuper), Ellen Hellman and a whole host of others. Amongst them was Jack Simons, a prominent member of the Communist Party of South Africa until it was banned in 1950. He taught African Government and Law at the University of Cape Town from 1937 until 1964 when the South African government barred him from the university and prohibited him from writing for publication. Simons was exiled from South Africa in 1965, where - undoubtedly through the intercession of the RLI - he took up an appointment at the newly established University of Zambia.<sup>81</sup> Writing of South Africa, Simons put in a nutshell what could just as well have been the shared historical paradigm of the RLI anthropologists under Gluckman:

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<sup>79</sup> Sir Roy Welensky, *Welensky's 4000 Days: The Life and Death of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland*, London: Collins 1964.

<sup>80</sup> See in this regard Gann's candid autobiographical article: L.H. Gann, "Ex Africa: An Africanist's Intellectual Autobiography", in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 31, 3 (1993), pp. 477 – 498.

<sup>81</sup> Simon Zukas, *Into Exile and Back*, Lusaka 2002, p. 136.

Three centuries of white settlement – phased by colonial wars, expropriations of tribal lands, slavery, forced labour and industrialism – had produced a variety of human types, an integrated multi-racial society and a way of life shared by some members of all racial groups. Colour prejudice was endemic and deeply engrained among whites; but their policy of racial discrimination, though vicious and degrading, differed in degree rather than in kind from the discrimination practised elsewhere under colonial rule.<sup>82</sup>

Simons summed up a paradigm which came to be applied by the RLI anthropologists to Zambia. Gluckman’s researchers visited Simons in Cape Town where he was involved in long-term research in Langa, the oldest African urban settlement in South Africa. To investigate the history and social conditions of Langa in the face of the aggressive segregationist policies of the National Party was a conscious political choice and statement in South Africa at the time. The National Party, in developing what would later become known as apartheid, argued that there were no permanently urbanised Africans in South Africa, yet research into the history and social setting of Langa proved otherwise. Similarly in Northern Rhodesia where official policy suggested otherwise, Godfrey Wilson, in setting out the research agenda for the Rhodes Livingstone Institute in 1938, had urged the Institute to investigate the society of permanent and semi-permanent African residents in the urban and industrial areas of Northern Rhodesia.<sup>83</sup> Significantly Simons’s work in Langa was continued by, Monica Wilson, another of the many academics that were visited by Gluckman and his researchers on their tour through South Africa prior to their first fieldwork experiences.<sup>84</sup>

It has been noted that “the sites they [Gluckman’s Circus] visited illustrated the social processes they would examine in Northern Rhodesia”.<sup>85</sup> Their tour of South Africa, with its visits to the sites of struggle and contention so relevant to South African history, prepared the RLI researchers for their own fieldwork in Northern Rhodesia. The researchers toured South Africa’s rural and urban areas, from Pondoland to Sophiatown,

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<sup>82</sup> Jack and Ray Simons, *Class & Colour in South Africa 1850 – 1950*, London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1983, p. 7.

<sup>83</sup> Brown, “Godfrey Wilson and the RLI”, p. 189.

<sup>84</sup> Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje, *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1963.

<sup>85</sup> Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, p. 91.

visited mines and bars on the Witwatersrand, and spoke to some of the finest minds of the time. These scholars had shaped, supported and sustained Gluckman's political and academic position, and were united in their opposition to the racial segregation that characterised South Africa and so many of the colonies at the time. And lest the South African paradigm be dismissed the first fieldwork training exercise carried out by the RLI researchers under Gluckman's supervision in Northern Rhodesia, took place "in a resettlement area occupied by members of the Lamba people, a group who had lost their best land to the white mining towns of Northern Rhodesia's Copperbelt".<sup>86</sup> To all intents and purposes, the researchers of the RLI under Gluckman's direction could do no other than extend the historical paradigm of South Africa to Northern Rhodesia.

