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Moving along the roadside: A social history of Mwinilunga District, 1870s-1970s

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Moving along the roadside

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Large parts of this research have been conducted in Zambia. The first time I set foot in Zambia in 2007, it reminded me of the island where my grandmother lives in Croatia and where I used to spend most of my summer holidays, riding my grandfather's donkey and picking grapes whilst running away from the wasps. The resemblance of the landscape and the welcoming attitude of the people I met during my short stay made me feel at home. This motivated me to conduct a study on the agricultural history of Zambia. My supervisor Jan-Bart Gewald proposed Mwinilunga District. Although I knew nothing about the area, I decided to give it a try and I have never regretted the choice.

So many people have helped me along the way, during research trips in 2008 and 2010. In Lusaka I have spent many hours digging through archival records at the National Archives of Zambia, where Marja Hinfelaar and the members of staff provided me with enormous assistance. They collected numerous boxes for me, gave me tips on how to understand the archives, but also made me feel at ease in Lusaka. It was a truly pleasant experience to do research at the National Archives of Zambia and to interact with the staff, other researchers and the students I met along the way. Much shorter research trips were made to the United National Independence Party archives in Lusaka and to the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines archives in Ndola. The assistance and material there were extremely valuable.

In Lusaka my stay was made extremely pleasant due to the friendship of Madeleen Husselman and the inhabitants of 21 Ngulube Road, which came to feel like home. Marja Hinfelaar and the University of Zambia provided me with institutional affiliation and academic assistance, for which I am truly grateful. Walima Kalusa provided me a valuable introduction to Lusaka and shared his experiences of doing research in Mwinilunga with me, for which I remain grateful. Special thanks go to Leah Samakayi, who came to my house every day and taught me Lunda, even when my pronunciation was ridiculous and my grammar horrible. Thank you for your patience, friendship and lessons in Lunda culture.

I spent one month in Ndola, where Theresa Maseka welcomed me to her house and made me feel at home. Next to being my host, she was my research assistant. She practiced Lunda speech with me and located Lunda migrants on the Copperbelt for interviews. Her meals, patience and jokes made my stay truly enjoyable. Webster tirelessly retrieved the documents at the ZCCM archives for me, but also proved a good conversation partner and companion. The Lunda language lessons which Harriet offered me were amazing. Not only did she teach me the grammar and vocabulary, she also taught me how to apply all the language rules in practical situations. Without her help I could never have felt so comfortable in Mwinilunga.

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In the United Kingdom I conducted shorter spells of archival work at the Rhodes House Library, the Public Records office and at the John Ryland's Library in Manchester. My special thanks go to Graham Johnson who made the Echoes of Service archival records accessible to me. It was extremely pleasant and informative to meet Betty Denning, the wife of the former colonial officer R.C. Denning, whose notes are deposited at the Rhodes House. Thank you for sharing your stories, pictures and afternoon with me.

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