Between 1937 and 1950, at least nine anthropological studies were carried out by the RLI. All were undertaken in the absence of a narrative history, a history of dates and figures that could have provided a historical context for the material with which the RLI researchers were dealing. Gluckman was aware of these shortcomings and commissioned Lewis Gann, a professional historian, to rectify this. As Gluckman noted, "the anthropologists found that their work was severely handicapped by the lack of anything like a good history of the region". For the anthropological research being conducted at the RLI, "a basic outline history was clearly necessary if we were to co-ordinate our different studies". Writing about his expectations and those of his fellow researchers at the RLI, Gluckmann was honest enough to say:

I suppose that we anthropologists were no more egotistical than most people when we planned to have an historian who would produce a study of the development of British Central Africa as a mere adjunct to our own researches. I, at least, was thinking of something like 'a schoolboy's history', in which we would learn the bare dates when various things happened in various parts of the country. It is probably not easy for scholars working in countries where at least the outline of events is easily accessible to realize how scattered were the historical facts about Central Africa.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, p. 86.

<sup>87</sup> Max Gluckman writing in the Foreword to L.H. Gann, *The Birth of a Plural Society: The development of Northern Rhodesia under the British South Africa Company 1894 – 1914*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1958, p. vii.

In the event, Gann provided historians and anthropologists alike with the first professional synthesis of Zambian history. This history, by dint of his extensive association with the RLI, was extensively informed by anthropological and sociological theory, and was far more than a white man's history or a mere 'Schoolboy's History'. It is sad, but the RLI researchers who could have cited Gann's work largely chose to ignore him in their own work.

Presumably on account of his experiences as a German refugee who had been caught up in the maelstrom of the excesses of the nation-state, Gann was never one for glowing recommendations and claims for the future.<sup>88</sup> For Gann the future was unwritten and unknown, a territory and space the contents of which could never be comfortably encompassed in glowing rhetoric. Thus, although the past could be approached and discussed with reasonable certainty, the future was problematic. It is probable that it was this ever present refusal, that permeates the work of Gann, to rejoice in the perceived inevitable joys of the Zambian future that led to his work being dismissed. In addition his brutally honest approach to much that he saw, also surely contributed to his dismissal. These strands, a refusal to rejoice in the future, as well as an untimely honesty, can be discerned in the closing paragraph of his *Birth of a Plural Society*:

... the seeds of potential struggles remain; and as the plural society of Northern Rhodesia forms part of a more extensive one, it is probable that these will ultimately be decided on an arena wider than a purely local one. ... The new society possessed means of unlocking wealth far beyond the imagination of the most enterprising Bantu chief; and the resources of even a backward colonial economy producing primary goods for the world market proved to be far greater than those of the most advanced tribal society. ... Within its [the plural society] framework a social and economic revolution was set off, the outcome of which none can as yet foresee.<sup>89</sup>

It can be seen that in the context of an academic milieu that was consciously opposed to white minority rule in central Africa, Gann's analysis was considered anathema to polite society.

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<sup>88</sup> Gann, "Ex Africa", pp. 477 – 498.

<sup>89</sup> Gann, *The birth of a plural society*, p. 191.

In the absence of Gann's pioneering work and in the light of the subsequent dismissal of his work as being that of a colonial historian, the past was not investigated but taken as a given. This past, which existed in the minds of the RLI researchers, was informed by the South African paradigm, contemporary racism and the evident power of the colonial state that they experienced. It was not based upon a professional investigation of the past.

### **Conducting Anthropology in a Colonial Setting**

Writing with the vindictiveness of old age, Edmund Leach lambasted a whole generation of fellow anthropologists for believing and arguing that the communities that they studied had lived in a rural idyll prior to the arrival of colonial rule. Of Raymond Firth, Leach noted that his:

... use of the word 'traditional' reflects an underlying presumption, shared by nearly all anthropologists of his own and earlier generations, that until the coming of the white man, primitive society everywhere had been in a state of Arcadian stability if not of Arcadian bliss.<sup>90</sup>

That there were sound reasons to argue that colonial rule had in many cases indeed destroyed stable and well-structured communities was conveniently overlooked by Leach. Yet faced with the triumphalist racism of those who had imposed the Central African Federation contrary to the wishes of the majority of the Northern Rhodesian population, it is not surprising that a generation of anthropologists -sensitised by the injustices of colonial rule, racism, anti-Semitism, segregationist and later apartheid rule- should choose to imagine an historical past that stood in direct opposition to the injustices that they observed in the present.<sup>91</sup>

The colonial state as it existed in Northern Rhodesia between 1930 and 1960 was a state characterised by racism and legislation that privileged sections of the populace

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<sup>90</sup> Edmund Leach, "Glimpses of the Unmentionable", p. 14.

<sup>91</sup> This is not to deny that Leach was well aware of the socio-cultural background of those whom he chose to criticise, vide:

Schapera, Hunter, Fortes, and Gluckman were all from South Africa. Is it too fanciful to suggest that the prominence that several of these authors were later to give to the notion of homeostatic social equilibrium and to the belief that social structures persist even when there are drastic changes in cultural appearances derived from their personal need for a stable homeland?

Leach, "Glimpses of the Unmentionable", p. 12.



merely on the basis of the colour of their skin. It was a colonial state that by 1930 was firmly established, a condition which for the majority of white settlers who arrived in the colony in the years prior to 1960 was natural and inevitable. That the colonial state had been established, not by conquest but in a series of initially symbiotic ad hoc relationships between the junior representatives of a charter company and a varied and disparate arrangement of resident power brokers was lost on many who were trying to deal with the country's contemporary issues. For the RLI researchers, the establishment of the colonial state mirrored that of South Africa and lay in conquest. The day-to-day reality of racist legislation and sanctioned racial prejudice appeared to underscore this assumption. Not surprisingly the colonial administrators, the majority of whom believed that they were running a "decent show" without prejudice and in keeping with the perceived natural order of things, were generally suspicious of the anthropologists. If the administrators were merely suspicious of anthropologists, then the vast majority of the settlers were positively paranoid.

The renowned South African anthropologist Adam Kuper examined the presence and impact of anthropologists in a colonial setting and tried to find an explanation for the extreme mutual prejudice displayed by anthropologists and the colonial administrators. Kuper noted that anthropologists often upset local white opinion by socialising with Africans. Many of the more orthodox colonial officials, "were easily convinced that they were going native, and letting the side down".<sup>92</sup> Kuper notes that Audrey Richards "was forced to be rather defensive about this", and cites her, on behalf of the anthropologists, with the following:

While it is probably sheer romanticism to suppose that he, or she, is ever really accepted as a member of a native tribe, as has sometimes been claimed, anthropologists do participate in native life much more closely than do other categories of Europeans living in the community. They must, for instance, live in a native village and not in the nearest European settlement. They must share in the work and play of the people and attend their ceremonies. It would be difficult for Europeans occupying positions of high authority, or closely identified with a particular Church, to attend beer drinks or magic ceremonies with the same

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<sup>92</sup> Kuper, *Anthropology and anthropologists*, p. 108.

freedom as the anthropologist does. An African district officer might be equally limited by what it was thought fitting for him to do. For this reason it is inevitable that the anthropologist should quickly acquire the reputation of a 'wild man of the woods', and should be constantly accused of 'going native'. There can be few who have not been described at one time or another as 'dancing round a tom-tom in a loin cloth'.<sup>93</sup>

A stark example of the hostility and suspicion displayed by the administrators towards anthropologists is provided by the following. Whilst it was being drafted, Gluckman's "Seven Year Research Plan" was submitted to the Provincial Commissioners in Northern Rhodesia for review and discussion. A number of commissioners submitted written comments, one of the more extreme being the comments of E. Munday (Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Province), who wished:

To stress the point that research workers should not be allowed to discuss political questions or criticise Government without working in close collaboration with a District Officer ... Amateur enthusiasts come out, full of strange ideas, which they disseminate without fear of the consequences, and Government has to clear up the mess, possibly with the help of arms, a weapon which the anthropologist is so adverse to. He is, by nature of his training, devoid of civic responsibility and a pacifist. He is quite irresponsible and is not interested in the outset of his propaganda, except as a scientist and explorer. His mind is generally academic. I can say this with knowledge as my mother's first cousin, Professor H.M. Chadwick, is a foremost anthropologist at Cambridge University and a member of the college where I spent three years, and from my close connection with Dr Richards. Both are quite irresponsible as to the results of their actions and both can talk in a language quite unintelligible to the ordinary human.<sup>94</sup>

Munday's direct and dismissive attitude is all the more interesting given that Audrey Richards explicitly noted her gratitude to Munday in the foreword to *Land, Labour and Diet*:

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<sup>93</sup> Kuper, *Anthropology and anthropologists*, p. 108, citing Audrey Richards.

<sup>94</sup> Richard Brown, "Passages in the life of a white anthropologist: Max Gluckman in Northern Rhodesia", in *Journal of African History*, 20 (1979), p. 534.

Mr. E. Munday, then District Commissioner at Chinsali, gave me every conceivable help at the most difficult initial period of my work.<sup>95</sup>

Although it has been noted that colonial administrators were sceptical of anthropologists, it has to be acknowledged that for their part a number of the anthropologists did consider themselves as being at some remove from the *hoi polloi* of administrators and European settlers. Discussing the position of the anthropologists vis-à-vis colonial administrators, Adam Kuper wrote:

Of course, intellectuals were appalled by their smugness, their arrogant assumption of omniscience, and their philistine opposition of the 'Practical Man' (as they liked to call themselves) to the scholar. But the anthropologists played into their hands, participating only grudgingly (as a rule) in the little studies dreamt up by the administrators, and accepting the view that they should not speak out on matters of policy, not being 'practical men'. The worst of it was that Malinowski had promised so much. As Audrey Richards confessed, 'the anthropologist often offers his help, but seldom condescends to give it'.<sup>96</sup>

If the truth be told, apart from detailed information on specific persons believed to be engaged in activities that ran counter to the interests of the administration, the colonial administration was not interested in what anthropologists had to say for themselves:

Not only did the administrators not keep in touch themselves, they were not even prepared to use the information made available to them by the social scientists. In fact, they seemed to resent it; because it so often exposed the half-truths and vague generalisations they had built up over a lifetime. ...<sup>97</sup>

### **The Colonial Setting 1930 - 1950**

Union policy reacts on Central African policy – many of the Europeans in Central Africa are South African by birth and sympathy – and the

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<sup>95</sup> Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet*, p. xi.

<sup>96</sup> Kuper, *Anthropology and anthropologists*, p. 106.

<sup>97</sup> P. Fraenkel, *No Fixed Abode: A Jewish Odyssey in Africa*, London: Taurus, 2005, p. 123.

entrenchment of a caste system in the Union fortifies racialism in Central Africa, tending to prevent any increase in racial inclusiveness there also.<sup>98</sup>

The racism that the RLI found when they started working in Zambia in the 1940s came most explicitly to the fore in mining towns where the concentration of large numbers of white settlers allowed for the open expression of racism in everyday life. To put it bluntly, colonial officials, many of whom were stationed at some distance from large settlers' communities, could ill afford to let their racism dominate their daily lives. Many of these men, particularly prior to World War Two, were Oxbridge graduates who, by dint of their education and background were not necessarily dependent upon the colour of their skin for job security. District commissioners, if they wished to continue to govern and administer effectively, could not allow their racial prejudices to gain the upper hand in their day-to-day dealings with the Northern Rhodesian population. This is not to deny that a number of these officials were suffused with racial prejudices and many of their activities could be deemed to be extremely patronising and paternalistic. The circumstances, which determined a modicum of consideration on the part of colonial administrators, appeared more often than not to apply to the white immigrants who worked in the mines in Northern Rhodesia, many of whom came from South Africa.

By 1940 the colonial state was firmly established in Zambia, and the cities and mines were increasingly being filled with settlers who soon soaked up and shared the sentiments of White South Africa. Stark anecdotal information provided by Peter Fraenkel, who was very closely related to the Rhodes Livingstone Institute, sheds light on these views.<sup>99</sup> Fraenkel describes how, whilst driving to the European quarter of Ndola, the bus made a short stop to drop off Fraenkel's African colleague. This resulted in a discussion in the bus led by a young white Rhodesian and a "red-faced and pimply" young man with an English north-country accent:

'What's this building?' asked the young Rhodesian.

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<sup>98</sup> Godfrey and Monica Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change Based on Observations in Central Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1945, p. 156.

<sup>99</sup> Fraenkel was closely associated with the Rhodes Livingstone Anthropologists, even to the extent of later marrying one of them, Ms. Merran McCulloch. Fraenkel, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 233. Merran MacCulloch, *The Southern Lunda and related peoples : (Northern Rhodesia, Belgian Congo, Angola)* Merran Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class in Monrovia*, London: Oxford University Press, 1964.

‘African hotel, just newly built,’ said the elderly European. He seemed to have an Italian accent.

‘What!!!’ The young man was aghast; ‘we go to the compound to drop a kaffir first?’

‘Hotel á la Bantu,’ sniggered the north-country youth.

...

‘Well, I don’t know what this country is coming to ...’ grumbled the Rhodesian.

‘I’m a Rhodesian, born and bred in Umtali,’ he continued, ‘and I think it’s all wrong. It’s those fellows in England ...’

The young Englishman hastened to ingratiate himself: ‘Yeah, they don’t know what things are like here. I came out to Southern Rhodesia three years ago and I can tell you, when I first got out I also thought “Treat them like human beings” but now ... well, now I know them. Baboons, straight off the trees. Do you think this could have happened in the South?’<sup>100</sup>

Gluckman had emphasised time and again that the inhabitants of Northern Rhodesia, white immigrants as well as Africans, were all members of a single social unit. Yet it is interesting to note that out of all of the RLI researchers the only one to actually seriously study aspects of the white community of Northern Rhodesia was Hans Holleman. During his research for the RLI he conducted research among the Shona in Rhodesia. Following his move to Natal from the RLI he undertook commissioned research at the request of the Northern Rhodesian Chamber of Mines on the “attitudes of White mining employees towards life and work on the Copperbelt and at Broken Hill”. Holleman’s research, which was finally published after he moved to the Netherlands, makes for interesting and, at times, humorous reading. The opening words of his study display a dry and appealing sense of humour:

One of the intriguing aspects of the swift turn of African history in the late ‘fifties and early ‘sixties has been the inability of the White communities fully to comprehend the speed and magnitude of impending political change. Nowhere,

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<sup>100</sup> Peter Fraenkel, *Wayaleshi*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959, pp. 74 – 75. Fraenkel returned to this incident in, *No Fixed Abode*, pp, 184 – 5.

perhaps, was this more evident than in the mining centres of Northern Rhodesia – now Zambia – where the expatriate White minorities, living in closed communities in the vastness of underdeveloped Africa, proudly (if sometimes recklessly) pursued what they believed to be the distinctive and superior values of the ‘European way of life’. Sustained by a protective employment structure and a general affluence probably unequalled in any other White community in Africa, they succeeded in creating for themselves exclusive spheres of social refuge (and of mental escape) from the African world around them.<sup>101</sup>

Protected by racist legislation, communities of people were able to establish lives for themselves in the mining towns of Northern Rhodesia that would have been virtually impossible elsewhere. What is particularly disturbing about the Northern Rhodesian situation is that so many of these people believed that this was their natural right.

Holleman described the life and noted:

As the industry prospered and the mining communities grew more and more affluent, the pursuit of wealth and comfort soon became the established dogma of a prevalent and highly materialistic faith. ...

This very largely immigrant community came from many countries, overseas and in the south, [62% of all male employees came from South Africa] where most of these values were to a greater or less extent the privilege of the upper strata of society. The vast majority of mining employees did not derive from these strata, but were working-class people to whom the acquisition of these values was tangible evidence of having made good in the new society. Naturally their ambitions were directed toward achieving these aims. In the Copperbelt employment structure even semi-skilled men could earn as much as, and sometimes more than, academically trained persons.<sup>102</sup>

Holleman’s work describes a situation in which boorish and racist behaviour were sanctioned and appeared to be rewarded by the administration, workplace and the social setting. It cannot be considered surprising that in these circumstances the work and

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<sup>101</sup> J.F. Holleman & S. Biesheuvel, *White Mine Workers in Northern Rhodesia 1959 – 60*, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1973, p. vii.

<sup>102</sup> Holleman & Biesheuvel, *White Mine Workers*, p. 35.

conduct of a series of young anthropologists were considered to be suspect by both administrators and settlers.

The activities of Arnold Leonard (Bill) Epstein as a young anthropologist in Northern Rhodesia provide us with insight into the relations -such as they existed- between the RLI researchers and the colonial milieu as it was at the time. Epstein, who by this stage had already completed a law degree, served in World War Two, and travelled from his native Ireland to Sri Lanka, modestly described his arrival in Zambia in 1950 in the following manner:

I was at the time a rather naïve young man with no experience, and certainly little appreciation, of the nature of a colonial settler society, and I had conceived of my study as a purely academic exercise – what I hoped would prove to be a contribution to the anthropology of law. I was very quickly disabused of this idea.<sup>103</sup>

For although Epstein believed he was no threat, to many living in Northern Rhodesia at the time he did indeed pose a threat, particularly to those who owed their positions and careers to racial prejudice. After he arrived in Lusaka the local settler newspaper carried an article by an anonymous contributor that went out of its way to make a mockery of his forthcoming research project and concluded with:

Mademoiselle Sun Woo, the 17 year old Mongolian modiste, who is studying the science of clothes with the famous firm of Paquin et Cie of Paris since she was ten, has accepted an appointment under the Colonial Office and is coming to Africa to co-ordinate and unify methods of dress among all the Native tribes in the country so as to enable the ‘African’ ladies to set an example to their less fortunate white guests when dining and dancing at the Governing Houses of the territories they adorn.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> A.L. Epstein, *Scenes from African Urban Life: Collected Copperbelt Papers*, Edingburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992, p. 2.

<sup>104</sup> Epstein, *Scenes from African Urban Life*, pp. 2 – 3. See also, Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity*, p. 30.

In later years when reflecting on conditions in Northern Rhodesia in the early 1950s, Epstein noted that the atmosphere of the time was “quite nightmarish”.<sup>105</sup> As the nationalist movement developed in Zambia in opposition to plans for a Central African Federation dominated by white settlers in Southern Rhodesia, politics in Northern Rhodesia became ever more heated. The cold war and the bogey of communist fifth columnists did little to calm the situation. The enforced establishment of the Federation in direct opposition to the wishes of the majority of the African population led to a very volatile situation in Zambia. Indeed, as the nationalist movement gained in strength, opposition between “whites and blacks” became more the norm, and those, such as the RLI researchers, who chose to oppose and not participate in these charades in which stereotypes as opposed to people dominated, were further alienated from settler society. As Epstein noted, “if ever there was a situation that was made for paranoia, that was it”.<sup>106</sup>

In the tense social context of the time, Epstein, who was working amongst and with African mine workers and trade unionists, was asked by the security police to report on the activities of mine workers. To his credit, Epstein declined, after which he was shadowed and investigated by the security services of Northern Rhodesia.<sup>107</sup> Shortly afterwards, the RLI was approached with the request that Epstein no longer continue his research among mine workers at the Roan Antelope Mine in Luanshya on the grounds that he “might interfere in union affairs and influence the thinking of African union leaders”.<sup>108</sup> In the event and mirroring earlier occasions, Epstein was subsequently denied access to the mine compound. He noted of this dismissal from the mine compounds:

It is interesting to recall in this regard that my own experience turned out to replicate in nearly all major respects that of Godfrey Wilson at Broken Hill in 1940. Following strikes on the Copperbelt in that year, Wilson was asked to suspend his research at Broken hill for a fortnight. Shortly afterwards there were

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<sup>105</sup> Kevin A. Yelvington, “An interview with A.L. Epstein”, in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Apr., 1997), p. 293.

<sup>106</sup> Yelvington, “Interview”, p. 293.

<sup>107</sup> Epstein, *African Urban Life*, pp. 4, 6, 9 – 11.

<sup>108</sup> Epstein, *African Urban Life*, p. 10.



complaints that he fraternised with Africans during fieldwork, and permission to conduct further research was withdrawn.<sup>109</sup>

The disapproval of sections of the white administration and settler society continued to hamper Epstein during the remainder of his stay in Zambia, where he was seen as a “known subversive deeply involved in the ... troubles on the Copperbelt”. Indeed Epstein’s so-called subversive record was to follow him to Australia where in later years he would be prohibited from entering Papua New Guinea, which was then a mandated territory under the authority of Australia.<sup>110</sup> Epstein, was deeply affected by the treatment that he had received at the hands of the colonial authorities and their settler allies. In later years Epstein sought to find words and thoughts for all that he had experienced in Zambia:

The interesting question is why a bare handful of anthropologists should appear so threatening to White dominance? In what ways precisely did the behaviour of the anthropologists give such profound offence? I think one could fairly expect that most anthropologists working in Central Africa at this time would have been driven by their personal and professional values to reject the various expressions of racial discrimination that had been almost from its inception the hallmark of Northern Rhodesian society. But I also consider that we need to push the argument further to take account of an even more basic factor – that in their very attempts to work effectively as anthropologists they were compelled to violate norms of behaviour that were quite fundamental to the structure of this colonial settler society. If one were to work successfully with Africans one had to win their confidence and support, and this was to put oneself in a position vis-à-vis the Africans that was entirely different from that of other Europeans: it was a relationship that demanded mutuality. In such circumstances even a public handshake, elsewhere scarcely to be regarded as a momentous event, here became a subversive act because it was an acknowledgement of the African’s equality.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Epstein, *African Urban Life*, p. 17.

<sup>110</sup> Epstein, *African Urban Life*, p. 15 – 6. Describes being denied access to sections of Papua New Guinea on account of his Zambian reputation.

<sup>111</sup> Epstein, *African Urban Life*, p. 19.

In the poisoned atmosphere that was Northern Rhodesia, where the mere recognition of another's humanity was grounds for censure, the validity of the paradigm drawn from South African History appeared beyond question. The paradigm initiated by Gluckman and Wilson and applied to Northern Rhodesia served to explain the contemporary condition being experienced, and appeared to be correct. Yet the way in which the colonial state came to be established in Northern Rhodesia was not truly investigated and when it was, by Lewis Gann, the dismissal of its tenets as being mere "colonialist history" appeared to be more acceptable and understandable in the light of what was being experienced.<sup>112</sup>

### **Implications**

The Rhodes Livingstone Institute anthropologists believed that Zambia had been subject to a historical process similar to that which had taken place in South Africa, where overwhelming force had enabled colonial conquest, land dispossession, the impoverishment of rural areas and the development of migrant labour. Research into the development and effects of migrant labour formed the most of the RLI's research, but how this migrant labour had come about was not investigated. The historical conditions that had led to the development of migrant labour were not investigated. It was taken for granted that the process of conquest that had occurred in South Africa also applied to Zambia. Instead of investigating how the present had come about, the contemporary condition was researched and conclusions were drawn on the basis of this about the past and anticipated future conditions. It was taken for granted that labour migration had been initiated by colonial conquest and that subsequent taxation drove people to participate in migrant labour.

Northern Rhodesia, or Zambia as it is known in the present, is a territory twice the size of Texas or France. During the establishment of colonial rule, the territory came to be occupied and administered by approximately 300 men. The way this occupation occurred is a subject for discussion and further research. This paper argues that the RLI

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<sup>112</sup> For an example of a priori dismissal see Lyn Schumaker who wrote:

Gann falls into the category of colonialist historian, whose work has been seen by subsequent Africanists as showing only the positive side of colonial rule while neglecting the African perspective.

Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, p. 308, n. 8

anthropologists believed that this occupation happened in similar way to how colonial occupation had taken place in South Africa. For Monica Hunter Wilson how the colonial state had come into being was informed by what she already knew about how South Africa came to be colonised. The same held true for Gluckman, and his researchers. They did not need re-investigate colonisation. They never asked themselves how a few men managed to conquer an enormous territory.

On the part of the RLI, there was an a priori belief that conquest had led to the establishment of the colonial state, and that colonial rule initiated the decline of the rural areas. Working from within this paradigm, the establishment of colonial rule was not investigated, with the exception of the Ngoni by Barnes, which only served to underscore the validity of the South African paradigm. The researchers at the RLI never investigated how colonial rule was established, or how the rural areas came to be impoverished. The argument as it existed within the RLI and initiated by Audrey Richards was that the establishment of migrant labour drained the rural areas of productive labour and led to the impoverishment of these areas, leading to yet further migration. Not surprisingly, these sentiments lead to a dismissal of the work and insights of Gann and Holleman, neither of whom fulfilled the stereotypes expected or anticipated.

## **Conclusions**

In March 1955, eight years after he had left Zambia, the erstwhile director of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute, Max Gluckman gave a lecture at the Royal Society of Arts on, “Social Anthropology in Central Africa”. He provided an overview of anthropological research in Central Africa as a whole; an exercise that he modestly claimed to find “somewhat embarrassing” on account of his leading role in this research.<sup>113</sup> Gluckman wrapped up his lecture with a plea for historical research and concluded in this vein with the following words:

The Rhodes Livingstone Institute hopes soon to produce a symposium which will examine what colonization and industrialization have done to the region.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Max Gluckman, “Social Anthropology in Central Africa”, reprinted from *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal* XX, Manchester University Press: September 1956, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Gluckman, “Social Anthropology”, p.18.

Unfortunately the industry and energy displayed by Gluckman and the RLI officers was not directed to this topic and the symposium never materialised. With the passing of the years, and with the demise of the RLI, the ways in which colonisation and industrialisation occurred in Central Africa still await investigation. In spite of this lacuna, the RLI research officers conducted social anthropological research in which it was understood that colonisation and industrialisation played a central role, yet the exact nature of this role remains shrouded in mystery and shrewd but unfounded conjecture. In the absence of founded history a paradigm based upon the history of what had occurred in South Africa came to be applied to Zambia.

The inadvertent and understandable transfer of the South African paradigm of colonial conquest to the history of Zambia by the researchers of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute ensured that Zambian historiography, certainly with regards to the establishment of colonial rule, is desperately flawed and needs to be revised. Historians need to re-evaluate the introduction and establishment of colonial rule in Zambia between 1880 and 1940.